**Community Board 17**

**Education Committee Virtual Meeting**

**Tuesday, April 26, 2022**

**Present:** **Guests:** **Excused:**

Gail Grandison Assem. Brian Cunningham Muline Mickle

Rose Graham 43rd Assembly District Nicole Julius

Monica McKain-Brown Naomi Ritter

Rodrick Daley CK Price

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The **Education Committee Virtual Meeting** was held on **Tuesday, April 26, 2022 at 7:30pm**.

**Ms. Gail Grandison** called the meeting to order at 7:47pm.

**Roll Call**-Gail Grandison, Assemblyman Brian Cunningham, Monica McKain-Brown, Rose Graham, Rodrick Daley, CK Price, Naomi Ritter

**Ms. Grandison** introduced Assemblyman Brian Cunningham.

**Assemblyman Brian Cunningham** said he was born and raised in this community and was elected on March 22, 2022 to serve this community. He has set up a few committees that are relevant to some and not relevant to others. He does sit on the Agriculture, the Banks, Economic Development, Energy and the Transportation Committees. Their major industries and challenges and pinpoints, especially in the City as they continue to grow.

His office is located at 330 Empire Blvd.

As of today, they have co-sponsored 25 pieces of legislation, which is the primary role of being a State Legislator. One is State budget, two, delivering services to the constituents, which his team does an amazing job at and three, making sure they sponsor and co-sponsor legislation that will both impact the State of New York, but also their districts specifically. The legislation ranges from education to housing to transportation to energy and the information is available on the website. He encourages people to call their legislative office building if they have legislative priorities they would like them to look at to propose or to push. The legislative office number is 518-455-5262. If they have district concerns pertaining to the district directly, they can call 718-771-3105. He will be attending general board and committee meetings because a lot of the work takes place in the committees. He thanked the committee members for participating in the process, making sure they get things on the floor of the general meetings **(INAUDIBLE)** They are currently in session and he broke away to come and say hello and introduce himself. He is looking forward to serving with them and answering any questions they may have.

**Ms. Grandison** said it was great to meet him and is glad the seat for that position was filled. Maybe they can partner in some of the things the committee is trying to do and to work with his office on certain initiatives and also pick his brain on some matters.

**Assemblyman Cunningham** said please do not wait until the Fall. His office will be open throughout the Summer and he and Ms. Ritter will be attending in-person and virtual meetings. He has reached out to Community School Board 17 Superintendent to meet with Principals and Parent Coordinators.

Before this, he worked at a Learning to Work Transfer High School in Coney Island working with people who were over aged and under credited for their grade level. This is how he got involved in politics and he interned for State Senator Kevin Parker. His understanding at the time was that education was a State issue and the State Government largely controlled the education and that is how he began an internship and became a Special Assistant, went to City Hall and served as Chief of Staff to Councilman **(INAUDIBLE)**

He worked with the Obama administration, but returned to do anti-gun violence work, where they did a lot of work with sponsors in communities and also mediation in schools. He did work at CCIS and he did run an anti-gun violence program for a number of years and also prior to serving in the Assembly, he was Director of Operations for a Naturalist who focused on criminal justice reform. A lot of his work is community-based and he is looking forward to working with them.

**Ms. Grandison** said she created a strategic plan for the year and part of the strategic plan was a needs assessment for the schools to get a better understanding of what are the needs of the schools in terms of the equipment or whether they need a new gym. She knows a lot of it is financial and she was talking about some Capital expense. She has not sent out the Needs Assessment yet because she wants to think through what she is asking Principals, and for them, what are the most important things that they need within their schools to produce sufficient programs and that is centered around the student’s safety and other things that were happening. She received an email from Mr. Daley from Meyer Levin with a list of things that the Principal had noted that they needed. Mr. Daley suggested reaching out to Councilmember Farah Louis because most of the schools are in her district. Their school districts are 17, 18, 22 and 23. They need to reach out to the elected officials and have a call around these needs and also invite the schools, the Principals and whatever other school administration that cares to attend. They want to know what the elected officials are doing, the policies, what legislation they are putting up there to pass, in terms of the schools in their district, what are the funding sources that they can utilize in order to provide some of the things that may come up in the needs assessment. Looking at it from a reasonable lens, as to how can they help. As a Board and a committee, that has not always been their strong suit in the past and she really wants to make it one of their top priorities by being able to advocate really strongly, especially when it comes to funding for their schools and the only way to know is to ask and she wants to do a comprehensive ask of it. Tonight, she wants to discuss with the members how they would go about this and how they are designing these questions and answer effectively and really give them the feedback they are looking for. For her, this has to be a continuous process. That is the main issue that she wants to start with tonight, how do they fold their schools into this. She asked Assemblyman Cunningham what are the steps they can take to start looking to secure funding in the State, citywide that they are able to get for their schools.

**Assemblyman Cunningham** said in terms of the City process, there is a discretionary fund application that is released in January and due in February. The City Council has more access to Capital and resources than the State government, in terms of discretionary funds. His last count with the City Council, there was about $4 Million in capital money that is available for them to distribute in their districts. This is a lot pf money because a lot of people do not qualify for capital. The schools, NYCHA and other City run projects have a greater chance of getting capital funding. That is one area where people are uniquely positioned to access $4 Million per Councilmember. School districts are a lot like Community Board districts, where they have more than one representative that oversees that area. In CB 17, they also have Councilmember Rita Joseph, who represents the 40th Council district, and also chairs the Education Committee. That is a huge asset when you have the Chair of the Education Committee, who has a weekly call with the Chancellor about some of the challenges facing her school district, but the City. They have a direct line to her as well as $4 Million in capital. Many members, including Councilmember Joseph, Councilmember Crystal Hudson and Councilmember Louis do participatory budgeting and they have the opportunity as parents and community members to vote on items to spend up to $1 Million of City funding. Parents should really pattern that opportunity to really pull those resources into their schools.

From the State level, he is happy that he was able to get the speaker to award them some capital money. He has only been here for a month and he is going to bring home some resources for the district and they are still trying to figure how to allocate that money proportionally among the institutions and the schools. He is meeting with some of his colleagues, who he overlaps with, and he is working with his three Councilmembers to look at the projects that are currently looking at funding to complete those projects. If they are willing to put $250,000.00 in capital and the project is $500,000.00, he wants to come in with the final $250,000.00 to complete the project, so these projects won’t be **(INAUDIBLE)**  which often times, raises the cost, particularly when you are talking about capital and building projects. He will be working close with them to make sure that they bring in some additional capital dollars to the community and make sure that some of those include schools as well.

They should absolutely, definitely, positively talk to their Councilmembers about the 5 year capital project that schools are awarded because that gives an opportunity from the fund programs over the next 5 years, which sometimes exceeds their term, but the resources are packed into that item.

The Executive budget process, most people look at the budget at the end of the fiscal year, when discretionary applications come on-line and when they are getting close to finalizing the budget. For the State, they just passed a $220 Billion budget in April. There is a late budget and they got more money in that budget for education. It was not a perfect budget and there are challenges in that budget and there is more money than ever before in a lot of areas. He will be sending a newsletter specifically on education to let them know what was done in that budget. The City’s budget is in June, but the budget process starts in September, around the time the Mayor releases the Executive budget and in January, the Governor releases their Executive budget. When those budgets come out, parents, teachers, Principals and activists should be looking at where the numbers are starting to indicate and begin to push where they want funding for education. The Summer should be the time while the Board is on break and actively thinking about ways they can best come back in the Fall when school starts to advocate for resources that their schools need.

He gets a stack of support letters every week from constituents and he urged them to send letters to funds things as well. This allows him to go to the Speaker and advocate for those things early before the budget is wrapped up, so he can bring in more resources for district and the school district. Please send letters with the Principal’s specific asks on the capital and he will make sure that at the next meeting they provide some guidelines for capital expenses, but different from a problematic expense or a **(INAUDIBLE)** expense and that is the first step to understanding how to advocate for themselves. He is looking forward to meeting with them more.

**Ms. Grandison** thanked Assemblyman Cunningham for attending the meeting and she will be reaching out to his office as this process continues.

**Mr. Rodrick Daley** asked can they get a coalition looking between Community Board 17 and the school district that it covers, which are 17, 18, 22 and 23. He is wondering if between those Assembly individuals they could talk to them to answer some of these questions. They are getting questions from some Principals, and they themselves have to learn how to navigate the system.

**Assemblyman Cunningham** said one of the benefits they have in terms of what he described, is the terms of the Councilmembers and **(INAUDIBLE)** the Assembly, they get along very well and they can powwow about what an Education Council looks like for them and how they can advocate for all the resources, policies and power of their collective voices, to make sure that the school districts they represent become a model, not only for the City, but the State of New York.

**Councilmember Farah Louis** said she is here to listen and be `as supportive as possible and as always, she wants to be a champion for CB 17 and all of their needs.

**Ms. Grandison** said at the May Education meeting, she would like to have a collective body of Councilmember Louis, Assemblyman Cunningham and some other elected officials and invite the school Principals to have this discussion around needs and also about the budgeting process.

It is really heartbreaking to hear Ms. Joseph say the community had not applied for any of the Capital Expense funding and that is something they definitely want to talk about and work with the schools to see how they can attain some of that money. They will be reaching out to her office within a couple of weeks. They will send out some of the questions they are thinking about asking and to be educated on.

**Councilmember Louis** said she wants to thank her for the information she shared. Hopefully, this is a working conversation, and Councilmember Joseph shared that there were schools that did not submit for capital and 90% of her schools submitted for capital. Her issue has always been that schools would submit for capital, but would submit the wrong requests and don’t get anything and she would be left to figure it out for the schools. They sent out a survey to all the schools asking what their capital needs are and they wanted green roofs, this and that, knowing that they have an aging bathroom, a cafeteria that is not sufficient. She does not have $5 Million for a cafeteria, but she can work something out with the Speaker and the Mayor and kind of figure it and she is left to make the decisions for the schools and she should not be and those are the issues she has. She has a group of Principals throughout her district that are aware of the process and have submitted for capital, but they have new Principals that don’t know the process about submission and they are the ones they need to empower and provide them with the information.

If Councilmember Joseph needs help in that area, with the schools in her district, she is willing to help her because everything is due this week. She thinks if they could add to this conversation about empowering and educating the Principals about targeting what their needs are. They will be sending a survey to all the schools to find out what other issues the schools have and they have been doing tele-conversations with the Chancellor to see how old are the bathrooms and roofs, so they can get SCH to put that as a top priority on their list. She will share the survey with them to use as part of their conversation.

**Ms. Grandison** said they spoke earlier about the needs assessment for the schools and she thinks they are trying to get to the same place with the schools and get the same information. With the needs assessment, she was asking what their needs are, not what they want. Don’t ask for a green roof, when they need a bathroom, prioritize the needs, what is most important to their students and what is needed in the schools. She would love to look her survey and she can also share the needs assessment with her office.

They are coming to the end of the fiscal year and all the budgeting is done and the State just passed their budget, but the process is going to be for next year and this is why she wants to get on top of this right now, so she and the committee can plan and think of other ways they can advocate for them. Between her office and Assemblyman Cunningham’s office to educate them on certain things that they do not know and give them some guidance in how to do this and also teach them. If she could learn how to look at the form and fill it out, she does not mind sitting down with the Principals and helping them through this process.

The next meeting is May 24, 2022 at 7:30pm on Webex and she would be able to get more people to participate. Next week, she will send out a formal invite with the date and the time and does hope that Councilmember Louis has some time in her schedule to attend and answer some questions and give them some guidance also.

**Councilmember Louis** said she will make herself available. She is glad to hear they have a needs assessment and she will follow their lead on that, but she will also share the survey they are using. She thinks Councilmember Joseph is doing an excellent job and they are having a conversation about additional resources and problematic related avenues that the City can use to help students as well students that are in foster care. Councilmember Joseph is having these conversations and they as the City of New York can get access to programs. That maybe something else they want to think about, and in addition to capital, what programs can they implement in the schools that they never had that they can add to the schools in the 43rd, 42nd and the 58th districts.

**Ms. Grandison** said the other thing that has stuck out to her for a while is the students in transitional housing or in shelters and there are some shelters in this community and she would like to focus on that area also because she does not know enough about it and how many students in the schools are living in these facilities and that may be a second need that she looks at and follow through with. That is a big issue for her and she is hoping she can work with her office on that also.

The information Councilmember Louis gave was very helpful and the next step is to reach out to her office and they will see about a date to confirm having this more in-depth conversation.

She thanked Councilmember Louis for taking the time out to join them.

She asked the members if they have any input into what they are trying to do for the May meeting? They can always email her if there are other things they thought od afterwards and she will keep them abreast of the steps that they are taking.

She wants to talk about the Spelling Bee and she needs for them to let her know if they should go ahead and have the Spelling Bee in May or June or push it to October. One of the problems she is having is getting a location.

**Ms. Rose Graham** asked if she has spoken to any of Churches in the area?

**Ms. Grandison** said no, she has not, because she was looking at the schools, maybe in the auditorium. She has not reached out to any Churches, but she is wondering in terms of schools.

**Ms. Graham** said that would entail **(INAUDIBLE)** in terms of security and safety agents and she might be able to get a school that would accommodate them on a Saturday.

**Ms. Grandison** said she knows there is a process to go through in order to utilize the school, especially on the weekend and she is trying to get her input.

What places in the community do they think would be a great place to host the event? The last place the event was held was at Crystal Reyes and she use the auditorium. She can try reaching out to them, but the only issue she had was they were set up in the back and they did not have any lights back there to get to the bathroom.

They did use Tropical Paradise at one point, but the place was sold and she is not familiar with the new owners and she has not reached out to ask the owner, unless they can find a space where they are not taking away any of the fun. She would appreciate any ideas or suggestions they may have. Do they think she should push back the date?

**Ms. Monica McKain-Brown** said in terms of pushing back the date, she thinks June is a bit soon, looking at the timeline for schools right now and it might be a good thing to push it back.

**Ms. Grandison** said they can do it in October or November, and it has to be this year, but before Thanksgiving. She will send an email to the members that are not here and get their opinions and that would give her time to find a space.

With the Essay Writing Competition, the letters were sent out to the schools and hopefully, the students are writing their hearts away. They are looking to have the event on May 21, 2022, and again, they are looking for a space and that is one of the biggest issues they are having when doing events, finding a location. She is hoping that within the next couple of weeks, they can lock down the location for the Award Ceremony. The information was sent to the schools and in the next couple of weeks, they are supposed to make sure they get them in to them to be read.

She asked if there were any other issues to discuss? Having heard none, she asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting?

**Ms. McKain-Brown** made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Ms. Graham** seconded the motion.