

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 9

**SENIOR ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2019

Committee Members in Attendance:

Hon. Anthony Q. Fletcher, Co-Chair, **Present**

Hon. Martin Wallace, **Present**

Public Members in Attendance:

Lillian Doctor, **Present**

Ruther Miller, **Present**

Other Attendees:

Ameenah Muhammada, Annie Payne, Lucinda Blackwell, Lorraine Wilbourne, Iretha Fletcher, Leonard A. Bonannu, Anne Burley, Sharon Fitzgerald, Verna Arthur, NYC Department For The Aging

Meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Anthony Q. Fletcher ("AF" or "Co-Chair") at 12:30 pm.

AF announced there were preliminary matters to be discussed and several announcements were made prior to the adoption of the Agenda, which were as follows:

- (i) AF appointed Hon. Martin Wallace ("MW") as Interim Chair for Meeting due to Hon. Reverend Georgiette Morgan-Thomas' ("Reverend Thomas") absence;
- (ii) It was apparent Committee Members were in need of being appointed, considering there was no official quorum of Community Board members present for the conduct of the Meeting since the Committee only has four (4) Community Board members presently assigned to the Committee, and that the matter would be addressed by AF with the Co-Chair, Reverend Thomas, and thereafter with CB9's Chair, Hon. Barry Weinberg ("CB9 Chair");
- (iii) The Coordinator of the Committee, acting previously as its official Community Liaison, Hleziphi Zita, was no longer assigned to the Committee and, accordingly, the Committee would need to formally request from the District Manager of MCB9, Eutha Prince, either a replacement and/or appoint its own Coordinator or Community Liaison subject to the approval of the CB9 Chair;
- (iv) The George Bruce Library's hours of operation each Tuesday were from Noon to 6 pm and, accordingly, Meetings would continue to begin on or after 12 pm on the first Tuesday of each month, absent either a change in the Library's hours or identification and approval of a new Meeting location available to the Committee at or about 11 am; and

- (v) The Committee's liaison to NYC Department For The Aging, Verna Arthur, will have to leave the Committee's meetings by 12:30 pm, and consequently requested that Committee meetings continue at 11:15 am consistent with past practice.

I. Motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to adopt Agenda for Meeting (attached as Exhibit A).

II. Presentations by Verna Arthur, NYC Department for the Aging, Regarding

(a) The **NY Connects Program**; (b) the NYC Department For the Aging's Public Hearing on October 25, 2019; and (c) The "Silver Bill" Payment System.

(a) **NY Connects Program**

- This Statewide Program provides guidance in directing people of any age to social welfare services and organizations that will assist them with, among other things, (i) personal care services (i.e., assistance with housekeeping, transportation, organizing household finances including bill payment and taxes), (ii) education and counseling programs and services (i.e., assistance with independent living, Adult education, supported employment, and education sufficient to gain vocational and skilled jobs), (iii) behavioral health and developmental support services (i.e., mental health services, intellectual/developmental disability support services, and substance abuse disorder services), and (iv) health and wellness programming (i.e., abuse prevention and protection services and programs and support with managing chronic conditions).
- The primary objective of the **NY Connects Program** is to ensure that people remain healthy and independent.
- The **NY Connects Program** is designed to further ensure that children or adults with disabilities, seniors, family members and caregivers, veterans and other professionals have ready information to the provision of long term social welfare services.
- The **NY Connects Program** may be reached online at www.nyconnects.ny.gov or by phone at 1-800-342-9871. The direct number to the Manhattan office is 1-212-962-2720.
- Please see **Exhibit B** (attached hereto) for additional information.

(b) The NYC Department For the Aging's Public Hearing on October 25, 2019

- The Department For The Aging ("DFTA") shall hold a Public Hearing on October 25th at which seniors, caregivers, community service organizations, and interested constituencies may voice their concerns in reference to senior services provided by the DFTA, the City, and/or matters related to seniors directly to the DFTA staff.

- The next DFTA Public Hearing shall be held on October 25th from 10 am to 12 pm at VISIONS at Selis Manor, which is located at 135 West 23rd Street between 6th and 7th Avenues.

(c) The “Silver Bill” Payment System

- Silver Bills is a third-party vendor that serves as an intermediary for the receipt, review, and payment of bills.
- Silver Bills’ primary purpose is to provide bill paying services for seniors.
- After contracting with them, Silver Bills will assign a dedicated account representative who is responsible for opening all bills addressed to their clientele, writing checks for each bill received, disputing bills received in the event of a billing discrepancy or dispute, and thereafter providing an item list to the client of a monthly statement showing each individual bill for that month and the precise amount paid for each bill.
- The service is intended to ensure that seniors are capable of having all bills reviewed (and, if warranted, disputed) and checks written for bills to be paid on time with the assistance of a dedicated account representative.
- If hired, Silver Bills charges a monthly fee for bill payment service and furnishes with their bill a monthly statement showing that all bills have been paid, and the amounts paid, for each monthly period.
- Silver Bills may be contacted by calling 866-653-4427.

In conclusion, Ms. Arthur made two (2) additional announcements:

First, new Medicare and Medicaid cards have been issued with random numbers and are now available to Medicare/Medicaid recipients. The random numbers contained on these new Medicare and Medicaid cards is intended to minimize the potential for fraud and other infractions associated with the unauthorized use of a Medicare/Medicaid cardholder’s Social Security number contained on his or her formerly-issued card. Any Medicare or Medicaid recipient may now receive a new card with a random number by contacting or visiting the Social Security Administration (SSA), as the SSA is the federal agency responsible for issuing new Medicare and Medicaid cards to eligible Medicare/Medicaid recipients.

Second, Ms. Arthur shall be the Honoree at a Special Reception on September 13, 2019 to be held by the Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, at the Harlem State Office Building, 3rd floor, between 6 – 9 pm, for her advocacy and promotional outreach efforts on behalf of seniors.

III. Motion to Amend the Meeting Agenda

A Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to amend the Meeting's Agenda for the purpose of proceeding directly to New Business, primarily to discuss the preliminary matters presented by AF prior to the adoption of the Agenda.

IV. New Business

The floor was given to all Community Board members, Public Members, Attendees and, for a brief time, Junelle Carter-Bowman, the George Bruce Library Manager, to discuss the following:

- (i) how to lobby the Library for restoration of the former hours to ensure that Committee Meetings could be started between 11am – 11:15 am on the first Tuesday of each month;
- (ii) whether the Committee should meet on Mondays, rather than Tuesdays, to ensure the availability and participation of Co-Chair Reverend Thomas;
- (iii) contacting the New York Public Library at 917-275-6975 to request that the George Bruce Library's hours of operation be extended so that the Committee could meet at its former time on the first Tuesday of each month;
- (iv) both AF's and MW's agreement that as Community Board members they would ask the Community Board to formally contact elected officials and ask for their assistance in lobbying for extended hours at the Library; and
- (v) Ms. Carter-Bowman's view that the Library was in the best position, due to internal staffing, to accommodate the Committee by opening earlier on Tuesdays as opposed to earlier on Mondays if the Library remained the Committee's preferred location for its meeting on an ongoing basis.

V. Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

A Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. AF subsequently adjourned the Meeting at 2:10 pm.