

**COMMUNITY BOARD SIX
YOUTH/HUMAN SERVICES/EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MARCH 24, 2010**

PRESENT:

J. BERNARD	L. CIRANDO	M. KOLMAN
J. SKALLER	S. TURET	V. TWYFORD

EXCUSED:

D. VITO

ABSENT:

L. BUFFINGTON	S. COLES	M. DE PALMA
E. FELDER	L. HILL	T. KAMBER
R. LOHIER	M. RECA-HEYER	Y. ROMAN
M. RUIZ	J. TREGO	

GUESTS:

G. WHEELER	M. CARR	M. MAHONEY
L. WALTON	M. BENEJAN	S. EDELSTEIN

***** MINUTES *****

Presentation and discussion with a representative for Common Ground's Street to Home (Brooklyn/Queens) program working under contract with the Department of Homeless Services to provide a variety of services to chronically homeless individuals living on the street with the goal of placing clients into safe and secure permanent supportive housing.

Common Ground ("CG") representative Lenny Walton provided a brief overview of the program. CG has a contract with the city to work with chronically homeless people and move them into permanent situations. All 311 calls relating to homeless people are routed to CG and they typically responds to a 311 call within two hours. CG makes referrals to hospitals and health care centers. CG also provides outreach patrol 24 hours a day, 7 days a week across Brooklyn and other areas of the city. The CG patrol will talk with homeless people to determine if they are in need of services. CG also provides supportive housing in all five boroughs. These are large facilities with services available on site.

CG expressed its appreciation for the referrals it receives from local community boards, who are more likely to know what is going on in the neighborhood.

In response to a question about whether it would be appropriate to contact CG for assistance with problems involving persons living in affordable housing, CG reiterated that it only deals with chronically homeless and not preventative services. He suggested Home Bound for prevention services.

In response to a question about trending over the last few years, CG mentioned that they perform a homeless count every January and the number for this year is 3400, down from 5000 five years ago. There is a steady decline over the five years but this year is actually up 11-12 percent over

last year. CG is concerned that the numbers could increase if the recession lingers. Shelters have a very low vacancy rate right now, about 6 percent.

The community director for CG in Brooklyn is Shana Wertheimer. Her contact information is as follows: 179 North 6th Street, 3d Floor Brooklyn, NY 11211 718.360.8029 (telephone) 718.360.8005 (fax) swertheimer@commonground.org www.commonground.org

Presentation and discussion with representatives for the Administration for Children's Services on a citywide plan to close various day care centers, including several in the district.

Two representatives from New York's Administration for Children Services – Suzy E. E. Edelstein (Chief of Staff, Child Care and Head Start) and Maria Benejan (Associate Commissioner, Program Development, Child Care and Head Start) – presented an overview of the reasons why fifteen (15) day care centers have been slated for closing. Four (4) are in CB6's district. For those children and families affected by the closures, CC/HS will work to find alternate services within the community.

They explained that there are 120,000 children in day care. They reported that Child Care/Head Start (CC/HS) has been "struggling" for the last four to five years because expenses have exceeded revenues. They experienced historic under-enrollment last year. The expense categories with the highest costs include property leases (including maintenance costs), health insurance and staff salaries.

CC/HS tried to get state and federal funding to bridge the deficit, but they have not been successful. They have met with the city's elected officials and will continue to do so. The decision to close certain facilities is a part of the mayor's budget (to go into effect July 1) and is currently under negotiation with the city council. It is not yet a "done deal." CC/HS reported that they had to come up with a reduction of \$9 million to meet the decrease in projected budget numbers this year. The number will go up next year.

CC/HS identified several "cost-saving initiatives" and emphasized that children will continue to receive services, though they acknowledged that there may be some "discomfort." The factors that accounted for the closings include lease costs, maintenance costs and the number of programs in the area as well as community need and number of eligible children. CC/HS stressed that enrollment was not a factor in the decision to close certain day care centers.

CC/HS was unable to provide specific reasons for the four closures in CB6's district during the meeting, but offered to "get back" to CB6. Committee members stressed the need for "real numbers" and expressed frustration that they would come without being ready to share such information. Representatives of the landlord of the AMICO Court Street Daycare reported that the landlord had never been contacted to renegotiate the lease and, also, that the landlord had never acted upon the lease provisions that permitted him to bill for maintenance costs. CC/HS reported that it does not negotiate with the landlords, rather DCAS is handling negotiations.

Committee members questions whether the factors took into account course of dealing rather than specific lease terms. Committee members also questioned whether CC/HS took the "fair share criteria" into account, for example, to determine that no one district would be disproportionately affected by the closings. Committee members also inquired how the \$9 million came to be allotted to CC/HS and asked whether the total approximately \$30 million

could have been allocated differently. CC/HS could not provide answers to these questions during the meeting.

In response to a question about whether CC/HS considered future needs in making the decision to close the day care centers, they referred CB6 to the child care website www.acs.nyc.gov which sets out the future community needs assessment information.

Committee members expressed concern about the fact that many public schools do not have universal pre-kindergarten. CC/HS reported that the Department of Education rejected its bid to have universal pre-kindergarten in day care centers.

Committee members formulated a recommendation by consensus as follows:

Given that a significantly disproportionate four out of the fifteen Citywide day care center lease terminations are being proposed by the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) for our district (including AMICO Court Street DCC at 292 Court Street, Bethel Baptist DCC at 242 Hoyt Street, Strong Place DCC at 242 Hoyt Street and Salvation Army Fiesta DCC at 76-80 Lorraine Street), representing fully half of our eight publicly-funded day care centers, and given that ACS has completely failed to provide any site-specific information as to the criteria for these closings, and given the apparent failure for ACS to follow the City's Fair Share Criteria in developing its plan, we strongly object to the closings in our district and find that they would be detrimental to the health and welfare of our families and children.

The committee's recommendation will require a motion from the floor at the general meeting as a quorum at the committee meeting was lacking.

Minutes submitted by Lisa Cirando on March 29, 2010.