

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – February 6, 2020

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Simon (Chair), Tanya Bonner, Daryl Cochrane, Sara Fisher, Elizabeth Lehmann, Jay Mazur, Rosy Perez.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Francisco Alvarez, Katherine Diaz (excused), Ayisha Oglivie, Beatrice Hall (Public Member, excused).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Richard Allman, Osi Kaminer.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT: Dr. Rebecca Linn-Walton, NYC Health & Hospitals; Dr. Zafar Sharif, Harlem Hospital; Catarina Rivera and Eman Faris, WHIN Food Council; Julio Batista, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital; Jahnielle Edwards, Columbia University Irving Medical Center; Joshua Goldberg; Nolen Scruggs, Charles Van Tassel.

S. Simon, chair, called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. and introduced the committee members.

- **Closing of detox units at Harlem Hospital and other City hospitals**

Dr. Rebecca Linn-Walton, Assistant Vice President, Office of Behavioral Health, NYC Health & Hospitals:

- There were 7 units, more years ago; two have been closed at Harlem and Bellevue; 5 others being closed at Metropolitan, Jacobi, Coney Island, Kings County and Woodhull, decided to close them years ago.
- Detox is a very specific, limited use
- Opioid disorders require 1-5 days treatment; alcohol use disorders less time.
- Medical treatment would have to be provided in a separate room.
- Metropolitan Hospital has different set-up with social workers. Patients are stabilized and detox is started in regular in-patient beds.
- Planning to provide traditional alcohol rehab (14-28 days) at Jacobi and Kings County hospitals.
- We're not pushing out anyone who needs in-patient care.

Dr. Zafar Sharif, Director of Psychiatry, Harlem Hospital:

- The detox unit at Harlem was closed last June and had 14 beds; 90% of patients had alcohol problems and would stay 3½ - 4 days, very few were there because of opiates. The most severe cases were admitted to the medical units.
- It was underutilized. The occupancy gradually declined from 85-90% to 40-50%.
- 2/3 of the patients were brought in by NYPD or EMS, mostly from Harlem.
- Less than 10% came from Washington Heights-Inwood.
- The plan is to provide ambulatory alcohol detox, a relatively new concept; patients would come very day; will apply to OASAS for approval to provide new service. At-risk patients would go to a medical unit as before.
- Vast amount of this work is done in an out-patient setting.
- Harlem Hospital has 4 peer counselors, addiction specialists and social workers who talk to patients whenever they come into the ER or clinics and encourage them to use ambulatory service.
- Detox patients are now being referred to Elev8, a for-profit provider located a block away that has 45 beds.
- Harlem has 52 psych beds; plan to use the 14 former detox beds for psych.
- Don't see that much heroin usage, increased problem with fentanyl, also see people using K2, PCP, cocaine and crystal meth.
- Trying to change the system to address the long-term nature of drug problems.

- **Presentation by the WHIN Food Council** – Eman Faris, Administrative Coordinator, and Catarina Rivera, Founder/Fundraising Coordinator showed a Powerpoint presentation on the Council's mission and goals, organizational history and structure, program components, accomplishments, 2020 vision planning, fundraising campaign and "our ask from CB 12."
 - Organization is based on community-led volunteers with an 8-member steering committee and now has a paid part-time staff member (Administrative Coordinator). All events are bilingual (English/Spanish).
 - They grow fresh produce in its garden beds at Swindler Cove – kale, tomatoes, peppers, squash, eggplant, peanuts, mint, basil.
 - **Mission:** Encourage sustainable food systems and healthy food consumption; Create a space for residents to identify and determine solutions to food justice issues; Develop future knowledgeable and culturally aware leaders; Foster community involvement and advocacy.

- **Goals:** Increase the amount of public land designated for food gardening in Washington Heights-Inwood (WHIN); Increase the amount of affordable and healthy food available in WHIN; Increase residents' awareness, knowledge and self-efficacy related to urban gardening, nutrition/healthy eating and food justice issues affecting the WHIN community.
 - **Accomplishments:** Consistent, progressive growth; Celebrating 4th anniversary in March; Awarded grant funding from Citizens Committee 3 years in a row; Adopted a new garden bed every year for a total of three currently; Joined NY Restoration Project (NYRP) as partner for federal grant; Increased membership and attendance at all events; Launched website www.whinfoodcouncil.org; Hired first paid staff member; Increased social media following and engagement.
 - **2020 Vision Planning:** Garden expansion – find additional gardening space to increase accessibility; Garden programming – adopt NYRP's Garden Growers' curriculum; Develop Food Justice/Nutrition Education Workshop Series – partner with Plant-Powered Metro NYC; Community Outreach and Partnership Development – Recruit new members and build partnerships with Dyckman Houses, Dyckman Senior Center, Dominican Women's Development Center, local churches and schools.
 - **Fundraising Campaign:** Online donations campaign in honor of 4th anniversary (goal: \$4000); Food-related fundraising event – salsa/guacamole competition, locally known judges, cooking demo
 - **Ask from CB 12:** Find space suitable for a garden; could be associated with an institution or free, unused public area. Seek partnerships with organizations that work with families in the WHIN area. Decide on best course of action to advocate for community garden that was to be built in Highbridge Park with FY 16 Participatory Budgeting funds.
S.Simon: Parks Dept. subsequently determined that a fenced-in, "private" garden could not be built on mapped parkland and has recently recommended to Council Member Rodriguez that these funds be used to build a community garden on land behind the George Washington H.S. building. Community groups have been working on clearing the area to create a garden.
 - **NY-Presbyterian Hospital Report** – Julio Batista, Director of Community Affairs, reported as follows:
 - Distributed copies of a handout from the NYC Health Dept. about the novel coronavirus in China.
 - One patient at the NYP – Queens being tested for the disease. Results haven't come back from the CDC. They have agreed to speed up the process by providing test kits to local governments.
 - We should be paying more attention to the flu. In the U.S., 25M people are affected by the flu each year; 10-20,000 people die. You should get your flu shots.
 - A team from the hospital went to Puerto Rico to provide assistance in the wake of the recent earthquake.
 - CHALK hosted a Grants 101 workshop in December; 26 organizations participated.
 - Held a resume writing and interview skills workshop tonight; 20 community members attended.
 - Willing to work with CB 12 on community outreach for the Census. Will have a kiosk with a computer at the main entrance to the hospital at 622 W. 168th St and maybe at another site where people can fill out Census form on-line. It will be open 2 days/week: probably Tuesdays 11 a.m.-3 p.m. and Thursdays 3-7 p.m.
 - The hospital is going through a major change, transferring all medical records to the EPIC system. All records will be accessible at each NYP unit.
- S. Simon: Crain's Health Pulse newsletter reported that NYP plans to open "a diagnostic evaluation stabilization center" to address behavioral health issues among youth at the Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital.
- J. Batista: The plan is in the regulatory phase, not yet approved. He will report on it at a future meeting.
- S. Fisher: What's the status of psych beds at Allen?
- J. Batista: The plan to close the beds is on hold. There are fluctuations in staffing and capacity.
- S. Simon: Jay Mazur found a report from Kaiser Health News that various hospitals, including NYP / Weill Cornell, have been penalized by Medicare for a high rate of hospital-acquired infections and patient injuries. We would appreciate a report on how this issue is being dealt with at the Columbia campus. Didn't the hospital form a task force sometime ago? Could Dr. Lisa Saiman, Epidemiologist, NewYork-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, speak to us about it?
- J. Batista: I'll look into it.
- O. Kaminer: Why was the recent gunshot victim at Floridita Restaurant taken to St. Barnabas Hospital? The NYP website says there is a trauma bed in the hospital. What is that?
- J. Batista: The Adult ER is not a Level 1 Trauma Center. The hospital has not applied for the designation because of the cost and difficulty in obtaining accreditation. He'll follow up and find out if the hospital might be interested in applying. The ER at Morgan Stanley is a Level 1 Trauma Center for children.

- **Columbia University Medical Center Report** – Jahnielle Edwards, Community Affairs Associate, reported as follows:
 - **EPIC Rollout** – New electronic patient medical record and business platform went live on Monday. EPIC will provide patients with a more comprehensive care experience.
 - **Medical Center Neighborhood Fund** – Applications are being accepted until Feb. 14.
 - **NERA MedPrep Academy Program** – Partnership between Columbia Vagelos College of Physicians & Surgeons, Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai, Rutgers Medical School and the Manhattan-Staten Island Area Health Education Center. The program expands health careers preparation for minority and disadvantaged students from junior high school on to increase competitiveness for medical school. Applications are due March 1.
 - **State Pre-College Enrichment Program (S-Prep)** – Free high school and college preparatory program designed for 7th – 12th grade students interested in pursuing a career in medicine or related STEM fields. Goal is to increase the number of historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students prepared to enter college and enter these fields. Applications will be available soon
 - The Office of Service Learning has been reorganized as the Office of Community Services Programming, one of the first in the nation. It is headed by Dr. Rafael Lantigua.

S. Fisher: would like information on the services provided at the clinics conducted by the medical students

D. Cochrane: Are there vacancies for community representatives on the Institutional Review Boards?

S. Simon: We'd like an update on research being done by the Mailman School of Public Health.

D. Cochrane: How many students in the Medical School and the Nursing School are from Washington Heights-Inwood? What specialties have they chosen? How many have chosen community medicine / primary care?

J. Edwards: will try to get answers to these questions

- **Isabella Geriatric Center Report** – Betty Lehmann, Director of Marketing & Communications, reported as follows:
 - Working with Columbia University Medical Center on a program, Conexion, for people coping with diabetes or depression. Recruiting 200 seniors to participate in workshops over two years. YM-YWHA and Columbia's Nurse Practitioner program also involved.
 - Health Outreach programs relocated from Allen Hospital to Isabella because of construction at Allen.
 - State budget has \$6 billion shortfall, largely attributable to rising cost of Medicaid from growth in the managed care program. Isabella was cut by \$650K in January, may be cut by \$5 million more in April. This is very serious. 90-95% of Isabella's revenue comes from Medicaid. Governor Cuomo has appointed a new Medicaid Redesign Task Force (21 members including Dr. Steven Corwin, NYP president) to recommend ways to cut the budget by 3/31. They have been given an impossible task.
 - NY State is also losing revenue because of Trump's change to the federal tax code limiting deductions for State and Local Taxes. As a result, wealthier people are moving out of state.
- **Old Business** – S. Simon reported on the following:
 - Reports on Street and Sidewalk Cleanliness ratings and on DEP Service Requests were not available.
 - DDC provided a written status report on four current projects in our district:
 - installation of water main/fire hydrant/water valve replacements on Edgecombe Avenue bet. W. 165th St. – W. 170th St., Jumel Place bet. Edgecombe Ave. and W. 167th St., W. 166th St. & W. 167th St. bet. Edgecombe & Amsterdam Aves. -- 90% complete
 - water main/fire hydrant/water valve replacements on Haven Avenue, Fort Washington Avenue, Riverside Drive, W. 165th – W. 172nd Streets – 90% complete
 - installation of sewer/water main in Inwood – 59% complete
 - water main/gas main replacement on Wadsworth Ave. from W. 183rd St. – W. 190th St., W. 184th – W. 186th Sts. from Broadway to St. Nicholas Ave. – 18.52% complete
 - Ban on plastic bags takes effect March 1. D. Cochrane suggested that we ask DSNY for more free reusable bags to distribute at the next CB 12 general meeting.
 - O. Kaminer: We should have more electronic recycling days, e.g. at Dyckman Houses and around Highbridge Park. There have been none in a year.
 - S. Fisher: will contact Lower East Side Ecology Center, which holds these events.
 - J. Goldberg gave an update on the Audubon Research Building (Mary Woodard Lasker Biomedical Research Building). Hitlab is facing eviction next week. The first five floors are being used by Columbia faculty. Columbia is just using the 6th floor as incubator space and is only giving start-ups 18-month leases. It's not enough time to do research that will produce anything. Intracellular Therapies, Inc., previously based

- at Audubon, recently created an anti-psychotic drug for schizophrenia after 15 years of research. A multi-billion industry has evaporated from the community. PIN Pharma, the company Goldberg works for, had to move downtown and no longer has a lab. His old lab is still empty. The 6th floor space is being rented by Alexandria Real Estate. He asked us to invite Columbia to return to the committee to discuss this issue.
 - The committee discussed the need for CB 12 to be involved in assisting the outreach effort for the Census.
 - T. Bonner: CB 12 should a forum on the "Public Charge" issue, which is creating a lot of fear, to let immigrants know not to be afraid to avail themselves of City services. Recent court decision allowed Trump Administration to implement his executive order.
- **New Business**
 - S. Simon: A Brownfield Cleanup Program application has been submitted for the site of a dry cleaner at 92-98 Nagle Ave. We will discuss the application at a future meeting.
 - S. Fisher: attended a City Council hearing on a bill introduced by Council Member Ben Kallos to ban the use of glyphosate, a chemically-based pesticide sold as Roundup. It used by several City agencies: Parks, DEP, DOT, CUNY and NYCHA. It affects Monarch butterflies and all wildlife. State senator Hoylman has a similar bill that would ban the sale and use of glyphosate.
 - T. Bonner: We should discuss the impact of legalizing marijuana and dealing with its potential proliferation.
 - S. Fisher: attended "Trash Talk" meeting sponsored by BP. CB 1 won the Manhattan Paper Challenge with the largest % increase in recycled paper.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Steve Simon