

COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX
Health, Hospitals and Social Services Committee
Minutes of Special Meeting about proposed
On-Site Methadone Clinic
at Terrace Health Care Center
June 3, 2010

Members of Community Board 8 in attendance: Maria Khury, Bob Abbott, Sylvia Alexander, Steve Balicer, Andy Cohen, Thomas Durham, Philip Friedman, Steven Froot, Irving Ladimer, Bridget Maybury, Dan Padernacht, Joyce Pilsner, Damian McShane,

General Public/Representatives: 128 community residents were in attendance and the attendance sheet is on file in the board office.

Maria Khury, Chairperson of Community Board 8's Health, Hospitals and Social Services Committee opened the meeting at 7:30 pm and welcomed all the attendees.

She described the purpose of the meeting as to provide information to the community about the proposed on-site methadone maintenance clinic to be operated by St. Joseph's Hospital for patients of Terrace Health Care Center (THCC) and to provide an opportunity for the surrounding community to express its views.

Ms. Khury explained the procedures that would be followed at the meeting: several presentations of information by THCC, St. Joseph's Hospital, a representative of NYS OASAS, representatives of NYS Health Care Facilities Association and Greater NY Health Care Facilities Association, following which speakers from the community who had signed up in advance were to be called on to speak, following which questions would be taken from anyone in attendance at the meeting. An attendance sheet and a sign-up sheet were available at the entry, and additional speakers were to be called on as time permitted.

PRESENTATIONS

Brenda Slater, Director of Nursing at THCC since 1983: Explained that the purpose of the proposed clinic is to provide on-site methadone treatment to patients at THCC, thereby eliminating the necessity to transport them to St. Joseph's Hospital which is very costly for the State and personally difficult for many patients.

Angelica Pantoja, Care Manager and Spiritual Leader at THCC: Described the difficulty of transporting patients, especially in bad weather and when patients are disabled.

William Robinson, a blind patient at THCC: Described his personal difficulties with the current arrangement and supported the on-site clinic.

Lowell Feldman, who assumed the ownership of THCC in 1983, expressed his view that the proposed clinic would preserve the dignity and self-respect of the patients.

Susan Anderson, Program Director for Substance Abuse Services at St. Joseph's Hospital: Explained that methadone blocks the craving for opiates.

Dr. Barry Perlman, Director of Psychiatry at St. Joseph's Hospital: Explained that the program will be treating people who are already patients of THCC, and that the objective is to eliminate the need to transport the patients. He explained that there is a federal requirement to make 10% of the slots available to residents of the community, *i.e.*, 6 of the 60 slots being proposed.

Belinda Greenfield of NYS OASAS: Stated that having an on-site clinic is innovative and will save taxpayers \$150,000, and that the Federal Freedom of Choice Plan (Medicaid) prevents discrimination by allowing a small % of community residents to utilize the program.

Martin Lieberman of the NYS Health Facilities Association and Angela Khatchadourian of The Greater NY Health Facilities Association both supported the program and THCC.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Members of the community who signed up to speak were called on.

Al Chapman of Kingsbridge Heights Neighborhood Association said that, as a pharmacist, he was aware of the benefits of methadone, but was concerned about methadone users selling the drug.

Lynn Schwarz of Ft. Independence Neighborhood Association recommended that the program not be expanded until there was a chance to see how it worked out.

Detra Reynosa, parent representative from local schools, expressed her concerns for the many children who walk past the facility on their way to and from school.

Rochelle Rose asked if there were any prohibitions about such a facility being in close proximity to schools.

A former employee of THCC, Vanessa Pastrano, complimented the facility, but expressed concern about patients getting into trouble when out on a pass. She felt there should be a guarantee of security for the community.

Erica Rivera asked about guarantees of safety.

The primary concern expressed was about the potential of having 10% of the slots in the on-site program being filled by methadone-dependent people from the community, who would be permitted to avail themselves of the program, *i.e.*, up to a maximum of 6 of the 60 slots that would comprise the size of the program at the outset, and up to a maximum of 10 of the possible 100 slots that would comprise the size of the program after the initial six months (Currently only 48 THCC patients receive methadone from St. Joseph's.)

During the question period, Councilman Cabrera's Chief of Staff, Greg Faulkner questioned whether the 10% was a flexible figure and whether there could be any adjustment.

In response to parent concerns, Mr. Feldman indicated that students currently volunteer at THCC to do community service and that many of THCC's patients are from the surrounding community.

**Respectfully submitted by Ms. Joyce Pilsner
Approved by Maria Khury**

The Chair wishes to express her gratitude to all Board Members present and in particular to:
B. Abbott (Sign-up), J. Pilsner (Minutes), S. Alexander (Timekeeper), S. Froot (Counsel).