



## **The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8**

### **Veterans Affair Committee**

Lenox Hill Hospital  
131 East 76th Street (Lexington-Park)  
Einhorn Auditorium  
Monday, June 26th 2017, 6:30PM

### Minutes

*Present:* David Menegon(Chair), Peter Patch, Alida Camp, Barry Schneider, David Rosenstein, Sara Solomon, Christopher Deluzio (public member).

The Meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

- Chair opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.
- Chair opening remarks discussing what inspired the decision to start the veterans committee on Community Board 8 and to assist the 8,000 veterans currently living on the Upper East Side and Roosevelt Island. The VA committee will meet quarterly and have joint committee meetings with Housing; Education; Small Business; and Health, Seniors and Social Services to address similar issues.
- Chair introduced committee members and public member.
- Chair provided overview of agenda and committee mission.

### **Item 1. Veterans Affairs Committee Mission Statement discussion and approval.**

David Menegon Chair read the Veterans Affairs Committee mission statement

“Consistent with the Community Board's advisory role, the Veterans Affairs Committee will explore issues affecting the quality of life of the residents in our community. The Committee will work with private and nonprofit entities and government agencies on issues related to veterans' needs and issues, including: education, employment, disability, health care, small business, housing, and benefits generally. One of the Committee's goals will be to ensure veterans are connected with the many resources available in New York City. Where appropriate, the Committee will issue recommendations to the relevant governmental agencies, elected officials, and organizations; will host informational forums on particular issues affecting veterans within the district of Community Board 8; and will refer matters for consideration by the full Community Board.”

- Public comment: Will issues affecting homeless veterans be covered through the mission statement as drafted?
- David Menegon addresses homelessness as a priority and is covered under the Housing topic: Future meetings addressing housing will be a joint meeting with the Housing committee. Topics will include Student Veterans denied housing, affordable housing, and Veteran Homelessness.
- Veterans in attendance were invited to introduce themselves:
  - Kathleen Steed (Army)
  - Ramon Pesceovich (USAF)
  - Dan McSweeney (USMC – United War Veterans Council)
- Motion to approve mission statement by B. Schneider.
- Motion was seconded by C. Deluzio.

*Approved, 7 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain;*

*Yes (7): D. Menegon, P. Patch, A. Camp, B. Schneider, D. Rosenstein, S. Solomon and C. Deluzio (public member)*

Oswaldo Pereira made a presentation about the NYC Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) and addressed questions from the public. Agency is responsible for reaching out and educating veterans about their benefits both on the State and Federal level. DVS has 3 lines of action: Housing the homeless population in NYC, Whole Health & Community Resilience Initiative, and City Employment, and Education, Entrepreneurship, Events & Engagement (CE5)

- Oswaldo Pereira discussed Veteran Homelessness: Several years ago there were 5,000 homeless veterans; today there are 500 with less than 50 that are currently on the street. DVS has a staff dedicated to Veteran Homelessness developing and sustaining a system that rapidly rehouses all those that become homeless, and working with public and private originations to prevent homelessness.
- David Menegon discussed how The Doe Fund has helped the veteran population with transitional housing.
- Oswaldo Pereira discussed The Whole Health & Community Resilience team at DVS, which matches veterans and their families with opportunities to connect, to heal, to grow, and to thrive—a holistic approach to veteran wellbeing health programs.
- The CE5 program is helping veterans gain access to jobs and educational programs, and create their own business opportunities and aims to connect veterans to city and no-profit services, to help veterans get small business loans, street vender licenses, and to connect veterans to Federal programs.
- Oswaldo Pereira addressed Introduction 1259-2016 to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to prohibiting discrimination on the basis of uniformed service, adding veterans as a protected class to the New York City Human Rights Law (HRL), which prohibits discrimination against individuals on the basis of certain protected

statuses in connection with employment and housing, among other things. Veterans will be able to take more action and get assistance from city agencies if faced with discrimination.

- For-profit companies or individuals looking to hire veterans are referred to the Workforce One initiative; non-for-profit companies or individuals are referred to NY Serves Network
- Patrick Bobilin asked whether the number of 500 veterans in the shelter system is dropping or steady? Oswaldo Pereira responded that the number has stayed at 500 in the shelter system. NYC is a Right to House city, and veterans have come to the NYC to take advantage of the program. To get a housing voucher, veterans must enter the shelter system.
- Kathleen Steed asked for an explanation of the USERRA laws? Oswaldo Pereira responded. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) is a Federal law that establishes rights and responsibilities for uniformed Service members and their civilian employers. USERRA is a Federal law intended to ensure that persons who serve or have served in the Armed Forces are not disadvantaged in their civilian careers because of their service, are promptly reemployed in their civilian jobs upon their return from duty, and are not discriminated against in employment based on past, present, or future military service. Oswaldo discussed his personal experience of using the USERRA law to assist him in keeping his employment as an EMT when he returned from an overseas deployment.
- David Menegon discussed the ongoing discrimination against Veteran students and how Introduction 1259-2016 will help them. Student veterans returning from active duty have not only have their tuition paid, but they also receive a housing stipend of \$3,500 per month. Some landlords are discriminating against veterans by not recognizing the housing stipend as income and denying leases as a result. Oswaldo also discussed how DVS is partnering with Human Rights Commission and drafting and educating rental agency's what the GI bill is.
- Rental Agencies/landlords number one concern was the payment of funds to the veteran through the VA may not coincide with the landlord's rental agreement commencement date and payments through the GI Bill are valid while veterans are in school, usually 9 months out of the year rather than the traditional 12 month lease agreements. Landlords are concerned that student veterans are not getting their housing stipend for 3 months during the summer. DVS is helping to develop special rental agreements with landlords to have a 12 month contract paid over a 9 month period.
- Discussion of educating students on their rights and getting assistance is challenging. Many students are not NYC residents and it is difficult to identify them and disseminate information.
- Public question: what about senior veterans and our benefits? Oswaldo Pereira responded that there is a free tuition benefit available to veterans at CUNY and SUNY. Veterans who attend CUNY or SUNY owe no tuition

under a new tuition benefits program. Oswaldo pointed out the even if you have used your GI Bill in the past, the State has its own tuition-free programs for veterans (separate from the GI Bill).

- Public question: I work for New-York Presbyterian Hospital community affairs and looking to develop a strategy to hire veterans, how do we hire vets through you? Oswaldo Pereira responded that they need to provide their information to DVS and if approved vetted by NY service network.
- Alida Camp asked what is veteran's crisis line? Oswaldo Pereira responded it is a crisis and suicide prevention and mental health hotline established by the federal government.
- David Rosenstein question: Medicare eligibility where Part B lapsed; if someone is Medicaid eligible as a veteran, can they access both VA and Medicaid? Oswaldo Pereira responded that VA benefits are separate from any other insurance plan. If you are a veteran, you are able to seek assistance at a VA Hospital, the only veterans that can receive free 100% compensated health care at the VA are disabled veterans or are living below the poverty line.
- Joseph Sellman asked the impact of Medicare/Medicaid developments on VA healthcare? O. Pereira responded you can seek VA healthcare independent of Medicare/Madicaid.

**Item 2. Discussion on supporting Introduction 1259-2016: amending the administrative code of New York City by adding uniformed service to the classes protected from unlawful discrimination and by clarifying that it shall not be a discriminatory practice to extend preferences or privileges on the basis of one's uniformed service.**

- Chris Deluzio spoke in favor of a resolution calling for passage of Introduction 1259, which will fill a hole in the New York City HRL that left out uniformed service as a protected status. Introduction 1259 would protect veterans who had served at any period of their life by protecting veterans in, for example, housing and employment, and would very broadly protect against discrimination. Two of the main places where this comes up is housing and education (for example, for young veterans in school using the GI Bill and landlords not accepting housing stipends. It is unacceptable to discriminate against veterans in employment—or any area, for that matter—and this law aims to fill that gap.
- Chris Deluzio read the resolution

WHEREAS, the administrative code of New York City prohibits discrimination on the basis of certain protected statuses in connection with employment, apprentice and other job training programs, the operation of certain places of public accommodation, the sale or rental of housing accommodations, land or commercial space, lending practices, real estate services and related transactions, the granting of licenses and permits, and certain boycott activities;

WHEREAS, the administrative code of New York City affords protection to a range of statuses, including age, citizenship, color, disability, gender, gender identity,

marital or partnership status, national origin, pregnancy, race, religion, or sexual orientation;

WHEREAS, the administrative code of New York City also prohibits employment discrimination based on arrest or incarceration record, caregiver status, or credit history;

WHEREAS, the administrative code of New York City inexplicably excludes one's military or veteran status (hereinafter "uniformed service") from the list of protected statuses;

WHEREAS, individuals who have answered their country's call to service in times of war and peace are equally deserving of protection under the administrative code of New York City from unlawful discrimination on the basis of uniformed service;

WHEREAS, Community Board 8-Manhattan and many elected officials and members of the public recognize the need to amend the administrative code of New York City to make clear our City's commitment to prohibiting discrimination on the basis of uniformed service and to protecting hard-earned preferences or privileges afforded on the basis of one's uniformed service; and

WHEREAS, Introduction 1259-2016—a measure passed by the New York City Council and currently awaiting approval by the Mayor—would amend the administrative code of New York City by adding uniformed service to the classes protected from unlawful discrimination and by clarifying that it shall not be a discriminatory practice to extend preferences or privileges on the basis of one's uniformed service; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8-Manhattan strongly urges that Introduction 1259-2016 be signed into law by the Mayor.

- C. Deluzio moved for adoption of the resolution.
- B. Schneider seconded the motion.

Approved, 7 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain; Yes (7): D. Menegon, P. Patch, A. Camp, B. Schneider, D. Rosenstein, S. Solomon and C. Deluzio (public member)

- Joseph Sellman read a statement regarding example of discrimination, asking that committee reach out to Gay Men's Health Crisis to facilitate reinstatement; Oswaldo Pereira will follow-up with Joseph individually.
- Public question: Isn't HIV healthcare covered by the VA? O. Pereira responded. Anyone who has served in the Armed Forces is eligible for services, but it is not free for all veterans depending on status. HIV health related issues are provided.
- Gil Mestler spoke about his suspension of bar status for failure to pay bar administration fees during active duty service.

Public session

- No further issues raised.

#### New business

- Discussion on future meetings will occur quarterly and with other CB 8 Committees.
- Attendees were invited to sign up for future email correspondence.
- David Menegon addressed burial issues: We have a very old population of veterans in our community, over the past few years you see fewer and fewer WW2 and Korean War veteran hats. There have been occasions when veterans have passed with no family to provide a burial and use the benefits they are entitled to. They rely on a network of veterans groups that volunteer to help provide ceremonies and burials for the veterans who die poor and alone in New York City every year. We need to identify the elderly veterans in our neighborhood and work with veterans groups to provide services.
- AM R. Seawright staff representative introduced himself and encouraged attendees to contact the office for help addressing issues.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 7:33 p.m.

Submitted

David Menegon  
Chair