

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

**MINUTES OF THE HEALTH, HOSPITALS & SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE MEETING, January 30, 2014**

**Kingsbridge Heights Community Center,
Early Childhood Services Building**

PRESENT

Steven Froot
Michael Heller
Lisa Daub
Sylvia Alexander
Beverly Fettman
Xaxia Sanchez
Julia Gomez
Dr. Carina Lopez
Andrew Sandler

AFFILIATION

Committee Chair
Committee Vice Chair
CB 8 – Committee member
CB 8 – Committee member
CB 8 – Committee member
CB 8 – Committee member
Lutheran Social Services of New York
Doctor of Naturopathy
Office of Councilman Cohen

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m.

Minutes: The minutes of the December 16, 2013 meeting were reviewed and approved.

Presentation: Carina Lopez, Doctor of Naturopathy

Dr. Lopez stated that she began medical school at Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, but changed direction and obtained a four-year degree in naturopathy at the University of Bridgeport. She also has degrees in acupuncture and as an herbalist. Dr. Lopez is not licensed to practice naturopathy because New York State does not issue such licenses, although other states, including Connecticut, do. This means that although licensed naturopaths in other states may do such things as draw blood and perform gynecological examinations, naturopaths in New York cannot diagnose or prescribe remedies – they may only “make recommendations.” (A medical doctor, who uses drugs and surgery to combat illness, is referred to as an allopath.) Homeopathy, in contrast, describes the body of alternative treatments that licensed medical doctors may be trained in, although such training is much more abbreviated than that received by doctors of naturopathy.

Dr. Lopez sees patients in her acupuncture practice at the Bronx Community Wellness Center on Westchester Avenue, and counsels others in her role as a naturopath and herbalist. She would like to make her services available in the Bronx, where she grew up, and noted that there are only four naturopaths currently in the Bronx. In the past year, she conducted free seminars at the Church of the Mediator. Her focus is on educating, empowering and enlivening – which she explains as healthy eating, good nutrition and making conscious dietary, lifestyle and emotional choices that get at the root causes of disease. She believes not only in alternatives to traditional medications (prescription and over-the-counter drugs) where possible, but also eschews vitamin and mineral supplements as much as possible. Dr. Lopez is trained to utilize specific foods and traditional practices in the first instance, because they are natural, less invasive (fewer or no side effects) and cheaper. She is not permitted to do physical examinations or order lab tests in New York, but she encourages patients to bring her any diagnostic reports and refers people back to their medical doctor for further tests. She also does not recommend that people stop taking medicines that have been prescribed; however, if they obtain relief through alternative means, they may make the decision in consultation with their doctor to stop the medication.

Examples offered by Dr. Lopez of foods that can serve as healing alternatives are cabbage (to remedy intestinal distress), string beans (to ameliorate Type 2 diabetes) and okra (to alleviate PMS). She also described healing practices such as hydrotherapy (the use of hot and cold water for their vasoconstriction and vasodilation effects) for fevers and other ailments, and biosyntonie (the placement of ceramic tiles on the body) to alleviate pain, tension and aid recovery from an injury. Dr. Lopez also mentioned the use of sea salt to stop bedwetting, turmeric to reduce inflammation, and dandelion to detoxify the gall bladder and liver and to remove warts. Some of these practices have a long history outside Western medicine.

The Chair noted that mainstream medicine is moving in the direction of prevention, which is consistent with naturopathy's goals. Andrew Sandler indicated that Councilman Cohen might be interested in exploring her work in further detail.

Chair's Report

- Mr. Froot noted that Joyce Pilsner had made efforts to contact NYStateofHealth, our state's Affordable Care Act health insurance exchange, to inquire about local resources to assist people in signing up for coverage, and would report at a subsequent meeting.
- The Chair also called the Committee's attention to Mayor de Blasio's appointment of former deputy health commissioner Mary Travis Bassett as the new commissioner of DOHMH. Ms. Bassett has been described as the architect of former Mayor Bloomberg's most prominent health policies.
- Mr. Froot reminded that applications for membership and renewal of membership on the Community Board were due in the Borough President's Office by February 7, 2014.

New Business

The Chair asked members for their reactions to a proposal that all committee meetings of Bronx Community Board 8 be audio-taped, so that Board members or the public who do not attend a particular meeting may listen to the proceedings in their entirety, by accessing an audio file on the Board website. (This discussion is expected to take place in every Board committee.) The Chair noted that Phil Friedman has stated that it is technically feasible to upload such files from digital recorders to an FTP site, and thereafter make it accessible via the Board website. Discussion of the proposal ensued. Six out of the seven Committee members present would oppose adoption of such a practice. The general feeling was that it could stifle candid discussions and lead to a focus after-the-fact on minutiae, and that written minutes were sufficient to communicate the content of meetings.

Follow-Up Business

- The Committee discussed the Montefiore-sponsored medical building development on South Riverdale Avenue in the former location of DJ Drugs, which has been the subject of multiple Land Use meetings. The recent announcement that Montefiore and the developer would be submitting revised plans for the facility was welcomed, in the hope that at least a scaled-version of the earlier-proposed 11-story structure would be put forward. Members expressed support for moving the planned development to the Broadway location of Loehmann's, which recently announced that it was liquidating the company and closing all stores. Mr. Froot noted that he and Chairman Fanuzzi were reviewing materials provided by the chair of the Land Use Committee, but had not observed anything about whether Riverdale was a medically underserved community. The Vice Chair pointed out that to the extent locating the facility on Riverdale Avenue is a business decision by the hospital, it would not make a difference whether our community is underserved or not.
- Lisa Daub, following up on the presentation several months ago by Animals Saved By Grace, noted reports indicating that a new animal care & control shelter was to be established in Queens, although none was mentioned for the Bronx.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

There will be no February meeting due to the conflict with Presidents Day. The Committee will hold its **next meeting on Monday, March 17, 2014, at 7:30 pm, at the Board Office.**

Prepared by Michael Heller, Vice Chair
Approved by Steven Froot, Chair
Health, Hospitals & Social Services Committee