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COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

3 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE

NEW YORK, NY 10012-1899

www.cb2manhattan.org

P: 212-979-2272 F: 212-254-5102 E: info@cb2manhattan.org

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The Social Services Committee of Community Board No. 2, Manhattan held its regular monthly meeting on January 27, 2022, at 6:30pm by video conference.

Committee Members Present: Susanna Aaron, Chair; Adam Zeldin, Vice Chair; Keen Berger, Ritu Chattree, John Deverna, Wayne Kawadler, Ryder Kessler, Ivy Kwan-Arce
Committee Members Absent With Notice: William Benesh
Other CB2 Members Present: Jeannine Kiely (Chair), Michael Levine, Donna Raftery
CB2 Staff Present: Bob Gormley, District Manager
Public Members Present: Rachel Yarmolinsky

Agenda: Updates from various service providers in our district:

-Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS) on Paul's Place, a Drop-In Center and Safe Haven for homeless adults that it will operate at 112-114 West 14th Street.

-St. Joe's Soup Kitchen, a soup kitchen affiliated with St. Joseph's Church that distributes meals at First Presbyterian Church.

-Bailey House, a provider of housing and support services to individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

-The Red Door Place, a soup kitchen and pantry with operations at Church of the Village.

REPORT

Doug James, Chief Operating Officer of CUCS, provided a progress report on Paul's Place, a Drop-In Center and Safe Haven for homeless adults planned for 112-114 West 14th Street.

[For more information on this project, see reports of previous CB2 meetings on this topic,

<https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb2/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2022/02/Report-2018.11.29-Safe-Haven.pdf>

<https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb2/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2022/02/Report-2020.10.29-Safe-Haven-ii.pdf>

James: The opening of Paul's Place has been delayed by Covid-19. The supply-chain problems that have created snags for so many have done so for us as well: tradespeople infections, site shutdowns, and then the entire city's pipeline of construction and housing being backed up because of the pandemic, where we're finding ourselves in the middle of the back of the front of the line for inspections and sign-offs.

We waited about eight months for a fire alarm drawing sign-off. That's now done. We have just a few more inspections to go. Construction is 99.9% complete. This was virtually a gut renovation of a very old building. We created a new elevator shaft and elevator system; a new stairwell for fire exits; and all new structural components.

Ultimately, we want the building to be as safe as possible, and the city has the same objective. We're very very close and our goal is to be open before the end of the winter.
[come back to this and see if the meeting produced any new info that was not in previous reports]

Connie Fitzgerald, Executive Director, St Joe's Soup Kitchen (www.SJSK.nyc)

St. Joe's is an all-volunteer organization that has been serving food to the hungry and homeless in the Village since 1976. It started in the Koch administration in response to the Mayor's request for houses of worship to help address homelessness. We served in the basement of St. Joseph's Church in the Village parish until some needed renovation work made it impossible for our kitchen to stay up to code, so at that point we moved to the First Presbyterian Church (12 West 12th St). We became an independent 501(c)3 charitable organization in 2015. At one point our operating budget was about \$40,000-\$45,000 a year but that is much diminished right now.

As of March, 2020, in response to Covid-19 we've had to change our service to an outdoors grab-and-go, and I will say that our numbers have decreased. We were at our busiest in the mid-90s, when we served as many as 700 meals in an afternoon. We only serve on Saturdays from 1:30 pm until 3 pm.

Before Covid-19, we provided a sit-down meal, which provided socialization and all those other good things that happen when people are invited in and given a choice – Do you want vegetarian? What would you like to drink? Welcome and thanks for being here – you know, Enjoy. We try to provide that same experience but because we're serving outside we're averaging about 180 grab-and-go meals per week, so we are slightly under 10,000 meals per year. Clients are allowed to consume their meal and return to the line to receive another one, so we tally meals served, not clients.

We are all volunteers, and we've had to limit our volunteers because of Covid-19 restrictions. I work about 15 hours per week on this. We are well-funded, which is a very good thing. We rely primarily on donations, and we also work with the Food Bank for New York City (<https://www.foodbanknyc.org/our-approach/>) which provides us with bulk foods. We receive grants from United Way and other programs. We do not have a contract with a NYC agency.

We'll also take donations of socks, hats, toiletries to augment what we're doing. We've fired up the kitchen again in an attempt to serve a hot meal like chili or fried rice. We like to celebrate the holidays so we did prepare meals for Thanksgiving and Christmas where we were able to serve turkey and potatoes and such. On Labor Day and Memorial Day we barbecued hotdogs and burgers. We've attempted outdoor seating to replicate what is happening with restaurants to try to promote socialization and provide relief.

An anecdotal description of our clientele: Mostly men ages 25-54, concentrated in the 35-40 age range. Many probably homeless or lacking consistent shelter. We are a "no questions asked" organization. I did have one point where an individual was quite disruptive and we reached out to the Xavier Mission for support. For the most part we don't have experiences like that. We have been known as a place where you were greeted warmly and invited to enjoy a meal. We have some senior clients and I notice some taking food home to reheat later. Our clients come from all over the city. On occasions when we've found ourselves with excess food we would like to go to Washington Square or Union Square and see if there is any food distribution we could

do, or alert people that we are an available resource. Our clientele diminishes in poor weather. [Ms. Fitzgerald was given a contact for Sheryl Woodruff, of the Washington Square Park Conservancy, to continue the conversation offline.]

We are not allowed to provide medication to our clients and we have never provided more than an aspirin or a bandage. For many years at St. Joseph's, Project Renewal provided a physician that came on a regular basis, but we are no longer in touch. Yes, it might be helpful also to have lawyers from NYU. We've had insurance companies come in on occasion to help navigate health insurance, and people who did voter registration.

Our greatest frustration right now is that we have capacity, and I think there is a need, and we feel too many people don't know that we are there as a resource. We should have better coordination between similar facilities and find ways to market ourselves. It would be helpful to have a multi-language guide to distribute.