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COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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The Social Services Committee of Community Board No. 2, Manhattan held its regular monthly meeting on November 30, 2022, at 6:30pm by Zoom videoconference.

Committee Members Present: Susanna Aaron (Chair), William Benesh, Ritu Chattree, John Paul DeVerna, Wayne Kawadler, Ryder Kessler

Committee Members Absent With Notice: Ivy Kwan Arce

Public Members Present: Rachel Yarmolinsky

Committee Members Absent Without Notice: Keen Berger, Adam Zeldin

Agenda: Conversation with God's Love We Deliver on its work and its leasing of the Northern Dispensary.

Panelist: David Ludwigson, Vice President and Chief Development Officer, and as of January, 2023, President and CEO of God's Love We Deliver. Before joining the staff 16 years ago, David served as a volunteer at the organization for eleven years.

God's Love We Deliver (GLWD) is a not-for-profit organization that delivers medically tailored meals (MTMs) to "individuals living with severe illness, as well as their children and caregivers." Founded in 1985 in response to the AIDS epidemic, in 2020 it celebrated a milestone of cooking and delivering its 25-millionth meal. Originally catering to individuals with HIV/AIDS, it now serves individuals with over 200 different diagnoses, including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, kidney disease, diabetes, and so on. It has also begun a pilot program for clients with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Clients with HIV/AIDS now constitute 13% of its clientele. GLWD does not have social workers on staff but has "linkage" agreement with about 180 different organizations to assist clients. It is in the process of building an improved electronic health records system to track its clientele.

GLWD defines its core principles as 1) Never turning away a client who is eligible for the program. 2) Delivering meals on the next delivery day following a request. 3) Keeping all meals and services free to clients.

Today, 26% of GLWD clients reside in the Bronx; 23% in Manhattan; 22% in Brooklyn; another 22% in Queens; 4% in Staten Island; and a small percentage in Nassau or Westchester County. 90% of its clients live below the poverty level. 70% reside "in some of NYC's poorest and most underserved neighborhoods." 72% are aged 60 and above.

Of approximately 3 million medically tailored meals (MTMs) delivered to 11,000 clients in 2022, 59,556 were for 149 clients in the CB2 footprint.

Last year, GLWD's revenue was \$31,724,239 and \$19,681,687 was spent on program. This year's budget is \$29 million. GLWD is not contracted by New York City and two-thirds of its funding is privately raised every year. Government grants, including discretionary funds from elected officials, total \$6,172,950 or 19.5% of its revenue.

All meals are prepared at GLWD's Michael Kors Building at 166 Sixth Avenue in Soho within Community District 2. Opened in 2015, the 50,000 square foot building has now reached capacity. About 40 members of GLWD outreach staff will soon relocate to the Northern Dispensary, at 165 Waverly Place. Purchased from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese by William Gottlieb Real Estate in 1998, the Northern Dispensary sat empty for decades because of a deed restriction that required it be used for people who are "poor or infirm."¹ GLWD obtained the lease to the building in the fall of 2022.

The number of clients GLWD serves has grown by 30% in the last twelve months, putting a strain on the organization, which is committed to never having a waitlist. GLWD is close to its production capacity and is planning a \$100-million capital campaign to fund its expansion by about 85,000 square feet with leased production facilities at one additional location in Brooklyn or Queens. (Purchasing space is prohibitively expensive.) This would allow it to triple its production within ten years to about 8 million meals annually; to expand client eligibility to reach new populations; and to serve a broader public in the tri-state area.

GLWD distinguishes itself from other services that provide home-delivered meals in New York City by producing medically tailored meals (MTMs) designed by one of their eight Registered Dietician Nutritionists on staff. It cites studies showing that MTMs reduce visits to hospital emergency rooms by 70% and that clients provided with MTMs are more likely to return directly to their homes after a hospital stay and to adhere to their medications. The program offers savings: GLWD can feed a person for a full year for the cost of one night in a New York City hospital. The organization is now seeking federal funding for a pilot program to run at ten veterans' hospitals across the country. Its hope is that the proof of concept might lead to MTMs becoming a Medicare-covered benefit. This would radically alter GLWD's business model.

Other regulation that could alter GLWD's budget is the prospect of congestion pricing in New York City, which threatens to add \$500,000 per year in expenses if GLWD is required to pay fees for travel to its Soho location. GLWD is also hoping to reduce its private parking fees, which currently run about \$500/month for each of its 30 vans.

While the leasing of an additional building would not qualify for capital funds, GLWD hopes that some of its equipment purchases for outfitting a new building would allow it to apply for public capital grants.

¹ Elizabeth Harris, "At High-Priced Corner, a Building Forlorn." New York Times, March 25, 2013. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/26/nyregion/former-village-dispensary-must-untangle-restrictions.html>