



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Toby Ann Stavisky

Senator Stavisky, Congresswoman Meng, Councilwoman Koslowitz Speak Out to Save Community Garden

TOBY ANN STAVISKY July 26, 2013

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Elmhurst, NY—Senator Toby Ann Stavisky (D-Flushing), Congresswoman Grace Meng (D-Queens) and Councilwoman Karen Koslowitz (D-Forest Hills) gathered at the Elmhurst Community Garden today to call for a delay of the property sale so that community members have an opportunity to conserve or relocate the garden, which is located on private property.

The garden at the corner of Kneeland Ave. and Manilla St. is on a lot that had abandoned for over twenty years. Residents say years of neglect made the lot a local eyesore and a magnet for vermin, littering and illegal dumping.

Starting in 2012, Young Governors, an Elmhurst-based youth organizing group, began cleaning up the lot with help from the New Life Development Corporation, Community Board 4 and other community groups. Since then, volunteers have transformed the lot into a thriving community garden with fruit and vegetable plots and a compost site. The garden is now in danger of being sold for development.

“What we need in Elmhurst isn’t more blind development. What we need is more green space, more room for children to play, for residents to grow fresh fruits and vegetables, for people to take pride in where they live and what they have built. This garden shows that with community participation and a little bit of elbow grease, we can create beautiful, functional spaces that improve quality of life and beautify our neighborhoods,” said Sen. Stavisky.

“Thanks to the hard work of the Young Governors, this piece of property was transformed from a dumping ground to a beautiful community garden,” said U.S. Rep. Grace Meng (D-Queens). “The sale of this site, one of the few green spaces in the area, would be a huge loss for the community and a major disappointment to all the teens and local residents who worked tirelessly to makeover this space. Hopefully, some type of resolution can be reached so that this precious piece of land can be preserved and remain a community gem for many years to come.”

“When I look at the Community Garden in Elmhurst, I see the hard work, dedication, and the truest form of civic passion of our youth and community members coming together to transform a neighborhood eyesore into a scenic escape. It would be disheartening to see that taken away. Neighborhood projects that add much needed green space and promote environmental sustainability need to be encouraged, and not sold,” said Councilmember Karen Koslowitz (D- Forest Hills.)

“Our community took an abandoned lot, saw its potential and made it something truly special,” said Assemblyman Francisco Moya (D-Corona.) “After all of that hard work and cooperation, we cannot lose this essential piece of green space. In delaying the sale of this property, we can give residents a chance to preserve Elmhurst Community Garden.”

"I hope a reasonable solution can be reached so we can preserve this great community resource," said Council Member Daniel Dromm (D- Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, East Elmhurst.) "The Young Governors have done a wonderful job transforming this patch of land. I call on the property owners to see the value in this community garden and to work with us to find a solution that benefits everyone."

Tala Haider, Young Governors facilitator said, "Community gardens allow the growth of friendship, neighborliness and beauty. Almost forgot, fruits & veggies too."

"This community garden is the best thing to happen to the neighborhood in over 20 years!" said Jennifer Chu, president of the Elmhurst Community Garden.

"The Elmhurst Community Garden is about local reinvestment. Reinvestment is creating your own great neighborhood versus moving out to find one," said Redd Sevilla, executive director of the New Life Community Development Corporation.

The community groups in attendance were the Elmhurst Community Garden, Young Governors, Young Volunteers, New Life Church, New Life Community Development Center, Forest Hills High School Key Club, Queens College Environmental Club, Family Federation for World Peace.