

CB9 HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

November 4, 2024, 6:30 pm

COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE

Present: **Chair:** Hon. LaQuita Henry **Members:** Hon. Justin Dent, Hon. Elizabeth Eastman, Hon. Monique Hardin-Cordero, Hon. Michael Iglesias, Hon. Heather Jason

Absent: Hon. Nicauris Camilo, Hon. Divine E. White

Present Public Members: (*On Zoom*) Dr. Edwin Torres, Monica Dula, Esq., Tiffany Khan

Minutes Taken By: Dr. Edwin Torres and Michael Iglesias

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Committee Co-Chair, LaQuita Henry, at 6:34 pm.

Adopt Agenda/Minutes

The Committee's Agenda and Minutes were adopted via motions by LaQuita, seconded by Heather Jason and Michael Iglesias, respectively.

A quorum was confirmed with Monique Hardin-Cordero present.

Meeting Purpose

Discuss community health initiatives and programs in Manhattan Community Board 9, including pest control, lung cancer screening, environmental justice education for youth, and other health-related topics.

Key Takeaways

- Representatives from NYC Department of Health presented rat mitigation efforts and upcoming pilot programs in CB9
- Several health organizations shared information on community programs, including lung cancer screening, environmental education for youth, and wellness initiatives
- The committee discussed following up on past resolutions and improving community outreach on health issues

Presentations

Rat Mitigation Program

- NYC Dept of Health conducting proactive inspections of properties in CB9 as part of broader Harlem rat mitigation zone
- Providing education and resources to property owners on rat prevention
- Planning to pilot rat contraceptives in CB9 in 2025
- Committee interested in hosting a Rat Academy training session

Lung Cancer Screening Program

- Dr. Lauren Groner presented on efforts to increase lung cancer screening rates, especially among high-risk populations
- Developing educational tools and community partnerships to raise awareness
- Committee suggested connecting with youth/education committee on outreach efforts

Environmental Justice Youth Program

- We Act and BIOBUS partnered on 6-session summer program teaching youth about environmental quality indicators
- Students conducted experiments on air quality, heat, etc. and designed environmentally just playgrounds
- Looking to expand program to schools and train more educators

Community Health Initiatives

- Columbia University Irving Medical Center shared info on community engagement programs
- CODA Alliance presented on upcoming wellness programs for teens, doulas, and community members
- Community Scientist Institute training community members on cancer research/clinical trials

Next Steps

- Follow up on past health-related resolutions to track progress/accountability
- Explore hosting youth environmental program presentations at future health forum
- Connect presenters with relevant CB9 committees for further collaboration
- Draft resolution on 911 response time issues
- Improve dissemination of health information to broader community

Summary Details Below

Meeting start and agenda adoption

The meeting is called to order, with the chair noting that a quorum is not yet present but will be reached shortly. The agenda is adopted, and the minutes from the previous meeting are approved.

Announcements:

1. Sickle cell disease outreach and initiatives

The chair provides updates on the community board's sickle cell disease outreach efforts, including a recent broadcast on the topic and an upcoming report from the sickle cell

project. Plans are discussed to circulate the broadcast recordings and partner with the Columbia Irving Medical Research Center to further disseminate the information.

- 2. Emma Bowen Community Service Center has a temporary facility under construction** at 520 W 135th Street. The CB9 Board and Committee have been invited by its Board Chair, Pat Jordan, to select a tour date.

The committee is invited to tour the Emma Bowen Community Service Center's new temporary facility, and the board is informed that the center will be presenting on their grant renewal from the West Harlem Development Corporation.

- 3. NYC Health Department survey participation**

The NYC Health Department is seeking participants to help test their surveys, and the community is encouraged to assist in ensuring the surveys are easily understood.

From Cheyenne Morillo,: “NYC Health Department is seeking people to help test their surveys to make sure the questions are easily understood. Surveys may ask about your health and your opinions, as well as your age, gender, and race, to ensure a diverse and accurate representation of NYC residents. The demographic questions are optional. Each survey is about one hour, and you can receive a \$40 gift card.”

- 4. 2025 public health forum planning**

The chair mentions that planning is underway for the 2025 public health forum, and the committee will discuss a date, time, and location before the end of the meeting.

NYC DOHMH pest control and chemical use presentation

Representatives from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene provide an update on the Neighborhood Rat Reduction Program and the proactive inspections being conducted in Manhattan Community Board 9. Concerns are raised about the use of pesticides and chemicals, which leads to a discussion on next steps.

Michael expanded - **Caroline Bragg, Director of Neighborhood Interventions for Pest Control**, discussed the Health Department's rat mitigation work in Manhattan Community Board 9 (CB9). This includes proactive, unannounced inspections of nearly 2,500 properties, collaboration with agencies like NYCHA and NYC Parks, along with the monitoring of rat activity. The goal is to reduce rat populations by encouraging property owners to maintain clean properties.

- Properties that fail inspections receive abatement orders and can face summonses if they don't comply. The failure rate in CB9 is lower than in other parts of Harlem, though still high compared to Manhattan overall.

- Educational resources are available for property owners, and the Health Department offers a “Rat Academy” with free trash cans as incentives. CB9 will also pilot a rat contraceptive program next year.

- Rat Activity Around Trees: Tree beds are often a hotspot for rat burrowing. While the NYC Department of Parks manages the trees, property owners are responsible for keeping the surrounding areas clean. The Health Department offers support for remediation.

- Access to Free Bins: Free trash bins are provided to hosts of the Rat Academy, not directly to individuals.

- **Dog Waste:** Dog waste contributes to rat feeding. The city encourages keeping areas clean and using pest control methods to reduce this risk.

- **Arsenic in Pest Control:** Arsenic is not used in any city rat control programs. The Health Department monitors pesticide use on city properties and aims to reduce reliance on toxic chemicals.

- **Rat Contraceptive Pilot:** A new pilot program for rat contraception will take place in CB9, part of a bill introduced by Council Member Abreau. This is in line with ongoing rat control efforts, especially with CB9 being the first to implement a containerization project to keep trash in secure bins.

Columbia University Irving Medical Center programs overview

The Community Affairs Coordinator for Columbia University Irving Medical Center presents an overview of the office's mission, programs, and initiatives, including the Community Research Initiative, Community Health Worker Training, and opportunities for youth engagement.

Michael detailed **Columbia University Irvine Medical Center - Diego's Presentation on OACP**

Diego Diego Quintana, Community Affairs Coordinator, Columbia University Irving Medical Center, presented on the Office of Academic and Community Partnerships (OACP), which was established in 2023 to enhance community outreach and wellness. The OACP includes several key initiatives:

Additionally, OACP works closely with Columbia's health departments, including the **Office of Community Health** and **Academy for Community and Public Service**, to improve health outcomes, promote research, and build sustainable community engagement.

Diego also mentioned efforts to engage students from diverse backgrounds, particularly high schoolers and community college students (e.g., City College), in healthcare career pathways. The office partners with the **Office of Student Diversity and Professional Development** to expose students to healthcare roles and support their transition into Columbia's programs.

- **America Reads:** A program focusing on literacy and tutoring.

- **Medical Sponsor Neighborhood Fund:** Provides funding to nonprofits addressing violence and community health issues in Washington Heights and surrounding areas.

- **Community Research Forums:** These forums present relevant topics (e.g., AI) to the community, encouraging knowledge exchange.

- **Youth Programs:** Offers opportunities for youth, with around 100 students placed in various healthcare settings (e.g., hospitals, clinics) to learn alongside professionals.

- **Senior Exercise Programs:** "Senior Eye" provides fitness programs for seniors in Washington Heights.

- **Community Research Initiative:** A partnership with local community-based organizations (CBOs) to assess hospital-community relationships and identify health needs in Washington Heights and Inwood. This initiative focuses on engaging community members to address health disparities and improve local outreach efforts.

Lung cancer screening and heart disease detection research

Dr. Lauren Groner, a radiologist from Cornell Medicine, presents on a research project focused on early detection of lung cancer and heart disease using imaging-based screening and seeks community feedback and potential partnerships.

More: on **Lauren Groner's Presentation on Heart Disease and Lung Cancer Disparities**

Dr. Lauren Groner, a radiologist and health service researcher, discussed the ongoing health disparities related to heart disease and lung cancer. Key points included:

- **Disparities in Health Outcomes:** Black Americans face earlier onset of heart disease and higher rates of lung cancer, with Black men having the highest lung cancer mortality rates. Black and Latinx populations are often diagnosed at more advanced stages.
- **Barriers to Screening:** Despite having extensive screening facilities in New York City, screening rates for lung cancer remain low (around 5%). This contrasts with higher screening rates for diseases like breast cancer (80%).
- **Factors Influencing Low Screening Rates:** Barriers include fear and stigma, especially related to smoking, which is often blamed for lung cancer. This contributes to lower uptake of screening despite available resources.
- **Community-based Solutions:** Dr. Groner emphasized the importance of community partnerships to understand the factors influencing screening rates and to develop effective outreach strategies. The project focuses on raising awareness about lung cancer screenings and ensuring the community is informed and empowered to access available resources.
- She also touched on genetic and environmental factors (e.g., air pollutants, pesticides) that might contribute to lung cancer in populations that don't fit the typical smoking history, particularly among young women and those with family histories of cancer.

Community Scientist Institute program

Nicole A. Bayne, a nurse from Columbia University's Cancer Center provides an overview of the Community Scientist Institute, a program that aims to increase diversity in cancer clinical trials by offering skills-building and networking opportunities.

Nicole's Presentation on the Community Sciences Institute (CSI)

Nicole, a nurse with a Master's in Public Health, spoke about her work with the **Community Sciences Institute (CSI)**, a program within the **Disrupt Grant** funded by **Stand Up to Cancer**. The Disrupt initiative is a collaboration among four major New York City institutions: **City College of New York, Columbia University, Montefiore Cancer Center, and Mount Sinai Cancer Center**. Nicole is affiliated with Columbia's Cancer Center and works closely with leaders from the other institutions.

The **Disrupt program** aims to **increase diversity in cancer clinical trials**, addressing the longstanding issue of underrepresentation of Black, Indigenous, and Latino populations in research. Historically, clinical trials have been dominated by white participants, which means treatments may not be as effective for minority populations. Disrupt's goals are to:

- Engage and recruit more diverse participants into clinical trials.

- Provide training and resources to help people understand cancer research and clinical trials.
- Promote community involvement in designing and leading research projects.

The **Community Sciences Institute (CSI)** is a key part of Disrupt. It offers a **6- to 8-week training course** designed to increase knowledge and skills around cancer research, particularly clinical trials. The course, which was launched in **2023** and expanded in **2024**, includes both in-person classes at **City College of New York** and online learning components. The course targets community health workers, health advocates, journalists, and graduate students, but is open to anyone interested in learning about cancer research and increasing diversity in the field.

Course Details for 2025:

- **Duration:** 8 weeks (Saturdays, 9:30 AM – 2:00 PM) from **February 1 to March 29**.
- **Location:** City College of New York (in-person).
- **Eligibility:** Open to adults aged 18 and older.
- **Tuition:** \$550, with full scholarships available for New York City residents and employees.
- **Content:** The course covers cancer research, clinical trials, and networking opportunities in the cancer field.
- **Registration:** Participants can register through City College’s Continuing and Professional Studies department, with a QR code for scholarship applications.

Nicole also mentioned plans to expand the course and its partnerships to other cancer centers in New York City.

We Act for Environmental Justice and BIOBUS youth science program

Representatives from We Act for Environmental Justice and BIOBUS describe their collaborative youth science program that educates and empowers the next generation of environmental leaders, and discuss plans to adapt the curriculum for a school-based setting.

KOTA ALLIANCE and Upcoming Programs

Teresa Mateus, MSW, E-RYT 200, Program + Fundraising Consultant, Avni Healing Collective, KOTA Alliance, briefly discussed her involvement with **KOTA Alliance**, an organization focused on **social change, advocacy, arts, and health** for Black and Latinx communities, particularly women, girls, and those with intersecting marginalized identities. They are piloting a **Teen and Families Program** in West Harlem, which will combine **learning and healing** across generations, focusing on issues like **social equity, justice, economic empowerment, and holistic health**. The program will launch in **November 2024** and will include sessions for teens and their families on Saturdays.

New Business: Discussion on EMT and Emergency Response Issues

The conversation then turned to a previous issue about **911 emergency response**, where there was a period when 911 calls were not being answered promptly in certain areas. One participant shared their personal experience of being involved in a case in which EMT services were delayed, highlighting the coordination challenges between hospitals, the **fire department**, and **EMT services**. There was mention of a previous **resolution** to address these issues, though further follow-up was needed.

Closing and next steps

The chair discusses potential next steps, including following up on previous resolutions and exploring opportunities to showcase the youth science program at a future community event.

Action Items

- Send PowerPoint presentation to CB9**
Lauren Groner
- Schedule Rat Academy with Caroline Bragdon from NYC DOHMH**
Manhattan Community Board 9
- Investigate Joel Kupferman's concerns re: arsenic in NYCHA properties**
Caroline Bragdon, NYC DOHMH
- Send presentation slides & contact info to CB9**
Nicole Bayne (she/her) (3)
- Email PDF w/ program dates & info to CB9**
Teresa Mateus
- Share KOTA Alliance info w/ community partners**
Judelysse (Judy) Gomez (She/Her)
- Follow up w/ Cameron Clarke & Maia Yoshida re: potential youth program presentation at future forum**
Manhattan Community Board 9

With duly entreating the meeting to adjourn, motion was stated by Chair and seconded by Monique,
at