

**Community Board 12, Manhattan General Meeting
March 31, 2020 / Online via Zoom**

Board Members Present*: Mary Anderson, Glennis Aquino, Wayne Benjamin, Jim Berlin, Tanya Bonner, Eleazar Bueno, Daryl Cochrane, Nobles Crawford, Waldys Cruz, Gerard Dengel, Katherine Diaz, Domingo Estevez, Gabriela Estrella, Ashley Fernandez, Sally Fisher, Fe Florimon, Danielle Jettoo, Yosef Kaminsky, Osi Kaminer, Betty Lehmann, Matt Levy, Francisco Lopez, Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Maria Luna, Isidro Medina, Ariel Miranda, Rud Morales, Debby Nabavian, Jonathan Nunez Frometa, Ayisha Oglivie, Rosy Perez, Bruce Robertson, Steve Simon, Omar Tejada, Chris Ventura, Curtis Young. **Board Members Excused*:** Richard Allman, Francisco Alvarez, Carolina Charles, Robin Cruz, Naysha Diaz, Barbara Frazier, Mariam James, Jay Mazur, Cindy Matos, Karen Taylor. (**Because the meeting was held on the 5th Tuesday which is not the usual day, all absences are considered excused per the bylaws.*) **Staff Present:** Ebenezer Smith; Paola Garcia.

6:41pm Call to Order: The Zoom call began at 6:30pm. First Vice Chair Katherine Diaz gave brief instructions of how the meeting would work given the very different format, and Jonathan Nuñez-Frometa gave technical assistance with regard to muting, adjusting video/audio settings, etc. The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:43pm with the appearance of a quorum, and offered gratitude for everyone's general health and our ability to harness technology to be together even while staying apart due to the global pandemic. As the minutes of the February General Meeting were not available (with apologies from the Secretary), their approval was deferred to the April General Meeting. The Chair also offered gratitude to Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee Chair Liz Ritter for her work on a CB12M notice on the use of Parks and availability of cultural resources in these times; to the Staff for their incredible efforts in these times to continue the work of the Board; to Martin Collins & the Washington Height/Inwood Chamber of Commerce for their continuing information on local businesses; to Kathy for setting up link for this meeting, and to Jonathan for his ongoing tech support.

6:48pm District Manager's Report, Ebenezer Smith:

- Thanks to Eleazar for his leadership in this situation that is changing every moment. Report on Richard Lewis whose sister has not been able to have a funeral due to the pandemic. There will be a memorial service in the future when circumstances permit. Thanks to Natalie Espino of the MBPO, who has provided invaluable assistance reaching out to NYPD, Medical Examiner's Office, funeral home, and Richard's family, and with helping to make arrangements.
- Thanks to the MBPO which bought Zoom for all for Community Boards so that they may conduct their business virtually. We also had bought a license previously, which we used last week for our March 24th Executive Committee Meeting.
- Participated in virtual meeting with the NYS Department of State regarding the temporary suspension of some of the requirements of the Open Meeting Law: the only suspension is the requirement to be gathered physically together; virtual meetings via online platforms are OK. All other requirements regarding notification and public participation remain in place.
- The NYC Department of the Aging (DFTA) has advised that clients will receive direct delivery, including 5 meals delivered each week; grab-and-go meal service at senior centers is suspended.
- NYPH/CU will occupy 2nd floor of the Alianza building, and only their employees will be working there, so that space is unavailable to the Board to use. This new use is unconnected to COVID; the area is being used as temporary office space.
- Catholic Charities also is working on food distribution.

6:55pm Ana Garcia, NewYork-Presbyterian Corporate Director of Government & Community Affairs offered an update on some of the resources we have to address this current Coronavirus pandemic. She apologized that Paul Dunphey, Senior VP & COO of NYP's Allen Hospital was unable to remain on the call. For general information on the epidemiology and the disease itself we should continue to reach out to the NYC Department of Health, a representative of whom (Pauline Ferrante, Manhattan Community Coordinator) had given a very thorough presentation at the March 5th Health & Environment Committee meeting.

- First message: we are open and EXTREMELY busy. Our urgent & emergency treatment is happening. We have postponed all elective procedures and are doing routine outpatient care through telehealth and other virtual platforms. We had developed this over recent years and were prepared to provide for excellent care even without that in-person visit.
- Text NYP to 69697 to download app for virtual urgent care right on your phone, or www.nyp.org/ondemand/urgent-care for laptop. You will be connected to Board-certified practitioner for appropriate virtual care.
- There is a tent outside of the Morgan Stanley Children’s Hospital on Broadway. This is not for any special or particular kind of care, but to create more space. PLEASE HELP US by reminding people to only come to the hospital ONLY for a true emergency, i.e., a life-threatening situation.
- Find our new visitor policy, which is updated regularly to reflect changing public health concerns, on our website: www.nyp.org.
- The Ambulatory Care Network is continuing to provide services, but moving towards telehealth services. Call 1-866-463-2778 for med mgmt., nutrition counseling, remote patient monitoring, and other services.
- We also have a general public COVID Hotline: 646-697-4000, 6am-11pm, in English & Spanish.
- We also have information online in many languages.
- We have partnered with the Hispanic Federation to provide \$10 million to the neighborhoods of Northern Manhattan as part of our commitment to the community. For more information and to apply, visit <https://hispanicfederation.org/nomafund>.
- Q&A / Sally Fisher: how is this impacting inpatient psych? How are you dealing with CPEP admissions? A: Don’t know; will find out. Sally: The WH CORNER Project is on pause right now, and that causes further problems. We would appreciate any feedback.
- Danielle Jettoo: re texting and telehealth, is it free for people without insurance? Also: what are you doing to ensure that ER & other staff have adequate PPE? A: There is a flat fee of \$49 now reimbursable by insurance. PPE is our top priority and we currently have adequate PPE.
- Steve Simon: NYT reported that half of your staff have been sickened by virus. Is this accurate? If so, how are you dealing with that? A: I don’t know. I can look into that and get back to you. Steve: do you have enough ventilators? A: currently yes, we are able to provide high-quality services to all patients. We need more supplies but right now we have enough. Steve: do you have numbers on how many patients? A: I don’t know; it is high, in the hundreds. Steve: I’ve sent other questions on statistics and capacity. A: we are working on expanding on our capacity; not to the target of 50% increase, but we are using a variety of strategies.
- Tanya Bonner: How is this information getting out to people in the digital divide who can’t be texting and emailing and following online? This is a wealth of info and I really appreciate it, but what about people who don’t have access to this constantly evolving info? How can we help? A: one reason we made the phone hotline was for exactly this reason. Help us get that phone number out there. Please also share our FAQ flyer. It is challenging in this moment of physical distancing to get info into people’s hands, so we are open to your thoughts. Most important is let people know the phone number.
- Daryl Cochrane: what about gender affirming surgery? These are not necessarily “elective”? A: I don’t specifically know. We have the virtual services to help patients bridge this gap until surgery can happen.
- Osi Kaminer: Can you tell us more about the plasma treatment protocol? A: yes; it’s an experimental treatment. The folks at Columbia have a recruitment website so that people who have overcome COVID can donate their plasma.
- Additional questions may be submitted through Q&A we will email and report back.
- On behalf of the Board Steve offered thanks to all working on frontlines.

7:24pm **NYC Councilmember & Health Committee Chair Mark Levine:**

- Thanks to Ana Garcia for her calm and reassuring demeanor in the midst of a crisis. Our system is maxed out. It's hitting us really hard because people live in crowded conditions and don't have the luxury of telecommuting and they are facing a brutal storm in the surge of many colleagues who are out. It may not be the 50% that has been reported in the media, but it's certainly thinning the ranks. Staff are working 12-hour shifts, with no days off.
- We all have a role to play in terms of protecting ourselves and relieving the burden on the hospitals. People must focus on staying out of hospitals, even if they have or suspect they have COVID-19. Most people will have the experience that I did: that they will recover at home without medical care. We are seeing an enormous number of 911 calls: more than 7k calls/day, ~2k of which should not be made. Mild/moderate COVID can be very scary, with high fever and dry cough, but unless you have serious difficulty breathing, DO NOT CALL EMS OR GO TO ER because that's forcing the system to burn through PPE and resources, and is exposing staff unnecessarily. Hydrate, stay at home, take over-the-counter medications for symptoms and reserve the hospital system for those most in need.
- Reports I'm hearing from the neighborhood is that there is still crowding in local stores. We have got to stop this. I am pushing the City to create and enforce rules, some of which are being done by stores and supermarkets. The public has really got to respect social distancing in our stores and essential businesses; it's a basic safety measure.
- Q&A / Sally: closing of playgrounds? How to impress on Mayor that this is a critical need. A: we want for people to continue to exercise which is important; solo is encourage, but no team sports and social gatherings. Hard to do that on a playground. Hard to keep kids from touching surfaces in a playground, but they can be carriers and their parents are there, too. I have called for closing of playgrounds. We have sent a letter to the Governor calling on that. Steve: speaking for Parks, we are also closely monitoring the situation, we brought in extra staff to monitor. PEP is checking on parks. Decision made today to close two local playgrounds (Javits & Wallenburg) due to lack of physical distancing and will likely take similar action elsewhere. We're trying to meet multiple competing needs. We had put up signage on appropriate ways to use playgrounds, but that wasn't universally observed.
- Nobles Crawford: can we close Margaret Corbin Drive to traffic to give people more space to walk and bike? There isn't a lot of commercial activity. A: Would like to limit to the ones that are crowded otherwise. DoT also wants to make sure that they're not closing a bus route or streets too close to a hospital. Although it's not in my district I support closing Margaret Corbin Drive; not sure why it needs to be open since the Cloisters are closed.
- Curtis Young: re numbers of sick NYPD & FDNY/EMS? A: 500 EMS workers out. It's hard all around. No command is immune from this. PD & FD are saying they're meeting all their staffing needs, though of course there's less flexibility in staffing. This is why we must prioritize first responders in addition to healthcare workers for PPE. I will check with 1PP on the big picture.

7:40pm **Chris Nickel, Office of NYS Senator Robert Jackson:** The State budget is projected to have a \$10-\$15bn shortfall. Budget being voted on tonight or early tomorrow. Sen. Jackson is clear that we cannot cut education or Medicaid. He also supports bail reform. For updates & information, email me at chris@senatorjackson.com to join our list. We also are helping to facilitate building-wide mutual aid networks to coordinate help among neighbors. We have 175+ pod leaders; email mutualaid@senatorjackson.com. Our offices are open; email COVID19@senatorjackson.com for resource guide.

7:42pm **Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer:**

- Thanks to Chair for his efforts at this time.
- We have gotten Fresh Direct distributing food every week at five NYCHA sites. Every Tuesday we are at Dyckman Houses. Thanks to tenant leader, Mr. Greene. Our priority is feeding and seniors and the poor. We are hoping to get someone like an ambassador at NYCHA to make sure that seniors get food.

- Last night had a 300-person webinar on YouTube talking about education and distance learning. We are going to do this again for small businesses.
- I am very focused on math to make sure that they have all the face shields and gowns and other PPE. I think that everyone should have a mask.
- Focus has been on our newsletter going out every day, with all sorts of information and resources. I want to thank the City agencies for all of their efforts.
- The Chair offered his personal thanks to the MBP for her efforts.
- Q&A / Steve: Is your office continuing efforts around the census even with everything going on?
A: 100% done in our office. But Staten Island is ahead of Manhattan, so we must do better because we can't have SI beating us!! Also we had a great robo-call from Deputy BP Aldrin Bonilla's young son, which wasn't even a script, he did that on his own.
- Q/ Member of the public, "Reid" re rent relief, and what should people eat to stay healthy? A: the Governor has instituted a 90-day moratorium on evictions. I don't know what will happen in Albany, but there is a push at this time for a rent moratorium. Sen. Housing Committee Chair Cavanaugh has another bill to fund people's rent who can't afford to pay. There's another bill to put security deposit into fund to be used for actual rent. And I have a letter going out to RGB for no increase. There's a lot on the table. Re: eating, beginning on Thursday all schools that provide food for students and their families, from 7:30am-1pm are available to anyone in the community who needs a meal. You do not need to be an NYC public school student or family member; anyone can go get a meal. Visit nyc.gov/schools for a list of open schools.
- Q&A / Sally: your daily updates are really helpful; keep 'em coming; thanks!
- Danielle: folks being released from jails due to age & COVID, yet it seems like there aren't very many resources for them. Can we expand advocacy? A: I will be in touch with you and Natalie to figure out what's being done and get back to you on that. We have been working with the homeless populations, the elderly, and I am happy to work with you on prison populations.
- Domingo: we'll weather the storm together as a community, but I'm part of two different networks providing the hospital with face shields, but with dropping off supplies for the elderly. Are there any resources for this? The masks are being put together at the 92nd Street Y using 3-D printing. The state says that you have to be producing at least a half-million masks to qualify for assistance, but these people are "only" producing 14k masks. A: The Robin Hood Foundation? These would have to be independent contractors; we can follow up.
- Domingo: can we create a hub for food drop-offs, and collect for the elderly to get them packages? A: We have networks working on this and will look into how we can support this.
- Ayisha Oglivie: regarding incarcerated individuals. Their attorneys can't even get into jails. Legal Aid offices are closed. There's no way for family members to know how to advocate for their incarcerated members, and people cannot defend their rights. A: we can find out on an individual basis. On a larger basis, I can do my best to get back to you. We are working on that. Let me see what I can find out.

8:04pm Mariel de la Cruz, NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer's Office: We are working on a demographic profile of front-line workers. We have called for childcare for those workers, as well as deep-cleaning of small businesses and non-profits. Tax revenues are due to drop by \$15bn. Enabled capital funds to be used for tablets for students. Shared contact info. We get and are being made aware of resources daily so reach out to me.

8:10pm Committee Reports & Additional reports from Elected Officials' Representatives
Domingo Estevez, Business Development Committee Chair: We've developed a flyer on resources for businesses to help weather this storm. We also have an event on Thursday, but we'd like to have a longer outreach period. Mariel offered to provide resources to support that.

8:14pm Ariel Miranda, Housing & Human Services Committee Chair: spoke about hardships for tenants and pending legislation in Albany. Will be working on a reso at next Committee meeting.

8:18pm **Debby Nabavian, for Congressman Adrian Espallat:** gave some information on latest developments and legislation at the federal level, and contact info. Major source of relief is a direct payment of \$1200 for individual making up to \$75k and couples making up to \$150k, plus \$500 for qualifying child(ren) up to age 17. That number will decrease with income and is subject to a cap. The IRS is finalizing the mechanism for payment. For people receiving SSI they may have to do a short-form equivalent. The feds are hoping to get the money moving in a 2-3 week period. Unemployment has also been expanded through the Coronavirus Assistance & Recovery Act. 13-week extension, some expanded access for self-employed and gig-economy workers, and the waiting period has been waived. NYS DOL is working on fielding a tremendous number of calls. As Domingo highlighted, our office will present on various programs pointed at small businesses. Emergency loans are being expanded in the same way as other kinds of disasters. Some of these are loans (which must be repaid); some are grants (which don't). Also repeated information from the Hospital regarding its Northern Manhattan recovery fund: \$2mm for immediate aid, and \$8mm later over two years. To reach WH District Office call me at 646-678-0721 or Laurie Tobias Cohen at 646-860-8367.

8:26pm **Wendy Olivo for NYS Assemblymember Al Taylor:** Thanks to technology our office is open and we are all available by phone. Also working on the census. Encouraging people regarding social distancing. So many people seem to be out-and-about as if everything is normal, and they shouldn't be! We have to work together to get the word out.

- **Q&A for electeds' representatives /** Ayisha: only 10 businesses applied? The criteria were very limited: only businesses that had 4 employees were eligible, which seems like a random number. What program was Domingo referencing? A: Domingo is referencing the Hospital's northern Manhattan fund. Ayisha: that's part of the problem, that's pretty limiting; working with SBS has its complexities and limitations and small businesses we need help with that.
- Tanya expressed some frustration with the NYP/Hispanic Federation funds format. Also stated with regard to small businesses that Women Entrepreneurs NYC is having a meeting next Thursday at 11am about economic relief programs; register via Eventbrite. She also asked are some other committees doing around the issue of this virus?
- Wayne Benjamin asked for clarifications about the timeline for the two-year rollout on the NoMa fund. A: Must serve or be located in WH/Inwood, or Morningside Heights. The size of the grants has not yet been determined, but it will be \$8mm in total.
- Steve: a service we could provide to the community is to compile all of this information because there is so much information out there.
- Domingo: we are working on a one-sheeter. But we didn't want to jump the gun. We're trying to get all the sources, and not just direct people to websites. We are making sure we have all the information.

8:46pm **Kiani Diaz for Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez:** we are working from home. The Councilmember is looking at how to lessen the economic blow, but doesn't have a plan yet. We are hoping that the budget is passed on time so that funding continues to flow.

8:48pm **Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee Chair:**

- Playgrounds are closed, as are ballfields, courts, dog runs, and skate parks. Parks are open, but folks *must* be vigilant to stay at least 6-feet apart from each other at all times. We are blessed uptown with hundreds of acres of parks and as you can see from my changing photo gallery of Zoom backgrounds spring is in full bloom. Safe use of our parks – i.e., alone, or observing distance – is an excellent way to get exercise and work through some of the anxiety and tension that can come from self-isolation. The Parks website has trail maps, and also links to many at-home activities, from exercise to home gardening, to science/nature education, and more.

- In terms of culture, these are very difficult times. Theatres are dark; all performance are cancelled for the foreseeable future; libraries, museums, and cultural institutions are closed; and people have to remain indoors alone. Rather than thinking in terms of “social distancing” we must think of ways to maintain social connection even while maintaining physical distance. Often the arts are a powerful way to help process through loss, grief, and challenge. There is a wealth of art and culture available online, most of it for free. Many artists and performers have seen their livelihoods disappear overnight; NoMAA and other cultural umbrella organizations are working to provide resources to support the arts & entertainment communities in this time.
- Re the Fort Tryon Park restaurant concession, rather than doing a Board resolution due to the uncertainty of meeting during the pandemic, the Parks Department agreed to just receive the Committee meeting minutes which summarized the points of public discussion.
- Sally: we should be flyering the parks/culture information as not everyone is online. She also asked if there is funding available for Community Boards to enable community notification.

8:53pm The Secretary *called the roll.

8:58pm **Natalie Espino for Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer:**

- Props to the Board staff for their continued efforts under extremely difficult circumstances.
- Will follow up with Sally & Liz on notification strategies for folks who are not online.
- Also, bear with us as we work through the (re-)appointment notification process.

8:59pm Ayisha: brother is owner of PRX gym on Broadway in Inwood. He is offering free workout classes and diet/nutrition instruction during the COVID quarantine period. There are 5k ppl worldwide who are joining in this.

There being no further Business the Chair entertained a motion to adjourn which was made by Domingo Estevez, seconded by Mary Anderson, and approved by acclamation.

**Note: since some people dialed in and were not identified on-screen by name and not able to respond audibly when called, attendance was confirmed after to the meeting to ensure that all who were in attendance were counted as such.*

Respectfully submitted: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Secretary