

Brooklyn Community Board 9
890 Nostrand Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11225

Health & Social Services Committee Minutes
March 2, 2023
Meeting ID: 845 4081 7100

Attendance (Board Members): Committee Chair, Francisca Leopold; Mayna Legoute; Milford Prewitt

Attendance (Community Resident Members): Alexandra Cameron; Enid Dillard

Absent (Board Members):

Absent (Community Resident Members): Jacqueline Love; Vanya Mayers; Reyana McKenzie; Cecilia Yampolsky (Excused); Kayla Williams

Guests: Abigail Aberdeen, NYC DSS; Nicolas Almonor, CB9; Fred Baptiste, CB9; Suki Cheong, CB9; Diana Foster; Julie Harrison, Asst. Commissioner, DHS, Streets Division; Hailey Nolasco; Dep. Commissioner of Intergovernmental/Legislative Affairs, DHS; Zulay Mateo, Program Director, Bronx Family Network; Pat Moses, CB9; Yuri Sanchez, NYC DSS; Shanice Wallace, Program Director, Bronx Family Network; Theresa Westerdahl, CB9

CB9 Staff: Mia N. Hilton, Assistant District Manager

- I. Committee Chair, Francisca Leopold convened the meeting at 7:05pm
- II. New Business
 - a. Presentation – The Stabilization Site at 205 Parkside
 - i. Operated by the Bronx Family Network
 - ii. One of many emergency homeless shelters operated under the Dept. of Homeless Services
 - iii. Julie Harrison kicked off the overview pointing out that DHS operates a diverse portfolio of shelters with diverse configurations. She said 205 Parkside is referred to as a stabilization site because it's a low-threshold facility. Fire, sudden unemployment, illness, and family break-up are the main reasons people apply for help. Moreover, the shelter tries to restore their dignity and safety until the resident gets in the appropriate social, re-training or educational or permanent housing program.
 - iv. The typical resident stays one to three years

- v. Zulay Mateo said the facility is clean and safe and provides several professionals in different fields and resources to help with on-site rehabilitation and training and counseling.
 - 1. We can help them achieve their next goal which, in our case, is permanent housing,” she said. Tenants are screened by DHS professionals.
- vi. There’s 24-hour security, a maintenance crew and a professional staff around the clock, Mateo said. Residents are guaranteed three meals a day and they share restrooms and kitchens. Each client has their own twin-sized bed, sheets, blankets, and bedspreads.
- vii. They stressed that the shelters being used today are far different from the open-dormitory spaces used decades ago.
- viii. Harrison said the room configuration allows more one-on-one consultation.
- ix. Right now, there are 14 clients and maximum residency is 66 at 205 Parkside.
 - x. A slide presentation was given to show how roomy and clean the facility is.; The facility was an empty building when rehab took place in December. The Bronx Family Network took over in February.
 - xi. Mateo pointed out that once a client is referred to the site, they are interviewed by a case manager to assess needs and come up with a strategy to achieve life goals.
 - 1. “It’s very individualized,” Harris said.
- xii. Six executive or senior officers run the 205 Parkside location.
- xiii. While permanent housing is the chief outcome, the staff also works on five key areas to attain goals:
 - 1. Outreach, identifying client barriers;
 - 2. At Hand, helping client find training, skills, and a job
 - 3. Housing, finding a permanent housing solution;
 - 4. Health, help to identify physical and mental barriers; and
 - 5. Safety, provide a safe, stable, and clean environment.”

b. Presentation Q & A

i. **Q: How are clients found or sourced?**

- 1. A [Harris]: There are five city and state homeless outreach teams with responsibility for providing homeless services in the five boroughs. Referrals are also taken from community groups and local leaders who are familiar with the individuals involved,

ii. **Q: How long do they stay in the shelter?**

- 1. A: [Harris] Since each person’s journey to homelessness is unique to that individual, so too is the road to permanent housing. We don’t set any definitive timeline. The trajectory is different and takes different amount of time to achieve. Some individuals may be reunited with family. Others find an alternative situation especially if they have family outside of New York. Then there are

places like Project Connection. We're here to make certain there's a warm handoff when that day does come.

iii. **Q: How does the shelter breakdown between male and female residents? And what's the success rate in terms of finding permanent housing? How long do the clients stay on average?**

1. A: [Mateo] we run a mixed shelter so there's men and women. Right now, we have 14 beds allocated for females and the rest for males. [In total, the facility can hold 66. They are ramping up, having taken in their first clients only in February though they've controlled the building since December 2022.]

iv. **Q: What is the average length of stay?**

1. A: [Nolasco] As it relates to their stay, it all depends on what barrier they are trying to cross, and everyone's timeline is different. They are all unique individuals like us in that we all have goals and timelines to get there. On average, a person stays in shelter about a year before permanent residence but of course someone could be in-placement for less than three months or they could be there over a year.

v. **Q [Leopold]: I didn't know there was a homeless facility on Parkside until I was informed, we were going to meet. First, how long have you been here? And how do you make sure that the client has someplace to go when their time has ended. I've seen it happen too often where they are just released to the street and the case worker or person who was helping them is gone.**

1. A: Three representatives of the agencies participated in giving a response to this question. All three pushed back against the idea that people were being dumped. Harrison said the classes of vouchers residents qualify for has a lot to do with how people move place to place. No matter which voucher program is used, there is a housing specialist and a case manager involved and while clients are with them, they are still in touch with the outreach team they knew on the streets. "The goal is not to abandon them, but to stay with them through the process," Harris said. "We don't want a revolving door. We want people to be stabilized in community. Clients not getting support and services, even though that may be true, that is not the overarching policy at DHS. And people will fall through the cracks because of decisions they make as they leave here."

vi. **Q: How many apartment units are there at 205 PARKSIDE?**

1. A [Mateo]: We have 19.

vii. **Q: Most of them are two to three bedrooms?**

1. A [Mateo]: Yes, It varies. There are generally two bedroom and two occupants per apartment.

viii. **Q: And each apartment has its own bathroom and kitchenette?**

1. A [Mateo]: That is correct.

ix. **Q: Could we get a tour?**

1. A: [Nolasco]: Yes. Just call my staff to set it up.
- x. **Q: As a woman, I find fourteen women and 52 men a ratio that is a bit concerning to me. Isn't it more normal to have shelters that are all female or all male unless it is a family shelter?**
 1. A [Harrison]: No. We just can't fill sites with females only, so we have mixed-population sites. So, the outreach teams just have more engagement with the males in a community. There has always been a more pressing need to bring on more beds for males. In the mixed configuration, the sexes are separated by floor. The question is really about program shelters that DHS run in the network that are strictly for women. But for sites like 205 Parkside, they are generally stabilization sites that are mixed.
- xi. **Q: Do you require your clients to be out during the day?**
 1. A [Harrison]: No, that's what makes us unique. They can stay on-site. They can participate in recreational activities. Watch television. There are board games and arts and crafts.
- xii. **Q: There's no job training? Nothing off-site they can get. Involved in? People just sit around all day long doing recreation and playing board games?**
 1. A: [Wallace] No. Each person is an individual. We have clients aged 18 to 80. A 77-year-old man won't be interested in job training just as a teenager wouldn't want to sit-in a senior activities program. Depending on what the individual's set of needs are, say for 18 to 25, we have the office of [inaudible] do linkage with them. The point is to get in community. Whether it's a job, a vocational program, a library program, the point is to get them involved in community. [Continued Mateo]: I just want to add people visualize homeless people sitting on a bench forget that those are individuals with different needs and goals. You have an individual who lost their job and apartment six months ago and needs stabilization to make a new start. It's our job to make the linkages in community to get that person a job new job.
- xiii. **Q: This facility is quite close to me, and I see the men who sit on the steel benches outside and it's obvious that some of them are quite sick. I wonder if you are equipped to handle them, or would you be better off sending them somewhere else? Do you do any medical screening and same thing for drug abuse?**
 1. A [Harrison]: What happens to a client who makes it to a stabilization site, the Outreach Team has a medical team that does an initial assessment as to what health issue - from mental illness to drug abuse -the client faces and search for the best care.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- a. The Mental Health Forum
 - i. The Mental Health forum has been set as a ZOOM Meeting May 4 (Thursday) at 7 pm. It's the same date and time as the normal H&SS

monthly meeting. While there is only one confirmed speaker, enthusiasm is running high that it will be a successful gathering.

- ii. Milford Prewitt is attempting to secure one of two Brooklyn DAs who specialize in cases where mental health intersects with the law.

IV. Adjournment

- a. Meeting adjourned 8:27pm

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deputy