

Jamaica Bay Task Force Meeting
Tuesday, October 11th 2005
6:00 – 8:30pm
Marine Park
Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Avenue U
Brooklyn, NY

Minutes

Attendees: See the last page for a list.

Eugenia Flatow (NYC Soil and Water Conservation District) called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Discussion about Intro 565 – A

E. Flatow began by explaining that for this meeting she has summoned the City Council appointees to the Jamaica Bay Advisory Committee for Intro 565 (a recently passed city law to create a watershed plan for Jamaica Bay) to talk with JBTF and its community members about their plans to include the community's concerns in their watershed plan for Jamaica Bay. She mentioned that she was recently informed that Leonard Houston of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was appointed by the mayor to be one of four mayoral appointees to the Advisory Committee and that he has requested to speak with the group to hear their concerns and suggestions. She stated that once she found out who the other 3 mayoral appointees were announced, that she would convene them for a discussion with the community.

Several community members were upset that the community was not involved in the process of selecting the task force appointees. Also, some were upset that the law was passed without community involvement and was done stealthily.

A question was raised about why there are so few people appointed to the task force.

E. Flatow responded that if there were too many people, no work would get done.

Ida Sanoff asked why this should need a separate Intro instead of making it a Blue Belt like in Staten Island. Bernie Blum asked why the Jamaica Bay assessment isn't sufficient.

John Fazio commented that in 1979 when the task force was formed, they came up with 51 proposals. He asked where all that has gone.

E. Flatow responded that she has all of that in her file cabinets and she shares it regularly with agencies.

J. Fazio asked why we are not acting on those projects. He called for a pipeline to go out into the ocean to take care of centrate from the Jamaica Bay plant.

E. Flatow responded by saying that if we tried to take that and implement it, you would run into a lot of community people. She was not aware that the community boards talk amongst

themselves. She said that there are a lot of issues that haven't been solved, but we've raised a lot of them, and that hopefully we'll continue to share them.

E. Flatow then reiterated that she arranged this meeting tonight because she thought it was important to bring the people we knew who would be on the Advisory Committee together with our task force to see how we could work together with them. She told the audience that if they want to go individually and raise all the issues they are raising, that they should do so, because she can't stop them. And she understands that they are living in Jamaica Bay and put a lot of time and effort into protecting it. She stated that she is going to work as hard as she can to be sure that this particular plan for Jamaica Bay recognizes all the work that has gone before it that the JBTF has been working on and all the things that the JBTF thinks are important to keep the bay as good as it is now and make it better. She thought it would be useful to bring people together, to have a dialogue on what we think is important; and that's what this was to begin. She wants the JBTF to figure out how we can cooperate with the people who were appointed and with the agencies responsible as decided by the legislation. She's already talked with the committee and told them that some of the planning should be done by the state agencies so that we can rationalize the conflicts between agencies because her experience is that the Mayor takes a very dim view of one city agency fighting another city agency. She went to Albany and talked to the state representatives about raising state money and she's also gone to D.C. and talked with our Washington representatives about getting money and she has asked the Environment Committee in the City Council to 'memorialize' the other state and federal agencies so that we have all three levels of our representatives who are interested in what can be accomplished in Jamaica Bay. She said she's happy to hear from others on what they think will be useful to do. She stated that the law has been passed and there are only a few things that the JBTF can affect on how this agency can play the part that it must play in making sure that we get a plan by September 2006.

E. Flatow mentioned that one of the problems has been that we've never tried to bring together a couple of the planning boards. She's worked exclusively with Queens Community Board 14, but has not heard from other community boards in the Bay. She believes that the best way to make this plan work is to take it to the planning boards.

J. Fazio noted that he was representing community board 10 and everything he says is completely backed by them. And if he's not present, there's another member present which reports back to the board.

E. Flatow apologized and noted that she was not previously aware of that.

B. Blum (Friends of Rockaway) stated that before we get back to the agenda, if you look at the Friends of Rockaway webpage, he has a drought preservation scheme for the eastern end of Arverne. And he mentioned that there are a lot of problems integrating agency agenda and local concerns.

E. Flatow asked for the record to reflect the fact that Bernie Blum suggested that we get back to the agenda.

D. Mundy requested that, as a person who's been appointed to the Advisory Committee, he'd like to hear from the community about their concerns and comments.

E. Flatow stated that she will be meeting with DEP and will be meeting with the Council Committee people, and she would like to know (either by email, phone or discussion) what everyone wants the members of the Advisory Committee to use as their procedures for how they go about implementing this plan.

E. Flatow asked if people want her to ask the Advisory Committee if we can set a regular schedule where we can meet with them as things come up.

Dave Lutz suggested that we shouldn't wait until the draft is ready but that we should invite them formally to a meeting of the JBTF so that we have the opportunity to suggest the things that we want to put in the draft using the combined expertise in the room.

E. Flatow stated that she already did that by bringing 3 of the appointees here tonight.

D. Lutz said that he thinks that it should be more formal where the appointees are here sitting at a table and taking notes.

New Issues with Jamaica Bay

E. Flatow stated that there were a couple of recent issues that we may feel very strongly about. She asked to hear what problems should be raised.

I. Sanoff said that one problem is the borrow pits – no more holes.

Don Riepe stated that we still have the erosion problem and that we have \$16 million dollars [from Army Corps of Engineers] which may or may not be in jeopardy because of Katrina. He's worried that we might have to fight for the \$16 million.

E. Flatow stated that there are a number of people here affiliated with the Estuary Program that had formed a group to go to Washington to see if we could keep some of the funding that is coming into this area intact no matter what is happening. She thinks it's going to take more than that, however. Also she is worried about the development which is taking place near the Bay especially if high-rises go up by the waterfront like they are in Northern Brooklyn, because that will most likely lead to another plant and a lot more pollution in the Bay.

D. Lutz mentioned that another problem is the highway extension which we're about to see, if it's built without the greenway expansion. Without environmental enhancements, there will be serious environmental repercussions.

E. Flatow stated that this issue is something that needs to be brought home to the community boards as well as the development agencies.

D. Lutz heard a rumor that they will be putting in breakdown lanes in all the areas where there aren't any breakdown lanes, but he cannot confirm that yet. He said that they are not building a

greenway as part of the same project. We've had a greenway on the plans for 15 years and it's supposed to have fingers into the various communities so that people who live around the Bay can get closer to it and value it more. None of those fingers are going to be built as part of this project, and there's going to be no environmental enhancement that he knows of.

A community member asked if the Horseshoe Crab habitat should be bought as part of this new initiative.

E. Flatow suggested that if he thinks it is important, he should recommend it.

E. Flatow said that there was another aspect to the Intro, which has passed and that the Mayor has signed which suggests that all wetlands in the City of New York be turned over to the Parks Department. This is the second part of that same legislation. She recommended that anyone who hasn't looked at the legislation yet should get a copy and look at the details.

D. Mundy asked if he could give a little background and history to Intro 565.

History of Intro 565: D. Mundy said that the lead up to Intro 565 started about 3 or 4 years ago. And it started after the Bay got media attention from the JBTF. The outcome of that was that the Councilman [Genaro] picked up on it and took it to the Council, and started oversight hearings in the Council. Don Reipe, Dan Mundy and all the agencies were present, and anyone and everyone was invited to attend. He and many other people volunteered to go and make presentations. The outcome of that was that the Council finally realized that maybe they should do something about JB. So this year to Dan's surprise, they enacted 3 pieces of legislation. One was creating the Jamaica Bay Advisory Committee, another is turning over City owned parcels of wetlands to the Parks Department, and the third is a resolution mandating that the Total Daily Minimum Loads of pathogens and nitrogen entering the Bay be changed. All are very important bills. Two of them were signed by the Mayor. The first one that was signed a couple of weeks ago was the one appointing 7 people (of which D. Mundy is one) to the JB Advisory Committee for the Watershed Protection Plan. After the last appointee is made, the group should start an 18 month tour of duty.

D. Mundy went over the 8 items required by the appointed committee:

- 1) BMP for minimization of stormwater runoff and erosion and reduction of point and non-point source pollution; assessment of watershed pollution sources and targeted education and/or enforcement efforts that can prevent or reduce behaviors leading to this pollution.
- 2) Improvement of current water quality and water quality standards in the Jamaica Bay Watershed
- 3) Acquire habitat
- 4) Land acquisition to restore wetlands, soils and natural areas; increase public access to JB
- 5) Quantitative and measurable interim and final goals to evaluate progress
- 6) Protocol for coordination with appropriate city, state and federal entities that have jurisdiction over the JB area, particularly with respect to development projects that may negatively impact JB.

- 7) Protocol for environmental assessment to ensure it's conducted pursuant to all federal, state and city environmental quality review boards and regulations that have a potential impact on JB.
- 8) Public education program, such as press releases and education programs to increase awareness about activities involved with the watershed protection plan

E. Flatow added that all this must be completed by September 2006.

D. Mundy stated that he is a member of the JBTF and also a member of the Watershed protection Advisory Committee and that anything mentioned in this task force will be taken to the other. And that he will make reports at every JBTF meeting about the progress of the Advisory Committee. He mentioned that there is a boat tour of Jamaica Bay planned within the next few weeks for the members of the Committee to get them out into the Bay. He stated that the JBTF will be kept apprised through him so that they can keep the pressure on them to make sure that the job is done. But there is a time frame: it all must be done in 18 months. He noted that none of these positions are compensated. He said he isn't sure if it's the best way to go about restoring and protecting Jamaica Bay, but that it's better than nothing. He said it's going to give the Bay and JBTF publicity, it's going to get funding into the Bay, and it's going to get the City to be responsible for the land that they own, which is extremely important. He stated that other issues, which have to do with Federal and state government, that's where we need the community to put a lot of effort into. That's as much as he knows at the present time, and he will keep the JBTF aware of anything new.

I. Sanoff stated that many of the things he mentioned are great ideas. But, said that many community members have been down this path before and are familiar with a lot of the studies. NRPA has a 30 year history with this estuary, we've seen a lot of plans, and we've seen a lot of initiatives. She's concerned about increasing water flow, how is that going to be defined?

E. Flatow noted that this is a question that has been raised.

Larry Levine (NRDC), representing Brad Sewell, another City Council appointee, said that he seconds everything that D. Mundy said. The NRDC, through Brad's role on the advisory committee, wants to see them serving the role of the liaison and will make sure that the community is involved in the planning process. If not perfect, this plan will be what we make of it and it's a great first step. He said that it can and it should be a vehicle for taking us to places that we haven't been able to get to before.

Larry Swanson (SUNY Stonybrook, Marine Sciences Research Center), the third City Council appointee to the Advisory Committee, stated that he presumes he was appointed to the committee based on his involvement with the Bay over the last 30 years. He was one of the original co-chairs on the technical advisory committee for the mercury study; he worked a lot with the DEP data sets coming from the bay and the harbor, so he presumes that he was selected to serve the role as the scientist. However, he also firmly believes that no plan should be developed without the political will of the people that are affected and if he has anything to say about it, he would definitely like to hear comments and suggestions about things that are important to include and assess for the study. He stated that the JBTF is very lucky to have E.

Flatow as the spokesperson for them, and she's already been on the phone telling him what she wants him to do and report. He said that he is here tonight to listen to the community and is more than willing to talk with anyone in the future.

E. Flatow added that L. Swanson did a lot of the work during the 208 study.

J. Fazio said that his main concern is the water quality of the Bay. He raised concern about dredged material being used to fill holes in the Bay. He said he doesn't want to see them make the tidal flow by putting dredged material from our harbor that once was called toxic, but lately has been said to be not so toxic.

E. Flatow suggested that hopefully the next meeting we will have the other 4 appointees to attend and devote the entire meeting to where we are, where we want to go and what ideas we want to put on the record. So please put them on the record, once, for the record, not over and over again because the advisory committee has a big task to accomplish.

A community member stated that has never heard anyone speak about the coastal zone management plan of 1972 which applies and he has brought this up at every JBTF meeting. In 1972 the coastal zone management and NOAA set up a new coastal management program and from that came the city's revitalization program that's NOAA CMP, with NOAA having oversight and enforcement powers. He demanded that they work with NOAA.

E. Flatow responded that the agency which we recommended originally is the coastal zone agency for the state of NY – and she noted that she was making this point personally. They did the Southern Long Island section on the Great South Bay. She said that she will open the discussion up to his concerns, but wants to move the agenda.

Update by Dave Lutz

D. Lutz discussed the rumors about changes in the National Park Service. A draft of the plan was prematurely floated, by a group of ex-employees of NPS that indicated that the NPS was going to be putting a greater emphasis on facilities for people at the expense of habitat within the NPS. Because of that plan being floated, it never came out. Even if it were published, it wouldn't have had a great impact on the Gateway National Recreation Area. It would have had a greater impact on the NPS as a whole. The GNRA is already under the various pressures of habitat versus historical interpretation versus recreational development, and it's an interesting balance. That said, there are going to be changes at GNRA, which are changes in management. There's a new general superintendent, Gary Sullivan, who is a friendly gregarious guy, who wants to get things done.

D. Lutz mentioned that one project that his organization, Friends of Gateway, will undertake is to develop a small area within Floyd Bennett Field. They'll be putting some additional facilities, landscaping, and a place to hold picnics and go fishing. So the NPS is reaching out to groups that want to take on some responsibility within the park and perhaps Friends of Gateway has a role to play there.

Ruth Siegel (NYCSWCD) introduced herself to the group. She will be replacing Karlee in the role of organizing the JBTF meetings and being the point person for questions about JBTF.

Restoration of Idlewild Park

Barbara Brown and Richard Bellgrade from the Easter Queens Alliance gave a presentation on Idlewild Park (see attachment for a summary of their presentation).

Mike Feller (NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, NRG) and John McLaughlin (NYC DEP) gave a presentation on the restoration efforts conducted by the NRG and DEP in and around Idlewild Park.

For more information about the Easter Queens Alliance and Idlewild Park, contact Barbara Brown at: 718-525-4399, eqa@att.net

New Business/Announcements

Bernie Blum (Friends of Rockaway) brought up the issue of impending development in Eastern End of Arverne. He requested that JBTF write an official letter stating our concern for this problem.

E. Flatow adjourned the meeting at 8:45

Attendees

	Name	Organization
1	Richard Belgrade	Eastern Queens Alliance
2	Todd McDonnell	Gaia Institute
3	Melissa Whitley	Eastern Queens Alliance
4	Jonelle Orridge	Eastern Queens Alliance
5	Barbara Brown	Eastern Queens Alliance
6	Dave Lutz	Friends of Gateway
7	Larry Swanson	Marine Science Research Ctr., SUNY Stony Brook
8	John Curataso	DEP
9	Don Riepe	Jamaica Bay Guardian
10	John Baxter	
11	Lowell Kachalsky	O'Brien & Gere
12	Ida Sanoff	NRPA
13	Chris Villari	DEP
14	B. Paolimo	Rockaway Point Y.C.
15	Charles Michaels	Concerned Citizens of Bensonhurst
16	John Fazio	QB #10 Jamaica Bay
17	John McLaughlin	DEP
18	George Frame	NPS
19	Dan Mundy	JB Ecowatchers
20	William Nelson	SQPA

	Name	Organization
21	Irnel Stephen	Rosedale Civic Assn
22	Mike Steffens	Friends of Gateway
23	Patricia Tubridy	Sen. Ada L. Smith
24	Paul Mankiewicz	Gaia/NYCSWCD
25	Mike Keller	Diamond Point Y.C.
26	Larry Levine	NRDC
27	Judy Baron	Env. Committee Manhattan, Beach Community Grp
28	Mike Feller	NRG
29	Bernard Blum	Friends of Rockaway
30	Harold Hohne	Rockaway Point Y.C.
31	John Scialdone	CIESIN, Columbia Univ
32	Robert Delorenzo	O'Brien & Gere
33	Jim Mueller	DEP
34	Mickey Maxwell	ALS
35	Adeline Michaels	Concerned Citizens of Bensonhurst
36	Manuel Russ	CAC NYC DEP P2
37	Peter Gramckas	QB #10
38	Eugenia Flatow	NYCSWCD
39	Ruth Siegel	NYCSWCD