

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

MINUTES OF THE LIBRARIES & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 9, 2017 AT THE KINGSBRIDGE LIBRARY, 291 WEST 231 STREET (Pending Committee Approval)

Present:

Marvin Goodman
Martin Wolpoff
Sylvia Alexander
Philip Friedman
Amy Joy Robateau
Martha Gonzalez-Buitrago
Nicola McDonald
Carlos Wilcox

Affiliation:

CB8, Committee Chair
CB8, Committee Member
CB8 Committee Member
CB8, Committee Member
CB8, Committee Member
Branch Manager, Kingsbridge Library
Branch Manager, Jerome Park Library
Community Resident

The meeting began at 5:35PM. The minutes of the January 12, 2017 meeting were approved. The chair reminded attendees that the NYPL is conducting a neighborhood library awards program. Visitors to any branch library are encouraged to fill out the forms that tell why the visitor believes that this particular branch library deserves an award for the outstanding service it provides its community. Six branch libraries will each get \$20,000 and another five will each get \$5,000, based on nominations of library users. This can be done online also. (These are the Revson Awards.)

The chair also noted that the "Citizens Defending Libraries" group has indicated that there is a possibility that the NYPL is considering closing the Inwood Branch Library as part of a real estate deal.

The chair introduced Martha Gonzalez-Buitrago, Branch Manager of the Kingsbridge Library. This branch library is the newest in our CB 8 district. Originally located in a rented space just across the street from its current site, it was moved to its current location when then Council Member Oliver Koppell helped acquire the funds for the site and for the construction of the new library.

Martha distributed folders about the library, which opened six years ago in June. There are two floors and a conference room. The lower floor is for programs for children and teenagers and the upper floor is for adult programs.

Among the special programs, there will be an estate planning program this month. The library has an ongoing ESOL program (English for speakers of other languages), and a civics program to help participants prepare for citizenship. Tax preparation help is offered too. On Wednesday, March 22 the public is invited to assist in the participatory budget process, where the attendees vote as to how to allocate city council funds given to Council Member Cohen's district. There will be a small business workshop in April to assist shop owners in our

community. There is a free health workshop on how to keep your family healthy. This branch library is the only one giving this workshop in both English and Spanish. A new children's librarian is offering a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program for students which includes a robotics program as well. More than 50 students are attending this program. In May, there will be a theater workshop for students. There is an outreach program with local schools. Plans are being promulgated for a summer reading program next summer, where there will be a street closing and various vendors will be able to offer their reading materials to the public. The library has a new team creative workshop, where young people are encouraged to do writing, which will be published locally. Participants as young as 13 were involved from the beginning. They are writing about their daily activities and their future plans. Guest speakers came to the advisory group and told them how they had become authors. The library has ongoing computer classes. There are many computers at this library on each floor. There are also ten laptops on each floor. This branch received funds for two other programs for adults, one a digitized program on family memories and one other STEM program for adults. These will begin in April. Each grant received was for more than \$3,000. Because this is a new library branch, it does not qualify for funding from Council Member Cohen's participatory budget program, but funds are available for start-up programs. To encourage reading, there are monthly book discussion groups for adults and for teenagers. On Saturdays there are college planning and financial planning programs for teenagers. One Saturday each month a film classic or a new film is shown for the community. This attracts many older adults. Participants help choose the films that will be shown.

The committee chair asked for an explanation of the library's relationships with local schools. This branch's teen librarian visits the local middle school and the children's librarian visits the elementary schools in the area. As part of the partnership between the school and the library, students at each school are encouraged to visit the library. There are collaborations with the school librarians and with classroom teachers and this library. The library encourages students to do research at the library. Help is available for students for this research. The branch librarian does book discussions with students at each school. The branch librarian makes sure there are many copies of the each book being discussed.

Other programs at this library include a "stay well" exercise program for older adults and a weekly meditation program. The library staff participates in computer games and video games with young people.

Martin Wolpoff suggested the library include on its monthly calendar the community board meetings on civics. A previous series of civics lessons had been given at this branch library by Council Member Gustavo Rivera, based on these committee suggestions.

Martin indicated the committee wants to be an interactive group, not just an academic class. It should encourage voter registration and voter participation.

Martha indicated there is probability of a series of cultural programs to be held at this library in the near future. Wave Hill will be doing such a program in conjunction with this library. This library does not have a homework help lab presently, but may have one in the future. The

staff is currently receiving training in coding, so a program in this area can be offered to adults, as it currently is for youngsters.

Martin asked about the “green roof” of this library. When this branch was to open six years ago, it was declared that the library’s roof would have a roof garden. Nothing has been done to advance this. Easy access to the roof to make this possible was not put into the final plans.

Martha indicated that the librarians of this branch would be visiting the local schools to talk about the summer reading programs. There are outreach programs to healthcare facilities in the community area and to homeless shelter facilities in the area to encourage full usage of the libraries resources.

The meeting ended at 7:00 PM. Because of religious holidays, there will be no April meeting. The next meeting of this committee will be on Thursday, May 11 at 5:30 PM at the Derfner Museum.

Respectfully submitted,

Marvin Goodman, Committee Chair