

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – September 6, 2018

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Danielle Jettoo, Gabriela Rosa.

GUESTS: Colleen Kane and Jeremy King, START Treatment and Recovery Centers; Julio Batista, NY-Presbyterian Hospital; Ross Frommer, Columbia University Medical Center; Mariel DeLaCruz, Comptroller's Office; Sarah McDaniel Dyer, Paul Hintersteiner, Cheramie Mondesire, Valinn Ranelli, Jeanne Ruskin, Andrew Adams, Maggie Green and Emily Liu, all from Columbia Journalism School; Rekha Shanmugan, CUNY Journalism School.

The meeting was called to order at 7:11 p.m. The committee members who were present were introduced.

1. Isabella Geriatric Center Report – Betty Lehmann, Director of Marketing & Communications, reported on the following programs taking place at Isabella and distributed flyers:

- Dancercise with Walter Perez – Tuesdays, Sept. 4 – Oct. 16 @ 11am-12pm
- Positive Aging Group – Storyworks Series – every other Tuesday, Sept. 4, 18, Oct. 2, 16, 30 @ 9-10am. Spanish group meets every other Wednesday, Sept. 12 & 26, Oct. 10 & 24 @ 9:30-10:30am
- Diabetes workshop – Sept. 13 @ 10am
- 14th annual health fair – Sept. 28 @ 10am-2pm
- The Scoop on Healthy Fats educational workshop – Oct. 9 @ 9:30-11am
- Lung Cancer educational workshop – Oct. 23 @ 9:30-11am

2. Update on START Treatment & Recovery Center's planned move from 500 W. 180th St. to 2406-12

Amsterdam Ave. – Colleen Kane, Director of External Affairs, stated that heroin and fentanyl are ravaging NYC and the country. NYC had its highest overdose rate ever last year. START, founded in 1969 as the Addiction Research and Treatment Corp., provides holistic care – “we look at the whole person,” not just the addiction or the mental illness. START has locations in Harlem, East Harlem, Fort Greene, East New York and Bushwick. Some funding is received from the Borough President through DOHMH.

Jeremy King, Deputy Director - Manhattan, stated as follows:

- The move is scheduled for February 2019. Space will be more than doubled from 6,000 sq. ft. to 14,000 sq. ft.
- There will be a large waiting room, so no one should have to wait out on the street, and an elevator, which the current building does not have.
- 3,000 sq. ft. will be available for a “community partner.” (In response to a question by S. Fisher, he said the Corner Project might be able use this space. He said the two groups already work closely together.)
- Currently serve 270 patients, who receive “addiction medicine” such as methadone and variants. With new space, probably will increase capacity to more than 400.
- Most patients come every day. Those who do well can come 3 times/week and eventually once a month.
- Most patients will need long-term chronic treatment. “If you’re using opiates, there are not many options.”
- START has relationships with short-term and long-term residential treatment programs.
- All forms of public insurance are accepted as well as self-pay. Don’t accept private insurance.
- No licensed psychiatrists. Doctors on staff can refer patients to psychiatrists.
- Individuals in this program are more likely to be stable and functioning, have jobs, no criminal activity.
- Work with HRA to provide housing to patients who might be homeless.

S. Simon recalled that a START representative who spoke at the H&E Committee meeting in November agreed to provide a zip code breakdown showing how many patients from WH-I’s four zip codes are served at this clinic. Kane said she would talk to the research staff about providing it.

S. Fisher suggested that START talk to local businesses near the new location to prepare them for the move. Kane agreed to do this outreach.

3. Brownfield Cleanup Application for 4650 Broadway – S. Simon reported on the application submitted by the new owner to the NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation:

- The current plan for developing the property is to demolish the existing building and construct a 9-story residential building with community space. Not an affordable housing project
- Property was purchased for \$26 million.

- Remediation of groundwater, soil and soil vapor contamination would be implemented pursuant to a Remedial Action Work Plan that will be reviewed by the H&E Committee.
- Remedial implementation is expected to begin in January and to be completed in December 2019.
- Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and semi-volatile organic compounds were found in soil and groundwater samples taken in a subsurface investigation in 2004.
- The report concluded that the source of the VOCs may be the three closed-in-place, 550-gallon gasoline underground storage tanks.
- Monitoring performed through January 2016 indicated that “petroleum contamination persists in groundwater and may impact soil vapor.”
- “Laboratory analytical results indicated that the historic fill contains SVOCs, metals and PCBs at concentrations” above recommended levels.
- Trichloroethene (TCE) “detected in soil vapor may be indicative of a chemical release associated with historical site use, or may be related to the historical use of the southern adjoining property as a dry cleaning facility.”

S. Simon said Michael Burke, vice president of Langan Engineering, the consultant working on the cleanup, agreed to attend a future meeting to discuss the Remedial Action Work Plan. He sent the following response to Simon’s email inviting him to the meeting and asking questions about the cleanup:

“The gasoline spill has been open for 15 years with little progress made towards remediating the site. The developer will expedite site remediation as part of his development, improving the environmental quality to its condition prior to the gasoline release. The remedy will likely be implemented in two phases. The first phase will consist of in-situ treatment of groundwater contamination and will be performed before the building is demolished. This will target the majority of the contaminated material, bringing down the levels of contamination considerably before excavation. Residual contamination will be removed using typical excavation techniques during foundation construction. Community air monitoring will be performed to ensure that dust management methods are effective and odor control measures will be in place to prevent nuisance odors from migrating off-site. It doesn’t appear that the contamination migrated beneath adjoining buildings.”

S. Fisher: Testing should be done in the three adjacent residential buildings.

D. Cochrane: Signs should be posted in the buildings informing the residents of the cleanup

C. Mondesire: Drilling is currently being done in the basement of the building. There are rumors that the garage may close in October or November.

J. Batista: Were former city employees who worked in the building exposed to health hazards?

S. Simon said he would write a letter with the committee’s initial comments to be sent to DEC by 9/14.

4. **Preliminary Discussion of FY 20 Capital and Expense Budget Priorities** – The committee members discussed the FY 19 budget priorities, especially the #1 expense budget request to expand mental health services in our community. D. Cochrane suggested including drug treatment services. The requests for additional noise enforcement inspectors, increased trash basket collections, increased rat mitigation efforts and water quality testing in the Hudson and Harlem Rivers also were discussed. S. Simon distributed a NY Times article from 8/5/18 reporting that Inwood is the second noisiest neighborhood in NYC based on 311 complaints for the year ending 7/23/18. Most complaints citywide were in the “loud music and party” category. C. Mondesire: Is there a relationship between liquor licenses and noise complaints? R. Allman: we should include an item dealing with lead inspections and remediation. The discussion will be continued next month, when the committee will decide on its FY 20 budget priorities.

5. **Columbia University Medical Center Report** – Ross Frommer, Vice President – Government and Community Affairs, reported as follows:

- His office is looking for a new staff member. Julia Hakim left for another job.
- The Project Medical Education program was held once again for community members at the Medical Center. Sara Fisher was among the participants.
- The School of Nursing held an opioid overdose response training for community residents last Friday. They would be willing to do it at a Health & Environment Committee meeting as well.
- Dean Bobbie Berkowitz of the School of Nursing retired.
- A rally in support of the National Institutes of Health will be held in Washington on Thursday. CUMC is sending people. Community residents are invited to join them.
- The Chamber of Commerce is holding an International Family Dine Out Festival at the Armory on Saturday.

- Columbia is holding its annual Northern Manhattan Neighbors Appreciation Day at its football game against Marist College on 10/6. Community residents can obtain free tickets.
 - Velocity, second annual bike ride for cancer research, will be held 10/7. Riders can start in either Rockland County or northern New Jersey. The finish line is outside the Hammer Health Sciences Building, 701 Ft. Washington Ave. Over \$1 million was raised last year.
 - NYU recently announced it was going to be the first tuition-free medical school. Last December Columbia announced it would be the first medical school in which its students would graduate debt-free. It will no longer provide student loans to its students, only grants to those who need assistance. Those who can afford to pay tuition will continue to do so. NYU policy only applies to tuition, not room and board and other expenses. Columbia's plan also applies to "life expenses."
6. **NY-Presbyterian Hospital Report** – Julio Batista, Director of Community Affairs, reported as follows:
- Paul Dunphey now oversees the Ambulatory Care Network as well as the Allen Hospital.
 - NYPH purchased plaques to be installed on two benches in the Broadway Mall at W. 165th Street in honor of Pamela Palanque North and Obie Bing. A ceremony will be held at a later date,
 - A ceremony will be held 9/21 to rededicate the plaque donated by the Yankees to mark the location of home plate in Hilltop Park, where the Highlanders (the team that later became the Yankees) played. The stadium was located on the site of the hospital. The plaque is inside the garden off Fort Washington Avenue.
 - The application to decertify the 30 psych beds at the Allen Hospital was not submitted to the NY State Office of Mental Health in August as NYPH had planned to do. "Discussions continue with the state."
- S. Fisher repeated her request for the utilization and patient-mix data and said she would like to take a tour of that unit as well as the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP) at 168th Street. J. Batista said she would check on whether there are restrictions on taking such tours in terms of patient privacy. S. Simon said he had been told by the NY State Nurses Assn. that the employees were informed that the unit would remain open until next June. J. Batista said he would check whether that is accurate.
7. **Old Business** – S. Simon reported on the following:
- Street and Sidewalk Cleanliness Ratings: The rating for acceptably clean streets in our district for August was 88.8% (87.8% in July). Sidewalks were rated 96% acceptably clean in August (98% in July).
 - The Health Department closed its investigation of the Legionnaires' Disease outbreak in lower Washington Heights and Hamilton Heights in August. There were 27 cases, including one death. The likely source of the problem was found to be the cooling tower at the Sugar Hill Project, 898 St. Nicholas Ave. According to the press release, "The facility fully cooperated with the Health Department in the investigation, cleaned and disinfected its tower on July 13, and is working with the Health Department on long-term maintenance to meet the City's cooling tower regulations."
 - He read aloud ten commitments made in the Inwood Rezoning Points of Agreement that involve Health & Environment issues that the committee should monitor.
8. **New Business** – S. Simon: asked Con Edison for information about the cause of the power failure that occurred in the area around Fairview Ave. and W. 193rd St. on Sept. 2-3. He was told, "The primary cause of the outage was a piece of our equipment that malfunctioned – the electricity ran in reverse – and caused a limiter to blow and secondary cable failure." No transformer fire was involved. PILC cable from 1969 was replaced as part of the repairs.
- S. Fisher: A recent lawsuit found that glyphosate causes cancer. Its use in parks is killing the Monarch butterflies. State Senator Hoylman has introduced a bill to ban glyphosate. She will bring a resolution in support of his bill to the next meeting.
9. **Announcements** – M. DeLaCruz: The Comptroller is holding a public hearing on "NYC's Lead Problem" on 9/17 in Harlem. He is conducting an investigation into the City's overall response to lead poisoning in children. He is also holding African-American and Hispanic Heritage celebrations.
- D. Cochrane: NYC Commission on Human Rights is holding a hearing on 9/25 regarding the definition of gender and how it relates to the city's Human Rights Law

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.
Respectfully submitted, Steve Simon.