

CB12M Youth and Education Committee

Meeting #5
Monday, May 10, 2021
MINUTES

LOCATION: VIRTUAL MEETING

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Fe Florimon, Chair; Waldys Cruz, Assist Chair; Glennis Aquino-Gil Maria Luna; and Jonathan Nunez-Frometa.

Board Members: Curtis Young.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Gabriela Estrella; Christina Richiez. **ABSENT:** Paradise Phoenix; and Miriam James.

PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT: Guillermo Perez.

GUESTS: BMCC's Team: **Tony Munroe**, President; **Douglas Israel**, Director of Government and Community Relations; **Anthony Watson**, Acting Dean of Continuing Education and Executive Director for the Manhattan Education Opportunity Center; **Jorge Yafar**, Assistant VP of Campus Planning and Operations; **Erwin Wong**, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academy Affairs. **Leoni Haimson**, Executive Director of the Class Size Matters.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Fe Florimon at 7:07 pm.

Discussions that took place as indicated below:

Chair welcomed and thanked members, guests, and general public present. She indicated that part of the new goals of the committee is to give members the opportunity to exercise leadership by co-chairing meetings. For this meeting, member Jonathan Nunez- Frometa co-directed the meeting.

Committee and board members were asked to introduce them-selves for the record. She discussed the unfolding of the agenda followed by the introduction of the guests/presenters.

The Borough of Manhattan Community College's (**BMCC**) core team appeared before the committee to announce the reopening and expansion of the CUNY/BMCC in the Heights location. BMCC's representatives included the presence of **Tony Munroe**, President of BMCC; **Douglas Israel**, Director of government and Community Relations; **Jorge Yafar**, Assistant Vice President of Campus Planning and Operations; **Anthony Watson**, Acting Dean of Continuing Education and Executive Director for the Manhattan Education Opportunity Center; and **Erwin Wong**, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academy Affairs. The team initiated their presentation by thanking the committee for inviting them to the meeting. Representatives identified themselves and shared their individual roles respectively and proceeded as follow:

According to the brief background information presented Israel, the vision of the developing project has concentrated on the expansion of space and programming. He encouraged committee member, and all participants to share their comments, suggestions, and questions. He looks forward to working together with the community to make sure that the CUNY in the Heights facility will be a success.

Jorge Jafar stated that his team is very excited about the project although the construction was impacted like many things due to the pandemic. But the good news is that the facility is now substantially completed and they are now working on the furnishing and setting up of the classrooms.

The designing of the educational space expansion has been doubled up. An additional 15,000 square feet has been added resulting in 30,000 sq ft in total.

The number of classrooms will be doubled up.

The number of seats in the classrooms will be tripled.

Areas of student support with quiet study room will available.

Student will have access to tutoring space, all facing the beautiful park's view across the street.

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Although the site will not be able to support space for public congregation, the upper level classrooms will be large and flexible enough to accommodate up to 40 students. The flexibility of the classrooms spaces are designed with multi-purpose which can be used as a computer lab or regular classroom.

The team is very excited about the opportunities the new space can bring to the community and possibly new partnerships.

Mr. Wong reiterated his appreciation to the committee for allowing his team to present. According to him, he speaks often to the students and the community and often says that “if you want to go fast you by yourself. But, if you want to go far you as a group and the key to the success of CUNY in the Heights is the fact that it’s a collaborative effort.” In additional to collaborate with other colleges, the team wants to work with the community in general (Politicians, high schools, CBOs among others). An emphasis was made on the importance of community collaboration; and they have already contacted numerous schools, and organizations in the Heights for possible collaboration. Mr. Wong discussed the proposed program areas (four areas) of expansion such as: Credit-bearing coursework that leads to Decree Completion; Continue Education and Workforce Development; Student Support, and Community Programming. With the expansion of program, students will be able to accelerate their goals towards a career and college degree of their choice, which will be a giant step for many students. BMCC’s mission is student success, and they want to see their students succeed.

Mr. Watson spoke about the additional program opportunities that will be available on the path of continuing education and workforce development like health care, and IT programs for the community. They also hope to learn what CB12M is looking particularly to do after knowing about the programs they are bringing to the community. In his opinion, programs that will really address what the community needs. He also spoke about different labs programs including the Sunny lab program among others that will be available as part of their project. At the end of the **Mr. Israel** spoke about their community outreach effort and recent initiative that has taken place. The was able to contact:

Elected Officials.

Educational Institutions including the George Washington Campus.

Employers and Community Based Organizations.

A virtual Town Hall was held May 4th in collaboration with local elected officials who represents the community.

A second Town Hall will be provided early summer (date remains pending).

Co-host Jonathan Frometa, opened the floor for questions allowing committee members first, board members second followed by the general public. And they all asked questions.

At the conclusion of their presentation, the team stated that they look forward to collaborating/partnering with the board. They also encourage the community general inputs/comments and recommendations. The committee collectively agreed to support their proposal for expansion in the Heights.

The next guest, **Ms. Leonie Haimson**, Executive Director from the Class Size Matters was introduced.

Ms. Haimson thanked the committee for inviting her to the meeting and immediately proceeded with her presentation. The main objective of her presentation is to obtain the board’s support on the long standing advocacy for small class size in NYC Public Schools. According to Ms. Leonie, because of the many events that have occurred all together, next year will be our best opportunity to lower class size.

The City Council has proposed \$250M for next year’s DOE budget to hire 2,500 more teachers to lower class size, and targeted towards struggling schools with especial vulnerable students. With the approval of this proposal, the need to reduce classroom size in NYC schools might become a reality. “This could lower the number of class size as many as 10,000 classrooms- as adding a new teacher, lowers class size for all other students in school in the same grade or subject” according to the presenter. She also spoke about the pending bill in the State Legislature to renew NYC’s commitment and obligation to lower class size. The bill was introduced by Senator Robert Jackson, original CFE plaintiff S.6286, and in Assembly A7447 submitted by Joanne Simon. The bill seeks to obligate NYC resubmit update and implement class size reduction programs for over five years, which was on the original contract for excellence law.

The opinion of many researchers about small classes was also highlighted. Many researchers believe that small classes lead to better student outcomes in every single way that can be measured including having better grades with higher test scores, better student engagement, few disciplinary referrals, and higher graduation rates, especially for

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students who need the help the most; and that is why it's one of only a handful of reforms that have been shown to narrow the achievement gap or opportunity gap between economic and racial groups among other factors. One the existent problem is the increase of students referred to special education diagnosed with special education needs. Many of these students are going to private schools at the DOE's expense and even sometime their tuition is paid by city taxpayers to eight hundred thousand a year in public funds without explanation. Presenter further elaborated on others updates and justifications for the need to support the need for small classes in New York City.

At the end of her presentation, she asked the committee to consider proposing a resolution (and example draft was presented) in support of this important cause. The committee reviewed the draft and based on the information presented during the meeting, including the opinions of the general public a motion was called by Chair Florimon, and seconded by member Jonathan Frometa in support the reduction of class size in NYC public schools in fall 2021. After a full debate discussion and proposal of friendly amendments among committee members and board member, (Curtis Young), the chair called the vote and the resolution was passed with following votes:

	Yes	Oppose	Abstaining
Committee Members	5	0	0
Board Members	1	0	0
Members of the Public	3	0	0

Business / New Business-Community Announcements:

- Dr. Gary Altheim, founder and Executive Director from Growth Development Services (GDS) will have an event on Wednesday, May 19th at 5:30 pm. Mental Health awareness month. The flyer will be distributed by CB12M.
- **Next Committee meeting discussions may include: Inwood library construction updates (pending)
WHIN Charter School –New site
CUNY in the Heights –stay tuned for the next Town Hall coming in June.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34pm. Seconded by Maria Luna

NOTE: To view further meeting details, please access the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUc_DMQWApq