

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

MINUTES OF THE HEALTH, HOSPITALS & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING, December 16, 2013

PRESENT

Steven Froot
Lisa Daub
Sylvia Alexander
Beverly Fettman
Phil Friedman
Joyce Pilsner
Robert Fanuzzi
Aaron Pitowsky
Julia Gomez
Jeffrey Moerdler
Matthew Lipman

AFFILIATION

Committee Chair
CB 8 – Committee member
CB 8 – Committee member
CB 8 – Committee member
CB 8 – Committee member
CB 8 – Committee member
CB 8 Chair
Boy Scouts (science badge)
Lutheran Social Services of New York
Riverdale Hatzalah
Riverdale Hatzalah

The meeting was held at the Board Office and called to order at 7:40 p.m.

Minutes: There were no minutes of the November 18, 2013 meeting, as the Committee met in conjunction with the Underage Drinking Forum on that date.

Presentation: **Jeffrey Moerdler & Matthew Lipman**
Riverdale Hatzalah
Volunteer Ambulance Service & EMT Corps

Mr. Moerdler explained that Hatzalah is the largest volunteer ambulance corps in the country. Riverdale Hatzalah (“RH”), founded 24 years ago, is one of 14 chapters in the NY Metro Area; most are in Brooklyn and Queens. The first local Hatzalah chapter was founded in Borough Park, Brooklyn, in the midst of a financial crisis, when cardiac arrest response times were on the rise. RH currently has two ambulances staffed by 30 volunteer EMTs and 4 volunteer paramedics (the Riverdale, Washington Heights and West Side chapters share the 4 paramedics). EMTs (150 hours of training) can administer 8-10 drugs (including glucose, oxygen, albuterol and epinephrine via epi pens) and can perform procedures like bandaging wounds; paramedics (100 hours of training) can administer over 100 medicines and can insert an IV.

On a normal call, RH dispatches three EMTs; one EMT proceeds to the ambulance, and two EMTs respond in their private vehicles, which are specially licensed by DOHMH, bear plates that permit parking where it is not normally allowed, are equipped with lights and sirens, and contain emergency medical supplies and a defibrillator). Mr. Moerdler referred to recent changes to DOT signage in a few locations that have adversely affected some RH volunteer EMTs’ ability to park their specially equipped personal vehicles overnight in locations convenient to their residences, which is essential to their ability to respond quickly; although this issue was addressed by CB 8, and DOT made some changes, the problem has not yet been resolved.

All responders and dispatchers are volunteers; there also are approximately 10 paid administrators working on behalf of all chapters in the NY Metro Area. There is one central Hatzalah dispatch center for all of NYC. Hatzalah is funded by donations, primarily from the Jewish community, but also relies on corporate grants for capital purchases. Hatzalah responds to 75,000 calls each year in the NY Metro Area; RH responded to 850 calls last year in Riverdale and the surrounding area. In only 2% of call situations is RH unable to respond, because multiple volunteer EMTs are generally available. In those situations where RH cannot respond adequately, including situations in which special expertise or equipment is required, Hatzalah dispatchers will ask 911/EMS for paramedics or other support. 80-90% of the calls result in transport to hospitals – Montefiore or Columbia Presbyterian for more serious situations; Allen Pavilion or St. Joseph's for less serious conditions.

Hatzalah will respond to any call that comes in, but most come from the Orthodox Jewish community, because Hatzalah was formed and is staffed by the Orthodox Jewish community, and considers its mandate to serve the Jewish community. There is a special sensitivity to Orthodox rules (considerations of holiday/Sabbath requirements for family members, as well as ways of handling patients), but there is no difference in patient care or treatment resulting from this sensitivity. During the recent Metro North derailment near Spuyten Duyvil station, RH and neighboring chapters transported 14 patients to area hospitals having nothing to do with service to the Jewish community.

RH also provides training free of charge (200 Riverdale residents in the last two years) in the use of CPR, choking relief and automated external defibrillation (AED).

In connection with Mr. Moerdler's presentation, the Chair noted that recent legislation passed by the City Council will result in major changes to the manner in which the Fire Department reports and tracks emergency response times by firefighting units and City ambulances. The new method will, among other things, result in reports of how long it takes from the receipt by a 911 operator of a distress call to the arrival on scene of the first fire unit or ambulance. Previously, the response time reported was the time between the receipt of the call by the Fire Department and the time the first unit arrived on scene. The purpose of the new law is to capture the time between a call's being received by 911 and the Fire Department's receipt of the emergency call, which was not encompassed by the previous reporting method. The Chair thanked HHSS member Dana Lennon for obtaining the text of the legislation.

Chair's Report

The Chair conducted a debriefing on the Underage Drinking Forum that was held at In-Tech Academy (MS/HS 368) the previous month. The consensus was that the panelists were experts in their fields and the forum was well organized and presented, but that it did not attract the audience of neighborhood parents and educators that would warrant the effort by the Committee and the panelists. Discussion ensued about possibly replicating a version of the forum with a single panelist/expert over the course of a day in a single school, featuring assemblies of students during the day and a presentation during a regularly scheduled PTA meeting after school, with a big focus on recruiting parents and educators in that particular school to attend. Another suggestion was to do a presentation to students at a community center, possibly involving students in a poster contest or community survey regarding alcohol advertising. Bob Fanuzzi pointed out

ways in which CB 8 could build on some of the ideas discussed at the Forum, such as educating and rewarding neighborhood grocery/convenience stores and bars for responsible behavior with respect to avoiding providing alcoholic beverages to underage residents.

New Business

- Lisa Daub conducted a discussion of the pros and cons of the recently announced Montefiore-sponsored medical building development on South Riverdale Avenue in the former location of DJ Drugs, which has been the subject of two Land Use meetings. The consensus was that such a development was not necessarily a bad idea for economic development or even availability of additional medical care in our community (although there may not be a need at the present time), but that there were better places in CB 8 for the development to be located – where it was not out of scale with its location and would not cause unreasonable noise, traffic congestion and parking shortages. It was suggested that the Board continue to negotiate with Montefiore and the developer to minimize the size of the project. Other issues discussed included whether Montefiore was so dominating the health care provider space in the Bronx that consumers were being deprived of a choice, and whether the proposed shuttle service to be provided by the medical center would be picking up patients at area nursing homes.
- The subject was raised of what resources are available in our community to assist people in signing up for health insurance coverage mandated by the Affordable Care Act. Joyce Pilsner agreed to contact the New York Health Exchange to inquire about what support is provided.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

The next meeting will be held in at **7:30 pm on Thursday, January 30, 2014**, at a location to be determined.

Prepared by Steven Froot, Chair
Health, Hospitals & Social Services Committee