

Community Board 7 Monthly Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2024

Opening of Meeting

Roll Call

Adoption of Agenda

Julio Peña moved to amend the agenda to note that only Land Use, Nominating Committee, and Public Safety were expected to have a vote.

Moved to adopt as amended – *Joan Botti*

Seconded – *Barbara Lee*

Passed by unanimous consent.

Adoption of May Minutes

Moved to adopt – *Damien Andrade*

Seconded – *Julio Peña*

Passed by unanimous consent.

First Public Comment on topics covered on the agenda

- John Santore stated that the Housing and Land Use meetings for City of Yes did not have quorums. Santore stated that 60% of AMI is higher than the majority of this community can afford, and view corridors were not considered. They suggested a “no” vote with conditions. With regard to Pier 6, the community should have more of a say, including whether we want to spend the money on this pier and more public engagement.
- Carrie Moore, a resident from 37th Street, urged the board to vote against the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity. The proposal only serves developers and will create out-of-scale dense and tall buildings. There is no complementary infrastructure plan. They suggested several modifications: communities should be kept to their current scale and an infrastructure plan should be required, and view corridors should be protected.

Report from 72nd Precinct - *Deputy Inspector Krystin Suarez*

- Deputy Inspector Suarez gave an update on enforcement against illegal mopeds, the positive local celebration for the Puerto Rican Day parade and said National Night Out will be on August 6 at Greenwood Park.

These Elected Officials Reported:

- NY State Senator Iwen Chu
- NY State Assemblymember Lester Chang
- NY State Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes – *represented by Emmitt Mendoza-Gaspar*
- Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso – *represented by Mon Yuck Yu*
- NY State Senator Andrew Gounardes and he *was represented by Francesca Lando*

- NYC Councilmember Alexa Aviles – *represented by Edward Cerna*
- US Representative Dan Goldman – *represented by Mayra Molina*

Committee Reports

Nominating Committee – *Joan Botti*

- Joan Botti read the slate. For Chairperson: Julio Peña unopposed. First Vice Chair: Pat Ruiz unopposed. Second Vice Chair: Damien Andrade and Cynthia Jeffers. Secretary: John DeLooper unopposed. Assistant Secretary: Antoinette Martinez and Karen Rolnick. Community Engagement Officer: Jerry Chan unopposed. Treasurer: Rosy Mota unopposed. Sergeant-at-Arms: Sam Sierra unopposed. Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms: Diana Gonzalez and Barbara Lee.
- Candidates for each position were offered a chance to speak. Julio Peña, Pat Ruiz, John DeLooper, Rosy Mota, Jerry Chan, and Sam Sierra declined to speak. Damien Andrade, Cynthia Jeffers, Antoinette Martinez, Karen Rolnick, and Barbara Lee spoke in support of their candidacies.
- Diana Gonzalez decided to decline her nomination.
- Joan Botti stated the committee would begin counting ballots at 8 PM.

Public Safety – *Cynthia Jeffers*

- Cynthia Jeffers stated the committee met in May and discussed two traffic fatalities which occurred on May 22.
- Students from PS 172 attended and shared concerns about the bike lane in front of the school and safety concerns for students and noted that children and parents have been hit.
- The 72nd Precinct spoke about mopeds and e-bikes on sidewalks. Concerns were expressed about the uncompleted bike lane on 4th Avenue.
- The Office of Nightlife gave a presentation about resources available to clubs, bars and restaurants.
- There was also an SLA application for a change of use for Love 69 at 4223 2nd Avenue, which is currently a bar but wants to become a go-go dancing club. The board contacted the applicant's representative many times, but were told the applicant was unavailable. They said they would send another notice, but the committee decided to move forward with a vote. Residents testified about traffic, trash and disturbances from the many nightclubs that have proliferated on 2nd Avenue.
- Jeremy Kaplan asked a clarifying question about the bar's allowed usage. Cynthia Jeffers stated if SLA rejects the change of use for the revised license, they can still operate as a bar, but not as a go-go bar.
- Chairperson Julio Peña III called for a vote on the committee's motion to disapprove the change-of-use application. The board voted unanimously to disapprove the application.

Economic Development & Small Businesses Committee– *Damaris Santiago*

- Committee Chair Damaris Santiago provided an overview of the May 21 committee meeting and encouraged increased attendance and membership because the committee did not obtain quorum on May 21.
- Julio Peña III moved to vote to approve a letter of no objection for the NYPD Harbor Charlie waterfront reconstruction project. The motion was seconded by Diana Gonzalez. A hand vote was conducted, and the motion passed unanimously.

Transportation Committee – *John DeLooper*

- The committee met jointly with CB10 about the Owls Head viaduct reconstruction project.
- The committee will meet again on June 17 for a presentation from MTA on the 36th Street subway station elevator project.

Land Use/Landmarks Committee – *Diana Gonzalez*

- Gonzalez reported that the committee, along with the Housing Committee met with the Department of City Planning for a presentation and discussion on the City of Yes Housing Opportunities text amendments.
- Gonzalez proposed the Board approve the City of Yes Housing Opportunities text amendments with modifications.
- Antoinette Martinez, Chair of the Housing Committee mentioned that the meeting was held for a length of time and was unable to reach quorum. She shared a few concerns regarding the City of Yes plan such as no mandate to build low density housing and no cap on number of studio apartments for UAP housing. She stated that because neither committee reached quorum during the joint committee meeting, she was open to discussing potential recommendations from the board members.
- Julio Peña III clarified that discussions on the City of Yes cannot take place unless there is a motion on the floor to discuss the text amendments. Diana Gonzalez reported that the committee meeting ran until 10pm and never achieved quorum.
- Jeremy Kaplan stated that he would make a motion to discuss the City of Yes Housing Opportunities text amendments before the vote. Kaplan asked if the board is voting on each individual text amendment or voting on the whole package. Julio confirmed that the vote would be on the whole package with specific modifications to the text amendments.
- Diana Gonzalez moved that the Board approve the City of Yes proposals with the following modifications:
 - The universal affordability preference average AMI be reduced from 60% to 50% AMI.
 - To create regulations of the affordable dwelling units to be a mix of studios, 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units
 - The town center zoning for storefronts should require the creation of an affordable unit to cap unit size to make certain that higher footage does not result in additional units.
 - To reduce the maximum height allowed on 5th Avenue from 40th to 47th Streets and 5th Avenue from 22nd to 23rd Streets to protect the view of Greenwood Cemetery and the Statue of Liberty
- The motion was seconded by Pat Ruiz.
- There was a discussion among the board members.

- Damien Andrade introduced a friendly amendment to reduce the AMI from 50% to 30%. Diana Gonzalez stated that she would accept the amendment if the change was to 40%. Andrade did not want to adjust the percentage and so did not agree to the proposed modification. The friendly amendment was therefore not accepted.
- Gabino Morales seconded Andrade's amendment. A roll call vote was conducted: 20-Yes, 10-No, 9-Abstention. The amendment passed.
- There was a discussion on the amended motion, including about specifics of AMI and on view corridors in Sunset Park and in Green-Wood cemetery.
- Sam Sierra requested that the board use the phrase "low income housing" instead of "affordable housing" in the letter to department of city planning and John DeLooper requested that the board ask City Planning for clarification on the City of Yes passages about railroad rights-of-way and how they impact CB7, especially in locations such as 39th St.
- Antoinette Martinez asked that the following recommendations to be added to the motion on the floor:
 1. That the City of Yes should be tied to upgrades of the public transit infrastructure to accommodate increasing density.
 2. Consider tying the passing of the City of Yes to the implementation of congestion pricing.
 3. Make it easier for small property owners to take out loans with a reasonable rate when they own mixed-use properties.
 4. To target existing locals with only commercial properties such as 5th Avenue
 5. Create more opportunities for people to buy properties and not rent to create generational wealth.
 6. Keep mandatory parking requirements.
 7. Prioritize senior housing over supportive housing.
- Julio Peña moved that the comments made by Antoinette Martinez, along with the additional testimony and feedback the board received about the City of Yes to be included in the letter to City Planning. It was seconded by Cesar Zuniga. The amended motion was accepted by Diana Gonzalez. There was more discussion among the board members on the amended motion.
- Jeremy Kaplan moved to divide the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity into separate votes about each component. The motion was seconded by Damien Andrade. The Motion did not pass: 7 – Yes; 30 – No; 1 – Abstention.
- Joanna Romero asked if the motion could be tabled to the next board meeting. Peña stated that if the board tabled the motion, the board would lose the opportunity to comment.
- There was additional discussion on the motion. Jerry Chan requested that 7th & 8th Avenues be included in the feedback. Antoinette Martinez moved to table the motion on the floor and have the Land Use & Housing Committees reconvene and have the board meet in July to vote. Jeremy Kaplan seconded the motion. The motion to table did not pass: 7 – Yes; 28 – No; 2 – Abstentions.
- The vote to approve the motion the Land Use Committee put forward to approve the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity with the board's modification, feedback and testimonies passed: 28 – Yes; 9 – No; 0 – Abstentions.

Nominating Committee Continued – *Joan Botti*

- Joan Botti reported on the voting for the Executive Officers. She stated that for all positions that ran unopposed, as per Board bylaws, the current Secretary would cast one vote.

- Chairperson – Julio Peña III ran unopposed. As Secretary, Karen Rolnick cast one vote.
- 1st Vice Chairperson – Pat Ruiz ran unopposed. As Secretary, Karen Rolnick cast one vote.
- 2nd Vice Chairperson – Damien Andrade (8 Votes); Cythia Jeffers (27 Votes). Joan Botti congratulated Cynthia Jeffers as the new 2nd Vice Chairperson.
- Secretary – John DeLooper ran unopposed. As Secretary, Karen Rolnick cast one vote.
- Assistant Secretary – Antoinette Martinez (15 Votes); Karen Rolnick (20 Votes). Joan Botti congratulated Karen Rolnick as the new Assistant Secretary.
- Treasurer – Rosy Mota ran unopposed. As Secretary, Karen Rolnick cast one vote.
- Community Engagement Officer – Jerry Chan ran unopposed. As Secretary, Karen Rolnick cast one vote.
- Sgt-At-Arms – Sam Sierra ran unopposed. As Secretary, Karen Rolnick cast one vote.
- Asst. Sgt-At-Arms – Diana Gonzalez (8 Votes); Barbara Lee (27 Votes). Joan Botti congratulated Barbara Lee as the new Asst. Sgt-At-Arms.

Second Roll Call

Chairperson's Report - *Julio Peña III*

- Julio Peña III tabled his report and stated he would email it to the board.

District Manager's Report - *Jeremy Laufer*

- Tabled by Chairperson Peña

Old Business

- None

New Business

- Marilyn Melman asked about construction at Caton Place. Julio Peña III stated that she should send an email to the office and the Elected Officials about the matter.
- Rosy Mota asked when the new committee requests would be completed. Julio Peña stated that they will be done over the summer.
- Edward Schloeman spoke about his work with first responders, and he donated a signed painting on behalf of his organization Operation Warrior Shield to the Board office.
- Julio Peña III acknowledged Hector Gonzalez's induction into the New York State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame by Senator Gounardes.

Public Comment

- Vivian Barretto spoke on how her father Efrain was hit by a scooter on 6/3/24 and passed away on 6/6/24 from his injuries. She spoke about how the person who hit her father had 70 previous arrests and was let out. Her father was a staple in the community. She pleaded that everyone reach out to all our Senator and Legislators to change the laws when it comes to

moped, scooters and e-bikes accidents and killings and discussed how scooters should be registered and licensed.

- Roxana Benavides from the Sunset Park Library spoke on library budget cuts and how they will affect their services. She also highlighted several events that will be happening in the library over the summer.
- P. Gallagher from Greenwood Heights Association spoke on how the neighborhood is inundated with shelters and how a new shelter is coming up at 25th Street.
- Marilyn Lopez spoke on how devastating it has been for the Barretto family over the death of their father and how laws need to be changed when it comes to scooters and mopeds.
- Melisa Del Valle Ortiz discussed her experience as a US Army Veteran and acknowledged National Women Veteran's Day. She also spoke on how she has established a committee for the 9/11 grove at Sunset Park. M. Del Valle Ortiz commented on the board's decorum and stated that there were comments made at the previous board meeting by board members concerning long tenured board members, and how they should step down based on their age. She felt this sentiment was insulting, humiliating and offensive. She wanted to inform the board that when you ask someone to step down based on their age it is discriminatory and it devalues institutional knowledge. She felt that the board members should display a level of decorum and exercise equality.
- Eddie Desmond spoke on how accidents have increased when it comes to e-bikes, scooters and mopeds. He described how he was hit by an e-bike.
- Sam Barretto spoke on how well involved his brother was in the community, how he helped anyone that needed his help. He spoke on how dangerous the neighborhood has gotten and how bicycle lanes are not being used properly.

Adjournment