



East Harlem Center Community Advisory Committee

Thursday, October 25, 2018

East Harlem Neighborhood Health Action Center

6:00 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.

Advisory Committee Attendees:

- Chantanae Singletary, Office of Councilmember Ayala
- Denise Jerez, East Harlem Center alumna and East Harlem Center resident
- Pennylane Ortiz, East Harlem Center parent and Children's Aid Trustee
- Gabriel Hernandez, Office of Assemblymember Robert Rodriguez
- Ja'Nai Harris, East Harlem Center alumna and kindergarten teacher
- Jose Rodriguez, East Harlem Center parent
- Pilar Dejesus, East Harlem resident
- Raja Flores, Children's Aid alumna and doctor at Mt. Sinai
- Shana Harmongoff, Office of Senator Brian Benjamin

Advisory Committee Members Not Able to Attend:

- John Green, East Harlem resident and Community Board 11 member
- Kesha Graham, East Harlem residents, East Harlem Center parent/alumna
- Michelle Booker, Office of Congressman Adriano Espaillat
- Neven Cepeda, East Harlem resident and East Harlem Center youth participant
- Nilsa Orama, Chair, Community Board 11
- Tammy Rodriguez, East Harlem resident and East Harlem Center parent

Children's Aid Attendees:

- Amy Scharf, Chair of the Board of Trustees
- Phoebe Boyer, President and CEO
- Ali Tan, Chief of Staff
- Courtenaye Jackson, General Counsel
- Don Shacknai, Chief Operating Officer
- Sandra Escamilla, Vice President for Adolescence
- Anthony Ramos, Vice President for Marketing and Communications
- David Sweeny, Assistant Vice President for Real Estate and Facilities
- David Giordano, Director of the East Harlem Center
- Patrick Egan, Director for Marketing and Communications
- Yolanda McBride, Director of Public Policy

- The meeting opened with Phoebe Boyer, President and CEO, providing opening remarks and welcoming everyone to the first community advisory meeting.
- Sandra Escamilla, the Vice President of the Adolescence division at Children's Aid, helped advisory members and Children's Aid staff get to know one another by asking everyone to state their name, their affiliation, and also what superhero power they would bring to this process.
- Yolanda McBride, Director of Public Policy, facilitated the meeting and provided an overview of how the committee will work. She also discussed the following:
 - Roles and responsibilities of committee members, dates for future meetings, and provided an overview of the memorandum of understanding that each committee member is being asked to sign
 - Discussed how the Children's Aid's ICREATE values will help drive the process
 - Informed the committee that key Children's Aid staff will support the work of the committee and that the goal is for the advisory members and Children's Aid staff to work together
 - Discussed that there will be ebbs and flows in the rebuild process
 - Children's Aid received a lot of information from the community engagement process and more information will come from the advisory committee
 - Wanted all to be clear that in the end, all of the information and feedback must be given to the Children's Aid Board of Trustees for their approval
- The Advisory Committee was asked to discuss the best ways for Children's Aid to communicate with them and the larger community: The following is a summary of those suggestions:
 - Work with Zoom, a virtual meeting space
 - Email updates that will be sent out every six weeks at a minimum
 - Use Google Docs – see how people are making contributions to documents, etc.
 - Website will be updated with membership of advisory committee so the community will know who they can contact. The notes from the meeting will also be up on the website.
 - Prepare a paper newsletter, something simple, to be handed out to people in the community
 - Text blasts
 - Use the Community Board 11 meetings to communicate updates
 - Create a social media page or Facebook group where updates can be added
 - Create a way for the larger community to give their input to the process. Conduct surveys which will allow the community to participate.

- David Giordano, Director of the East Harlem Center, provided an update to the advisory committee about the transition of the programs from the East Harlem Center to the local schools. The following is a summary of that conversation:
 - We have had successful transfers to the new sites – PS/MS 72 and Vito Marcantonio campus
 - There are still a few staff members who start the day in the old building, and then move at 1 pm to go to PS/MS 72
 - The office at PS/MS 72 is designed and staff have worked very well with the principal to get adequate storage space
 - At PS/MS 72, they are serving 240 kids
 - The Saturday Deaf and Hard of Hearing program is up and running. No loss of service.
 - At PS/MS 72, there is a need for mental health services for the younger kids.
 - Every Center staff member remained employed by Children's Aid. They either moved with the programs to the schools or they were placed at another Children's Aid site.

- David Sweeny, Assistant Vice President for Real Estate and Facilities, provided an update on the rebuilding process.
 - Children's Aid facilities division has spent a lot of time so far supporting the transition of the programs from the old center to the schools
 - They are also learning about existing inventory of equipment at the old building. What do we do with it? Thinking about the systems and cables running in the building.
 - Children's Aid continues to bring engineers and demolition contractors through the building.
 - There are a lot of steps involved in demolishing the building.
 - Moving utilities.
 - Securing data.
 - Ensuring neighboring structures are safe.
 - Determine if there are any regulated disposals.
 - When Children's Aid hires a demolition firm, they will sequence all of this, clearing everything out, establish structure protection systems for the neighborhood, and over time bring down the building
 - Right now, nothing will happen right away.
 - Once the building is demolished, we will fence it. We will use the kids artwork (the cut out figures) to help maintain a good environment that captures the spirit of the community.

- The Advisory Committee was asked for suggestions on how to make sure that the building is secure and safe but also not an eyesore in the community. The following is a summary of that discussion:
 - Safety is key, too. Examples were given of scaffolding that has become a drug haven in the neighborhood. Property is losing its value because of the scaffolding at 112 101st Street.
 - Rats can be an issue as well when buildings come down.
 - Concern about the construction on the block because the majority of residents on 101st Street are homeowners.
 - Is it possible to sequence the demolition of the building to coordinate with the first steps of the construction?
 - Filing and permitting often takes as long as or longer than the demolition. It is usually about 2-4 months after you hire someone before you can start taking steps. Best case scenario is that it will take six to 10 months before the building is taken down.
 - Once we make programming decisions, we want to hire an architect. So it would be great to get the planning done in the next few months so an architect can get to work and come to this group at some point next year.
 - When will the demo plans be made public so that we can work with neighbors? Epidemic of rats/infestation. We have to make sure the building inspections happen and that we anticipate problems.
 - Has anyone dealt with the vermin issue well that we should be talking to?
 - So far it's all been reactive rather than proactive.
 - It was suggested that Children's Aid talk to the Department of Health as well as the MTA
- Sandra Escamilla, Vice President for Adolescence, provided an update on how Children's Aid is thinking about developing the program budget and how that will impact the design of the building.
 - Children's Aid is excited about design.
 - Need to be responsive to changing neighborhood needs in addition to being sustainable.
 - Budgets and existing program contracts—we're putting that information together while considering the ideas from the community.
 - Really want to increase the work we do with teens.
 - We will look closely at flexible spaces to adapt to changes of programs over the course of many years.

Meeting Ended with Next Steps:

- Communicate in six weeks unless something urgent arises sooner.
- Children's Aid will set up a walking tour for Councilmember Ayala and CB 11 Chair Nilsa Orama of our school sites. We will invite members of the Advisory Committee.