

# The Public Ought To Know

*May 19, 2025*

*By Corey Bearak*

## ***Community Board membership matters; limiting members term non-sensical.***

As part of the 2025 Queens Community Board 13 (“QCB13”) Nominating Committee deliberations, the committee members expressed concern about the advent of term limits for Community Board members. As chair of the committee, I committed to its members that I would raise this concern when I made the report at the May 19 full meeting of QCB13.

Effective January 1, 2019, a change to the New York City Charter imposed limits to the terms of service of New York City Community Board members: it limits appointment of community board members to four consecutive two-year terms, starting with terms for which appointments or reappointments are made on or after April 1, 2019. However, members appointed or reappointed for a term commencing on April 1, 2020, could be reappointed for up to five consecutive two-year terms, in order to prevent a heavy turnover of community board membership in 2027 and 2028.

Most Charter recommendations, once put on the ballot, absent any strong, well-financed opposition, routinely pass. This ill-informed and mis-guided and UNNECESSARY change requires rescindment. Our elected Borough President and City Council Member(s) simply can deny re-appointment to any current community board member for any reason, including merit, a need for new fresh point of view, diversity, etc. The current Charter denies them the ability to retain qualified member who represent their community and provide useful, often needed experience and expertise.

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, a community board can help shape the project.

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.

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. Require prospective and existing community board members to certify involvement in a community group to gain appointment or reappointment. This means community board members must maintain a relationship with one of the following: their civic (or tenant or block association), senior, youth, faith-based or business organization. This change will ensure community boards include not just people with knowledge and expertise but ongoing communal involvement that ensures each community in the district a seat at the table.

I never contemplated nor would advocate limiting terms. Quite frankly, some community boards and their members, perhaps because of the matters the boards 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 this current mandate to automatically remove dedicated community members.

As a result, since the Mayor and City Council currently established Charter Revision Commissions, I recommend Queens Community Board 13, as well as every one of the other 59 Community Boards throughout the City recommend that each commission recommend removing the existing term limits mandate. Further, I recommend all voters to press all candidates for city office this year to commit to seeking the removal of community board member term limits, which can also be achieved by the City Council passing a local law.

***\*Corey Bearak can be reached at [StrategicPublicPolicy.com](http://StrategicPublicPolicy.com). Find his ebook, *The Public Ought To Know*, at Kindle, Nook and Apple iBooks. This commentary was presented to Queens Community Board 13 May 19, 2025 as part of Mr. Bearak's report as chair of the QCB13 Nominating Committee.***