

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8
MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 7TH, 2011
COUNTRY BANK
583 WEST 235TH STREET

PRESENT

Maria Khury
Sylvia Alexander
Steven Balicer
Nils Graham
Irving Ladimer
Patricia Mullen
Karen Pesce
Robert Press
Bill Stone
Tony Edwards
Clinton Flanagan
Judy Sonett
Mayron Anton
Jason Adolphus
Carmelo Alvarado
Nelson Baez
Robert Brewster
Alec Diacou
Gregoria Feliciano
Joseph Gordon
Jose Lopez
Marina Lopez
Ed Lowe
Marie Matias
Michael Nixon
Karina Pena
Marcelo Rodriguez
Ari Spett
Derrick Walker

AFFILIATION

Cmte. Chair, CB8
CB8
CB8
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CB8
CB8
CB8
CB8
rep. Councilman Y. Rodriguez
Unlimited Future Inc.
rep. State Senator A. Espaillat

Riverdale Little League/Bella Rest.
TD Bank
Riverdale Garden
Riverdale Mental Health
Yes The Bronx/Riverdale Senior Svcs.

Khury Tours
Community Committee Mbr/Exec-You-Van
Century 21
Bronx Overall Economic Development Corp.
Kerner Law
Inlanet
Community Committee Mbr
Associated

Meeting called to order at 7:35PM

The Chair thanked the attendees, whose participation indicates a strong interest in improving our community. She stated that the main purpose of this month's meeting was to focus on how non-profit organizations contribute to the economy of our community while they also serve essential social needs. An example of this is human resources – jobs, which are vital in this time of difficulty. She acknowledged that these organizations are struggling financially. Therefore, their financial challenges present more than financial consequences for our local economy but cause the needs of our people in the community to be unmet. Ms. Irene Korman of Country Bank thanked the Chair and welcomed the attendees.

Minutes of March 3, 2011 approved unanimously

Steven Ballister, Vice Chair spoke next. He has compiled statistics on the impact that non-profits have on our community. He suggested based on the research that the committee look at its budget priorities to see if there is any assistance available. He identified one of the larger needs as services for our youth especially in the Kingsbridge area of our community. In addition, throughout the community, due to our economic upheaval, we face increasing mental health needs. Yet these agencies' budgets are being cut dramatically forcing them to have less staff to provide these vital services. The decrease in jobs that the non-profits provide combined with the increased need for their services must be addressed. The Vice Chair concluded by thanking the nonprofits present who took the time to attend this meeting to solve our communities' challenges together despite their increased workloads.

Non-Profit Organizations' Forum

Presentations

Committee member Ari Spelt facilitated the time and order of the speakers' presentations.

Jason Adolphus, spoke on behalf of the **South Riverdale Little League**. He acknowledged Ed Lowe a member of the Committee, who for at least 15 years volunteers greatly to the activities of the league.

He mentioned that as with most community activities the past two years have been the most difficult financially for the league. Their concern is the loss of opportunities for our youth cannot be made up later – they are developing now, and therefore, they need the league's programs now. Each year, some of their development requires activities such as athletics for decision-making skills and working with others as a team. Each young person who is not able to participate in an activity loses more in that year. We cannot make up for they loss they may experience, especially when they might not be motivated to return to participating when funding is available. The cycle gets broken and they may stop competing altogether. Jason acknowledged that the league has very strong volunteers, such as like Ed Lowe bring their love of baseball to our children.

Programs like the leagues' keep the kids community-based where they develop lifelong relationships. To maintain the fields on which they play cost a lot of money which is not provided by the government, and may not be in a position to fund their maintenance anytime soon.

Volunteers write grants. Some local businesses provide nominal grants that require a lot of time and people to write these grants. The league organizes fundraising events such as at their awards ceremony where trophies are awarded. People attending buy tickets and participate in activities such as silent auctions. He encouraged people to come to see the students play baseball to witness how important it is to our kids.

The Chair asked Jason to submit further information so that she can send it to other members of our community. She also acknowledged and congratulated him for the Grand Opening of his Restaurant "La Bella Havana" on Main Street in Yonkers, N.Y.

Clinton T. Flanagan, CEO of Unlimited Future Inc. He opened by saying that he was glad that the committee recognizes that serious changes need to be made to our local community. His organization strives to re-invest consumers spending back into our community. His program offers classes in the community to develop local entrepreneurs. For six months, these entrepreneurs learn how to develop actual local businesses that will keep supporting the community's economic base. The program provides solutions that the people can do for themselves, not wait for others to help. His group seeks to help our neighborhoods develop and keep their capital working for them -- not to larger outside conglomerates. The program is taught in local community colleges. In September, there will be five classes of 10 entrepreneurs each in five different areas of our community. There, students write business plans, learn marketing and business management skills, again, through actual marketing in the community. They learn through real activities outside the classroom in the marketplace. This is important the development of their self esteem as they learn to contribute to the financial improvement of our community. These people will also be expected to contribute back into the community. One of the ways the program's administrative needs is lowered is by employing workers that the state pays as part of a program while they are receiving government assistance. Each entrepreneur donates 10% of the proceeds back to the program and the community for the next classes. He closed by saying that redirecting the spending in our community will make it stronger. His organization also provides discount prescription cards that can be used at pharmacies throughout the nation and they have no expiration date. Their website address is: WWW.UnlimitedFutureInc.com.

Alec Diacou of "Yes the Bronx" and Riverdale Senior Services made his presentation. "Yes The Bronx", is doing a **Run for your Life** series of runs and walks to address growing obesity problem. The Bronx has the largest obesity problem in New York State and is in second place in the entire country. It is shocking statistic that 25% of 18 to 24 year olds are obese.

The goal is to have at least one event in each of the eight council districts. There are 5K races and 2K walks so that all can participate from all age groups. Another goal is to encourage families to do active things more often in our Bronx parks, which has more parkland in any other borough in New York City.

Robert Brewster of Riverdale Mental Health Services (RMHS) is an agency that has been in Riverdale for 51 years. He has been there for 30 years, originally as a social worker, now for the past five years as Executive Director. Mental health is an issue that is not given a lot of attention because the privacy of people seeking help. Understandably, it is an issue that many do not know how mental health needs are served, and to whom. Riverdale Mental Health Services is located in the same building as Community Board 8. Their programs have helped to stabilize the community.

They have 15 satellite clinics at several schools where social workers and clinical psychiatrist conduct short screenings of every student in the school to address the fact that young students avoid seeking these services fearing schoolmates may find out that they need help. Clinic Plus does early intervention screening evidence-base evaluations which the state is now cutting completely. The Chair pointed out that as these programs are cut, in addition to services lost, there will be additional economic impact of lost jobs. Chances for Children is an evidence-based children's program for ages 0 to 3. The interactions between children and their caregivers are videotaped. Then using a strength-based approach RMHS introduces improved parenting practices.

They also provide housing that helps its residents' transition to independent living. The organization is facing very serious financial straits due to Medicare and Medicaid cuts that have had a strong impact on services. As the funding is decreasing, the demand for services is increasing. He feels the cuts may be as large as what NYC faced in the 1970s when fundamental services were not provided and some communities faced factors challenging their stability.

Over the years, they have gotten tremendous support from our legislators, are very appreciative but even that support has been cut in the last year or two.

When a community member comes for services they are not turned away due to less funding, The organization helps them whether or not it is in a financial state to help them. Some programs are in states of emergency. They have cut administrative positions, leading to job losses in our community. They try to avoid cutting staff people who provide services. Many members of our community are discharged from the hospital requiring supplemental services as they are getting better. Outpatient treatment is less expensive, but what is to be done as funding is being cut.

Michael Nixon of pointed out that there is a program that works with nonprofit organizations to provide them low interest loans.

Mr. Brewster concluded that local businesses provide employment to people who are in treatment programs that help them remain stable economic contributors to our community. They are hard workers who want to work and RMHS helps them remain employ and work effectively in the community.

A participate mentioned that in 1963, Alice Simon used to sell flowers outside the back of a station wagon to fund these programs, and asked if the Simon family continues her legacy.

Bill Stone of AHRC-NYC spoke next. He began by thanking the Chair, Maria Khury. He stated that in his 50 years of community involvement he has never attended an event like this focused on non-profits and was grateful that she saw the need to focus on this topic.

He explained that AHRC is an all service organization that maintains residences and business contracts that provide meaningful jobs for their population, individuals with physical and mental disabilities including brain injury. Their residences have even rehabilitated damaged property, such as the abandoned property of the deceased owner of the Circle Line, cleaning up the blight in the community while establishing homes.

He mentioned that the NY Times recently had an article about group homes. It was focused on problems as to how state-operated group homes are run, not private volunteer agencies such as theirs that are run very strictly. There is strong supervision from the state. All residents must leave their facility each day to participate in the community either to work or attend a program. Some take private while other take public transportation to their jobs. Others participate in vocational training.

AHRC's funding is 90% from NYS, which is going to be cut. The governor is now cutting funding and replacing equipment such as wheelchairs as young people grow they require larger wheelchairs. The speaker explained how some may remember how he became involved due to his son having cerebral palsy that affected his physical and mental abilities. He stated that when he looks back on how much his son's care requires, he imagines how unprepared families who face such are, and the care is required over a lifetime. It is very labor intensive.

The Chair introduced an idea for community fundraising for local business to sponsor community promotions to support non-profits. Perhaps, a day can be set aside where the businesses join "Profit-Non-Profit's Day of Giving Back" and a portion of the profits made from that day's earnings donated to the non-profits in the community.. One participant mentioned that he believes Applebee has such a program. The Chair asked Gregoria Feliciano to follow up with them to inquire how it works and if our community is receiving any contributions from their program.

Mr. Flanagan mentioned that consumers should not support businesses in the community that do not support non-profits. The Chair mentioned that she was certain that if we continue to support our businesses they will continue to support non-profits efforts.

Tracy Shelton of KRVC discussed the success of a cross-promotional program local merchants created, In addition to bringing out customers, the local businesses received a lot of attention when they had a media event. Consumers used coupons on products associated with the color orange highlight the advent of the spring season. Additionally, each of the merchant associations is moving forward with their establishment. One of the functions of the associations is to share strategies amongst businesses that keep consumers buying locally such as Country Bank's "Shop

locally, eat locally and bank locally" campaign. She thanked the Chair for the collaboration she offers the community and KRVC.

One program educates our youth on effects of graffiti where they also participate in a clean-up campaign.

For spring, KRVC will be able to do some plantings and street beautification, but funding for this program has been cut for the fall. They will continue to produce guides such as the restaurant guide, shopping guide and promote special event such as seasonal and holiday shopping campaign.

Next, the discussion amongst the participants focused on the changing nature of the small town feel in Riverdale, where people raised funds in each of the businesses for local programs, such as cans at the register for people to put coins in. One person speculated that this may be due to the recent scandals involving public donations that went more to administrative costs than the people who needed the funds. Ed Lowe offered a strategy to share resources amongst programs, and perhaps some organizations may have duplicate services to share such as physical therapists and other vital staff. One person introduced a Groupon model in which each day new coupons are posted. Some of the coupons could also raise funds while increasing business traffic.

Karen Pesce spoke on behalf of the local chapter of the **Rotary Club of Riverdale**. It is a member-supported effort of local men and women who fund local and international projects together. They sponsor reading programs. They have collected books, which they sent to Kenya. They participate in street beautification and distribute food boxes at Thanksgiving.

They worked with Montefiore Hospital and the Westchester Medical Center to help a young person obtain needed surgery. Their group meets at the Green Tree Restaurant on the first Thursday of each month. In addition to helping community, the Rotary club is also networking opportunity.

Karen also mentioned that there will be a dry goods food collection for the Church of the Mediator's food pantry at the May Meeting of the Community Board 8.

Michael Nixon described the **Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation** as a hybrid of a nonprofit and an organization that also functions as the economic development arm of the Bronx Borough President's Office. Their organization is facing cuts and actually lost a staff member that day.

They foster economic development in the entire Bronx. They oversee a lending program for small businesses under the US Department of Commerce and encourage energy efficiency and environmental investments for local businesses such as green roofs. They also maintain a real estate database that businesses can use to search or advertise available properties at no cost such as the Yankees Stadium contract that provides tickets to nonprofits and the Bronx.

He noted that Bronx Week is up coming and the Springs Arts Festival will be held on Sunday, May 15 on its first weekend. The festival is sponsored by the South Riverdale Merchants Association. It is an excellent example of how an event such as this draws people. These events grow annually and provide a spotlight on our communities. He congratulated the Chair for being very active and creative in CB8.

He concluded by explaining that the Yankees still provide free tickets to non-profits as part of their contract to build the new stadium.

Maria Gutierrez, a real estate agent, suggested that we should use our students in the community more. Students often do service or products, which makes them attractive candidates for college admission.

She emphasized that it is especially important for nonprofits to cultivate their interest and commitment when they're young. This strengthens the organizations' community contacts and improves young people's ties to our community when they graduate from college, we want them to come back and rent or buy property and live where they were raised. The Chair encouraged her to reach out to the Youth Chair of CB8.

Mr. Irving Ladimer spoke to the fact that there are about 50 or 60 houses of worship that contribute a great deal to our community. Their participation in the local economy is significant. Most shop and bank locally. As much as possible, we should participate in their events. This is one way to seniors with young people inter-generationally so that our youth understand that getting old is not a bad thing.

The Chair mentioned several events in the community. Our next meeting Monday, May 9 for the Springs Art Festival Checklist to prepare for the next week's event. It will be held at Sotheby's. Of course it is very important to get as many people to attend the Festival Sunday May 15. April 10th - Town Hall Meeting at the Van Cortland Jewish Center with local politicians in attendance. The location is 3880 Sedgwick Ave.

June 2 – The Small Business Survival Act will be discussed from different perspectives. There will be activities to educate us so that each of us can determine for ourselves its pros and cons. Gregorina is the outreach person. The lawyer who wrote the original act and local legislators have been invited to attend.

The Chair indicated that the link to the board's website is posted at the bottom of our agenda with information on each committee. She encourages all to attend other committees' meetings .

The new owners of the Riverdale Garden discussed that their new restaurant would open in May. The cuisine is worldwide. They will be employing approximately 25 people from the community. They plan to have 35 tables indoors and 15 tables in the garden. Their hours are 11am to 3pm for a light lunch. Full menu will be served from three to the midnight. Ed Lowe mentioned that Riverfest will be June 12. He explained that Riverfest.org is a nonprofit organization that hopes to reestablish links to the Hudson River.

New Business

Bob Press inquired if the skating rink issue will be reviewed by the Economic Development Committee. The Chair explained that it is currently on the Parks and Recreation Committee's agenda. When the time comes to discuss concessions, it will come before the Economic Development Committee.

The Chair again thanked Country Bank for graciously hosting the meeting and providing snacks and beverages. At close of the meeting, the participants were encouraged to take 5 to 10 minutes to enjoy them. Meeting Adjourned at 9:30PM.