

CB12M Youth and Education Committee

Meeting #8

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

Minutes

LOCATION: VIRTUAL MEETING

Committee Members Present: Fe Florimon, Chair; Miriam James; Michelle Lee; Maria Luna; Jonathan Nunez-Frometa; Wendy Pena.

Board Members: Absent: Glennis Aquino-Gil; Waldys Cruz, Assist Chair; Gabriela Estrella

Board Members:

Public Member(s) Present: Guillermo Perez.

Guests: Genesis Abreu, Program Manager, WHEELS' Youth Environmental Leadership;
Ricardo Lopez, Outreach Coordinator Youth –Youth Action Youth Build (YAYB).
Meldis Jimenez, Community Organizer, Sugar Hill and Dorothy Day Apartments

The meeting was called to order by Chair Fe Florimon at approximately 7:12 pm.

The following discussion took place as indicated below:

Chair asked committee members to introduce themselves for the record. She discussed the unfolding of the agenda and then proceeded to introduce the guest presenters.

Guest: Genesis Abreu, Program Manager for Clean Air Green Corridor program (CAGC) - Black and Brown youth-led coalition advocating for environmental change. The guest presented an overview and an update of the school's program mainly based on "Environmental Education, Youth Leadership Development, and Community transformation." Ms. Abreu joined the program last year in November 2020.

The school was founded by teachers and community leaders from the school. As an organization, part of the work they do is dedicating time and resources to amplifying youth and community power by inspiring guiding, and advocating for youth not just the highest performing youth in school but, all youth to really identify and persist in reaching whatever their college careers and leadership futures may be.

According to the Presenter at WHEELS, weeklong course "Restoring Highbridge" students learn about the history of green spaces. 182nd Street from Broadway to Highbridge Park has many schools, students thinking about how to create a Clean Air Green Corridor. What could 182nd street look like? Students created renderings of street and bus stops with green roofs, more trees, recycling, and art using street murals. Now young people are moving from visioning to doing-working with different groups to restore and redesign gardens, install air monitors, prepare 17 tree beds and tree guards, and mulch.

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The advocacy for environmental change is through exposure in the classroom, center in action. It also provides youth leadership development to build leadership skills to create community transformation. Rethinking the urban environment and reimagining opening green spaces are part of the work. The program is really about building and advocating for increased access to beautiful and healthy places where everyone can and like to live, learn, work and play. The presenter also shared a youth quote noticing large environmental differences between west and east of Broadway. The quote was written by Mayerling Lantigua, who is a student and Founding Leader of the CAGC. In a reported quote student Lantigua emphasizes what young people are encounter when walking every day to school. Crowded sidewalks full of trash, big uptake in syringes all throughout the neighborhood, and in tree beds among other issues students encounter every day to school.

Ms. Abreu also mentioned that COVID-19 has increased inequity and Washington Heights has poor air quality- many polluting facilities in the community (GW Bridge, highways, etc.). A map was presented showing the substantial car traffic implications and different polluting facilities in the community that is impacting the health and well-being of young people and the rest of the community.

A WHEEL is looking ahead to: 1) putting air quality front and center 2) green career paths 3) beyond their block: replicable model 4) integrating arts and culture.

Maria Luna asked what the school's plans are during the winter. Ms. Abreu responded that they will be concentrating on their afterschool program and ongoing stewardess crew; how to continue to make a presence on the block so neighbors know who they are; and also they want to create a community needs survey to survey other stakeholders in the community.

Michelle Lee asked about what engagement they wanted from the community board?

Answer: Need assistance to open their streets program, for which they have already applied but the application was put on hold due to the 181st busway being recently implemented. 182nd between Amsterdam and Audubon Ave an "Open Street" has been approved. However, the parking situation is a huge problem. It's hard to think about how to approach the community with the loss of parking spaces. Students want infrastructure change and how to make streetscapes like learning labs, and the opportunity to build more outdoor infrastructure.

Ms. Abreu understands that young people of color should be paid for their labor- full budget for summer youth employment. She stated the importance of exposing young people to stem and forestry. In summer 2022, they hope to equip them on urban ecology and forestry as a way of piloting a work-based learning opportunity. Also farming in the school garden, students are dying to grow food in the school garden and restart the compost system in school. Moreover, in the long-term, they want to get young people into doing the solar installation. There are organizations that provide OSHA training and similar courses that they would love to build on. She's a strong advocate that everyone should apply to college but it's not right for everyone. Find students who like to work with their hands and put them there - as NYC moves towards a more sustainable city. WHEELs would like to increase their number of supporters; unfortunately, they have lost several partners in the community, including NYC Parks.

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Chair Florimon, offered Ms. Abreu the opportunity to share any budget item based on her school's needs for the committee's consideration in its budget priorities for FY23; and assistance with the school's infrastructure plans was her response.

Ms. James: Genesis, do you foresee any expansion of this? Everything is in the Heights, I live in Dyckman, would love to see this. Nothing goes past 181st.

Genesis 'answer: Friends of Wheels has a strategic plan to work in other schools uptown, which would include Inwood. Want to take this model and apply it to other schools. Work this summer: not just students from Washington heights. When we start up work based learning pilot, will go there.

Ms. Florimon: Considering the ambitious expansion you're looking into in the near future, have you thought of moving WHEELS to another location/building?

Ms. Abreu: Cannot speak to that, but it would be nice. Some teachers have spoken about that, there are resources, I can relay that to them.

Ms. Florimon; Find out how the CB12M can cooperate with you? Second question: I noticed that in your list of supporters, I only noticed elected official Robert Jackson on your list. Has your school approached other public officials for support?

Ms. Abreu: I know before I started it was difficult to get in contact with the council member's office, but we spoke with Allison James, Director of Education and Environment before she left. Part of our advocacy goals is to invite Carmen De La Rosa to come and speak, have our students talk to her about our plans, and find ways of collaboration and support. We identified Robert Jackson because of his long history one education justice uptown, contacted them to get help with a street closure permit.

Ms. Florimon: Last question: Considering that we have a bunch of nonprofit organizations with individual budgets, can you say out loud one or two things you may want to share with them; how can they help you with your project? How can other community groups help you?

Ms. Abreu: What's been helpful so far is that I'm only one person, so having and collaborating with community partners to work out ideas has been super helpful. Also, some groups that have resources (e.g. compost to donate, lend tools, etc.) are very helpful. Love thought partners, folks with equipment to lend, help with community stewardship. What's the next goal? Capital funding; how to bring infrastructure changes that students have identified - building seating, shelters for people during heatwaves. Having any allies in this work is helpful.

Mr. Perez: Congratulations to you for your work serving our community. I am concerned about the help you need (e.g. expanding to a bigger location). We have opportunities with all the new buildings in our community; they are obligated to provide spaces for the community. When we have a chance to ask for space in these buildings, we should ask for this space or community room for this. We have one now at Amsterdam and 181st going on. We need more of these. So much construction going on now to make money- not enough for community services.

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Ms. Jimenez: Kudos to Genesis for your work with children. We have heard of your work, we will be reaching out directly. My question is about Friends of WHEELS: is that just for students at WHEELS or is it open to the public? What is eligibility?

Ms. Abreu : We are changing our name soon because we want to give all young people access to our services. Part of our strategic plan is to do provide this. We offer college access and post-secondary possibilities at the moment but only for WHEELS students. I personally think everyone should be able to come. Ms. Florimon: Encourage everyone to consider expanding their relationship with the board and then thanked Ms. Abreu for her presentation.

Next guest Ricardo Lopez, representative for the “YOUTH Action Youth Build” organization. An organization that provides: Paid Internships Vocational Training Scholarship Opportunities for young people.

Mr. Lopez saluted everyone and CB12M. He has a background in food sustainability and various experiences including consult for energy efficiency in NY State. YAYB has been around for 50 years in their neighborhood and started after many buildings were burned down. How do youth repurpose them for use? He’s reaching out for help with their next cohort for next year. The program has opportunities for youth 17-24 who have dropped out or re-entry youth. According to Mr. Lopez, their organization covers all of NYC but focuses on uptown, Harlem, South Bronx. They want assistance from the Community Board to get as many youths as possible and fill seats, grow the program.

The offers pathways for re-entry and dropout students: Assistance in GED, get a stipend to go to school, MTA card, certifications and pay for internships in careers e.g. construction (OSHA, Building performance institutes, building science institute) and green jobs. Also, have a network of for-profit partners. Other pathways: Building operators pathway, and superintendents. Many are union jobs, lots of retirement going on so there are careers (and possibilities of retirement!). The last path is culinary pathways, building out the farmers and chefs of tomorrow while instilling food justice and food security. Where are food deserts, food swamps? Food access: Brought world centered kitchen to Brooklyn - worsened by COVID. Food comes from the South Bronx but doesn’t stay there. Another program is for youth under the ages of 17-24, also for veterans, and wireless technicians positions; building 5g networks, training youth to implement these networks. These are the 4 job pathways right now. YAYB has an upcoming event on October 14th, and there will be networking opportunities. Students also have the opportunity to become AmeriCorps members while in HS, also internships for each of these pathways: culinary, construction, building operators, wireless. He could talk about what working together looks like. The bottom line is they need people in seats started towards pathways in career.

Ms. Florimon: Encouraged participants to think about any organizations they may be interested to attend Ricardo’s event and learn about opportunities for program partnership. Mr. Lopez wants to increase his pool of partners in the community of Washington Heights and bring resources.

Michelle Lee asked for the number of youth engaged in Youth Build. Mr. Lopez responded that in 48 years of history, many of their alumni have stayed on track with them, turning students into

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opportunities with certifications. They take around 20-30 youth per year and 10 per class and funnel them through the pathways.

Jonathan Frometa asked about how to reach out, Ricardo Lopez says there is a QR code to register on the flyer, which has been sent to the board. If youth have no high school diplomas, take a different pathway to test at the 7th-grade level. The program is only available for citizens currently.

The chair opened the Budget Priority discussion for FY23. The committee was able to discuss at length their budget priorities and successfully ranked six (6) Capital items and six (6) Expense items. Member Maria Luna Called the motion and the motion was seconded by member Miriam James. The chair called the vote and the resolution was passed with the following number of votes:

	Yes	Oppose	Abstain
Committee Members	6	0	1
Board Members	0	0	0
Public	0	0	0

***Note:** Due to conflict of interest member Wendy Pena abstained on budget items related to PS 128).

New and old business:

Guess Meldis Jimenez, Community Organizer, Sugar Hill, and Dorothy Day Apartments, was called but apparently has left the meeting.

Chair reported the annual event of Youth and Police Building Bridges was phenomenal; it was just great, except that she didn't see any Y&EC's member but hope to see them next year. She thanked the Chairman of the Board, Eleazar Bueno for attending and speaking in support of the event; Board's staff for sharing the event with the community (e-blast); Member Curtis Yong, Gerard Dengel. Member Luna and Florimon thanked Jonathan for hosting the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:58pm.

We thank to our colleague- Michelle Lee for helping with the minutes.

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxTI0jDie8k>