

CB12M-Youth and Education Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday February 09, 2015

Meeting #2

Location: 530 West 166th Street, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10032

Committee Members Present: Fe Florimón, Chair; Alyce Smith, Assistant Chair; Ayisha Oglivie

Committee Members Absent: Lorena Jimenez-Castro; Manny De Los Santos

Committee Members Excused: Maria Luna

Guests: David Gracia, Founder & Director of Washington Heights and Inwood Music Project

Board Member(s): None

Community Member(s): Lindsey Armstrong, DNAinfo.; Mery Diaz, City Tech, CUNY; Al Kurland, Police Athletic League ; Karen Ozuna; Joel Yoffie; Phil Zablocki, Community Activist;

The Chair Fe Florimón opened the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

Members of the Committee and attendees were introduced by the Chair.

❖ Discussion was conducted as indicated below:

- ✓ Mr. David Gracia, Founder & Director of Washington Heights and Inwood Music Project came the meeting to present a proposal for a new Charter School under the name of “the Washington Heights and Inwood (WHIN) Music Community Elementary Charter School.” Mr. Gracia studied music and graduated in his native country Spain.

At the opening of his presentation, Mr. Gracia showed the audience an educational video describing a musical program named “El Sistema” and he also provided an overview of the program. “El Sistema” is a music education program Founded in 1975 in the country of Venezuela by an educator and musician Mr. Jose Antonio Abreu. The program promotes opportunity and development for students of different social economic background. The program consists of over 100 youth orchestras with over 200 hundred young musicians. Mr. Gracia also discussed about the “Conservatory Lab Charter School” which is located in Massachusetts and has adopted the “El Sistema” program as a model. The essence of this model lies on the combination of music on students’ lessons. These programs are dedicated to promote opportunity and development for disadvantaged students.

- ✓ Based on this concept, three years ago (2012), Mr. Gracia founded the WHIN Project with less than one hundred students (50 students) and today the program has grown to over one hundred students. In addition to this success his project has also expanded in other areas including East Harlem, Bronx and Brooklyn.

- ✓ Moreover, Mr. Gracia is planning to open a WHIN Charter School of music in School District 6. He hopes not to co-locate with other public school and in the event that he cannot find any space in District 6, he's willing to move his plan to midtown, around 59th Street.
- ✓ The new WHIN Charter School will serve children from Kindergarten to fifth grade. The curriculum will be designed to provide students with two hours of music lesson on a daily bases and also music lessons will be combined with other science, like mathematics. The project is expected to promote a positive school environment and constructive educational experience for the children of the community; especially, for children of disadvantage background. The pending Charter School will be comparable to the "Conservatory Lab Charter School" which also mirrors the program model "El Sistema. Mr. Gracia also shared a valuable thought he learned from El Maestro Abreu in Venezuela who once said that: "The worse thing in life is to feel that you are nobody" adding that sometimes, that's what poverty does to people. He also discussed the need for special training program in the community in order to enhance children's talent and help them to reach out their potential. Mr. Gracia's school proposal application is pending for approval.
- ✓ Presenter asked the audience for opinions and also encouraged them to share ideas that may help improve his proposal. Questions and answer were discussed.
- ❖ The following agenda topic of *School District 6 and Education Data* was cancelled due to technical problem.
- ❖ **Under the New/Old Business:**
During this phase of the agenda the following announcements were made and all participants were invited.

Chair Florimon reported that the Y&EC's event on behalf of Isabella Foundation and Ed. J MacFadden Scholarship Award was successfully delivered. Over twenty five students (some accompanied by their parents) came to the meeting. She presented the participants with an overview of the scholarship program including a brief history of the scholarship initiative, applications requirements, criteria and its process. In addition full package of applications were distributed and also shared with Representative from the NYC Public Library, who came to the meeting to make announcement about their programs and new services available to the community.

 - ✓ Youth Mental Health event will be held on March 5th
 - ✓ Collective meeting will be held at Operation Exodus @ 10 am. February 10th, location 21 Wadsworth Ave near 174 Street and Wadsworth.

The meeting adjourned at 9:03pm