



East Harlem Center Community Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

Thursday, March 5, 2020

6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

East Harlem Neighborhood Health Action Center

Advisory Committee Attendees:

- John Greene, CB11 member and East Harlem resident
- Jose Rodriguez, East Harlem Center parent
- Luisa Lopez, Office of Council Member Diana Ayala
- Matthew Washington, Office of Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
- Michelle Booker, Office of Congressmen Adriano Espaillat
- Nilsa Orama, CB11 Chair
- Pennylane Ortiz, East Harlem Center parent , East Harlem resident & Children's Aid Trustee
- Pilar de Jesus, East Harlem resident
- Tammy Rodriguez, East Harlem Center parent

Advisory Committee Members Not Able to Attend:

- Denise (Mille) Jerez, EH community resident
- Gabrielle Hernandez, Office of Assemblymember Rodriguez
- Ja'Nai Harris, East Harlem Center alumni
- Neven Cepeda, East Harlem Center youth
- Shana Harmongoff, Senator Brian Benjamin
- Raja Flores, CBO rep (Mount Sinai) and Children's Aid alumni

Children's Aid Staff:

- Amy Scharf, Chair, Board of Trustees
- Anthony Ramos, VP for Marketing & Communications
- David Giordano, Director, East Harlem Center
- Don Shacknai, Chief Operating Officer
- Michelle Avila, Assistant Director, Public Policy
- Moria Cappio, VP for Early Childhood Education
- Phoebe Boyer, President & CEO
- Sandra Escamilla, Executive Vice President
- Yolanda McBride, Director, Public Policy

Other Attendees:

- Xavier Santiago, Vice Chair, CB11
- Michael Rodriguez, East Harlem Center youth
- Natasha Rodriguez, East Harlem Center youth

Meeting Notes

- The meeting opened with **Phoebe Boyer, President and CEO of Children's Aid**, welcoming advisory committee members and other community member to the meeting.
- **Don Shacknai, Chief Operating Officer** provided an update on the East Harlem Center rebuild process.
 - Negotiations have taken some time, as Children's Aid has had to discuss all of the elements needed in the building and the costs to achieve that.
 - Substantial progress has been made and Children's Aid is now at the point where we can start exchanging written business terms. Once an agreed-upon written understanding of the business terms is complete, we will be in a position to turn the business terms over to the lawyers who will put the agreement on paper.
 - Anticipate that it could take about another month to finalize the written business terms, then the lawyers would get involved in contract drafting.
 - Also reported no changes made to the building designs shown to the advisory committee and the community.

Question: Has Children's Aid chosen to have a computer room or STEM programs?

Answer: Children's Aid wants to mirror post-secondary pathways. They are looking at various industries and were just awarded 17 DYCD SYEP contract which allow them to do more workforce programming.

Question: How is Children's Aid looking at storage and design?

Answer: The space has been designed to be very flexible to allow for the best use of space.

- **Sandra Escamilla, Executive Vice President and Moria Cappio, VP, Early Childhood Education Division** provided an update on programs at CPE II.

- As a reminder, Children's Aid transferred the East Harlem Center early childhood education programming to CPE-II, the school where they already had existing early childhood programming.
- During the October 2019 advisory committee meeting, Children's Aid asked for support for recruitment with the early childhood education program for 2-to-4 year olds. At that time there were 23 children enrolled at a site that was contracted for 86 slots.
- Children's Aid unfortunately continued to experience challenges with recruitment of children for the program throughout the fall 2019.
- Several things were tried to address recruitment.
 - Recruitment video was developed
 - Flyers were put up in the neighborhood
 - Tried to work with the CPE II principal and their waitlist
 - Children's Aid ran incentive programs so enrolled families could benefit from 'referring a friend'
 - Community meetings were held with various partners?
- Goal was to fully enroll or be close to that by the end of November. However, Children's Aid was not successful and had to close the program in December 2019.
 - Last day for families was December 20
 - 20 families remained in the program and each family was offered an alternate program at another Children's Aid or neighborhood program
- Children's Aid also transferred their federal home-based program (15 children/2 staff) to their Taft Houses location.
- Children's Aid indicated that the changing demographic of the community, saturation of existing free programs including those provided by the school, and also DOE's decision to pull the early childhood education RFP had a huge impact on their ability to stay afloat.
- Children's Aid still plans to have early childhood education programs at the new center and believes that an intergenerational center (programming for children, teens, parents and the larger community) will make them an attractive option for families.

- The proposed design in the new East Harlem Center will still have 4 classrooms but Children's Aid will monitor closely what is happening with the city's contracting process. Many of our after school contracts are up for renewal and they are proceeding with caution given there will be a new Mayor soon and we are uncertain about the level of investment that will be made for after school.
- The city has decided to provide one-year renewals and not put out an RFP until the new administration is voted in.
- **David Giordano, Director of the East Harlem Center** provided an update on programs at Lexington Academy.
 - Children's Aid now has two full classrooms --- one for the administrative and staff offices and one for the POWER program.
 - For the summer they will have 120 teens working at Lexington Academy in SYEP.
 - 60 youth (ages 14-15 year olds) will be in project based learning workshops
 - 60 youth (16 years and up) will be given office staff roles, maintenance, junior counselors and junior facilitators with POWER
 - Summer camp registration occurred on Feb. 29 and they are fully enrolled.
 - The new step team performed for the elected officials at the Black History Month celebration hosted by Council Member Ayala. They will also perform for the local CEC.
 - Concern was raised about the bill (\$40K) East Harlem Center received from DYCD to operate the after school program after the school building is closed.
- **Yolanda McBride, Director, Public Policy** provided some updates on community engagement.
 - Asked for feedback on how best to engage and update East Harlem residents on the rebuild process to make sure they are aware of what is happening.
 - Children's Aid already plans to talk with East Harlem Center parents at the summer orientation and the parents that attend the Saturday Deaf and Hard of Hearing program.

- Advisory Committee offered the following suggestions for other venues to provide updates on the East Harlem Center rebuild process:
 - LINK NYC advertisements at the bus stops in the East Harlem community
 - Host a town hall on the rebuild process led by East Harlem Center students
 - Pass out flyers
- Reminder was provided that the two-year term for the advisory committee will end in September. More information will be provided at the next meeting about the process moving forward.
- As a follow up to this meeting, Children’s Aid was encouraged to reach out to the Manhattan Borough President’s Office about the “Extended use Hardship Waiver Program”. This program is provided by all of the Borough Presidents across the city. This is essentially a grant program that nonprofits operating in schools can apply for to pay for the school building fees.
- Meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.