

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

**MINUTES OF THE LIBRARIES & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2014
AT THE KINGSBRIDGE BRANCH LIBRARY
291 WEST 231ST STREET**

Present

Marvin Goodman
Sylvia Alexander
Philip Friedman
Martin Wolpoff
Gesille Dixon
Peter Pamphile
Rebecca Brown Barbier
Tim Tureski
Martha Gonzalez Buitrago
Holly Makin

Affiliation

CB8, Committee Chair
CB8
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CB8
Bronx Network Branch Manager
Van Cortlandt Branch Library
Riverdale Branch Library
Spuyten Duyvil Branch Library
Kingsbridge Branch Library
Sinfonietta of Riverdale

The meeting began at 6:45PM. The committee minutes of June 12, 2014 were approved.

The chair reported on a visit to the only library in Rockland County in Nyack, NY, funded by Andrew Carnegie in 1894. The library is still the only one serving the Village of Nyack, but has been expanded considerably by building all around surrounding land in very creative ways among the nearby houses. All books in the library have plastic covers to preserve the books. The library has a box for comments from community users of the library.

The Chair called attention to current reports from "Citizens Defending Libraries". One main concern is the sale of libraries in Manhattan and Brooklyn. They argued that Manhattan's Science Industry and Business Library, located near the main 42nd Street library has had 87% of the land sold secretly, with no public process. This library is in excellent condition and was constructed only 20 years ago. The library is important to CUNY graduate students as well as many NYC residents.

The Chair then read a quote from a book written by a public librarian from Vermont about the role of the local libraries in today's society; Libraries are so much more than books to borrow. They provide computer access to so many people with no other means of getting on line. Many offer a free Wi-Fi connection. We provide downloaded free audio books and e-books. We help build literacy skills in folks of all ages. We provide community meeting spaces, offer kids programming from babies to teens. We offer book discussions and lectures for adults and offer opportunities for hands on activities, such as traditional arts and crafts. No matter the size of the library, once inside you have to access to a world of information with a librarian ready to help guide you."

Gesille Dixon, the Library Network Branch Manager for the Bronx Public Libraries, was our featured guest speaker. She discussed plans for Community Board 8's libraries for this coming year. She stated that her primary duties include overseeing programming, mapping and

budgets for all library services. One goal is to get an increase in library visits and book circulation. All libraries are rolling out a lot of new initiatives related to education. There are after school programs designed to connect students to libraries in some districts. We hope to expand these programs to our district libraries. These are free, innovative programs. Jerome Park and Kingsbridge are getting community funding this year to enhance these after-school programs. The turn-out has been good. Van Cortlandt has a new head librarian, Peter Pamphile. As to programs at the CB8 branch libraries, each location puts out a calendar of on-going events at that branch and also distributes the NYPL calendar. Each branch also does outreach to the local areas. One of the most popular activities is the technology training classes, which is offered at various times during the day and evening. For older adults there are many craft activities, such as jewelry making and crocheting. For young adults there is a gaming program and a creativity lab, where they work on designing programs. There is networking with other countries for these joint programs in technology. The big push is educational programming, such as in science and math, where children learn while having fun. These relate the common core curriculum. Some branches offer career training technologies for adult work-job opportunities, how to write and download resumes.

The Chair then discussed the capital budget requests and expense budget requests for each of our five branch libraries for the coming fiscal year 2015. These capital improvement requests came from the NYPL and were approved by our community board when CB8 put together its own capital budget and expense budget requests. For example, budget item #2 was for interior renovations of the Spuyten Duyvil branch library. CB8's budget requests at other branches included replacing or upgrading the HVAC system and supplying new furniture and renovations. For the expense budget, CB8 recommended robust funding for strong six-day programs.

Committee members pointed out that these recommendations from the community board must receive fund approval and funding from the City Council before they can be implemented. The City Council usually restores some funding that had been cut from the mayor's capital budget. In addition, there are some discretionary funds available to each city council member who may use these for very specific projects.

Under New Business the Chair pointed out that there is an official publication called the "City Record", published daily, and a copy of which is available daily at our community board office, which details all the events that took place in City government that day, including community board hearings. The Chair also showed the publication "NYPL Now" which are free exhibitions for adults, children and teens at the different libraries throughout the City.

There was much talk about the coordination of local libraries and local school libraries. Last year a program was begun to help train school librarians in current cataloguing systems, but not every school has a qualified librarian. There are also some difficulties in having NYPL library staff visit schools to train school librarians. Not all schools have similar software, so implementing these cataloguing systems is more difficult. It was pointed out that difficulties arise at times when more than one school is located in a particular building. One school may have a librarian and the other only an on-line catalog, and the two schools don't work together. Sometimes it's a public school and a charter school in the same building, and the two don't always work together. There is a need for outreach to encourage all to visit their neighborhood library branch. There is a need to increase classroom visits to local libraries.

Among the problems present at, and being worked on at solving effectively, is the problem of proper teen-age behavior at the library. The community board helped to have security cameras installed at some branches.

Long term problems include proper staffing at each library and increasing, or maintaining the hours of service to the community.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

The next meeting will be on November 13th at 6:30 PM. The location still to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Marvin Goodman
Chair, Libraries and Cultural Affairs Committee