

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – January 7, 2016

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Simon (Chair), Arlene Schulman (Asst. Chair), Domingo Estevez, Mitchell Glenn, Andrea Kornbluth, Elizabeth Lehmann, Alyce Smith, Beatrice Hall (Public Member).

ABSENT: Wanda Garcia, Terriell Peters.

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Richard Allman, Mary Anderson, Osi Kaminer, Katherine Diaz.

GUESTS: Julio Batista, NY-Presbyterian Hospital; Rob Buchanan, NYC Water Trail Assn.; Amy Bush, Sara Frazier, Friends of Inwood Hill Park; Obed Fulcar, Friends of Sherman Creek; K. Gonzalez; Oliver Grullon; Sandra Harris, Columbia University Medical Center; Steve Harris, Inwood Canoe Club.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

1. **Visit to NY-Presbyterian Hospital's Allen Hospital and its new spine surgery unit** – Arlene Schulman reported on the community breakfast / open house held at the Allen Hospital on December 10, 2015: :
 - Presentations were made by Andria Castellanos, Group Senior VP & COO of NYP/Columbia, David Alge, Sr. VP, Population Health, NYPH and Healthcare System, and Paul Dunphey, Sr. VP & COO. NYP/Allen Hospital. About 40 people attended.
 - The isolation area that had been created for the treatment of Ebola patients has been re-incorporated into the ICU. It can easily be restored for the care of Ebola patients if needed.
 - Allen Hospital is now called “The Spine Hospital” within the NYPH Network of Hospitals. It will serve patients from around the globe. Allen has 196 beds and handled 2,200 births last year. It also has 17 clinics and manages nine school-based programs.
 - Three specialists have been hired from St. Louis to perform complicated spine surgeries (Dr. Lawrence Lenke, Dr. K. Daniel Riew & Dr. Ronald A. Lehman). Additional spine specialists from within the NYPH network may be added to staff. The mortality rate for the three surgeons is less than 5 in 30 years.
 - The hospital has undergone a multi-million dollar renovation that includes state-of-the-art patient rooms, a new waiting room, family meeting rooms, patient and family lounges and a new rooftop garden that will open in the spring. The garden will be available for community organizations to use.
 - Five services that had been located at Allen have been relocated to the 168th Street campus to accommodate the new spine unit. All patients who use these services were notified, and there have been no problems with this transition.
 - The food served at Allen has been rated in the “top 10%” of organizations offering the same type of service.

2. **Citizens' Water Quality Testing Program** – Rob Buchanan, Steering Committee, New York City Water Trail Association (NYCWTA), gave a PowerPoint presentation and made the following points:
 - NYCWTA has been testing for pathogens and other pollutants for the last four years at four Washington Heights-Inwood sites where boaters are likely to have contact with the water on the Hudson and Harlem Rivers: Muscota Marsh, North Cove, Sherman Creek / Peter Jay Sharp Boathouse and the Inwood Canoe Club. Testing is done for 20 weeks during the boating season, using volunteers (such as Sally Fisher) to collect the samples. Samples are collected near the shoreline on Thursdays, tests are performed at labs (including one at the Columbia University main campus) on Fridays and results are posted on its website on Saturdays. This year there were only two failures at the Inwood Canoe Club.
 - Has not seen a great deal of progress over the four-year period. Probably need 10-15 years to have a full evaluation to determine the trend in water quality.
 - Riverkeeper has its own testing program, which it does once a month during warm months in mid-stream. Its findings last year: 88% passing at Dyckman Street, 93% at the George Washington Bridge, 67% passing at the Washington Bridge (Harlem River).
 - DEP also tests water quality, but not in Washington Heights-Inwood. Nearest locations are at the North River sewage treatment plant at 145th Street and on the Harlem River at W. 155th Street. He recommends that we urge DEP to test the water in our area.
 - Water quality on the Harlem River is particularly problematic because of the cluster of Combined Sewer Overflow pipes (CSOs) from the Sherman Creek area going north, including a particularly large one at 216th Street. Test results usually decline after heavy rainfalls, when CSOs discharge polluted water into the river.

- “Sometimes, during heavy rain and snowstorms, combined sewers receive higher than normal flows. Treatment plants are unable to handle flows that are more than twice design capacity and when this occurs, a mix of excess stormwater and untreated wastewater discharges directly into the City’s waterways at certain outfalls.” (DEP website)

Obed Fulcar: concerned about dirty water going into sewer system from people washing cars on Ninth Avenue in Sherman Creek area. He is participating in a pilot project with an oyster cage hanging in the river off the street-end park at 203rd Street, proving that oysters can survive in the river. They can help filter the water.

A. Schulman: wondered about the impact of the 207th Street subway yard on the water, whether it adds to the CSO problem. Are there any protections inside the yard?

S.Simon: thanked Rob Buchanan for the presentation and asked him to stay in touch with the committee.

- 3. Resolution regarding City Council bill to reduce the use of carryout bags in retail stores, groceries and supermarkets (Intro. 209) – Ms. Schulman suggested that the committee reconsider passing a resolution in support of this legislation. She explained the purpose and details of the bill and suggested that language be added to the resolution specifying that an intensive outreach and education campaign be conducted during the three-month period after the law is enacted and prior to its taking effect and that the effectiveness of the law be evaluated two years after it takes effect. .**

Osi Kaminer brought several reusable bags to the meeting that she offered to people in attendance.

Obed Fulcar: plastic bags are the #1 type of litter his students find in Sherman Creek when they do cleanups.

Motion by Lehmann/Glenn to approve the resolution as amended was passed by the following vote:

Committee Members	6-1-1
Other Board Members	2-0-1
Members of the Public	6-0-1

- 4. NY-Presbyterian Hospital Report – Julio Batista, Director of Community Affairs, reported as follows:**
- Introduced Amy Bush, Program Coordinator for Volunteer Services and Community Relations at the Allen Hospital, local resident
 - Holiday season programs: NY Ballet and Rockettes were guests at the Children’s Hospital
 - 11th annual Three Kings Day party to be held 1/9 at the Children’s Hospital. 500 local kids up to 15 years old attended last year and received toy gifts.
 - Thanked Betty Lehmann for arranging for Isabella to host volunteer day by NYPH External Relations staff.
- 5. Columbia University Medical Center Report – Sandra Harris, Assistant Vice President, Government & Community Affairs, reported as follows:**
- Annual toy drive was held. 1,000 toys were distributed to local day care centers and schools.
 - Held food drive with Fresh Youth Initiatives (FYI) in November. Young people delivered meals to seniors. They collected and delivered canned goods to their homes.
 - Forum on mental health research being held 1/20. Researchers will talk about latest treatments for the mentally ill.
 - CUMC has been looking at ways it can better collaborate with the Fort Washington Men’s Shelter at the Armory. Clinical management team is meeting with the shelter to help manage care for shelter residents, including providing additional support through NYS Psychiatric Institute. Focus is on those dual-diagnosed with mental illness and substance abuse. Will be announcing new initiative shortly.
 - More resources are needed to deal with these issues. All levels of government recognize this fact and are putting more funding into mental health services.

Domingo Estevez: students in his school (P.S. 132) aren’t utilizing these services because they have to wait too long to see bilingual psychologists.

- 6. Isabella Geriatric Center Report – Betty Lehmann, Director of Marketing & Communications, reported as follows:**
- Thanked 34 volunteers from NYPH who visited 8 different units at Isabella.

- Isabella received grants to operate three NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities) programs, including social workers and nurses, at the Mitchell-Lama buildings on Fort George Hill and Fairview Avenue, east of Broadway between W. 168th – 170th Streets and the River Terrace co-op on Riverside Drive north of W. 155th Street. The objective is to keep seniors healthy at home.
 - State grant to operate the Upper Manhattan Partnership for Senior Independence (UMPSI), extended in-home services for 1,000 clients in Community Districts 9, 10 and 12, was renewed for three years, with option to renew again
 - Renovation of social hall now scheduled to start in May and end in August. Includes new stage, lighting, windows, sound system. Meetings such as CB 12's can be live-streamed.
 - The rehab suite on third floor now scheduled to open at end of February – 30 beds.
7. **Old Business** – S. Simon: Street cleanliness ratings improved again. In November, we reached 91.6%, above the 90% threshold needed to keep the ASP reduction we previously earned. In December, we slipped to 89.6%, more than 11 points better than one year before.
S. Simon: Another suicide occurred at the George Washington Bridge on 12/31/15. A 31-year-old man from Westchester was the 18th person to jump off the bridge in 2015. Still trying to get a representative from the Port Authority to come to an H&E meeting to discuss its plans to install a fence along the bridge walkway to prevent suicides.
B. Hall: committee should pass a resolution to prohibit smoking at bus shelters. M. Glenn: saw a No Smoking sign on a bus shelter on W. 86th Street. Will check when he returns there tomorrow.
8. **New Business** – A. Kornbluth: Received a mailing from an industry group asking constituents to call Council Member Rodriguez's office to urge him to support a plan it says "could recycle 100% of the city's 58,000 tons of foam and rigid polystyrene (from your salad containers to your foam cups to your takeout containers)"
S. Fisher: Upcoming meetings being held in connection with the Inwood NYC rezoning plan: community services (including health) workshop on 1/14, zoning and housing on 1/23 and parks, streets and waterfront TBA. B. Lehmann said she would represent H&E at the 1/14 workshop.
A. Schulman: leaving the committee to become chair of the Public Safety committee. Enjoyed being a member of the H&E committee and promised to come back now and then.
9. **Announcements** – M. Anderson: WHICOA is sponsoring a conference on substance abuse and the elderly at Isabella on 4/14. S. Fisher: The Parks Dept. is sponsoring its annual Mulchfest to recycle Xmas trees on 1/9 and 1/10. Inwood Hill Park at Isham Street is one of the sites.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Betty Lehmann and Steve Simon