

Community Board 12, Housing & Human Services, November 4, 2021 (via Zoom)

Committee Members Present: Daryl Cochrane, Chair; Marielle Ali, Asst. Chair; Ayisha Oglivie, Edda Santiago, Richard Allman, Michelle Lee, Bruce Robertson, Marshall Vanderpool (Public Member) | **Other Board Member(s):** none
Agencies & Representatives: none | **Staff:** Shinelles Paniagua. | **Public Attendees:** Sonia Figueroa Pagan

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 by the Co-Chair Marielle Ali, Edda Santiago, seconded.

1. Welcome, Opening Remarks, Updates & Announcements, (Marielle Ali, Co-Chair)

Procedural notes: Thanks to Bruce Robertson for chairing the meeting last month about Budget Rankings. Bruce Robertson will prepare minutes for this meeting. See attached background articles referenced in tonight's meeting

Agenda:

1. Budget Rankings Recap
2. Community Health Profile
3. Vaccine rates amongst city agencies
4. Climate change
5. Old Business
 - Armory Public Hearing
 - Bowery Recovery Center 3966 10th Avenue Inwood
6. New business
 - Sonia Figueroa Pagan, public
 - Composting

1. Budget Rankings Recap (Chair)

Last month H&HS Committee set priorities for the upcoming fiscal year, FY '23 for two different budgets: Expense (programming, staff & operations) and Capital (projects which cost at least \$50k and have a useful life of 3+ years).

Capital Budget

- Three of the committee's rankings were in the top eleven of the full Board's priorities, in order of our first, second and third picks
- Seventh ranking for the full board was our second ranking which was to provide increased funding for housing at risk and transit transitioning individuals and families
- Eighth ranking by board was our first pick, to provide funding for the construction of affordable accessible housing for seniors
- Third pick was the 11th pick overall for the board, was to provide funding for the construction of 100% permanent long-term affordable housing units, based on area median income, to nonprofits commune land trusts, land banks that are partnered with nonprofit developers.
- Committee got 26th, 32nd and 37th of item rankings by the full board

Expense Budget:

- H&HS committee had three of the top five rankings. The 2nd ranking overall for the board was our 2nd ranking which was to provide more food funding for food pantries.
- 4th ranking for the board overall was our first choice which was increased funding for free legal representation in housing court and increase the eligibility criteria for receiving services to 300 percent from 200 to the federal prop of the federal poverty level
 - 5th ranking overall was our 3rd, to provide more funding for the home base program to prevent individuals and families at imminent risk from entering the shelter system
 - Other four of our rankings came in 41st, 33rd, 30th, and 52nd respectively
 - Overall, H&HS rankings were considered very important by the Board in general.
 - H&HS committee ranking's this year reflected last year's, particularly funding for food pantry and for more legal representation. The real work begins to see how we can further action on these priorities over the course of next year and beyond.
 - Next step is that Ebenezer Smith and staff report results for committees and Board to MBPO.

DC - What groups should be invited to our meetings to update us on their activities? For example: armory homeless shelter, NMIC workforce, HRA Intake Center, NYCHA, Dyckman houses, CLOTH, DWDC, Inwood Community Services, etc. We could compile a list of individuals or institutions that we should be bringing on a regular basis to our monthly meetings. And there are topics like aging (e.g., Isabella) and youth services that overlap with other CB12 committees for possible joint meetings.

MA - Discussion regarding follow-up about Inwood rezoning commitments that are either stalled, in progress or haven't commenced. That would be a good starting point to invite speakers from different agencies, housing and social services, that are involved in the rezoning dynamic.

AO - Inwood Rezoning Ad Hoc Task Force – the Board committed to creating a Task Force to keep track of those commitments, their progress and report to the Board. That's not happened yet. DC will ask the Board Chair and the executive committee to update that initiative. And every committee should pay more attention to this major development.

AO - Discussion about the inclusion resolution which resulted in a letter by MBPO saying that we should have a task force or committee responsive to the needs of not just the bylaws but a space for board members to be able to bring any other issues that don't fit in on the committee level. Not every member is a member of the executive committee board and so they don't have the opportunity to weigh in there on things that happen and that this hasn't come to fruition. For example, AO is supposed to be a

member of the IT Committee but has yet to receive any communication about it in years. 31:59

MV – There was a recent walking tour of Inwood Rezoning by MBP’s staff where we started up by the Manhattan bridge and went by the back of ninth avenue looking at different lots where projects were proposed or underway. We visited the Bowery Residents’ Center (BRC) who’ll be building a shelter project with accommodation for the burial ground.

Tim Anderson, urban planner for our district seems to be chairing this, to be confirmed. 35:56

DC – New MBP Mark Levine knows many of the concerns of CB12 and hopefully continue his interest in them.

AO – Levine also expressed interest in his platform about revising community board functions.

DC - there’ll be a transition happening on the community board one once term limits kick in too, so we need to keep that continuity going

2. Community Health Profile & City Planning Community Profile (39:07)

DC – sharing screen – Manhattan CB12 Statistics 2018

Topics especially pertinent to our committee

- Poverty level, the percent of residents that live in poverty:

City wide 20%; CB12 20%; Manhattan 14%

- Rent burden - % renter occupied homes:

city wide 51%; CB12 53%; Manhattan 45%

- AC units - Percentage of residents with working AC:

City wide 89 %; CB12 90%; Manhattan 93%

There are programs to get conditioners free, for a discount, or to swap out older air conditioners that are energy inefficient.

- Homes without maintenance defects: city-wide %44; CB12 33%; Manhattan 48%

Significant difference for maintenance upkeep in CB12. How do raise the percentage?

- Cockroaches: 23% of households reporting; CB12 28%, Manhattan 20%

AO - Roaches affect health issues, for instance asthma. There's a higher instance of kids with asthma when there are roaches in their apartment. A young lady 15 years old in my building died because of her issues with asthma.

What programs for supers & landlords can help increase that rate for our residents? It’s why our committee asked for more funding for more inspectors in our budget rankings because there’s a shortage of inspectors to address the amount of disrepair and dilapidation in our area. One option discussed in past is dual certification instead of single certification when it comes to repairs. Currently what happens is you report that you have an issue with a repair. The landlord is supposed to do it and the landlord, or an inspector must visit and report the work was done. With dual certification the tenant would confirm the work was completed therefore no need for an inspector, saving time and effort. What drives the lack of maintenance in these situations? Money, and/or other factors? A lot of CB12 housing in CB12 is pre-war. Let’s invite HPD to talk about this once they’re in place in the new administration

MA – Create a Community Resource Database

- Update the data from the 2018 Community Health Profile

- Organize a town hall to highlight two or three key issues, invite representatives to inform the community about their resources and compile a worksheet or toolkit for the community. Coordinate with Health & Environment Committee.

City Planning Community Profiles of various districts.

Highlights - English proficiency in CB12 was 38%, the eighth lowest; overall NYC 23%; Manhattan 16%. There are library and nonprofit literacy programs.

AO – Charon Gwynn · Deputy Commissioner, Division of Epidemiology at New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has spoken about advancing health equity and may be able to provide more current data (post-2018) about the Community Health Profile.

City college article several years ago said that approximately 12,000 Latinos had moved out of our community. What other pressures and factors contributed to that change, besides the pandemic. You have individuals moving uptown who have higher incomes seeking more affordable housing. The 2020 Census data indicates that CB12 is slightly less Hispanic, slightly more white, slightly older than 10 years ago. How will that impact services and needs of the neighborhood.

3. Vaccine rates amongst city agencies

Interesting to note that low rates of vaccination among NYCHA and Armory Shelter workers are harmful to residents and to the community. Refer to article attached “NYC Workforce Vaccination Summary by Agency” Oct. 19 – Nov. 2.

AO - Wikipedia says that there are 5 NYCHA sites seemingly with the total number of apartments of about a thousand all together not including Dyckman Houses. Approximately 3,000 apartments.

MV - Re the NYCHA the article about NYCHA scaffolding sheds being removed after five years, feels much longer. It’s not down yet at Dyckman Housing. Cautious optimism.

AO – Heating season is upon us and what can we do about problems with residents being cold?

4. Climate change

MA - Noted the torrential downpours that happened not that long ago where some of our neighbors were impacted in Inwood and the 157th street train station was flooded. We’re seeing the ramifications more and more especially right here in our own community

- Proposed town hall with Health & Environment Committee to highlight how we can make CB 12 more climate resilient, e.g., green financing, how are our local businesses being more sustainable, how are we doing things differently. Propose event to take place in January or February 2022.
- Resolution to call on our elected officials and CB12 to really take climate change seriously. Propose a planning session to brainstorm what's happening globally with what's happening locally, recognizing that it's not just the leaders that need to do something but also us right here in Washington heights and Inwood. Includes environmental justice as well, knowing that our community residents are being disproportionately impacted by the political impact of climate change.

5. Old Business

Avenue Bowery Recovery Center (3966 10th Avenue):

DC – Muzzy Rosenblatt, Chief Executive Officer & President, Bowery Recovery Center (BRC) presented to the committee in April 2020 about an Inwood site where they were planning to build a residence to heal and help those traumatized by homelessness. In a letter from him, (paraphrased) "...(we) listened to the voices of hundreds of stakeholders, the descendant of the communities, current community historians, spiritual leaders and other experts. The workforce and clients of BRC and so many other people that process of inclusion and listening led to the establishment of an advisory group for the Inwood Lenape Ceremonial sacred site which recognized the direct connection between the history of the site, its relationship to the persecution and dehumanization and marginalization of people and communities color, and the root causes of homelessness today which disproportionately impact communities of color. Recognizing these connections between our city's history of racism and the racism that still exists in our society, the advisory group recommended that BRC proceed with its residential program but do so in a manner that incorporates the site' history restores dignity to those who have been laid to rest there and affords an opportunity and space for reflection and education".

- Since then, BRC has closed on legal title to the site and is moving forward consistently with these recommendations including an interpretive center where people can enter, learn and peacefully reflect, while BRC will operate its residence. They will seek out appropriate partners to design and operate the memorial and interpretive center, and plan/hope these programs will open in 2024. This is a huge step forward.

- Miguel Guadalupe, BRC Director of Donor and Community Engagement, reports that as BRC moves forward you'll begin to get more information from us on key operations milestones and developments. BRC wants to maintain a very open avenue of communication going forward and your questions feedback and ideas are most welcome.

Armory Public Hearing:

DC - Chair was absent last Executive Committee meeting and the meeting before that, so public hearing topic has not been addressed. Will raise topic again.

AO – GDS contact District Manager and Chair about it. Speaking tomorrow about it. I'm concerned with broader issue to invite policy experts to determine the best way to utilize the building. We should determine what, when and who will be at a public hearing. I authored the first resolution supporting a hearing which the board took eight years to get a vote. Unfortunately, there was a level of suppression that took place withing the Board. Which also included me being removed as chair of housing, chair of IT, and as a member of the personnel committee, instantaneously removed from all three.

AO – in my opinion, the Amory Foundation has been running the building like a corporate Airbnb, not allowing the community to use certain spaces for many years, especially in the off-track season when its quiet. What has happened to GDS is a result of Gary Altheim being a whistle-blower. I also met with Carmen De La Rosa, Assemblywoman, now soon to be City Councilperson, previously to inform her about engaging all stakeholders including the offices of the elected so that they would be at the meeting. It's been eight years since we've been addressing this matter.

6. New Business:

- Public attendee: Sonia Figueroa Pagan's father currently lives on 181st street between Saint Nicholas and Audubon avenue, an 88-year-old disabled veteran with dementia. His privileges having access to vehicles in front of his building to get into a vehicle have been removed by the new transit bus stop. It takes up the whole block between St. Nicholas and Audubon avenue. Our handicap placard doesn't help; we still get parking tickets whenever I have to pick-up or drop-off my father. I've sent letters since June to all the city agencies departments, to Albany and no one has replied. My father's mobility has been limited totally because he has no access in and out of his place of residence anymore because of the bus stop. How do I get permission or at least a sign saying that it's okay for someone with a handicap plaque to stop because there's no standing or parking now? I've spoken to Debby Navabian, Chair Traffic & Transportation Committee who was not able to offer any assistance. I then contacted DOT, MTA, Rodriguez and Jackson's offices, but none could help. It's getting worse as my father's dementia increases. Committee chair will ask Ebenezer Smith to include this in his next District Service Cabinet meeting, the third Thursday of each month.

AO - Residential building at 165th between Broadway and Riverside, owned by NY Presbyterian hospital needed a wheelchair ramp. Management installed a ramp incorrectly and put the railing on the wrong side for the disabled resident to use. Does this require submitting a complaint to the City Commission for Human Rights?

DC – I work at the CHR and this is an issue that we deal with frequently at the agency. We're always asking for something to be installed or be repaired. A resident can initiate a pre-complaint process if something needs to be fixed, or if worse there needs to be a formal complaint, then the agency's attorneys will do that.

Composting: What is status of city composting program? Is that within the purview of our committee? DC - falls under health and environment committee and Chair Steve Simon would probably know more about this issue. Currently, there's only the site at the

Inwood farmer's market on Saturdays. There's a lot about this issue, because there's the increasing rat infestation which could be reduced by composting organic waste versus throwing it in trash bags, which the rats can penetrate. Vermin prevention is one of main reasons for composting. Sally Fisher, CB12, lives in Inwood and is passionate about the topic so contact her. Also, contact (email or call) Ebenezer Smith, District Manager, to ask about composting at the District Service Cabinet Meeting, every third Thursday of the month

Motion by DC to adjourn at 8:52 pm. Seconded by AO.

Bruce Robertson 11.22.2021 submitted to Chair and Vice-Chair

Video recording and transcript... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srtS2yAluLs>

Attachments: