

Re: **Summary of the Borough-Based Jails Queens Advisory  
Committee - First Meeting**

Date: November 5, 2018 6:30 pm

Location: Queens Community House- Kew Gardens Community  
Center - 80-02 Kew Gardens Road Kew Gardens, NY,  
11415

Prepared by: Arnold Bloch, Kathryn Kramer, and Daniel Dickson

Perkins Eastman  
Architects DPC

**Attendees:**

QAC Members

Mary Abbate	Queens Community House
Steve Bell	Kew Gardens Civic Association
Sister Tesa Fitzgerald	Hour Children
Sylvia Hack	Community Board #9
Dominick Pistone	Kew Gardens Civic Association
Robin Spigner	District Leader
Jane Stanicki	Hour Children
Ben Thomases	Queens Community House
Rosemary Zins	Queensborough Community College

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Members of the Public

Murray Berger	Kew Gardens Civic Association
Alfred Brand, P.E.	Kew Gardens Civic Association
J. Carter	Community Board #9
John Dovyasz	New York City Council
Mara Einstein	Kew Gardens Civic Association
Madyha Farooqui	Kew Gardens Civic Association
Malka Fraenkel	Kew Gardens Civic Association
Laraine Fletcher, Ph.D.	Community Board #9
Maria Lefkarites	Kew Gardens Civic Association
Renee Levine	Kew Gardens Civic Association
Rudy Simhaef	
Tim Thomas	Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal's Office
Aida Vernon	Resident of Briarwood
Seth Welins, Ph.D.	Community Board #9

Adam Whiteman

Kew Gardens Civic Association

City/Consultant Team

Arnie Bloch	FHI
Daniel Dickson	PE
Jessica Douglas	CAU
Eric Fang	PE
Chatodd Floyd	MOCJ
Kathryn Kramer	PE
Jane Marshall	HR&A
Joseph Thomas	CAU
Ahmed Tigani	IGA
Nicole Torres	MOCJ

**Key Action Items:**

1. The group agreed on a set of questions that they would like the City to provide answers to by the next meeting. These are:
  - a. What other jail sites in Queens were considered?
  - b. Why not postpone the ULURP action to a later date so that community concerns can be dealt with before the DEIS is released?
  - c. When the DEIS is released, will the first set of public hearings be at the community board level or borough-wide?
  - d. Why not build new jails and courts on Rikers Island?
  - e. How will new jails be maintained and sustained to remain in good condition?
  - f. Why not focus the City's spending in alternative ways, including:
    - i. Programs to help people stay out of the criminal justice system altogether?
    - ii. Fixing other parts of the criminal justice system, including hiring more judges?
    - iii. Other City services that are in need?
  - g. Why not consider a proposed jail for this site that is better scaled to the neighborhood?

- h. How much will the borough-based jail system cost to build? To maintain? What funding sources will be used?
  - i. If borough jails are built and Rikers Island facilities are closed, what will happen to Rikers Island?
  - j. What happens if the jail population goes up dramatically and the jail capacity is 6000 beds?
  - k. What are the plans for evacuating a 1500-bed, high-rise jail in case of emergencies?
  - l. What is the plan for Correction Officers and creating a new culture in the jails? Have the various unions bought into the borough-based plan?
  - m. Who makes the final decision on whether to go ahead with the borough-based jail plan?
  - n. Why wasn't the community involved earlier in this Master Plan process?
2. Members of the QAC asked the City that the next meeting be scheduled for the week before Thanksgiving. A tentative date of Monday, November 19 at the same time. The City will explore using the same facility.
3. Members of the QAC – namely Steve Bell, Andrea Crawford, Sylvia Hack, and Dominick Pistone – asked that the next meeting be a true “Neighborhood Advisory Committee,” which to them meant members of the nearby community (particularly Kew Gardens) and not the way the QAC has been formed now.

**Summary:**

One QAC member summed up the thrust of the concerns voiced at the meeting as such: “No one is denying that the criminal justice system needs to be reformed; our concern is with the proposal for this site.” Those QAC members’ concerns included the following:

- **Transportation:**
  - Overcrowded subway and bus usage in the site’s vicinity;
  - Queens Boulevard has horrendous traffic.

- **Building size:**
  - A 30–40 story building is inappropriate for this neighborhood.
  - The Lippman Commission said that the size of borough jails should be commensurate with the number of detainees whose residence is in that borough; concern that Queens is receiving an unfair share with an equitable distribution at four sites and no facility in Staten Island.
  - Concerns about the safety of vertical jails (particularly if emergency evacuation is necessary).
  - Concerns that the same problems with Rikers Island can develop at the new facilities; how can we ensure sustainability of reform over time?
  - Won't the Specialized Medical Annex be disruptive to this neighborhood?
  - The City should use the resources it will commit to these new jails to other purposes, including helping to fix other elements of the criminal justice system, working to prevent crimes from being committed, and other important city needs.
  
- **Process:**
  - What other sites were considered in Queens and why were they not selected?
  - Why does Rikers Island have to close? Why can't the City build new jails there, along with courts to help speed up case processing within the criminal justice system?
  - The moral imperative should not be to close Rikers Island and build borough-based jails: but rather to expedite the criminal justice system. With that imperative in mind, other options could be considered, such as hiring more judges and putting new jails and courts on Rikers Island.
    - The City responded that they are pushing for many changes to the criminal justice system, including at the State-level.

- The City has waited too long to come to the community for meaningful input.
  - There should be a true neighborhood advisory committee, not a boroughwide advisory group.
- The ULURP process should be slowed down so that the community's input would have meaning in the DEIS document released in 6.5 weeks.
- The release of the Program Management RFP by NYC DDC shows that "it is a done deal."
  - The City responded that a Program Management consultant team is needed to help lead processes after ULURP, which does not imply that the current proposal could not be modified as ULURP and Design occurs.
- Finally, the QAC members and members of the public expressed concerns with the community engagement meetings hosted by the City to date.