

HUMAN AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE - MEETING MINUTES

November 1, 2018

Committee Members Present

Ayisha Oglivie, Chair
Barbara Frazier, Asst. Chair
Waldys Cruz
Bianca Guerrero
Fern Hertzberg
Nicholas Martinez
Ariel Miranda

Committee Members Absent

Board Members Present

Richard Lewis
Steve Simon
Sara Fisher

Public Member Present

Marshall Vanderpool
Rehka Shanmugam

Staff

Ebenezer Smith

Guests

Pauline Franti, New York Department of Health
Lubna Ahmed, WEACT for Environmental Justice - Clean Heat Initiative
Kimberly Burke, Columbia University Center for Children's Environmental Health - Clean Heat Initiative
John Butler, RiseBoro Community Partners
Maria Veira, RiseBoro Community Partners
Randall Tonn, RiseBoro Community Partners

1. Having established quorum, the meeting began at 7:16 PM. Housing and Human Services Committee ("HHS" or the "Committee") held a joint session with the Environmental Committee to discuss the Legionnaire's Outbreak in Washington Heights, NYCHA Quality of Life Issues, and the phasing out of dirty oils in apartment buildings in the neighborhood. Environmental Committee Chair Steve Simon began the meeting by welcoming committee members and guests. Committee members introduced themselves.
2. Pauline Franti of the NYC Department of Health ("DOH") began her presentation summarizing the Legionnaire's Outbreak in Lower Washington Heights and Hamilton Heights. When investigating the outbreak, the Health Department examines two possible epicenter types. First, a Community Cluster, which maps where the cases are coming from and whose source is most likely a cooling tower. Second, the same address where the internal water system is likely the problem. Both cases in Washington Heights and Hamilton Heights were related to the Community Cluster type. In the latest cluster, the DOH sent out detectives and engineers to check a number of towers of cooling towers in the concentrated areas affected. One tower was unregistered while 10 others were asked to do a boost of biocide. Out of 20, there were 11 cooling towers with live or dead bacteria.

Ms. Franti stressed Legionnaires is very common. The problem with cooling towers is they run water through the system and has to run warm water into the system. This eventually emits warm mist into the air. If someone has the underlying health conditions (older age, poor lung quality) with the live bacteria, it can develop into the pneumonia. It is easily treatable. If you test positive, antibiotics will get rid of it. Unfortunately, one person in this outbreak died. 31 people were diagnosed. There have not been any new cases.

Questions:

The tower that has been identified, was that tested? Yes, two of them had a full clean and disinfect. Typically, health department does not like to point to specific buildings in order to make sure that people don't get a false sense of confidence if they feel they never interacted with that building.

At this point, we don't know which of the 11 may have the problem?

Correct. We are down to the 11, but it will take time in order to figure out which one it actually came from. Asked people to provide samples in order to match the identified problem site/tower. It is not about pointing fingers. What we want is that people are immediately going to see a doctor.

Do the cooling towers have to be maintained?

Yes. The inspectors go out and do the spot testing to the health department via third party vendor. They don't focus only on a building. It can happen anywhere.

What steps are taken in order to make sure seniors are being spoken to? What is the timeline for getting the information out there? Where do the fines come? How long was the water tower functioning before it was reported?

(Run-on question, Ms. Franti summarized her answer): There is outreach done by way of posting information in building lobbies. The information is presented as quickly as possible. We don't know how long the cooling tower was functioning.

Is there any way to utilize trained homecare workers who are trained for closer eye on folks to disseminate information?

That is a good suggestion. Right now, we are posting information in buildings.

Cooling towers create a mist inside or outside of the building?

Most common way is through the shower head. Once you breathe in the mist, the pneumonia can develop.

How much cross-communication is going with different government agencies?

DOB recognizes that the buildings have to self-register. We know that list may be incomplete. We know that list may be incomplete, but we do our due diligence in order to make sure we are checking on it.

Has the Department of Health used Google Maps?

Yes, Google Maps is utilized, but DOH still goes to every building that we can.

How much did it cost to actually do the test in order to see if the person has legionaries?

Although, the cost can vary, the test is likely going to cost about \$200.

What are you doing to make sure inspectors are trained?

Inspectors are trained in order to do this specifically.

What will be different?

There will be more stringent guidelines. We work within the context of the law. The most important public message is: If you are not feeling well, go tell your medical provider.

Connecting with places that provide meals on wheels? DIFTA may be the best connect to the aging population can take advantage of. Take advantage of the hospital's outreach capabilities.

Ms. Franti agreed these are good ideas, but emphasized that people should reach out to their medical providers if they are not feeling well.

Ms. Franti closed by mentioning that there needs to be a review and an update to the follow-up meeting and checking on the cooling towers to make sure that they're registered.

3. NYCHA Villages- WEACT

WEACT is a non-profit based in West Harlem. The group focuses on the health outcomes of people of color are involved in environmental policy. The group works at the intersection of health and housing, especially public housing. Through the program NYCHA Villages, the group works to investigate how NYCHA can become a better landlord. Studies show that living conditions at NYCHA are not conducive to a healthy life. A 2016 report

studied the quality of life at NYCHA and resolved to adopt evidence-based practices, communicate best methods, and encouraged to work in a spirit of partnership.

WEACT emphasizes the mapping process at NYCHA housing because WEACT understands there are a number of decisions made about where people live without their input. Community mapping process is multifaceted and includes the examination of environmental, social, and economic conditions.

WEACT focused on the Dyckman Houses to see how to improve the quality of life and health. And to address the priorities of the community. Overall outcomes are for tenants to have increased awareness of their rights. WEACT wants an engaged network of stakeholders knowledgeable about problems confronting NYCHA residents. Greater social cohesion among NYCHA residents. What should be the ask for CB12? Prioritize Dyckman Houses in its capital and expense budget recommendations and provide interpretation services during board meetings.

4. West Harlem Clean Heat Initiative (“WHCHI”) spoke to key areas identified related to internal environmental issues were the continued use of dirty heating oil Uptown. Banned oil was phased out in 2015 and is expected to be completely phased out by 2030. Of the three heating oils, there are graduations in dirtiness. Alternative Energy Resources are available. Clean Heating Oil results discourage the use of #6 and switch to #4. The maps presented showed the concentration reductions in dirty oil. 70% of greenhouse gas emissions in NYC comes from buildings. Mostly traffic pollution that was noticeable on the map. When you look at the rest of NYC, Uptown accounted for close to half of the building heating oil pollution and that number has grown since 2011.

WHCHI is trying to prevent environmental injustice related to the issue of major capital improvements. The cost of improvement falls on the shoulders of the tenant. Air pollutants have negative health effects on people who are exposed to them, especially prenatal and young children. Linked to Uptown and the Bronx during the study that started in 1998. WHCHI conducted a small study with a number of different women. They are wearing wristbands during the period that they are pregnant. They will look to where the women live and if the oil has exposure to the pollutants out of PAH in oils #2 and #4. MCI increases based on the law changing of oil furnaces and the oil number. Two pieces of legislation related to the upgrades through MCIs will be stopped. These two bills would address the issue of tenant turnover related to the financial windfall.

5. After the third presentation, HHS moved rooms in order to address the fourth presentation of the evening. John Buehler, RiseBoro Community Partnership presented 37 Hillside Avenue. 37 Hillside Avenue is an As of Right development. There is no asking for public action. RiseBoro is not asking for any support. RiseBoro is trying to keep the community informed about the development. The project will have a newly developed church doubling the size of the footprint. Process is going through the Attorney General’s office, as is any property that is converting from a house of faith to housing. The project will be a 100% affordable housing development. The project will be financed by Tax-exempt bonds and 4% LIHTC. The project has a passive house standard to minimize environmental impact. There will be manned security at the front desk and signals throughout the building related to senior safety. The project will have case management offices, community rooms for recreational spaces and laundry rooms on every floor. The project will have small breakout areas and youth nutrition spaces on the ground floor, which will host nutrition seminars for healthy living. The project will be submitted to DOB within the next month. RiseBoro re-emphasized that project will have 164 project-based Section 8 affordable units.

Questions?

In relation to what we just saw in the other presentation, can you elaborate on passive house design?

This means it will be a healthy building and a building that will include lower utility bills and long-term affordability. There will be no dirty oil used at this project.

Have you addressed the issue of bedrock at the site and how it will affect your project? Are you aware of the giant crack in the retaining wall behind the building?

The geotechnical analysis shows where the bedrock is and where it isn’t. After careful geotechnical analysis, the project will not touch the neighboring building nor the retaining wall.

Can you please provide a breakdown of the units and explain how they will be affordable?

Reviews the slide with the breakdown of units and explains the AMI. The rental numbers will not be finalized until the tax credits are administered for the project. However, once those tax credits are administered, the rents cannot exceed 30% of a resident's income.

Have you reached out to local houses of faith and other senior resources to get the word out about these units so that seniors in this district are prioritized?

Outreach for the units will go through the usual channels of affordable housing in NYC. Riseboro cannot strictly publish the units within any given neighborhood.

Can you provide security on Hillside Avenue? Not just for your project, but for the entire street?

RiseBoro will provide security at the front desk of their development and have lighting placed in front of the building, but will not have additional security in the street.

How do we know you are not going to flip this project into a luxury development down the line?

Once the Restrictive Covenant on the project is signed, it will be affordable for the next 15 years. After the 15th year, there will be an opportunity to refinance the property back into another 15 years of affordability on advantageous terms for the building operator. If the building is taken out of LIHTC compliance before that period, it becomes disadvantageous as the property loses its tax-exempt status and would likely become insolvable at that point. Short answer: it is in Riseboro's best interest to keep the project in affordable compliance.

6. Richard Lewis, Community Board Member of CB12, presented and provided source materials for information on the potential impact of pending legislation related to the Community Reinvestment Act ("CRA"). Mr. Lewis gave a brief history of CRA and how it affects local banking, lending, and the development of affordable housing and infrastructure throughout urban neighborhoods throughout the United States. The potential changes would take federal incentives away from investing in urban centers and place the focus on rural areas throughout the country.

There is a deadline for a response by November 19th, 2018. Housing and Human Services Committee unanimously passed a resolution that supported the work and comments of the Association of Neighborhood and Housing Development ("ANHD") with some local changes. Mr. Lewis will look to get support from the Business Development Committee as well.

The Meeting adjourned at 10:16 PM.

Minutes for this session were prepared by Nicholas Martinez