

**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8**

**MINUTES OF THE HEALTH, HOSPITALS & SOCIAL SERVICES  
COMMITTEE MEETING, January 4, 2016**

[Pending Committee Approval]

**PRESENT**

Steven Froot  
Lenora Croft  
Karen Pesce  
Dan Padernacht  
Rosemary Ginty  
Lisa Daub  
Donald Lash  
Elizabeth O'Flynn  
Patrick O'Flynn  
Kennedy McDonnell  
Mary McDonnell

**AFFILIATION**

Committee Chair  
Committee Vice Chair  
Committee member  
CB 8 Chair  
CB 8 Vice Chair  
CB 8  
Executive Director, Sinergia, Inc.  
3018 Corlear Avenue Neighbor  
3018 Corlear Avenue Neighbor  
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**ABSENT:** A. Moore, N. Friedman, O. Murray, M. Heller.

**The meeting was called to order at 7:45 p.m. at the Park Gardens Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, 6585 Broadway, Bronx, NY.**

The Chair thanked Janine Sotero, Director of Admissions, Park Gardens Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, for hosting the meeting.

**Conversation regarding 3018 Corlear Avenue IRA**

Donald Lash, Executive Director/CEO – Sinergia, Inc.

The Chair explained that the Committee had requested that Mr. Lash appear at a meeting of the HHSS Committee to answer questions about new information that had been brought to the attention of the Community Board and the Committee since approval of the 3016 Corlear Avenue IRA proposed by Sinergia, Inc. had been recommended by resolution of the Committee after a public hearing held on September 21, 2015, and voted on by the full Board at its October 13, 2015 meeting. The new information was that Sinergia in October 2015 had signed a lease on 3018 Corlear Avenue, the property immediately adjacent to the 3016 Corlear Avenue IRA, for the purpose of operating a second IRA, and that because the 3018 Corlear Avenue IRA was intended to house three intellectually disabled adults who did not require 24-hour supervision, this second property would not be subject to Board approval under the Padavan Law. The Committee was concerned that it was never notified of Sinergia's intention to operate a second IRA next door, at 3018 Corlear Avenue, at the time the Committee and the Board gathered information from Sinergia, held a public hearing and ultimately voted to approve the proposed IRA at 3016 Corlear Avenue.

The Chair explained that the meeting was not a public hearing designed to permit public statements and questions from members of the public, but rather an opportunity for the

Committee to ask questions of Mr. Lash about what appeared to be a lack of candor on the part of Sinergia in its dealings with the Committee and the Board.

In response to questions posed by members of the Committee, Mr. Lash stated that both 3016 Corlear Avenue and 3018 Corlear Avenue were owned by the same person, that Sinergia was not aware of the availability of 3018 when originally introduced by a real estate broker to 3016 – although Sinergia was at the time interested in leasing additional space because several individuals who had been living at another location operated by Sinergia needed to move. Either the broker or the owner herself informed Sinergia later that she was interested in renting 3018 (where the owner had been residing), although Sinergia initially believed the rent for the larger property, which included a yard, would exceed the OPWDD rental threshold. Mr. Lash stated that at the time of the September 21, 2015 public hearing, no application with respect to 3018 had been submitted to OPWDD, although discussions were ongoing with the owner. Mr. Lash also stated that there was never a plan to purchase the two properties together in order to build a larger facility, because (1) it was not economical to purchase properties for development in areas zoned R3, (2) because Sinergia is not interested in operating larger situations like group homes or Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) for more than three individuals, as those tend to be more restrictive settings, (3) because Sinergia has no experience operating larger group homes, and (4) because OPWDD is encouraging smaller IRAs at this time. In this regard, Mr. Lash stated that Sinergia does not do major construction, just minor renovations to rental properties to make them suitable for the residents.

The lease for 3018 was signed sometime in October, although Mr. Lash said he did not know the exact date. [Mr. Lash later wrote to the Committee that the lease was “as of October 1, 2015,” but that his best recollection is that it was signed on October 6, and a rider was prepared a day later on October 7, 2015.] Although the rent for 3018 exceeded the OPWDD threshold, Sinergia determined it would make up the difference and lease the property.

Three intellectually disabled women aged from 22 to 40 years of age will reside at 3018; they are similar except in age (younger) to the women residing at 3016. Mr. Lash stated his view that both residences are small in scale, in keeping with the neighborhood. The residents will be supervised on a non-24-hour basis, receiving assistance with budgeting, locating supportive resources, running the house, etc. It is not anticipated they will receive much in the way of clinical services or behavioral intervention. Some medication would be supervised, and some residents will self-administer. Mr. Lash stated that the 3018 Corlear Avenue IRA was not yet operational, and was awaiting certification. He said some modifications had already been completed, including installing water temperature valves and smoke detectors.

Mr. Froot handed out to the Committee information regarding 3018 Corlear Avenue that he had printed out from the Department of Buildings (DOB) website, which showed a “Stop Work” order had been issued for that location. Mr. Lash explained that certain environmental modifications were required to be made to the property, and that the person doing the work was not a licensed electrician, which resulted in the Stop Work order from DOB. He indicated that it had always been Sinergia’s intention to have the work inspected and certified by a licensed electrician, and that the work was now being completed by a licensed electrician.

Mr. Lash stated that each location had a separate operating certificate; that each facility would have its own staff; that there would be no “floaters” serving both locations; that there was some efficiency to operating two IRAs close together because a visiting residence manager could easily visit both locations, but otherwise they would operate independently. The 3018 Corlear Avenue IRA might have staff assisting residents in the morning, and would definitely have staff later in the day from approximately 3 pm until 9-10 pm, to assist with shopping, meal preparation and laundry following the residents’ return from day programs or jobs.

It is expected that most staff would use public transportation. In the event they drive, staff will not use the driveway at 3018 for their vehicles. Two of the three residents of 3016 are transported to day programs by a 15-passenger Sinergia van, which will not be parked on this block, and it is anticipated that two of the individuals who will move into 3018 will do the same. The vans do not stop or park, but only pick up and discharge residents.

Neighbors in attendance at the meeting reported fights involving residents of 3016 Corlear Avenue late at night, as well as a van parked in the driveway at 3018. Mr. Lash stated he was not aware of any incidents, but would look into it. He urged neighbors to call Sinergia with any problems or concerns, provided his office extension as well as that of the Sinergia Residence Director, Rebecca Maitin, and made available his personal cell phone number to all in attendance if they needed to report an issue after hours. The Chair suggested that neighbors might want to participate in a Community Advisory Board (CAB) and offered the Committee’s assistance in facilitating the formation of a CAB if there was community interest.

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**Minutes:** No review of minutes of the November 16, 2015 meeting due to lack of a quorum.

**Chair’s Report**

- Mr. Froot discussed the January 14, 2016 “Forum on Drug Use & Dependence” organized by Councilman Cohen at the Chair’s suggestion. The Board is co-sponsoring the event and assisting with publicity. It will take place from 6:30-8 pm at Riverdale Neighborhood House.
- The Chair reported on the rulemaking concerning requirements for the operation and maintenance of cooling towers in NYC, relating to the late 2015 outbreak of Legionnaires’ Disease in the Bronx. This material was previously circulated to HHSS members via email.
- Mr. Froot reminded the Committee about the DOH/MH community consultation about health priorities scheduled for February 18, 2016 at the Riverdale Library Branch.

**The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.**

The Committee will hold its next meeting at 7:30 PM on Monday, February 1, 2016 at the Board Office.

Prepared by Steven Froot, Chair and Lenor Croft, Vice Chair  
Approved by Steven Froot, Chair  
Health, Hospitals & Social Services Committee