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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Women & Families Committee Meeting
October 26, 2022, 6:30 PM on Zoom**

MINUTES

CB8M Members in Attendance: Elizabeth Ashby, Gayle Baron, Alida Camp, Saundrea Coleman, Ed Hartzog, Peggy Price

1. Forum on Domestic Violence

The recent surge in domestic violence, fueled by the pandemic, has prompted new moves to attack the problem, but much more needs to be done.

That was the consensus of speakers, who included State Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright; Dr. Jayne Mooney, Sociology professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the CUNY Graduate Center; Fatma Zhara, associate director, Intimate Violence Intervention at the National Network for Safe Communities; Sgt. Tyishah Williams, domestic violence officer of the 19th Police Precinct; and Kelly Keating, line assistant district attorney in the Manhattan DA's office.

Nationally, data show that about one in four women and about one in seven men have experienced severe physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner.

The multi-dimensional problem—which includes physical, mental, sexual and economic abuse—worsened amid the confines created by the pandemic. Indeed, in 2021, domestic violence triggered more than 195,000 orders of protection in New York State—up 18% from 2020, AM Seawright reported. (On the Upper East Side, the 19th Police Precinct currently logs about 113 reports of intimate partner violence per month, Sgt. Williams reported.)

Although state and local governments have been addressing the problem, more, and broader, help for victims is needed. Beyond additional social services, Dr. Mooney called for a “multi-pronged” approach, which should include: more education about domestic violence so that family and friends can identify the problem and help its victims; more culturally focused services that address the language and values of victims; greater access to health care for victims; and, longer-term, more understanding of why men are more likely than women to resort to violence.

Moreover, new forms of outreach are needed. As Fatma Zahra pointed out, during the pandemic—and especially its lockdown phase--some domestic violence victims lacked the privacy needed to make calls for help safely. To curb that problem, she said service providers should make themselves accessible via email, texting and other electronic services, she said.

However, the issue has spurred governmental action. Among the state-wide crackdowns on the problem: Assembly Member Seawright cited legislation she has sponsored which would: require training and counseling for those found guilty of domestic violence; and, define consent in New York's penal code as freely given, knowledgeable, and informed agreement between domestic partners. She also has sponsored the New York State Equality Act to protect “all of our rights under the state's Constitution.”

In addition, the Assembly Member sponsored or co-sponsored domestic violence legislation that was recently signed into law. This package of laws includes: seizure of firearms owned by those subject to a protective order if

the judge determines that gun possession remains a danger; requires criminal or family court judges to inquire about a defendant's firearm possession when orders of protection are issued; allows survivors of sexual assault to apply to the state board of elections to seal voter registration information from the public; requires utilities to allow survivors of domestic violence to opt-out of shared contracts without penalty; and requires health insurers to allow domestic violence survivors to provide alternative contact information when they access health claims and benefits.

For its part, the Manhattan DA's office is now "retooling" its domestic violence unit, according to Ms. Keating. That will involve adding assistant DAs to the unit to "improve results" for victims. She estimated that "at least a dozen" more assistant DAs will tackle more serious cases of domestic violence. In addition, the unit will be raising its visibility on the domestic violence by attending more meetings and conferences. Unit members also will be fanning out to high schools and middle schools to inform "younger people that domestic violence is not acceptable," Ms. Keating said.

Survivors of domestic violence can contact the New York State domestic and sexual violence hotline for free by calling 1-800-942-6906, or texting 844-997-2121. A chat service is available at opdv.ny.gov. Victims also can contact their elected officials, including Assembly Member Seawright, whose district office phone number is 212-288-4607. In addition, the Women & Families Committee plans to create a white paper listing resources available to those afflicted by domestic violence.

2.Childcare at Community Board Meetings

The NY City Council has been considering legislation-- Intro. 0526-2022—that would make childcare available at the City's public meetings. (See details on the proposed Intro. 0526-2022 at the end of these minutes.) The City Council had requested community boards' input on the desirability of including childcare at community board meetings, if requested. Although Intro. 0526-2022 has recently been rescinded (at least temporarily), the committee believes that providing childcare at community board meetings would be vital to expanding our board's outreach to our community.

Thus, the committee unanimously passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS the New York City Council is working to amend and pass Intro. 0526-2022 as a phased-in program to make childcare available at the City's public meetings, which could include community board sessions; and,

WHEREAS, in September, 2022, the City Council requested feedback from community boards as to whether they wish childcare to be made available at their community board meetings when requested; and,

WHEREAS the district covered by Community Board 8, Manhattan includes a large percentage of families with young children; and

WHEREAS although the City Council has recently, and temporarily, rescinded Intro 0526-2022, Community Board 8 believes that providing childcare at public meetings should be an essential service; and,

WHEREAS if the current suspension of the Open Meetings Law, requiring in-person attendance at community board meetings, is lifted, many fewer parents, will be able to attend the community board meetings that address issues of importance to them; and,

WHEREAS since the pandemic, community boards have been allowed to hold remote meetings, expanding their participation by the public, generally, and enabling many more parents to participate in ways they could not do so in the past; and

WHEREAS space to hold in-person meetings is limited in Community Board 8, Manhattan. And even if space were available, CB8M lacks the funds for providing childcare at meetings; and,

WHEREAS allowing for hybrid—in-person and remote participation—meetings after the Open Meeting Law resumes would be the optimal way to ensure that as many people as possible, including parents, could participate in future community board meetings; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8, Manhattan strongly favors providing childcare at community board meetings. But the board believes that, once the Open Meetings Law is reinstated, meetings should be “hybrid” in nature--allowing for in-person and remote participation--to accommodate parents, including those on a community board, who would otherwise find it difficult or impossible to attend community board meetings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of New York should be responsible for funding hybrid community board meetings.

VOTE: 6-0-0

In favor: Elizabeth Ashby, Gayle Baron, Alida Camp, Saundrea Coleman, Ed Hartzog, Peggy Price

Please Note: The committee chairs have subsequently determined that it will be preferable to table this resolution and will so move at the full board meeting.

Intro. 0526-2022

A Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to childcare services at public meetings

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 47 of the New York city charter is amended to add a new section 1069.2 to read as follows:

§ 1069.2 Childcare at public meetings. a. For the purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

Administering agency. The term “administering agency” means the administration for children’s services.

Child. The term “child” means a natural person under the age of thirteen years or a natural person with a disability under the age of nineteen years.

Childcare Services. The term “childcare services” means care for a child at a location in proximity to a covered meeting by a provider licensed and registered pursuant to section 390 of the New York state social services law or by a legally exempt childcare provider who meets the requirements set forth in section 415.13 of subchapter c of the New York state regulations of the department of social services.

Covered Meeting. The term “covered meeting” means any public meeting held by a mayoral agency at which testimony from the public is accepted, but does not include any event or activity for which the primary purpose is entertainment or recreation.

b. The administering agency shall, upon request in a form and manner to be determined by such agency, provide childcare services at all covered meetings. Such request shall be submitted no less than five business days prior to the covered meeting by a parent, step-parent or guardian that will be attending the covered meeting.

c. Any invitation, advertisement, poster or public notice for a covered meeting, whether in print or via electronic means, shall contain information on how a request for childcare services may be submitted and the deadline for when such a request must be received.

d. For any meeting, other than a covered meeting or an event or activity for which the primary purpose is entertainment or recreation, that is open to the public and held by a city governmental entity other than a mayoral agency, such city governmental entity may request that childcare services be provided for such meeting pursuant to subdivision b of this section, provided that a request from a parent, step-parent or guardian that will be attending the meeting has been received and that the administering agency is informed no less than five business days prior to the meeting.

e. The requirements of this section shall be limited by the appropriation of funds available for such purpose.

§ 2. This local law takes effect 1 year after it becomes law.

Gayle Baron and Margaret Price, Co-Chairs