

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES – NOVEMBER 6, 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Simon (Chair), Edgard Nau (Asst. Chair), Wanda Garcia, Elizabeth Lehmann, Juan Mejia, Beatrice Hall (Public Member). **ABSENT:** Lorenzo McGougan.

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Arlene Schulman

GUESTS: Paul Dunphy, Henry Ting, MD, Kerry DeWitt, Julio Batista, all from NY-Presbyterian Hospital; Mary Anderson; Albert Hendrix; Patti Jacobs; Deborah Wallace, Bogardus/Hillside/Ellwood/Nagle Block Assn.; Joel Yoffie; Monica Barnkow, Manhattan Times.

S. Simon called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m. He read from a newspaper report that NYC health officials are now monitoring 357 people for signs of the Ebola virus, including medical volunteers who returned from Africa in the past three weeks and Bellevue Hospital personnel involved in treating Dr. Craig Spencer. None of the 357 is showing any symptoms.

1. Local response to the Ebola Virus crisis

Dr. Cheryl Lawrence, Medical Director, Office of School Health, NYC Department of Health & Mental Health (DOHMH), called into the meeting by phone and gave the following report:

- Ebola has been around for many years – not a new disease. In previous outbreaks a few hundred people died. But this year, 4400 have died so far. Sierra Leone, affected by civil war, has a poor infrastructure, and the disease has spread to the cities this time.
- The City and health care providers are well prepared to handle any cases. We have been preparing for several months, long before it became a front-page story.
- Emergency medical personnel have been trained to identify any patients with Ebola virus symptoms.
- We learned from what happened in Texas [when Thomas Duncan was originally sent home by the hospital there and later died].
- All protocols were followed in Dr. Spencer's case. He continues to be stable. All three people he was in contact with are being monitored. His fiancée will remain in quarantine until Nov. 14. His two friends pose no threat. All Bellevue staff involved in Dr. Spencer's care, including lab workers, also being monitored. 470 DOHMH staff are dealing with the response to the Ebola crisis. The cost for all this is significant – in the millions.
- DOHMH's Center for Health Equity is doing community outreach to CBOs, faith-based organizations, etc.
- Not focusing on health insurance or immigrant status.
- Closely monitoring the outbreak in West Africa
- Providers are required to report anyone with the virus.
- The risk of the average New Yorker getting Ebola is very low.
- People at risk are those who traveled to West Africa and have had direct contact with a person or animal with the virus. It is only spread by contact with someone's bodily fluids.
- Symptoms appear 8-10 days after exposure, starting with fever, nausea, etc.
- DOHMH is also monitoring stigma and discrimination resulting from fear over the disease. "We need to support each other, as Mayor de Blasio has said...There is no excuse for discrimination or fear."
- Anyone with concerns should call 311.

Paul Dunphy, Senior VP & Chief Operating Officer, Allen Hospital, NY-Presbyterian Hospital (NYPH), then spoke:

- NYPH is one of eight designated sites for Ebola patients in NY State.
- A dedicated unit to treat Ebola patients (one at a time) was created in an area that had 12 beds in the ICU at the Allen Hospital, modeled after ones at Emory University Hospital and Nebraska Medical Center. These units were established after 9/11 to treat bio-terrorism victims. Patients in the 12-bed unit were relocated. The ICU will be restored after the crisis dissipates.
- Staff have volunteered to work in this unit, including nurses and physicians from the main campus and Allen, and even housekeeping staff.
- They have been trained in wearing full protective equipment, using a simulation unit.
- We are in constant contact with Bellevue and other hospitals. There is a lot of collaboration.
- DOHMH sends "mystery shoppers" to check to see if we are immediately isolating patients with potential symptoms, We passed all tests.
- Safety is our main priority. Our staff has risen to the occasion.

Henry Ting, MD, Senior VP and Chief Quality Officer, NYPH, also spoke:

- 70-80% of the people with the virus are dying in West Africa.
- There have been nine patients in the U.S. 8 have survived with plasma therapy. They can't get the disease for another 10 years. 4 of them contracted the disease here. We have the ability to save their lives.
- A patient may need 3-4 nurses at one time.
- Over 200 patients have come into NYC hospitals with possible symptoms. Only 20 were tested for the Ebola virus. Only one tested positive.
- It's easy to kill the virus. Hand sanitizers (e.g. Purell) kill it.

- 2. Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) program to reduce hospital readmissions** – Kate Spaziani, VP – Grants and Federal Relations, NYPH, reported that the hospital is applying for this new Medicaid program utilizing federal funds. It is partnering with 100 other organizations. The application to the state is due 12/16. It's a 5-year program that would start next April. The objective is to reduce avoidable ER visits and hospital readmissions. NYPH plans to propose 10 projects across its system focusing on 80-100,000 Medicaid patients throughout NYC: HIV, behavioral health, palliative care, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, reducing chronically ill, tobacco cessation, childhood asthma. The state will establish benchmarks and assign patients to NYPH. The project advisory committee has been meeting at the CB 12 office. She will keep us updated.
- 3. Isabella Geriatric Center Report** – Betty Lehmann, Director of Marketing & Communications, gave the following report:
 - Isabella is participating with NYPH in the DSRIP application.
 - The ribbon cutting for the new rehab center is planned for late December or early January.
 - The 20th anniversary event for the Institute for Older Adults will be held 11/21.
- 4. Resolution in support of intro. 422:** Setting nutritional standards for kids' meals with toys or other incentive items at restaurants – S. Simon reported that the resolution has not yet been written. Tabled.
- 5. Old Business** – S. Simon reported that NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation issued a report stating that the environmental cleanup has been completed at the brownfield site at the former gas station at 4566 Broadway (Nagle Avenue). DEC told him that it has submitted comments to the consultant for the draft remedial investigation work plan for another brownfield site at 2420-30 Amsterdam Ave. (W. 181st Street). DEC is waiting for an acceptable revised version before releasing it to the public, including CB 12.

S. Simon reviewed CB 12's rankings of FY 2016 budget requests. The committee's #1 expense budget priority – Expand mental health services in the community, especially for youths and the elderly – was voted by the full board as its #2 expense item. The committee's top capital budget priority – Construct a new District 8M sanitation garage and relocate its trucks from District 12M – came in as #10 on the board's list.
- 6. Announcements** – People's Theatre Project performances 11/21 and 11/22 at the Alianza Dominicana Cultural Center.
- 7. Next Meeting:** The committee discussed whether to hold a joint meeting with the Youth & Education and Housing & Human Services committees on the state of mental health services as a special meeting on a Saturday or as our regular meeting in January. Everyone preferred the latter alternative.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Steve Simon