

Neighbors Link Board of Directors Meeting

February 2, 2026

Participating in the meeting were Nancy Bauer, Carola Bracco, Elisa Burns, Jelane Caspar, Kevin Conroy, James Fenimore, Stuart Marwell, Julie Muniz, Robert Newborn, Raymond Sanchez, Robert Shepardson and Teresita Wisell. Joining on Zoom were Steven Bloom, Cynthia Brill, Wendy Gardner, Tracy Stein and Mary Weiss. Staff members Ali Ahmadi, Jeanette Gisbert, Denisha Hilario, Kathy Thorsberg and Adrienne Vogel were also in attendance.

Elisa welcomed everyone and introduced our newest board member, Tracy Stein. The board voted to add Tracy to the advocacy committee.

Jelane discussed the role of the development committee and its need for additional members. Tere and Julie volunteered to join and the board approved adding them to the committee.

The December minutes were approved.

As a followup to the desire expressed in the board survey for board members to learn more about clients and their stories, Carola introduced ESL Program Coordinator Ali Ahmadi and ESOL Manager Denisha Hilario to share some insights into what some of our clients have experienced during these trying times. Denisha shared the story of a single mother who was working on an asylum application that was in danger of being denied without an evidentiary hearing. The Neighbors Link attorneys wrote a 97-page brief in her defense and the judge granted her the right to present her case. Immigration court is almost impossible to navigate without an attorney. Another client also had a pending asylum application and was taken advantage of by employers. Neighbors Link helped hold the employer accountable and the client ultimately decided to return home with dignity rather than being deported. The percentage of people opting to return home rather than risk deportation is going up.

The budget, which was reviewed and unanimously approved by the finance committee, was presented by Kathy and Adrienne. Both revenue and income were over budget, and Neighbors Link had a fabulous December and annual campaign results. Carola noted that money was raised before it was spent. The MAP program will be winding down in May 2026 after helping 122 families. Adrienne has been focusing on engaging top-tier donors. The response from donors and foundations indicated that people are recognizing the urgency of Neighbors Link's mission. The 2026 budget will continue to invest in staff, our

most valuable asset. We will hire two new full-time employee— an accounting manager and an HR manager. Operating expenses will decrease due to the completion of our new headquarters. 2025 was a great year for donor acquisition and Adrienne expects the growth in number of donors and amount pledged to continue in 2026. The board elected to approve the budget.

Carola reported on current events. Governor Hochul made an announcement proposing legislation that would disallow 287G agreements (partnerships between local police and ICE). NY for All legislation would also broaden the rights of those facing legal immigration issues. Neighbors Link is encouraging public officials to be consistent so that they are able to come out quickly with messaging when the need arises.

Neighbors Link is launching an accompaniment program to recruit and train volunteers to accompany clients to court appearances.

Carola presented a proposal for Neighbors Link to be involved in a documentary about immigration being produced by a locally based and highly respected production company. The board engaged in an in-depth discussion of whether we should participate in the project. At the conclusion of the meeting the board decided to give the matter more thought and continue the conversation at the next board meeting.

The board met in executive session.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Bauer