

BROOKLYN COMMUNITY BOARD 6
TRANSPORTATION/PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
MAY 21, 2015

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT:

W. BLUM	S. MATHEWS-NOVELLI	T. MISKEL
M. SILVERMAN	R. SLOANE	U. ZIMMERMAN

EXCUSED:

D. DECOSTANZO	D. GORDON	S. LONIAL
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ABSENT:

D. ABRAHAM	J. ARMER	J. COHN
D. GIULIANO	R. GRAHAM	E. MCCLURE
M. MURPHY	R. RIGOLLI	J. OLTMAN SMITH
J. THOMPSON		

GUESTS:

K. THOMAS	B. CHANCEY
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*****MINUTES*****

The meeting was called to order at by the Co-Chair, Tom Miskel.

Presentation and discussion with representatives for the Office of Emergency Management on Hurricane Preparedness.

The OEM rep started her presentation by explaining that the hurricane season in NYC lasts from August to November. She then presented the campaigns that the OEM has developed to enhance preparedness, Know your Zone: Following Hurricane Sandy, OEM revised their evacuation zones from three to six zones. Note that these zones are not exactly the same as the FEMA zones. OEM is running a campaign to have residents find out if they live in an evacuation zone. One can find out the zone on the OEM website or by calling 311.

She explained that the biggest hazards of the storms are high winds and flooding. In preparing for storms special attention needs to be provided for people with special needs including language barriers.

There was a brief discussion about normal insurance not covering flooding and that coverage for damage from wind is also being cut back. It was acknowledged that in some instances where houses are being built in very close proximity to waterfronts it is understandable that insurances might not be willing to cover the risk the house owner is taking.

The question was raised if the OEM provided information after a storm about where to go for services, what stores are open etc. The OEM does not provide that service but recommended gathering information from the TV.

Another campaign that was presented is Notify NYC, which allows residents to sign up for email or text message notifications about emergencies in their ZIP code.

There was a brief discussion about the unusual character of the CB6 area that has all zones and in very close proximity to each other.

The suggestion was made that following a catastrophe there should be a better organizational structure allowing the city workforce to volunteer in the aftermath. Something that wasn't in place after Sandy.

The OEM rep continued to explain that the storm surge is the most dangerous part of a storm and that her colleagues monitor the surge extremely closely starting up to two weeks prior to a storm reaching NY.

She continued to explain that all citizens should identify the closest evacuation center to their home. The centers are open as soon as a call for evacuations is made and the evacuation center then directs evacuees to shelters.

The representative then went through a list of recommendations for emergency situations and presented the emergency plan booklet, which helps citizens prepare for any kind of emergency.

She briefly presented the CERT program (Community Emergency Response Teams), a volunteer emergency relief training program.

The question was raised if the city had contingency plans for larger emergencies that might require larger evacuations for example, which the OEM rep could not answer. She did share that the OEM had close to doubled its staff (from 180 to 230) following Sandy in response to the lawsuit the OED lost for the lack of adequate support to people with special needs after Sandy.

There was a brief discussion of how this information can reach citizens better after which the OEM presentation ended.

A committee member then asked to discuss the role of the CB and its committees. He suggested that attendance at meetings that consisted only of presentations like the one today and did not require a vote should be voluntary. He expressed his concern that with these kinds of presentations are simply made to fill the calendar and that the committee is not fulfilling its function of taking on real and urgent concerns in the community and giving feedback and making recommendations to the responsible parties.

The request was made to urge the city to share more significant projects with the community board and seek their advice on them, or to otherwise rethink the need for a community board.

The committee member then presented as one example of an urgent matter for the community the planned renovation of the section of the BQE that runs below the Brooklyn Heights promenade, a triple cantilever roadway. He expressed his dissatisfaction that the fact that he was informed of the plans not by the city reaching out to the CB but by company representatives who are planning to enter a RFP. Via the community meeting called by these private entities he learned that the RFP is scheduled to open in

July 2015, followed by a year of RPF reviews, followed by a year of planning; construction is then planned to take 3 years, but even the companies at the meeting admitted that it would easily take 5 years. The effect will be felt in CB districts 2 and 6.

There is a big concern because New York City not New York State is taking charge of the project, and why that is. From the information presented so far, it looks as if the City is going to do the reconstruction on the cheap, with minimal plans of how to manage redirecting the traffic which will end up on residential streets in the area. There is also the concern that the reconstruction itself is not thorough and forward-thinking enough. 90% of the costs will be covered by the federal funds, the rest by the City which adds the additional concern that if the reconstruction isn't up to federal highway standards they will not provide the funds. It was also mentioned that the north and south ramps are both tremendously dangerous which need to be addressed as part of the work being planned.

It was agreed by the committee that it should be more proactive in bringing real matters of public safety and transportation to the committee and inviting the responsible entities to present to the committee, rather than waiting for the City, starting with inviting the DOT presenting on the planned work of the BQE.

[The meeting was not officially adjourned but ended around 8 pm]

The minutes were submitted by Ute Zimmerman.