

## HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – December 1, 2016

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Steve Simon (Chair), Mitchell Glenn (Asst. Chair), Richard Allman, Daryl Cochrane, Wanda Garcia, Andrea Kornbluth, Elizabeth Lehmann, Javier Trejo, Beatrice Hall (Public Member).

**OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Wayne Benjamin, Obie Bing.

**GUESTS:** David Pearce, Caroline Kretz and Kimberly Williams, Con Edison; Michael Burke and Stuart Knoop, Langan; Bryan Woo, YoungWoo & Associates; Jeff Mulligan, Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel; Katharine Pichardo, MirRam Group; Phoebe Henry; Nandini Kannan; Rita Gorman; Konstantinos Pantazis; Joanna Rodriguez; Julia Rubin, Northern Manhattan Not for Sale. .

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S. Simon, chair, called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. and introduced the committee members.

**1. Report from Con Edison on the Washington Heights-Inwood electrical system – David Pearce, Department Manager, Manhattan Regional Engineering, reported as follows:**

- The electrical distribution system in Manhattan is his area of responsibility
- The Washington Heights-Inwood network has a peak load capacity of 192 megawatts and 20 feeders; served by the substation on 110<sup>th</sup> Street. A small portion of Inwood is supplied from The Bronx.
- In the 1999 blackout, a primary feeder failed
- The WH-I network has 352 transformers, average age 16 years. The average age of transformers throughout the Con Ed system is 20 years.
- Peak load occurred 8/8/16, which only used 51% of the WH-I network's capacity

Bing: Capacity is not the issue. We cannot use all the electricity because of the faulty distribution system, which has 100-year-old PILC (paper-insulated lead-covered) cables. When they fail, you have to cut back on service, and we're not allowed to use "intensive appliances."

Pearce: We have replaced PILC cables. Almost all have been removed from WH-I network. Vast majority of cables are not PILC. Also, the Elastimold joints, a more significant issue that have caused failures, have been removed. We are always keeping track of network reliability factors.

Bing: WH-I is the oldest network in the city.

Pearce: No, there are older ones. WH-I's is better than most networks in Manhattan. We're not discriminating against WH-I. [He invited committee members to come to Con ED's HQ, where he would show us maps and explain how the network operates.]

Bing: In 2007-08, during the Public Service Commission hearings on the M29 transmission line proposal, Con Ed engineers admitted that PILC cables were a major problem and promised to remove all of them.

Pearce: Not aware of any such commitment. It's not necessary to remove every last one. [Caroline Kretz said she would check the transcript from the hearing and report back on what it says.]

Simon: Is the network sufficient to handle the community's current and future needs?

Pearce: There are 4,259 structures in WH-I. We inspect them every five years. We strive to employ new technology to identify problems. We are trying to get problem components out of the system. The capacity of the system is adequate with the remaining PILC cable. It's prohibitively challenging to remove all of it.

Rubin: Has EDC spoken to Con Ed about the growth that may result from the Inwood rezoning plan?

Pearce: We don't have an issue with any growth. We add infrastructure to increase capacity, which is what we've done at the Hudson Yards, for example. There have been 23 projects asking for additional service in 2016. We're not saying there's no room for them.

Kretz and Pearce said they would return to the committee with more information about the PILC cables and after reviewing the transcript of the PSC hearing to discuss this issue further.

**2. Brownfield Cleanup at 2420-30 Amsterdam Ave. – Jeff Mulligan, planning and development specialist working for the developer, YoungWoo & Associates, explained that an environmental cleanup will be necessary before a mixed-use hotel, office building and retail complex can be built on the former site of a gas station on Amsterdam Avenue between W. 180<sup>th</sup> – 181<sup>st</sup> Streets. He introduced Michael Burke, Vice President / Senior Associate, Langan engineering firm, which will oversee the cleanup. Burke said as follows:**

- An investigation completed last summer found heavier volatile elements on the site.
- A work plan was submitted to the NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC).
- No off-site contamination was found.
- Will have to control odors, monitor air and keep dust (particulates) down during the cleanup.

- Now have to submit a remedial work plan to DEC and the NY State Dept. of Health.
- Contaminated soil and rock will be removed in water-tight transporters and taken to a landfill yet to be determined, maybe in New Jersey or Pennsylvania. Material will be handled "in an engineered fashion": to make sure nothing is dispersed into the community.
- He will be on site monitoring the process. This is the 62<sup>nd</sup> brownfield site Langan has worked on.
- DEC will make sporadic checks during the cleanup.

Simon: How can we be sure that no contamination seeped into residential buildings on W. 180<sup>th</sup> Street?

Burke: We did test borings on Amsterdam Ave. sidewalk and on W. 180<sup>th</sup> St. and did not find any seepage. Did not go into basements of buildings on W. 180<sup>th</sup> St. If site is considered a significant threat, state can use special fund to do off-site clean-up. The developer did not own the property when the contamination occurred so is not responsible for that work. Every time we break ground, we have to do air monitoring at the site and perimeter.

Glenn: What's the timeline?

Burke/Woo: Hope to start cleanup in the spring. 6 months to complete remediation. Construction of office building/hotel will take place at the same time.

- 3. Resolution calling upon the Port Authority of NY/NJ to expedite the installation of a fence on the George Washington Bridge to prevent suicides** – Simon distributed a draft resolution. Allman offered friendly amendments to delete some wording and add data on how fencing prevents suicides. After further discussion, the resolution was approved by the following vote:  
Committee Members 9-0-0 Other Board Members 1-0-0 Members of the Public 3-0-0  
Simon said he planned to ask the Traffic & Transportation Committee to support the resolution as well.
- 4. NY-Presbyterian Hospital Report** -- Julio Batista, Director of Community Affairs, submitted the following statement from Dr. Pete Gordon, Medical Director, Comprehensive Health Program:  
"As we recognize World AIDS Day it is important to remember the many New Yorkers who have died of AIDS, people who made countless contributions to our culture, to our communities, and to our families and were too soon taken. It is also important to remember that while NYC and NYS remain the epicenter of the HIV epidemic in the United States, both the city and state are leading the way in providing comprehensive, life-saving care to all – regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual identity, sexual orientation, or immigration status.  
"We are also at a uniquely optimistic moment insomuch that NYS and NYC both believe that ending the HIV epidemic in the next 3-5 years is possible and perhaps the Hepatitis C epidemic as well. NewYork-Presbyterian, working closely with NYC, NYS, and local community partners like the Washington Heights Corner Project, AIDS Service Center, Dominican Women's Development, Harlem United, and Argus Community has joined to establish the REACH Collaborative (*Ready to End AIDS and Cure Hepatitis C*). The REACH Collaborative is working to provide free HIV, HCV and STI testing, prevention, and treatment services available to our community and to raise sexual health and substance use awareness. We look forward to presenting the REACH Collaborative program and resources to you soon and look forward to partnering with Community Board 12 to end the AIDS epidemic in our community."
- 5. Isabella Geriatric Center Report** – Betty Lehmann, Director of Marketing & Communications, reported as follows:

  - The renovation of the social hall should be completed by the end of the year.
  - President/CEO Mark Kator will be staying longer – not retiring yet.
  - Isabella is looking again at building affordable housing on site, talking to a housing developer.
  - Obtained accreditation for palliative care program for people with dementia. It's a novel approach utilizing music instead of medication to provide individualized care.
- 6. Old Business** – Simon noted that the board's #1 expense and #1 capital budget request for FY 18 were both recommended by the H&E Committee. The #1 expense budget request: Expand mental health services in our community, especially for youth and older adults. The #1 capital budget request: Expedite the replacement of old water mains and sewer lines in our community.
- 7. Next meeting**: Thursday, January 5 – The committee will be co-hosting a Columbia University Medical Center forum, "Staying Healthy in 2017," on the latest disease prevention research at the School of Nursing.

Respectfully submitted, Steve Simon.