

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – October 3, 2019

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Simon (Chair), Tanya Bonner, Sara Fisher, Katherine Diaz, Elizabeth Lehmann, Rosy Perez.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Francisco Alvarez, Daryl Cochrane, Jay Mazur (Excused), Ayisha Olgivie, Beatrice Hall (Public Member, Excused).

GUESTS: Anthony Ciampa and Julia Camagong, NY State Nurses Assn.; Jahneille Edwards, Columbia University Irving Medical Center; Hana Frankl, Yeshiva University; Paul Hintersteiner.

S. Simon, chair, called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m., apologized for the late start and introduced the committee members who were present.

1. Discussion on whether to support City Council Resolution No. 396 calling upon the State Legislature to pass the “Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act”

Anthony Ciampa, Vice President, NY State Nurses Assn. (NYSNA), and President, NY-Presbyterian Hospital chapter, NYSNA, requested that the committee pass a resolution supporting the City Council Resolution: “safe staffing saves lives.” He distributed flyers from the New York Campaign for Patient Safety, which discussed myths and facts about this issue affecting hospitals and nursing homes. There would be different nurse-patient ratios in various units of a hospital, based in extensive industry-wide studies. California has a law requiring safe staffing levels, which he said has worked. This issue has been brought before the Manhattan Borough Board. As a result, Community Boards 3, 7 and 8 have passed resolutions supporting the state legislation. This issue was addressed to some extent in the recent contract negotiations between the union and New York-Presbyterian (NYP) and other hospitals.

Lehmann: The California law has not worked. Hospitals have had to reduce non-direct patient care staff (housekeeping, dining services, secretarial, laundry workers).

Ciampa: Safeguards are built in so no one would lose their job. No California hospital has closed despite predictions that this would happen because of the law.

Lehmann: This is the wrong time to pass this law. Governor Cuomo has proposed a \$500 million cut to health care institutions, reducing Medicaid reimbursements. The industry will be hit hard. Isabella will lose 55 jobs.

Ciampa said he would come to the next meeting with more information on how the safe staffing law would work.

2. Report on the Allen Hospital -- Julia Camagong, NYSNA Political & Community Organizer, reported that 22 of the 30 beds in the psych unit are being used, there are 2 doctors (down from 4), 2 Nurse Practitioners (one is on leave), 4 nurses during the day, 3-4 at night (should be 5 during the day, 4 at night). NYP never followed through by filing the second application to close the unit; the Certificate of Need application was not approved. The first floor is being renovated for an operating room. The outpatient geriatric unit/private doctors' offices on the third floor is being moved out of the building to different locations in The Bronx and Inwood.

Simon said he is concerned whether Washington Heights-Inwood residents will be inconvenienced by having to go to The Bronx to see their doctors.

3. Columbia University Irving Medical Center Report -- Jahneille Edwards, Community Affairs Associate, reported as follows:

- Healthy Haven – This health and community wellness event took place on Sept. 28 at the interim pedestrian plaza on Haven Ave. More than 600 community residents in attendance. 25 CUIMC/NYP departments and offices represented. 15 community-based organizations and government agencies. Over 200 attendees participated in trainings. Over 200 attendees were screened for cholesterol, BMI, glucose, and/or blood pressure and were counseled on their results.
- Velocity – Columbia's ride to end cancer will take place on October 6. Velocity raises money to support cancer research at Columbia's Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center. 100% of fundraising goes to research, patient services and essential infrastructure to improve treatment outcomes for cancer patients.
- Dyckman Institute Scholars – A local student was awarded a scholarship, which provides financial support to outstanding students from the Washington Heights/Inwood area who attend Columbia College.
- Northern Manhattan Neighbors Appreciation Day – This annual event will take place on October 12 at the Baker Field Athletic Complex. Residents will receive complimentary tickets for a football game featuring Columbia vs. Central Connecticut. The event will also feature golf, baseball and lacrosse clinics for youth.

- Late Night Science – The most recent session of “Late Night Science,” an informal lecture series led by CUIMC graduate students, took place on September 26 at the Jerome L. Greene Science Center 3227 Broadway. This month’s topic was “What can tiny fruit flies teach us about movement and pain?”
 - Fort Washington Greenmarket – The Fort Washington Greenmarket continues to run every Tuesday now through November 26 between 168th and 169th Streets along Fort Washington Avenue, next to the Hammer Health Sciences Center. Market hours are 8am to 4pm., rain or shine.
4. **Isabella Geriatric Center Report** -- Betty Lehmann, Director of Marketing and Communications, reported:
- Health fair will be held October 11. 56 community organizations are participating.
 - Alzheimer’s walk will held on October 13.
 - The adult day care program was closed for financial reasons – a phenomenal program that provided meals and activities to people who would otherwise have to go into nursing homes. More than half of the clients had dementia. Others had Parkinson’s or other ailments. Reimbursements from managed care companies are too low – the program was losing money.
5. **Washington Heights Workgroup on Syringe Litter and Public Drug Use** -- Tanya Bonner reported on the meeting called by the Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) on Sept. 18. The group is in support of the CORNER Project getting a new space in the community. Since they lost their office space on West 181st Street, there has been an increase in overdoses and syringes found in the community. Children are finding syringes near schools. Council Member Rodriguez’s office wants the CORNER Project to come up with a plan to deal with this problem and to address complaints from businesses about thefts and people using drugs inside their stores. However, CORNER Project is limited in being able to make an impact as long as they don’t have a space and they have no leads. The potential site at the George Washington Bridge Bus Station fell through. DOHMH will be doing an assessment of drug users in the community and interview community stakeholders.
6. **Discussion and vote on FY 21 expense and capital budget requests** – The committee discussed its FY 20 budget priorities and changed the wording on a few of them. The order of the expense budget items was changed to reflect the FY 20 rankings by the full board. Hana Frankl, Director of Wurzweiler Care Café, Yeshiva University, requested support for funding for her program, which provides free educational presentations and parent engagement workshops at local schools and a dance therapy class at the Riverstone Senior Center. She currently receives \$50,000 allocated by Council Member Rodriguez through DOHMH. A motion by Lehmann/Diaz to approve the FY 21 budget requests passed by a vote of 6-0-0.
7. **Old Business** – S. Simon reported on the following:
- NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) reported that the brownfield remediation at 2420/2430 Amsterdam Ave. has been completed.
 - The engineering consultants working on the remediation at 207th Street & Ninth Avenue reported that they found a previously unknown underground storage tank on the site. It was intact and filled with water, with no signs of holes or leakage. It was pumped out and cleaned and removed from the site by a licensed contractor. They performed soil sampling beneath the tank to confirm there were no impacts to the soil.
 - Street and Sidewalk Cleanliness Ratings: The rating for acceptably clean streets in our district was 97.2% in July and 99.2% in August. The rating for acceptably clean sidewalks was 99.2% in July and 100% in August.
 - There were 329 service requests to DEP in September. The highest number of complaints (102) was for Noise: Construction Before/After Hours.
 - DDC provided a written status report on its four current projects in our district.
8. **New Business** – P. Hintersteiner submitted a report suggesting that a seven-story apartment building being built at 100 Fairview Avenue is on a toxic site that had been used for petroleum bulk storage.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rosy Perez and Steve Simon.