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## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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### HUMAN SERVICES

The Human Services Committee of Community Board No. 2, Manhattan, held its regular monthly meeting on May 29, 2025, at 6:30pm in hybrid format.

Committee Members Present: Susanna Aaron (Chair), Keen Berger, Juliet Kaye, Ryder Kessler, Emma Smith

Committee Members Absent With Notice: Ritu Chattree (Vice Chair), Arturo Fernandez, Zachary Kazzaz, Janet Liff

Public Members Present: Rachel Yarmolinsky

Other CB2 Members Present: Valerie De La Rosa (Chair), Carter Booth, Donna Raftery

**Agenda:** \*The Village Interagency Task Force reports on its activities

#### **Guests:**

- 1) Village Interagency Task Force: Vanessa Warren (Social Services Chair, Washington Place Block Association), Brian Maloney (Infrastructure Chair, Neighborhood Action Group founder), Scott Hobbs (Business Chair, Village Alliance Executive Director)
- 2) Manhattan District Attorney's Office: Eric Strazza (Supervisor of Community Engagement), Peter Tse (Community Engagement Coordinator)

#### **REPORT:**

The Village Interagency Task Force (VITF) is a new collaborative initiative developed by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and the Mayor's Office. The VITF aims to address pressing quality of life and public health issues in the Greenwich Village area through coordinated interagency efforts.

It is modeled after successful interagency collaborations in Harlem and Midtown, aiming to address quality of life issues including mental health crises, homelessness, addiction, and infrastructure decay. It was created in response to community outcry over deteriorating conditions around Washington Square Park, especially during the summer of 2024.

#### **How VITF Works**

Composition: The task force is composed of three arms:

-The Mayor's Office, which provides access to agency heads.

-The DA's Office, which appoints the VITF chairs and supports coordination and accountability.

-The VITF Community Co-Chairs, who represent resident, business, and public concerns. The decision to place chairmanship in the community and not in a city agency is to strengthen accountability.

### Meetings:

-Frequency: One-hour meetings are held biweekly, alternating between infrastructure and social services focus.

-Footprint of area covered: Known as the “Red Zone,” includes Washington Square Park and surrounding streets (W. 4th to 9th Streets, 6th Avenue Corridor). This includes critical areas around the park with high levels of drug activity, encampments, and public safety concerns. A related “yellow zone” has emerged as a spillover area from the increased enforcement and outreach efforts in the red zone. (See map below.)

Format: Meetings are closed to the public to ensure focused, results-driven discussion. Community input is collected via block associations, WhatsApp groups (referred to as “NAGs” – Neighborhood Action Groups), and community council meetings.

### **Questions**

How does VITF become aware of concerns? VITF chairs employ an established network of communication. Before VITF, Vanessa and Brian organized the Neighborhood Action Group (NAG) to coalesce smaller block associations and connect them through a series of WhatsApp chats, and people can report an address where there is trouble, an encampment, needle debris, or trash, etc. NAG then submits 311, or 911, calls en masse. There are eight or nine NAG groups in the Village.

VITF also attends Community Council meetings of the 6<sup>th</sup> precinct of NYPD and other community meetings.

How can the community that is not part of NAG make its concerns known to VITF? VITF is not intended to replace 311 calls as a system of reporting. Residents should know that issues rise in priority when 311 receives five separate calls with the same address and complaint.

If meetings are not public, how can the community become aware of VITF’s work? VITF will come to CB2 several times a year to report on its activity. VITF also puts out a newsletter and neighbors may request to receive it by writing to [nycnagnow@gmail.com](mailto:nycnagnow@gmail.com).

Several operational challenges were noted, such as gaps in transportation for those ready to enter shelter, lack of communication among agencies prior to the task force, and holes in service delivery that are now being identified and addressed. Nonetheless, there have been meaningful successes, such as placing 42 individuals into shelter or housing through coordinated efforts.

Street homeless have rejected the traditional shelter intake system. For these chronically homeless individuals, the city has built a limited number of Safe Havens, which are designed with lower barriers of compliance. One of these is that individuals can request the Safe Haven they prefer, which can add to difficulty in housing them when their preferred location has no vacancy.

### **Reported Successes**

-2,800 discarded needles collected since January 2025.

- 42 individuals placed into shelters or Safe Havens. (No additional details were available about the welfare of those individuals today, so we don't know if they remained in shelter or housing, or sought additional services, or have returned to unsheltered living.)
- Improved responsiveness from city agencies (e.g., DEP resolving flooding at Stumptown Coffee).
- Better information on systemic problems, permitting agencies to address them at a higher level of administration.
- Laws and design of street scaffolding in process of changing, providing fewer hiding places for antisocial behavior.

### **Ongoing Challenges**

- Gaps in detox and addiction treatment infrastructure (no detox centers in Manhattan).
- Dearth of inpatient beds for addiction treatment.
- Many services requiring ID documents, which many homeless people lack.
- Interagency coordination still evolving, especially among outreach providers.
- Limitations in 311 tracking and public awareness. VITF interested in being better informed of 311 complaints to direct its work.
- While rates are low for "index" crimes, felony drug arrests have increased. (Please see [here](#) for report from July 27, 2024, CB2 meeting with Office of Special Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York (OSNP))

### **Community Engagement**

- Community members report issues via 311 and WhatsApp-based groups.
- NAGs coordinate mass 311 submissions to increase response rates.
- Community outreach is managed by the co-chairs and village institutions like the Village Alliance.
- The committee expressed the need for broader communication and access to VITF resources, including periodic updates to CB2 and improved public outreach tools (e.g., flyers or posters). Committee expressed interest in expanding channels of input to the VITF to allow fuller and broader representation of community interests.

### **Observations from CB2**

- The committee praised the unprecedented level of interagency coordination and participation.
- There was a strong desire to see this model replicated in other areas of the city.
- Members suggested rotating CB2 attendance at VITF meetings and more formal integration with the community board's work.
- Emphasis was placed on finding a balance between operational efficiency and democratic input.

(See map below)

# Village Interagency Task Force

January 8, 2025



## Initial Areas of Focus *(Highlighted in Red)*

- I. NW Corner of Washington Square Park
  - Mercer St between W 3<sup>rd</sup> & W 4<sup>th</sup> Sts\*
- II. W 3<sup>rd</sup> St – W 9<sup>th</sup> St between 5<sup>th</sup> Ave – 6<sup>th</sup> Ave
  - MacDougal St & Minetta Lane
- III. Washington Place & Waverly Place between 6<sup>th</sup> Ave & Grove St

## Impact Areas *(Highlighted in Yellow)*

- Blecker Street – W Washington Place from 6<sup>th</sup> Ave – 7<sup>th</sup> Ave

## Hub Co-Chairs

- Scott Hobbs: Executive Director, Village Alliance
- Brian Maloney: President, Village Neighborhood Action Group
- Vanessa Warren: President, Washington Place Block Association

