

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – November 1, 2018

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Simon (Chair), Daryl Cochrane (Asst. Chair), Richard Allman, Tanya Bonner, Sara Fisher, Danielle Jettoo, Elizabeth Lehmann, Beatrice Hall (Public Member).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Richard Lewis.

GUESTS: Pauline Ferrante, NYC Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene; Lubna Ahmed, Genesis Abreu and Milagros de Hoz, all from WE ACT for Environmental Justice; Kimberly Burke, Columbia University Center for Children's Environmental Health; Julio Batista and Dr. Mara Minguez, NY-Presbyterian Hospital; Sandra Harris, Columbia University Medical Center; Sophie Nicole Tailor.

The meeting was held jointly with the Housing & Human Services Committee through the first three items on the agenda. S. Simon, chair, called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. He introduced the members of both committees who were present.

1. Report on the latest Legionnaires' Disease outbreak – Pauline Ferrante, Manhattan Coordinator, Office of Community Affairs, NYC Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene, reported as follows:

- The investigation area is Lower Washington Heights / Hamilton Heights – 1 Km radius
- It's not unusual to see repeat outbreaks, but this latest one was unusually close to the one in August.
- Legionnaires' disease is a type of pneumonia. People with underlying health conditions are more susceptible.
- It's common in the environment. There are 200-400 cases in NYC per year.
- DOHMH is tracking the community cluster, where cases are coming within the neighborhood.
- 20 cooling towers have been identified in the area. One was unregistered with the Dept. of Buildings and was ordered to be fully cleaned and disinfected, as was the one at the Sugar Hill Project, 898 St. Nicholas Ave., which caused the first outbreak.
- 10 of the towers were given a boost of biocide chemicals to kill bacteria. 11 had evidence of live and dead bacteria. The towers emit a mist that can travel a wide distance.
- Don't know which of the 11 towers caused the outbreak. Have to compare bacteria from the towers with the DNA sequence of bacteria in the patients.
- 31 patients in the second cluster. 30 have been treated, one died.
- No new cases in two incubation periods so outbreak could be over.
- NYC is the only city that requires cooling towers to be registered. Landlords must file biannual inspection report with the Dept. of Buildings. \$2000 fine for failure to do so.
- The City Council is looking at legislation to strengthen requirements.

The committee members made various suggestions to improve outreach to the public, especially senior citizens, when outbreaks occur by using home care workers, senior centers and Meals-on-Wheels programs to spread the word.

S. Fisher: According to an article on the Gothamist news service, 90% of the violations involving the cooling towers are thrown out in court because of defects.

2. NYCHA Villages Project – Genesis Abreu, Bilingual Community Organizer, and Milagros de Hoz, Environmental Health Manager, WE ACT for Environmental Justice, gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding a community planning project at Dyckman Houses:

- The project is a collaborative community mapping process, a demonstration project that will last 1½ years.
- The goal is "to build a culture of health" at Dyckman Houses. Also to make NYCHA a better landlord.
- Dyckman Houses has 1167 apartments, population of 2319.
- Have held 5 meetings with 200 people. Also did a survey.
- WE ACT also received a state Dept. of Environmental Conservation grant to do a project involving climate resiliency. It will involve Dyckman residents and others living east of Broadway.

3. The Challenges of NYC's Clean Heat Transition – Lubna Ahmed, MPH, Director of Environmental Health, WE ACT for Environmental Justice, and Kimberly Burke, Program Coordinator, Columbia University Center for Children's Environmental Health, gave a PowerPoint presentation pointing out that while the NYC Clean Heat program was very successful in getting landlords to stop using the dirtiest type of fuel oil (#6), more than half of the buildings are now using #4 oil, another dirty type of fuel that is not required to be phased under current law until 2030. They would like to see landlords

switch to non-polluting fuel, such as natural gas but also alternative energy sources. One concern is whether these conversions would lead landlords to file for Major Capital Improvement rent increases. They believe that some landlords obtained MCI increases for conversions from #6 oil to natural gas. R. Lewis: None of the conversions in our area led to MCI increases. Schools are burning #4 oil. Ayisha Ogilvie, chair of the Housing & Human Services Committee, asked what fuel the local institutions are burning. [Julio Batista, Director of Community Affairs, NY-Presbyterian Hospital, later reported that the company managing the hospital's residential buildings has over the past several years undertaken a program to convert all the boilers to burn natural gas. They have five more buildings to go, all currently burning #2 oil, which will be converted to natural gas by 2021 or 2022, if funding permits.]

At this point the Housing & Human Services Committee left to conduct its meeting in the board office, and the Health & Environment Committee continued with its agenda in the large meeting room.

4. Columbia University Medical Center Report – Sandra Harris, Assistant Vice President – Government and Community Affairs, reported as follows:

- She asked that a presentation regarding the Get Fit initiative -- the Mailman School of Public Health working with local restaurants on healthy food options -- be placed on our December agenda.
- She would like the Office of Service Learning to make a presentation at our January meeting.
- Annual food drive and toy drive are now underway at the Medical Center.
- Million Oysters program has been started at Muscota Marsh.
- Also a Learn to Row program involving students from local schools.

5. NY-Presbyterian Hospital Report – Julio Batista, Director of Community Affairs, introduced Dr. Mara Minguez, Assistant Chief Medical Officer for Community Affairs. She has worked at NYPH since 2001, is trained in pediatrics and has specialized in working with adolescents. She spoke about how she had previously served as a doctor at the school-based health center at the George Washington H.S. campus and as director of the Lang Youth Medical Program, which enrolls 7th – 12th grade students from School District 6. In her new position, she will be working to “engage” community physicians, among other things.

S. Simon: We learned at last month's meeting that some local pharmacies do not stock Narcan, a spray that can counteract opioid overdoses, and it may be helpful if local doctors who use these pharmacies urged them to have this life-saving medicine available for their customers.

J. Batista then gave the following report:

- 14th annual Taxi Drivers' Health Fair, originally suggested by a CB 12 member, was held 9/29. 120 drivers, mostly livery drivers, received services, including training for hands-only CPR and for opioid overdoses.
- A program was held for 93 6th graders from the Community Health Academy of the Heights.
- Two events were held in which free flu shots were provided to the community: one was held with the Washington Heights Corner Project, the other with the local elected officials at the Hebrew Tabernacle, where 130 residents were served.
- The hospital is organizing its annual coat drive. 500 coats were given last year to local community groups, including a women's shelter on W. 174th Street.

Simon once again asked for a copy of the Certificate of Need application submitted by NYPH to the State Health Dept. regarding its plan to decertify the 30 psych beds at the Allen Hospital.

Batista said the hospital would not be providing it. He invited the full committee to take a tour of the Allen Hospital.

S. Fisher requested utilization and patient-mix data for psych beds in hospitals throughout the NYPH system.

In early October, NYPH provided the following data about the patients utilizing the psych beds at the Allen Hospital:

Discharge Demographics (Based on 2016/2017 claims data)

Washington Heights/Inwood – 46.1%

Manhattan (non-service area) – 14.5%

Bronx – 21.4%

Brooklyn – 7%

Queens – 5.3%

Out of State/Westchester/Long Island/Other – 4.3%

Discharge Payor Mix:

Medicaid 75%

Medicare 17%

Commercial 3%

Other/Self-Pay 1%

6. Isabella Geriatric Center Report – Betty Lehmann, Director of Marketing & Communications, reported as follows:

- Working with the NYPH Ambulatory Care Network to offer diabetes workshops in English and Spanish in November & December.
- Working with Presbyterian Senior Services to provide caregiver support to families dealing with dementia, including respite care.
- Working with Project Renewal to provide screenings around the city.
- Annual Thanksgiving Day event.
- Tango event on 11/21 -- \$25 per person.
- CB 12's Aging and Youth & Education committees will hold a show with youths performing for seniors – 12/16.

7. Old Business – S. Simon reported on the following:

- Street and Sidewalk Cleanliness Ratings: The rating for acceptably clean streets in our district for September was 85.2% (88.8% in August). Sidewalks were rated 98.1% acceptably clean in September (96% in August).
- The most service requests for DEP from WH-I residents in September were as follows: Fire Hydrant Emergency (72), Hydrant Running Full (65) and Hydrant Running (61). In October, the top requests were Noise: Construction Before/After Hours (45), Noise, Barking Dog (21) and Lead Kit Requests (20).
- DDC provided a written status report on three of its four current projects in our district: installation of a water main on Park Terrace West between W. 217th and W. 218th Streets, water main/fire hydrant/water valve replacements on Haven Avenue, W. 169th Street and W. 172nd Street, and installation of catch basins at the Broadway/Nagle Avenue intersection.

8. New Business – S. Fisher reported that she received the Silver Plunger award from the NYC Water Trails Assn. for her work testing the water in local rivers and that DEP is holding its annual meeting on its long-term plan on 12/5.

The committee members had a further discussion concerning the NYPH plan to close the 30 psychiatric beds at the Allen Hospital.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Steve Simon.