

CB12M Youth and Education Committee

Meeting Minutes

Meeting #10

Monday, December 7, 2020

LOCATION: **VIRTUAL MEETING**

Committee Members Present: Fe Florimon, Chair; Waldys Cruz, Assist Chair; Glennis Aquino; Maria Luna; Gabriela Estrella; Jonathan Nunez-Formeta; Paradis Phoenix; Miriam James

Committee Member(s) Absent: Miriam James; Excused: Christina Richiez

Public Member: Guillermo Perez

Guests: Representatives of Ambar Charter Schools': Dr. Vhathi R. Acosta, Executive Director; Ana Vargas, Founding Principal; Veronica Almedina, Chief Schools Officer; Christine Ganey, Chief Communications Officer. Representative of **Internal Creation Inc**, Jahzeel Montes, Founder & Executive Director

The meeting was called to order by Chair Fe Florimon at 7:05pm.

Discussion that took place as indicated below:

Members of the Committee and the guests were introduced by the Chair and the agenda was reviewed.

Ambar Charter School Presentation

- 1) **Representative of Ambar Charters School (ACS): Ms. Veronica Almedina**, Chief Schools Officer started the presentation as follow:

We look forward to sharing with you the history of amber charter schools and our excitement in opening our third school in Inwood this September of 2021.

Ms. Almedina shared a substantial background about her career as administrator. In the educational field she has held several positions including Teacher, Assistant Principal, Dean of Students and School Principal.

According to the school's history, Ambar was created in 2000 as the first Latino-led charter school in New York State by the Community Association of Progressive Dominicans (ACDP), a community based organization. Presently, Ambar has locations in East Harlem and Kingsbridge. They have nearly 1000 students K-5 grade (975 students) between both locations.

Ambar is projecting to open a third branch in the next school year, 2021, at the location 532 West 215 Street, New York, NY 10034 (former location of Northeastern Academy).

The school is not new to the community of Washington Heights. Prior to Kingsbridge location, Ambar was located in district 6 (precisely on West 187 Street, near the school district 6 office).

Ambar's mission is to "provide our students with an academically rigorous and well-rounded education, along with strong character development, enabling them to prosper in their future endeavors."

Dr. Vhathi R. Acosta provided a summary of her academy credential and experience. At the opening of her statement, Dr. Acosta stated that she was born and raised in Washington Heights and continues as follow:

CB12M Youth and Education Committee

She wants to bring Ambar to the community and bring parents choices. Dr. Acosta proceeded to introduce **Christine Ganey, Ana Vargas** and they both shared background summaries about their work and educational experiences.

Ms. Ganey has 9 years of teaching experience and also serves in the different professional capacities at the school. Ms.Vargas was born and raised in Washington Heights and attended school in the community as well. She has been teaching for almost 20 years leading and founding in K-8 settings.

When the school branch opens in fall 2021, it will be for grades K and one. They are also planning to increase one grade per year at both levels, elementary and middle school. The school is focused on Academic rigor and enrichment.

Ambar's enrichment classes include music and technology. Students spend great deal of time on important subjects; out of their daily schedule, 90 minutes are dedicated to literacy and math instructions. Students are also offered science and social studies concept for 90 minutes during the week. The school doesn't have a dual language program but Spanish classes are offered to all learners. To reinforce students' learning, the school provides tutoring assistance.

Ambar enjoys of a large number of community partners in which they exercise mutual collaboration and/or support e.g. after school programming, mental health services, swimming classes all for the benefit of their students.

They also spoke about their community service project. An initiative that helps students understand the importance of not only getting involved in the community but also to give back to the community.

Dr. Acosta stated that they want to acknowledge that they always, as all charter schools, are required to give priority to the community residents in the student lottery system and they will continue doing that.

As for transportation, they will not be providing busing because the streets in this vicinity are too narrow. Families will be encouraged to take public transportation to attend school. The admission process is by lottery, which will be available in April 2021. Students' registration will start in late April or early May.

As for the school's new location, according to Dr. Acosta, they have not purchased the building; they are leasing the building. Questions and answers were facilitated.

After their presentation, Presenters informed the committee that they were scheduled to attend the Traffic and Transportation Committee.

Internal Creations Presentation

2) Presenter, Jahzeel Montes, Founder/Executive Director of Internal Creations, Inc.

Mr. Montes started his presentation by thanking the committee for the opportunity to be heard. He continued his presentation providing details about the mission of his organization, and program services available to the community.

Internal Creations is a non-for-profit organization dedicated since it was founded 6 years ago to provide guitar education program with the mission to develop leadership self sufficiency and life skills through learning the classical guitar.

Mr. Montes was born and raised in Washington Heights for which he has a deep passion. He believes that in NYC youth guitar is an instrument that saved his life. It helped him learn what was possible when proper work and discipline was put into learning a skill.

CB12M Youth and Education Committee

The service is free of charge. He works close with community based organizations, schools, and most recently with W.H.I Mental Health and substance abuse clinic. The guitar program normally follows the Department of Education school year that means to start in September.

According to Mr. Montes, presently the organization is focused on junior high and high school students and is currently developing an elementary school curriculum for stringed instruments specifically towards building the classroom guitars skill set for young children that will transfer over to their junior high school and high school years as well.

During class, the program provides participants with the instrument (guitar) during G class. But, when the class is over, the instruments must be returned to the program. A brief video about the classes was provided showing the unfolding of the program. He also discusses part of the norms of the program, which are based on what he called "The 3P's of Internal Creation." They are considered to be in consistency with the pillars of success: Patience, Persistence and Perseverance.

Due to the pandemic, remote learning is possible. The curriculum transcribed itself from in person to remote. Part of our guitar education program is community service, which aligns with the ideal of building relationships. Questions and answers were facilitated. To contact the program visit:

www.internalcreations.org

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49pm. Seconded by Miriam James

NOTE: To view this meeting, please access the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppGBjMZbwg8>