



Meeting Minutes for Health & Clean Campaign

Summary

- **Objective:** Launch of the Healthy & Clean Harlem Campaign (Manhattan CBD #10) with key stakeholders
- **Date & Time:** April 20, 2017, 7:00-9:00PM
- **Location:** Touro College, 230 W. 125th St., New York, NY 10027
- **Forum Participants:**
 - Barbara Askins (President & CEO, Harlem 125th Street BID)
 - Brian Benjamin (Chairperson, Harlem 125th Street BID)
 - Michelle Booker (Vice Chairwoman, CB10 Health and Human Services Committee)
 - Caroline Bragdon (NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene)
 - Honorable Inez Dickens (New York State Assemblywoman)
 - Thomas Fanizzi (NYC Department of Education)
 - Ester Fuchs (Columbia University)
 - Humberto Galarza (NYC Department of Environmental Protection)
 - Shermagne Glover (District Manager, Banana Republic Factory Store, Retail Business Representative)
 - Christine Johnson (Solid Waste Advisory Board)
 - Andrew Lassalle (District Manager, Manhattan Community Board 10)
 - John Mancuso (Deputy Director, NYC Department of Sanitation)
 - Senior Pastor Marvin Moss (Church Representative, United Salem Methodist Church)
 - Michelle Nieve (owner, Blink Fitness)
 - Honorable Bill Perkins (City Council)
 - Tariq Shahif (Community Representative, 116th St. Corridor)
 - Other community members

Welcome/Introductions

- Andrew Lasalle (**AL**): The community forum marks the kickoff of the Healthy & Clean Harlem Campaign.
- **AL**: The purpose of the community forum is to share information about the role of government agencies which are responsible for sanitation, education, waste, and health.
- **AL**: The community forum is an opportunity for community members to communicate their concerns around sanitation and waste to relevant government agencies.
- **AL**: Attendees should tweet at #mancbd10 to raise awareness about the campaign.

- Michelle Booker (**MB**): All of the attendees are stakeholders in a clean and healthy Harlem, especially in consideration of the district's exponential growth.
- **MB**: Thank you to Barbara Askins and other panelists for their support in organizing the campaign.

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- Brian Benjamin (**BB**): Thank you to Barbara for her work.
- **BB**: There is a greater need for more sanitation support on 125th Street.
- **BB**: Thank you to the board members of Community #10, particularly Michelle Booker, for leading the sanitation initiative.
- **BB**: Various government officials are attending the forum.
- **BB**: It is crucial to address multitude of issues around sanitation as it is tied to health; sanitation is a quality-of-life issue.
- **BB**: Invite Bill Perkins to say a few words on the subject.

- Honorable Bill Perkins (**BP**): Thank attendees for the opportunity to represent the Harlem community.
- **BP**: He and his staff wanted to be active with the community and live up to the opportunity that his constituents have given him.
- **BP**: Community members should approach him and his staff on the street to voice any concerns or questions.

- Barbara Askins (**BA**): The campaign poster design is meant to raise public consciousness about litter on the streets.
- **BA**: BID commissioned reports in 2007 and 2017 regarding litter on 125th Street.
- **BA**: Mention that a raffle will be held later in the evening.
- **BA**: Attendees should become more engaged and learn about what is happening on the street and how to deal with unsafe sanitation issues.
- **BA**: Attendees should tweet at #harlemjustdunkit and/or call 311 if they spot any unsafe sanitation conditions.
- **BA**: It is crucial that community members report issues so that the city government can collect data.
- **BA**: BID is interviewing attendees so that BID and its partners can collect feedback and input from the community.
- **BA**: Everyone needs to be smarter about their approach to waste in their community and be active participants in business improvement initiatives. The city is not capable of providing full services, so property owners need to come together to deliver services.

Panel 1

- (**MB**): Call on panelists to introduce themselves and explain how they are addressing pollution in their work.

- Christine Johnson (**CJ**): The Solid Waste Advisory holds fundraising events twice a year and raises funds for compost and recycling grants, provides SWOT and advice on solid waste management, and participates in advocacy.
- **CJ**: 2.3% of waste in Manhattan comes from single-use plastic bags and that the board wants to promote the reuse of items such as cups, water bottles, bags, etc.

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- **CJ**: Everyone must work to change their own behavior as well as help others better understand ways to reuse, recycle, etc.
- **CJ**: New York is one of the most wasteful megacities in the world and New Yorkers need to work on reducing waste and collaborating with other agencies.
- Thomas Fanizzi (**TF**): Wants to spread the message about trash and sanitation to the community and has suggested coming up with a mural to put up on a school building.
- **TF**: The schools in district #5 make sure that trash is removed out of the buildings, and they coordinate trash pickup schedules with the department of sanitation.
- **TF**: Students and staff in district #5 schools separate trash inside their buildings, which requires significant effort.
- **TF**: District #5 is aiming for zero-waste schools by 2020.
- Honorable Inez Dickens (**ID**): Government funding is crucial to providing health-related resources on the city level and to grassroots organizations like BID.
- **ID**: Thank CB10 Health and Human Services Committee for hosting community events and supporting her.
- **ID**: The city council plays an important role in driving financial resources to local communities.
- **ID**: When the community is not healthy, future generations of children do not have a conducive environment for learning.
- **ID**: Attendees need to stand together for Harlem despite their differences because the district is in a period of transition; community members need to stand together to have their demands heard.
- John Mancuso (**JM**): By the end of 2018 and 2019, the Department of Sanitation aims to have an organic waste program in place to achieve its zero-waste objective by 2020
- **JM**: In fiscal year 2014 and 2015, the average scorecard for sanitation around 125th Street was 86.1 and 86.6, which is below the 90 score standard; in fiscal year 2016, Harlem achieved a score of 91.3 in part due to BID's efforts
- **JM**: In 2016 the Department of Sanitation expanded basket pickups and MLP services in Harlem; it also utilized one of the largest numbers of mechanical brooms
- **JM**: The Department of Sanitation is here to learn how it can better serve the Harlem community
- Humberto Galarza (**HG**): The purpose of DEP is to ensure public health by providing safe, clean drinking water to residents.
- **HG**: According to the latest water reports, the DEP has met all state and federal requirements
- **HG**: DEP is here to assist, and one aspect is to inspect and maintain and repair all catch basins. Basins are inspected once a year, and the DEP calls on residents and businesses to report any problems because the rain water is used for drinking water.

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- **HG:** Litter is a key component of drinking water. When street litter ends up in the catch basins, this prevents city sewers from controlling the flow of water.
- Ester Fuchs (**EF**): We are lucky to have Barbara Askins running the 125th BID; she is innovative and gets the work done.
- **EF:** I worked in urban policy under Mayor Bloomberg's administration and have been fortunate to work with the former commissioner of environmental on the issue of street litter.
- **EF:** Last summer Columbia students conducted a workshop over the summer and completed a study on street litter in Harlem. Her students have continued this study, looking directly at 125th Street.
- **EF:** The study conducted last summer spanned 40 blocks (125 sites across the city) and involved collecting information about the trash. Students counted the litter and created a policy-driven model to explain why trash was on the streets and how to mitigate the problem.
- **EF:** We all need to confront the problem of litter, whether that is on the community, individual, business, or nonprofit level.
- **EF:** It is crucial to collect data and identify problems around waste; there is a need to identify causes of the problem, which cannot be addressed by throwing money to the agencies and organizations handling the issue.
- **EF:** 125th Street BID is ahead of the curve in handling the trash problem by recognizing that this issue is a health problem (rodent, fumes, etc.), a quality of life problem, a development problem (tourism, employment)
- **EF:** The issue of reusable plastic bags is particularly distressing as plastic does not biodegrade and the fish in the rivers eat the plastic and die.
- **EF:** Environmental degradation from the trash is everywhere and impacts every aspect of our lives.
- **EF:** Policy proposals based on study: 1. most of trash on 125th Street is bagged, 2. need to develop targeted solutions based on specific conditions, 3. greater quantities of trash in industrial neighborhoods, 4. most of trash comes from food-related businesses; 5. on average 82% of trash across sites is paper and plastic, 4. much of the trash can be monetized, 5. BID should consider developing programs that monetize trash (such as picking up trash and recycling, paper, cigarette butts, etc.)
- **EF:** We have created an application that will harness the power of "citizen scientists" for more accurate measurements of sanitation issues out on the streets.
- **EF:** It is not enough to call on residents to report to 311 as low-income communities tend to underreport to 311.
- **EF:** Based on Columbia's study, there is no correlation between Columbia's waste management score and the Department of Sanitation's waste management score.
- **EF:** Governments can improve existing programs or create new incentives for individuals and businesses to be more proactive about waste management. The government cannot just roll out fines but should consider public education that is customized to the specific

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needs and culture of the community. Citywide campaigns are ineffective unless community members are involved in the process.

- **EF:** BID's campaign is the beginning of a model program that will surely be replicated by other NYC residents. BID should charge other programs to replicate this campaign.
- Caroline Bragdon (**CB**): I have studied rats for many years, and rats go where the food is. New York City has a rat problem because of its food waste problem.
- **CB:** Presence of organized community cleanup efforts such as those under BID can help reduce rat activity on the streets.
- **CB:** Overflowing litter baskets that leak into catch basins will drive rats into the catch basin. We should do more to appeal to businesses to participate in the adopt-a-can campaign.
- **CB:** In parks, overflowing litter baskets lead to the creation of rat colonies.
- **CB:** Communities need to organize around cleaning up trash. Government programs can assist neighborhoods by hosting workshops customized to each location and provide targeted strategies for specific areas.
- **CB:** We want to partner with the community to offer "rat academies" and take a walk around the neighborhood to offer suggestions on how to make improvements.
- Neil Shoemaker (Harlem Heritage Tourism) suggested customizing waste bins by initiating a campaign around Harlem's culture (e.g. name a trashcan after a famous Harlemite)
- Sharon Ritchie (116th Street Association and small-business owner) asked how to expand the use of segmented steel containers on street corners and why waste bins have disappeared on certain blocks.
 - **JM:** Segmented steel containers can be ineffective waste management tools and that the city is not responsible for on-the-block baskets. Ritchie should contact councilman, businesses, and other individuals who may be interested in purchasing these baskets via the adopt a basket program.
- Raul Garcia said that the city takes too long in picking up trash and that the rat traps on 125th St. and 5th Avenue have not been changed in many years.
- A representative from the Lennox 125th Block asked for panelists' contact information and asked TF about waste management education in schools.
 - **BA:** All attendees who signed in will receive contact information for all of the panelists.
 - **TF:** District #5 has started a sustainability initiative in schools to reach the zero-waste objective by 2020. As part of this program, principals at each school meets with a sustainability coordinator, who is a teacher at the school. Schools also post signs and bins on trash, and classrooms have three recycling bins. Students are dropping trash after classes end in the afternoons. The best solution to this problem is for the cleaning staff at each school to go outside and police the sidewalks. Sanitation is supposed to pick up trash bags from schools by 4pm; if not, residents should call 311 to report this problem.

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→ **JM**: Parents need to educate their children on littering because schools and state agencies are already educating them on the importance of recycling; this type of behavior needs to be reinforced at home.

Panel 2

- **BA**: Audience should stay for the community panel as the issue of litter cannot be a one-sided conversation.
- Tariq Shahif (**TS**): Statistics are fine, but when you are walking on the streets and living that experience everyday, it is a different story.
- **TS**: The community needs to address the issue of waste from the perspective of each person's influence, choices, and consequences. We have to educate people to be more conscious about the impact of their behavior on shared living spaces or "shared freedom spaces." People do not have the right to impose on other people's spaces.
- **TS**: The campaign poster could incorporate other images, such as businesspeople, mothers, and people of all different backgrounds. Everyone has to be "dunking." There is a need to formulate an inclusive strategy around waste.
- **TS**: Let's put the neighbor back in the hood to develop a different community consciousness. For example, adults should attempt to correct children's behavior.
- **TS**: Change with your hands, speak against it, change it with your heart—there is a difference between fault and responsibility.
- Marvin Moss (**MM**): We need to shape a community consciousness and make a change. People need to understand that they are drivers of change.
- **MM**: The church can support BID's campaign because it is about transforming individuals' lifestyle. Not everyone who litters in Harlem lives in the community. They do so because there are no consequences to their actions.
- **MM**: The church takes ownership in ensuring that the area around the church is clean (e.g. place a trash bag in the trash basket and maintain the basket).
- **MM**: We speak to individuals and make a request about changing their behavior around waste. Most people will respond to those requests based on how you approach them.
- **MM**: Currently the church is experiencing waste problems at night; there needs to be an arrangement to get the trash picked up at night because people ride through the streets and dump trash in the church's receptacles.
- **MM**: The church will not point fingers or blame others for the waste problem. The church will help to create a solution that engages the entire community in order to drive ownership.
- Shermagne Glover (**SG**): As a representative of the Banana Republic brand, it is important to protect the Harlem community's legacy. We want to make sure that the brand will be here to take care of Harlemites.

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- **SG:** Leadership at the Banana Republic store recognizes that cleanliness is a priority. The Harlem community is growing, and people deserve to work and live in a clean environment. Everyone needs to be respectful of each other.
- **SG:** Businesses can partner with schools and organize events where there is corporate volunteerism. This will help youth to understand that they need to take pride in where they live.
- Joy Williams responded to the need for new campaign graphics. She suggested recruiting artists to create additional new designs. Also, block associations need to coordinate their efforts.
 - ➔ **BA:** Health and Human Services Committee meets every third Monday of each month at 6:30PM. Community members are invited to attend these meetings so that they can get more involved in the campaign.
- Wan-tien voiced her concern that she did not know what to tell children who ask why we produce plastic bottles in the first place if they are not good for the environment. She suggested the need to encourage businesses to use biodegradable and organic materials in their packaging.
 - ➔ **TS:** The community needs to highlight positive role models and good behavior among children to combat the litter problem.
- Nina Saxon: What does the community demand from elected officials in terms of their participation in the campaign?
 - ➔ **BA:** Officials need to attend community forums and hear the community's voices. Also, community organizations like the BID need funding for their activities. The community need to make sure that this issue is a major priority for elected officials.
 - ➔ **MB:** Community members need to mobilize to rally for their own lives. They need to remember that they are powerful and call 311 to make their demands heard.
- Athena Moore said that it is important to replicate the campaign in other areas of Harlem as more businesses and attractions arrive in the district.
- Jackie said BID's initiative will get back to the Solid Waste Advisory Committee as a model program. The issue of waste is not just a health issue but also an ethical issue.
 - ➔ **MM:** The church employs what it calls social principles. For example, two youth in his ministry asked their mothers if they can start cleaning up around the church. This was the start of the "Hands on Harlem" program, which brings together individuals of all ages for cleanup activities. These types of activities are an opportunity to educate children around current issues of waste and sustainability.

Closing Remarks

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- Maria Nieves from Blink Fitness offered a prize for her raffle by talking about her gym and how it has a “everybody cleans” philosophy (all staff help clean the gym). Her business supports the entire community.
- Diane H. won the three-month Blink membership.
- Arden won the \$50 gift certificate from Target.
- **MB:** The main takeaway from the forum is that all attendees need to be mindful and upgrade their consciousness around waste. Everyone should file complaints to 311 and tweet at #harlemjustdunkit.