

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

**MINUTES OF THE LIBRARIES & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON JUNE 12, 2014
AT THE VAN CORTLANDT LIBRARY BRANCH
3874 SEDGWICK AVENUE**

Present

Marvin Goodman
Sylvia Alexander
Mercedes Zegarra-Soja
Beverly Barker
Tim Tureski
Peter Pamphile

Affiliation

CB8, Committee Chair
CB8
CB8
Riverdale Art Association
Spuyten Duyvil Branch Library
Van Cortlandt Branch Library

The meeting began at 6:40PM. The committee minutes of May 8, 2014 were approved.

Peter Pamphile, head librarian of the Van Cortlandt Library, was introduced by the Chair. In giving a history of the library, he noted that the earliest records show a library located in an apartment building across from the current location as early as 1938. The current library opened in 1969. Archival pictures go back to 1988 and 1992. Current renovations have removed many book shelves to help provide more space for users in such a small area. There is a large TV for many uses. PS 95 expansion from K-5 to K-8 has resulted in many more users. A second floor would be hopeful, but is not possible. A new site is needed, but no site is easily available. No easy parking spaces available. There are various programs offered by the library for children and adults. For example, there is a reading program on Thursday; there is a TV program to enhance learning on Tuesdays. There is an arts and crafts program on Fridays. There is instruction in chess on Wednesdays. There is a creative-writing program which includes learning about settings, plot and characters. There is no space to have separate programs for adults and for children, since there is only one room on one floor. No community space or programs are possible. There is a computer class for adults on Tuesdays, but is constrained by children's usage. A learning program about musical instruments received complaints from adult readers about the noise. About 75% of users are children and teens. There is no possibility of utilizing space in the nearby community center since Montefiore Medical Facility has taken over the available space. Trying to block off space for a temporary program would deny access to books or computers. Handicap access is limited. Fire code must be maintained.

The capital budget requests for 2016 were again approved. The chair again noted that letters of support for NYPL funding increases were available to be sent on to legislators. The effort is to restore funding to at least 2008 levels, to provide for more books, computers and classes and increased hours of operation.

The chair read a letter from the Vice-President for NYPL branch libraries asking people to send letters to city legislators asking for additional funding and giving multiple reasons to support these requests. It was pointed out that the library budget was cut 11 separate times in the last 6 years of the previous administration, even though there has been a 78% increase in library attendance since 2008.

The chair read a letter from an organization called "Citizens Defending Libraries". In this letter it was noted that the Chief Executive of the NYPL system earned \$174,000.00 last year in that position, including housing and other benefits. This is too high, given the budgetary constraints for the library. It was asked that the public send pictures of empty book shelves, unsanitary or unsafe library areas to local officials. It was also noted that the NYPL central library plan renovation was costing over 7 times the cost of renovation per square foot done by the DDC. The letter claims it was a scam to sell the two Manhattan branches. CDL feels these efforts dehumanize libraries, librarians and library users and tend to benefit only real estate dealers.

The librarians pointed out that under Mayor Bloomberg there were frequent budget cuts, then restorations as a result of citizen outcries and then mid-year budget cuts again when citizens were unaware. This isn't happening now.

There are summer reading programs. Information is also available online about these programs. There will be an end of summer rewards program for children who read the most books. Ongoing incentives are also offered. There are team awards too for each branch. Children keep logs on readings. There is an on-going involvement with local schools and school libraries. Schools often use the library summer reading templates to encourage more summer reading. In response to a question from the chair, Peter Pamphile pointed out that this branch, like others, also has books to cater to the needs of the residents in this area. There are foreign language collections in multiple languages.

There were no further comments about the library or the library system.

Beverly Barker of the Riverdale Art Association was introduced as the next speaker by the chair. The RAA has its monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of the month at the Atria at 7PM and the community is invited to attend. RAA has been in existence for 14 years. They are seeking younger members, and want to explore and share art resources in our area. There is no geographical restriction to membership, some live in Yonkers and some in Inwood and Washington Heights. RAA has been working with Kingsbridge Riverdale Business Corporation (KRBC) and other merchant associations to get their presence known, including RAA presence at street fairs and Riverfest, as well as Riverdale Y, Gallery 18 and Society for Ethical Culture for Exhibitions. Art forms are in a variety of media; painting, sculpture, pottery, photography, beadwork and embroidery are all represented. RAA artists have won awards at the annual Bronx Rewards Its Own (BRIO) event, sponsored by them Bronx Borough President. BRIO winners all do community service and lectures as part of their award. CB8 libraries have had exhibits of RAA artists. An exhibit was just completed at the Will Library in Yonkers. The winning selections are now on display at Ethical Culture Society. The aim of RAA is to promote art and to get more community residents involved in art, in all media. The RAA website has a calendar of RAA events and info about artist members of RAA. Listings are also posted in the Riverdale Review and the Riverdale Press of exhibits, including artist's receptions. There is no funding for RAA. Money comes from membership fees and from a slight supplement to RAA from sales of members art work at various exhibits. There are about 40 members and dues are \$30.00 to \$40.00. Some members of RAA teach art classes. RAA gets –publicized there too. Among the best known RAA artists is Olga Kitt. The current vintage artists' exhibit at the Riverdale Senior Center has works being shown by RAA members. This Vintage Artists exhibit was initiated by the Bronx Council of the Arts.

The chair noted that this meeting had presentations by both the library section and the cultural affairs section of our community board.

The meeting ended at 7:45 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 11th. The location and time to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Marvin Goodman
Chair, Libraries and Cultural Affairs Committee