

**Youth, Education, Libraries Committee**

**October 11, 2017**

**521 West 145th (Boys & Girls Club of Manhattan)**

**Committee Members Present:**

Deirdre McIntosh-Brown (Co-Chair), Alec Barrett (Co-Chair), Miriam Aristy-Farer, Chaya Crowder, Edgar Avalos, Ken Miles.

Meeting called to order at 6:53pm.

**Wendy Hilliard, Wendy Hilliard Gymnastics Foundation**

Ms. Hilliard has been running her foundation for 20 years, and has served over 17,000 youth in NYC. She was formerly a member of the National Gymnastics Team and coach to a 1996 US Olympian, and was inducted into the US Gymnastics Hall of Fame in 2008.

WHGF covers a range of gymnastics events, including trampoline, tumbling, and rhythmic gymnastics. The program helps instill lifelong commitment to personal fitness, awareness of nutrition, and personal skills like following instruction and communicating with an adult coach. The program also provides classes for special needs students, closely involving parents of those young people.

The foundation works primarily in Harlem but newly also in Detroit, Ms. Hilliard's hometown. They have published an annual Black Gymnasts in History Report every February for Black History Month. They sent a very successful team to the 2015 National Championships, and Ms. Hilliard remarked that the "team from Harlem" is starting to earn attention and recognition from other competitors.

WHGF is a grantee of the West Harlem Development Corporation. They work with local organizations including Boys and Girls Club of Manhattan and the Harlem Children's Zone. Ms. Hilliard expressed her desire to someday build a gymnastics center in upper Manhattan: this would require around 15,000 square feet with 50-60 foot ceilings, and though there isn't currently an available footprint, Ms. Hilliard is keeping an eye out.

**Dominique Jones, Boys and Girls Club of Harlem**

Ms. Jones spoke about the history of the space and the longtime effort to convert the former public school space into both housing and a clubhouse. The building is about the idea of bringing community together in service of kids. BGCH can provide kids' first exposure to world-class instruction and opportunities through partnerships with local organizations (including WHGF, and soon the Harlem Football Club). The club is always looking to engage with arts, academics, sports programs in the community.

The club has lots of capacity to support kids, both young kids and teens. They also operate out of Frederick Douglass Academy, PS 125, Manhattanville Community Center, and finally PS 30 on the east side, bringing the club's service area river-to-river.

The club's board recently finalized a strategic plan. The current goal is to have 2,500 kids enrolled in programming across all sites, by diversifying programming and extending hours. The academic enrichment emphasizes STEM, while other programs include leadership development and health and wellness. The work is about kids being able to be independent adults. This will require a lot of funds, too, to sustain programming moving forward: the club has a goal of \$6M over 3 years, which will require support from champions including the community board.

They also hope to stay open until 8pm on weekdays to accommodate their teen program. They have also begun partnering with several traditionally African-American Greek organizations, which will operate mentoring programs on weekends out of the clubhouse.

The annual fundraiser will be on October 26, 6-9pm, at Columbia's new Lenfest Center (more information at <http://www.bgcharlem.org/ainv17>).

#### **Corey Parks, Success is a Journey, Inc.**

Success is a Journey (<http://successisajourney.org/>) focuses on reentry for men and women coming out of prison. In January they are beginning a speaking series for young people on gang and street violence, police violence, mass incarceration, and school bullying. The goal is to connect with young people who are exposed to or choosing to get involved in gang or drug activity.

Mr. Parks was incarcerated for 15 years, from 1997 to 2012, after being arrested as a teenager for being involved in gang activity. In school he realized he had dyslexia, but he recently completed his Bachelor's degree and is pursuing an MSW. Now working as a motivational speaker, his mission is to talk to students, talk to them about changing their narrative and his experience, having been counted out by people around him, and how they can change their trajectory by valuing their education.

Mr. Parks will emphasize how students could choose to spend their time instead of activities that would lead to jail time, even if they feel like they can afford to lose those years of their life. He also spoke about the fear of reading among his peers growing up. He'll also work on another program for aspiring entrepreneurs to help them feel empowered to pursue their dreams.

#### **Melissa Koszer, George Bruce Library**

The library's fall festival is on October 28, featuring a fun, family-friendly musical performer.

The library will also hold a back-to-school community resource fair, which will connect organizations that serve the community and young people specifically with parents from the community. Interested organizations can have a table at the fair.

#### **Katrina Ortega, Hamilton Grange Library**

The library's college and career club will talk to students 12 to 18 about plans for after high school to help them think about school choices, career choices, financial aid, etc., on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The library's hotspot program lets families who meet criteria check out free WiFi for a year. Families must have a child under 18 in the public school system. Sessions are happening on October 25 and November 1.

**Old Business: Know Your Educational Rights with Center for Educational Equity**

The committee will be meeting with Joe Rogers from CEE and representatives from CEC5 and CEC6 on Friday, October 13.

**New Business: District Needs Statement**

CEC5 is having an issue with the location of Columbia Secondary School in Ralph Bunche/PS 125. Ralph Bunche has been growing, had a long wait list this year, and has been a success for racial and socioeconomic integration in the district. CSS includes middle and high school students, though the space was built as an elementary school, and is also growing. PS125 was supposed to be the temporary location for CSS, but a permanent alternative was never found. PS125 reclaimed two classrooms this year, including the former district office, but the school is looking to expand to a middle school.

This is connected to the ongoing issues with both of Columbia's schools, TCCS and CSS, and it was agreed that CB9 would work to reconvene a conversation with Columbia and the DOE.

CB9 has a colocation problem. Even if the number of students in the school building meets the original specifications of the school, having multiple schools comes with overhead that strains the capacity of the original building.

The colocation problem is exacerbated by charter schools that are up for renewal and will be seeking to expand. It is also connected to expansion of housing in our neighborhood, which will come with new families that are looking for preschool.

CEC6 has issues with technology infrastructure. While there is an academic push for STEM education, the building infrastructure (Internet bandwidth) doesn't support that, so only certain classrooms can support laptop use and instruction. We should ask SCA to prioritize our schools for upgrades.

Also in CEC6, colocation causes the loss of arts programs and dedicated space for special needs programming. We should ask the School Planning division to have a conversation about strategies for successful co-location.

Our district would benefit from bullying intervention and tolerance programs. Students in our schools can be intolerant of people who look different. There is relatedly a deficiency in our curriculum when it comes to teaching about slavery and positive contributions of different ethnic groups. Students lack the tools to have healthy discussions about a traumatizing topic.

We should expand the offerings of CBOs alongside our schools to provide counseling, mental and physical health, dental services, etc. This is especially relevant when it comes to providing wraparound services that meet the needs of homeless students.

Another concern about the physical infrastructure of our schools is testing for lead in school water fountains. The DOE needs to provide transparent information about performing tests and the results of those test, and communicate about safety risks to parents.

On the libraries side, George Bruce Library has a custodial space that hasn't been used since the 1970s which could be converted to an inviting space for teens. The development would cost around \$1M, mainly to bring elevator service to the third floor to make it ADA compliant.

Hamilton Grange Library is similarly looking to convert an old custodial apartment into classrooms to increase the number of classes the library can offer.

**Johanna Garcia, CEC6**

Ms. Garcia made a brief announcement about a planned forum in November to combat bullying in schools and address mental health needs to reduce violence without relying on metal detectors.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35pm.