

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

February 19, 2008

Committee Members

In Attendance: Lois Bronz, Chair, William Burton, Judy Myers, Vito Pinto, Jose Alvarado.

In Attendance: Health: Renee Recchia BOL: Rick Pezzullo, Neal Rentz, Christina Giliberti and Melanie Montalto; Visitors: Lillian Jones(ACS), Judy Dobrof (Cancer Support Team), Lisa Winjum (PPHP), Lindsay Farrel (Open Door), Damian Gonzalez (ACS), Jean LePere (ACS), Albert Annunziata (building institute), Daniel Finger (Finger & Finger).

Items Discussed: Members of the Access to Care coalition gave a presentation on universal healthcare.

Minutes

Chairwoman Bronz called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Lillian Jones, Advocacy Director, Eastern Division, American Cancer Society, gave a PowerPoint presentation on universal healthcare and how the lack of care affects cancer patients. She discussed the Access to Care coalition and stated that their goals are to raise awareness about universal healthcare, to educate people about the current proposals, get them paying attention to the 2008 election, and to try to find out just how the lack of healthcare is affecting Westchester residents.

Lillian Jones asked the Committee to sponsor a public hearing to help find out more about the uninsured population.

Judy Dobrof, Executive Director of the Cancer Support Team spoke about her organization and the difficulties her clients have in finding care that is covered by their health plans or that they can afford with no healthcare at all. She gave a specific account of a 19 year old with a rare form of cancer and his difficulties obtaining care.

Lindsay Farrell, President and CEO of Open Door Family Medical Centers, talked about breast and cervical cancer. She stated that they are fortunate to have a system of care for uninsured women with breast or cervical cancer that has been made possible by a partnership with the Department of Health and the screening program through Medicaid. However, because we (as a country) insure organ by organ, the problem still exists for other cancers and problems with the rest of the body. We need to attack this problem on a national level. Some things can be done at the state level, but national coverage would be more effective.

Lillian Jones stated that she is working with coalition to promote for healthcare on the state and federal level.

Lisa Winjum, Director, Public Affairs & Communications Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic, stated that Planned Parenthood sees people regardless of their ability to pay and puts people on a sliding pay scale, but prevention is more important, and family planning is basic healthcare that help with prevention of illness down the road. She continued by saying that the problem is that people do not come for preventative services when they cannot afford to pay for it and have no coverage.

Renee Recchia, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Health, stated that the census reports in Westchester we have 10.5% uninsured residents, but for the under 18 population the number is only 6.2%, which indicates that we have made strides for children and it can be done all around.

Legislator Pinto suggested having public hearings in the four quadrants of the County to gain the most speakers.

Chairwoman Bronz stated that the Committee would be happy to host public hearings and will open the idea up to the entire Board.

Legislator Alvarado asked for a time-line on this plan for hearings and public outreach, and stated that he would like to see this move quickly. He stated that he will host a public hearing in Yonkers, Legislators Bronz and Abinanti will host one in Greenburgh, and Legislator Myers and Pinto will host one in New Rochelle.

Lillian stated that an organization committee come together to schedule and identify dates and locations.

Chairwoman Bronz stated that a planning session will be scheduled for mid-March.

Moved by Legislator Pinto and seconded by Legislator Alvarado the minutes of the February 12, 2008 Community Services meeting were approved 5-0.

Moved by Legislator Pinto and seconded by Legislator Myers the Committee on Community Services adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

A complete audio recording of the meeting is available for review upon request.