

(Pending Committee Approval)

Minutes of the Special Committee on Racial Equity Meeting  
January 7, 2021, via Zoom

**Attendees**

Committee: Bob Bender, Margaret Della, Robert Fanuzzi, Julie Reyes, Jyll Townes

Other CB8: Laura Spalter (CB8 Chair), David Gellman, Omar Murray, Camelia Tepelus, Martin Wolpoff

Community: Andria Cassidy, Alma C, Andria Whited, Aracell, Jacki Fischer, Julie Dalton, Barbara Denson, Deborah Johnson, Leslie Boden, Margie Schustack, Marilex Santana-Tavarez, Marissa Lewis, Shira Silverman, Anthony Del Orbe, Justin Sanchez (Bronx Borough President's office)

**Agenda**

The meeting began at 7:07 pm. Bob Bender chaired the meeting at the request of board chair Laura Spalter, and explained that he was acting as meeting facilitator in the absence of a committee chair. Committee chair Daris Jackson had resigned from the board prior to the meeting. Bob noted the presence of CB8 chair Laura Spalter and other CB8 members, noted above.

Minutes of the December committee meeting were approved unanimously by the committee.

Northwest Bronx Food Justice Coalition

Bob introduced Deborah Johnson, representing the Northwest Bronx Food Justice Coalition. Ms. Johnson in turn introduced Andria Cassidy of Riverdale Senior Services, who is the facilitator of the Food Justice Coalition. Ms. Cassidy explained that the project began to address a lack of healthy food and insufficient nutrition education in the CB8 neighborhoods. Ms. Cassidy introduced several members of the Food Justice Coalition who were in attendance and noted that the group was in the second year of funding from the Bon Secour Mercy Fund, which has supported food justice local initiatives such as Youth Markets.

Ms. Cassidy observed that even prior to the Covid epidemic one out of four families in the Bronx were food insecure. When Covid hit, the situation worsened. St. Stephen's food pantry for example now serves 700 families a week, up from 300; Kingsbridge Heights Community Center serves 200 a day; Church of the Mediator serves 300 to 400 families a week, once a week.

Ms. Johnson explained that the relatively high rate of poverty in the Bronx leads to food insecurity and poor nutrition. It also results in a lack of medical care. Combined, these factors

cause a higher death rate among black and brown people compared to white people. Ms. Johnson said that systemic racism is the underlying issue in disparate health outcomes. She also observed that nutrition education is essential in better health outcomes, which is why this is part of the Food Justice Coalition's mission. In response to question about racial disparities among those suffering from food insecurity from Bob Fanuzzi, Ms. Johnson confirmed that the Bon Secour grant that funds the group's efforts is dedicated to residents of Marble Hill Houses and community members utilizing the services of Kingsbridge Heights Community Center.

Ms. Cassidy noted that the Food Justice Coalition needs additional funding and storage for food. She said that food insecurity preceded Covid and will continue after the pandemic ends. In response to a question from committee member Bob Fanuzzi, the Food Justice Coalition participants commented on the need for a community-wide food assessment. Bob F. also noted that the community board can prioritize addressing food insecurity and its leading social determinants via local institutions through the CB8 budget process. Camelia Tepelus suggested that the issues described at this meeting be added to the SCRE report. Jyll Townes asked whether the Food Justice Coalition could coordinate with local supermarkets and restaurants; storage problems make this difficult, however, Ms. Cassidy said. It was noted by the committee that this issue should be brought to the attention of the Economic Development Committee, which might be able to find a local merchant who could provide food storage and or liaise with food rescue organizations such as City Harvest. Jyll followed up on the matter of the community food assessment, suggesting that perhaps local college students could assist to do this, which the committee felt was an excellent suggestion.

Shira Silverman, manager of the Riverdale Y Sunday market, asked how her market and others in the community can work best with the Food Justice Coalition. Justin Sanchez raised the question of better outreach to people who experience food insecurity to inform them about these resources. In response to a request from Bob Fanuzzi, Mr. Sanchez also expressed his willingness to bring contacts and neighborhood advocates to the committee's attention, and to enlist them as speakers. Bob Bender said that the community board can be a conduit for communication among groups about how to improve current efforts to address food insecurity in the area.

### Committee report

It was noted that the committee report has been distributed to all CB8 board members and will be posted on the CB8 website, and then made available to the community at large. Camelia Tepelus and Bob Fanuzzi observed that organizations such as the Northwest Bronx Food Justice Coalition should be identified in the report.

### SCRE Outreach to CB8 Committees

The committee then addressed the issue of how best to work with standing committee chairs to implement the recommendations in the SCRE report. He gave the example of potentially working with the HHSS committee on the Covid vaccine and public education and asked

committee members for their thoughts about how best to address this issue. It was suggested by committee members that the committee consider holding joint meeting with other committees. It was also noted that members of the SCRE committee serve on several other committees and can bring SCRE issues to those committees in that way. Bob Fanuzzi urged that we ask committee chairs to work with us to incorporate racial equity issues into their committee work. It was agreed that the committee should present this issue at the upcoming CB8 board meeting.

Justin Sanchez and Margaret Della suggested that the committee use its meetings to discuss what racial equity issues to bring to other committees and then debrief after meeting with those other committees.

#### Committee Structure

The committee agreed that the two members who have left should be replaced, and it was further agreed that the new members should be people of color. Julie Reyes suggested that Sergio Villaverde be asked to join the committee. She proposed that he be named chair and Margaret Della be named vice-chair.

This matter is being brought to the attention of board chair Laura Spalter, who was on the Zoom.

The committee will meet in February at a date to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 pm.

Minutes submitted by Bob Bender