

The Public Ought To Know

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By Corey Bearak

Community Board membership matters for labor; limiting members term non-sensical.

Recent City Council legislation would limit the term of service of New York City Community Board members; Int. No. 585 would set the tenure at a maximum of 12 years – six two-year terms.

Community Boards provide an advisory role and input on land use and budget matters. In some cases, elected officials will follow the land use recommendations of community boards. On significant local development, most recently Astoria Cove, a community board can help shape the project. Of particular significance to labor, this includes whether union labor builds a project and union workers get employed by the business that operate once a projects gets completed.

Council Members (in proportion to their district overlapping with the board) and Borough Presidents appoint Board members. Each year they appoint and re-appoint members to two-year terms. This time of year these elected officials solicit applications to serve on community boards. Labor union members should apply to help make sure issues of concern to the movement get their due. This include union jobs in development projects and adequate public services (delivered by public employees). Contact your local council member or borough president for an application.

As a member of Queens Community Board 13, and as a former aide to a council member and borough president, I developed my own standards for what qualifies someone to serve on a community board (See my recent ebook, “The Public Ought To Know.”).

I never contemplated nor would advocate limiting terms. Quite frankly, some community boards and their members, perhaps because of the matters the board consider, get more attention from their electeds when it comes to placing, replacing and re-appointing members.

The qualifications and work of board members and prospective members should matter more than mere longevity.



If electeds find a community board member wanting, they can simply impose term limits by not re-appointing a member. This makes more sense than some mandatory law to remove dedicated community members.

****Corey Bearak can be reached at StrategicPublicPolicy.com. Find his ebook, *The Public Ought To Know*, at Kindle, Nook and Apple iBooks.***