

**COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX
MINUTES OF THE HEALTH, HOSPITALS & SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 19, 2011**

<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>AFFILIATION</u>
Steven Froot	Committee Chair
Joyce Pilsner	CB8
Philip Friedman	CB8
Karen Pesce	CB8
Steven Balicer	CB8
Sylvia Alexander	CB8
Beverly Fettman	CB8
Xaxia Sanchez	CB8
Madeline Ginzburg	CB8
Bruce Zarett	Committee Member, Kingsbridge Heights Rehab. & Care Center
Dana Lennon	Community resident
Andrew Sandler	Office of Councilman G. Oliver Koppell
Ji Yeon Lim	Student, Hunter College
Alan Gary (and son)	P.S. 51 Parent

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:45 pm.

The minutes of the June 20, 2011 meeting were considered and approved.

Chairperson's Report

The Chair welcomed returning members of the Committee, and introduced new CB 8 members Xaxia Sanchez and Madeline Ginzburg. The Chair noted that CB 8 member Nils Graham had also joined the Committee.

The Chair reviewed the HHSS mission statement, and explained that the mission statement, along with the recent years' HHSS meeting minutes and agendas were available on the Board website.

It was announced that in an effort to hold Committee meetings in different neighborhoods within CB 8, every other meeting this year will be held away from the Board office. A meeting schedule was distributed, which will include meetings in Marble Hill, Kingsbridge, Kingsbridge Heights and Spuyten Duyvil.

The Chair stated that the effort to hold meetings throughout CB 8 was consistent with the Board's recent initiative, described in a September 1, 2011 press release, to recruit community members who reside or have a business in CB 8 to join Board committees.

Recent population figures incorporating the results of the 2010 Census were distributed that reflect increases and decreases in the population of various neighborhoods in CB 8. The Chair also distributed for members' reference a list of Board committees with their corresponding City agencies, and a copy of a *New York Times* article about the obesity epidemic in this country.

The Chair reminded members of a health care forum to be held the coming Wednesday, September 21, 2011, for non-profits and small business entitled, "Health Care Delivery in the Bronx: Challenges and Opportunities," from 9-11:30 am, at Hostos Community College. Andrew Sandler, of Councilman Koppell's office, indicated he might be able to attend and report back.

Presentation: Concerned Parents of P.S. 51/Bronx New School

Alan Gary, a parent of a student who just graduated last June from P.S. 51/Bronx New School ("BNS"), attended the meeting, without advance notice, as a representative of a group of 35 concerned parents of current and former students who attended BNS before the Department of Education (DOE) determined this past August to move it from the location on 3200 Jerome Avenue where the school was housed since the 1990s. BNS enrolls students in grades K-5.

In the course of inspecting the school premises in connection with a renewal of the lease in early 2011, it was discovered that the air contained amounts of the chemical Trichloroethylene (TCE) that exceeded New York State guidelines. TCE is an industrial solvent used to de-grease metal parts; it is also found in consumer products, such as "typewriter correction fluids, paint removers/strippers, adhesives, spot removers, and rug-cleaning fluids," according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and was also used in the past as a general anesthetic. The leased site was formerly the location of a lighting manufacturer, and had been designated a RCRA hazardous waste site. One of the parents' concerns was that the school was not closed until five months after the DOE learned of the TCE contamination.

Mr. Gary stated that concerned parents have learned that tests of the air and groundwater at the former school site showed elevated levels of TCE, but that drinking water in the building was not affected. Mr. Gary indicated that although the chemical passes out of the body in a matter of days, studies have shown that intense short-term and prolonged exposure to TCE could cause serious health problems that affect the central nervous system, including the liver, kidney, and the immune system, according to the EPA. Exposure to TCE has also been associated with several forms of cancer.

The BNS parents want DOE to arrange for some form of medical testing and monitoring of current and former students, as well as the establishment of a registry of students, to better understand if there were any harmful health effects of the TCE exposure on the many students who attended the school and graduated years ago. Mr. Gary indicated that apart from a letter from DOE and a public meeting with Chancellor Walcott, parents have not heard anything from DOE about the problem. Mr. Gary stated that there would be a meeting of parents on September 21, 2011 to further discuss the issue.

Andrew Sandler indicated that he would investigate whether the Department of Health could initiate a testing program for students exposed to TCE.

Follow-Up Business

EMS restocking/decontamination station: At an HHSS meeting last spring, a representative of EMS suggested that although ambulances serving CB 8 were soon to be based out of a new restocking/decontamination station on West 233rd Street and

Woodlawn Avenue, and the temporary restocking station at the 50th Police Precinct closed, there was a DOT-owned site in Van Cortland Park, at Mosholu Avenue and Broadway, that could serve as a future location of a new restocking station in CB 8. The Chair stated that the District Manager recently reported based on conversations with FDNY-EMS at the Borough Consultations that EMS' identification of the DOT site in Van Cortland Park has been put on hold. It was the strong sense of the Committee that the identification of a site for a new restocking station in CB 8 should be a high priority, and that the Committee should invite EMS back to address HHSS on this issue.

Health Screening: Members addressed the availability of mobile health vans that could provide our community with testing/screening in areas such as HIV tests, mammograms, blood pressure, asthma, cholesterol, hepatitis and diabetes. The following sources of health screening were suggested:

- BASICS/Promesa Systems (health care mobile unit)
- Morris Heights Health Center (screening van)
- Visiting Nurse Service (health screening van)
- Harlem United (prevention program testing)
- New York State Dental Association and Bronx County Dental Association (dental screenings)
- NYU (dental van)

Mr. Froot stated that he would continue to be in touch with Promesa about the availability of their mobile unit. Dana Lennon indicated that she would be the contact point for the Morris Heights Health Center van, which does HIV, diabetes and blood pressure screening. Madeline Ginzburg, who is head of the Bronx County Dental Association and active in the NYS Dental Association, explained that the state association recently did 300 dental screenings as part of Harlem Week, and that she could coordinate such screenings for the appropriate event or site. The screenings do not require a van, but only dentist volunteers and tents, which the dental associations already own. Mr. Sandler suggested the Committee contact the Visiting Nurse Service about their van, and offered to provide further information about mammography screening and the NYU dental van. Xaxia Sanchez offered to coordinate with Harlem United about their health screening services. Bruce Zarett indicated that nurses from Kingsbridge Heights Rehabilitation and Care Center would be available to assist in screening.

Beverly Fettman stated that she would continue to investigate through Einstein Medical Center whether genetic testing could be provided with other screening, or at least information distributed about where genetic testing was available.

The Chair appointed a subcommittee consisting of the Madeline Ginzburg, Dana Lennon, Steve Balicer and the chair to follow up on this issue, with the goal of arranging screening at an upcoming community event.

Healthy Communities Initiative (Schervier/Bon Secours): The Chair reported that this program, which has supported the establishment of local Bronx Youth Markets in cooperation with Bronx Community Board 8, has completed a community food assessment/survey, and is now working on setting up a program of weekly food deliveries to the elderly, a healthy corner store/bodega initiative, and a health fair in the

spring at a local Bronx elementary school. The report of the findings of the community food assessment/survey is expected to be available soon and will be distributed to HHSS members.

The Chair reported that the District Manager has met with the Healthy Communities Initiative about coordinating a health fair to be held at P.S. 7 this spring, which might serve as a template for health fairs at other CB 8 elementary schools. The focus would be on healthy eating, and might include a lecture and/or cooking demonstration aimed at parents and students, as well as some recreational activities for the children and some health screening/information. Ms. Sanchez stated that she is familiar with businesses and organizations in the natural foods sector that might participate in such a health fair. Joyce Pilsner expressed the view that mental health information, provided by Riverdale Mental Health or the Jewish Board, should be a part of the health fair as well. It was agreed that we would coordinate with the Education Committee on the health fair.

The Chair appointed a subcommittee of Xaxia Sanchez, Sylvia Alexander and Joyce Pilsner to monitor the progress of the spring health fair initiative.

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The Chair announced that the next meeting would be held on October 17, 2011 at St. Stephens United Methodist Church in Marble Hill.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

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