

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – November 2, 2017

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Simon (Chair), Daryl Cochrane, Richard Allman, Sara Fisher, Wanda Garcia, Andrea Kornbluth, Elizabeth Lehmann.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Beatrice Hall (Public Member).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Osi Kaminer.

GUESTS: Michelle Soto, Renee Sumpter and Regina Phillips Tabon, all from START; Catarina Rivera, City Harvest; Shweta Antani, Angela Castillo, Samantha Cinnick and Naomi Gaskin, all from the WHIN Food Council; Mezeguerre Alexandre, RN; Edna Fernandez, Rachel Bridge Corp. Tenants; Patrick and Andrea O'Rourke.

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

1. Presentation regarding START Treatment & Recovery Centers' clinic, 500 W. 180th St., and the plan to move it to 2406-12 Amsterdam Ave. – Renee Sumpter, LCSW-R, CASAC, Vice President of Behavioral Health Services, said the following:

- The organization has been in existence since 1969. It was previously known as the Harlem Hospital Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program, later as Addiction Research and Treatment Corp.
- Specializes in substance abuse treatment, mostly opioids. Also provides primary care, HIV/AIDS counseling, vocational services, etc. Assists adolescents in detention.
- Now has seven programs in NYC, including West and East Harlem, three in Brooklyn.
- Opened clinic in West Harlem, 119 W. 124th St., in September offering outpatient mental health services for adolescents (12-17 years old). Also train teachers on mental health needs of students.
- The opioid epidemic affects all ages, races and groups. In Washington Heights, as in every neighborhood, everyone is affected. It's a disease, not a moral affliction.
- Have outgrown the current site, which serves 300 people. New space is larger, can serve 500 people.
- Funded mostly through Medicaid reimbursements. Sliding scale for self-pay.
- Half of patients have mental health issues.
- Don't have geographic breakdown of patients' residences. Most patients seek treatment outside their community to avoid stigma.

In response to S. Simon's request, Ms. Tabon, legal counsel, agreed to provide a zip code breakdown showing how many patients from WH-I's four zip codes are served at this clinic and others run by START.

Michele Soto, MD, Vice President of Medical Services, continued the presentation:

- Most people need to take medicine throughout their lives to prevent relapses.
- Current building does not have an elevator. Some patients are getting older and have difficulty climbing stairs. New building will be accessible.
- Prescription drugs are the gateway to drug addiction.
- Limited to giving patients a 7-day supply of medicine.
- Some addicts switching from opioids to heroin because it's cheaper.
- Also provide hepatitis-C treatment.
- Offer tele-medicine, using doctors in Rochester and Buffalo.
- Screen for HIV "at every opportunity we can."
- Security staff deals with loitering, closely monitor the street outside the clinic.
- The W. 180th St. clinic director is Ms. Arezoo Teremechi.
- We don't turn patients away.

2. Report on Neighborhood Garden Assessment – Catarina Rivera, Community Engagement Manager, City Harvest, noted that she was joined by members of the Washington Heights-Inwood Food Council and said the following:

- WH-I does not have empty lots as in other communities that can be used as community gardens.
- Goal of her project is to compile a list of all the gardens in the community, including those operated by churches, schools and institutions, and issue a report with a map for public dissemination.
- Project is supported by the Open Architecture Society.

- Phase I is to prepare the report and map with past, current and desired gardens, noting those that grow food and to whom it is available. Groups will be asked what resources they need. Want to document what the challenges are in operating gardens.
 - Will need volunteers to help collect the information. A project coordinator will be hired.
 - Phase II report will have recommendations on creating new gardens, reactivating old gardens, with a plan for obtaining financial resources.
 - Timeline: Data will be collected in December-January, report and map will be done in February-March, report will be published in April-May, action plan will be established in June-beyond.
 - P.S. 98 garden being paved over because of rat problem.
 - She will report back to the committee next spring when the report is completed.
3. **Isabella Geriatric Center Report** – Betty Lehmann, Director of Marketing & Communications, reported as follows:
- Collected a “massive” amount of supplies for hurricane victims in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands
 - Studio and 1-bedroom apartments still available at Isabella House
 - 230 residents attended the 15th annual health fair on 10/13. 54 organizations had tables, including CB 12.
4. **Old Business** – S. Simon reported on the following:
- Results of CB 12 Ranking FY 19 budget requests: The committee’s #1 request – Expand mental health services in our community, especially for youth and older adults, including those operated by WH-I CBOs, and LGBTQI services in CSD 6 for grades 6-12 – was ranked by the board as the #1 overall priority. The committee’s other expense budget items were ranked between #15 and #42. The committee’s #1 capital budget request – Expedite the replacement of old water5 mains and sewer lines in our community – was ranked as the board’s #3 priority.
 - Street and Sidewalk Cleanliness Ratings: The rating for acceptably clean streets in our district for the first quarter of FY 2018 (July, August and September) was 90%. Sidewalks were rated as 96.7% acceptably clean.
 - A man jumped off the George Washington Bridge yesterday, the 13th suicide leap from the bridge this year, even while the Port Authority has started installing a temporary fence to prevent suicides.
5. **New Business** – S. Fisher: an environmental mitigation bank for the waterfront should be created. P. O’Rourke: we should have a healthier food culture, a “Just Say Yes” to fruits and vegetables program. Other communities throughout the city have workshops sponsored by the NYC and NYS Health Departments, but not WH-I. He was told that the WH-I Food Council conducts such workshops, and he agreed to work with them.
6. **Announcements** – S. Fisher: WEACT holds its annual membership meeting 11/11. WH-I Food Council holds its monthly meeting 11/16. Halloween party at Swindler Cove 11/5. Friends of Inwood Hill Park and Isham Park volunteers doing clean-up projects 12/2. O. Kaminer: we should request data from NYPH on drug overdose cases at the hospital ER.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Steve Simon.