

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

October 7, 2024, 6:30 pm

Committee Attendance

Present: Chair: Hon. LaQuita Henry **Members:** Hon. Elizabeth Eastman, Hon. Monique Hardin-Cordero, Hon. Michael Iglesias, Hon. Heather Jason, Hon. Felipe Castillo Trujillo (*departed at 7:00 pm*),

Absent: (*Excused*) Hon. Justin Dent
Hon. Nicauris Camilo
Hon. Divine E. White

Present Board Members: *Board Chair* Victor Edwards

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

Minutes Taken By: Dr. Edwin Torres

Agenda Highlights

To discuss community health issues, review resolutions, and prepare for the upcoming district needs statement and public hearing.

Key Takeaways

- Mental health, especially among youth, is a critical issue requiring multifaceted approaches including parental support and education
- Sickle cell disease awareness and funding needs more attention, particularly for treatment centers and genetic testing
- Environmental concerns like mosquito control and air quality monitoring require further discussion and potential policy changes
- 911 response times and accessibility issues need to be addressed urgently

Welcome and Introductions

- The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm and began with adopting the Agenda (MHC moved/ HJ seconded), the September Minutes (MHC moved/MI seconded). She then made three announcements regarding materials for meeting
- Following, the Committee Chair introduced Victor Edwards, the General Board Chair, who provided brief remarks about his background and interest in the committee's work on mental health and underserved communities. He reminded all members of their responsibility to be present – that's when their committee presence and vote counts. If by chance they are on Zoom, their face must be visible as a meeting participant.

Community Health Updates

- DOH is holding free COVID and flu vaccination events from Oct 17-30 at East Harlem Health Action Center
- Focus on underserved populations, seniors, and those without health insurance
- Walk-ins welcome; appointments available at 855-789-8760
- Recent data shows 12 people tested positive for monkeypox in NYC from Jan-Sep 2023

Mental Health Awareness

- October is National Depression and Mental Health Screening Awareness Month
- 1 in 5 young people experience depression or anxiety before age 14
- Stigma and lack of awareness prevent many from seeking help
- NYC's Teen Space initiative has seen over 6,800 sign-ups for therapy
- Parental stress and support identified as crucial upstream factors

Sickle Cell Disease Advocacy

- Sickle Cell/Thalassemia Patients Network working on state legislation for treatment centers
- Seeking \$25 million to create 11 treatment centers of excellence throughout NY state
- Two bills passed in NYC for provider education, public screening, and genetic counseling
- Need for more public awareness, especially regarding sickle cell trait carriers
- Challenges in getting accurate population statistics since 2008

Environmental Concerns

- Debate over mosquito control methods and potential health impacts of spraying
- Standing water issues contributing to mosquito breeding need to be addressed
- Air quality monitoring and reporting suggested as part of district needs

911 Response Issues

- Multiple reports of long wait times or inability to connect with 911
- One community member reported 17 attempts to reach 911 during an emergency
- Concerns about impact on elderly and critical emergencies
- Resolution pending

Next Steps

- Committee members to provide 4-sentence summaries with data on identified health issues for district needs statement.
- Explore the potential for NIH funding for sickle cell disease initiatives
- Delay voting on resolutions to allow for further exploration of topics
- Gather more data on 911 response issues for potential resolution
- Schedule follow-up presentations on doula services and maternal health
- Develop public health campaigns on various issues including cannabis education and parental support

Action Items

- **Revise mosquito control resolution draft. Incorporate feedback from meeting discussion.**
- **Reach out to Shanika re: school year mental health initiatives for youth**
- **Discuss w/ team how to incorporate meeting feedback into Making It Through program**
- **Check w/ Mercedes Narcisse & Liz Schulman on status of city sickle cell legislation**
- **Compile 7 health-related themes from meeting for district needs statement, incl. public campaigns. Email bullet points to committee members.**
- **Contact Ginger Davis for sickle cell disease stats in Manhattan/Harlem for district needs statement**
- **Draft resolution re: 911 response time issues. Include personal experience data. -**

Chair called to adjourn meeting. By unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 9:23 pm.

Annotations

HIGHLIGHTS

- LaQuita presents agenda
- LaQuita presents September minutes.
- Monica brought up pharmaceutical costs and access. Manhattan recalled a presentation on Black maternal mortality being largely due to stress, not mishandling.
- LaQuita discusses statistics on women dying during childbirth in the US compared to other countries.
- LaQuita discusses encouraging charging stations for e-bikes and funding and support for sickle cell disease research.
- Pauline announces upcoming free flu and COVID vaccination events in East Harlem.
- Pauline responds she will find out the COVID vaccine type and send the information to LaQuita
- Pauline provides vaccine information and notes CB9 is a priority neighborhood for low cost DULA services from the Health Department.
- Pauline confirms no known dental program
- Wendy discusses her organization's youth program
- Wendy reports on a mental health newsletter from the TA Omega Charitable Trust Fund.
- Sharon discusses how a child's experiences affect their development and Victor agrees, noting that it takes a community to support youth.
- LaQuita reports delayed 911 response in New York City.
- LaQuita proposes adjourning meeting 923.

Dr. Torres