

Long Branch Partners Meeting Notes July 20, 2021
3:30 pm via zoom

Attendance

John Brill- community school Liason New Hampshire Estates Elementary School

Agar Mbianda- community engagement manager Manna Food Center

Helen Dominguez- coordinating pine ridge community center and the Piney apartment complex and works with CASA: 301266203

Maureen Larenas Department of HHS Community Action Agency- TESS Center 240-773-8260

Kelly Umana- community health programs manager at cheer

Robert (Bob) Geiger - Principal New Hampshire Estates Elementary School

Febe Huevo- Montgomery County public libraries

Lisa Buttner- Cheer; community-based gardening

Grayce Wiggins- Housing manager for the City of Takoma Park

Grayce Wiggins graycew@takomaparkmd.gov 301-651-6764

Buddy Daniels- Takoma park emergency preparedness committee

Elizabeth Gonzalez- Montgomery County Department of Recreation
@montgomerycountymd.gov

240-994-4979 cellular

240-773-4815 Direct line

Shawn Morris, Silver Spring Regional Services Center

Bruce Baker,

Hallelujah Ketema

Reopening news from Long Branch Partners-

Bob- New Hampshire Estates Elementary School. We do have in-person summer school going on now. 170 students in the school every day

Try to make space in the school for community groups and rec department

He wants the school to be a resource to the community

A number of families are moving out of the area- significant rent increases (broader topic)

This may be an early wave of a coming tidal wave driven by the purple line development coming and the changes that this is going to bring.

He was part of a meeting with County Executive Marc Elrich on Long Branch issues. Housing was one topic at this meeting. Bob suggested that rent stabilization, way to bring about renter protection.

The vast majority of the students in new Hampshire states are going to be displaced over the next several years without this protection. This is an existential issue unless there is a way to stabilize rent or bring light to the issue

Febe- Long Branch Library all of our branches are open

Most normal services are returned- study rooms and discovery rooms (toddler play area in the library) are available for reservation a week in advance. Customers can print and scan

Programming such as story time telling, book clubs are virtual with no date set to reopen in person

National Night out will be held August 3rd

Starting next Friday- the long branch library will be having outdoor programs starting next week

Masks- voluntary for customers regardless of vaccination status

Cleaning is done daily

Use a study room or computer- customers are concerned about the cleanliness of these facilities and customers are welcome to clean up

Outdoor programs- flyers are being worked on

August 6th- Friday 10-12 these are every Friday

Hellen- CASA Pine Ridge Community Center Casa is offering a sewing class for ages 11-18, teachers are already vaccinated and in September there will be Spanish literacy, sewing classes, computer classes will be available, gardening classes possibly with Lisa Buttner of CHEER

ESOL classes are available online

20 kids enrolled and 14 kids actively participating in an 8-week long program

John- programs are for Piney Ridge residents only?

Hellen- anyone in the PG and Montgomery area can apply to these free programs and classes, She will be creating flyers

There were a lot of girls that were being enrolled in the soccer program

Maureen- TESS Center combined schedule: open indirect services HHS TESS Community Action Center,

The Center is now open Tuesday Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings 9 to 11 am for triage of referrals and quick assessments.

Afternoon appointments are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

The TESS Center will move in the future next to CASA furniture possibly and the community is not aware since it is not set in stone and this may happen 6-8 months

Elizabeth- County Recreation Department

August the 3rd 6-8:30 national night out will be held

Shawn Morris- Silver Spring Regional Services Center

Silver spring veteran plaza is back open to be booked for events and is booked for the next month

Regional services system- not back fully into the office yet

Not sure when it will be open to the public and walk-ins

A new Regional Services Director will be taking over soon, but Shawn will still be an assistant to the next director

Buddy Daniels- Takoma park emergency preparedness committee

Grayce- City of Takoma Park long term City manager Suzanne Ludlow retired

The new City manager will be Jamal Fox- African American male relocating from Washington state

City is also hiring a new Housing and Community Development Director- Alex Cross from DC

1. working with the Purple line coalition in terms of displacement
2. For people who live in the city of Takoma Park, there will be a release in the emergency release efforts and emergency assistance with rental assistance after we get down to a 0 dollar balance, if the landlords are not going through the county
3. Homeownership- city of Takoma park- working with the HIP for the property for the affordable homeownership opportunity
4. There have been some folks identified within the 80-120% AMI level
5. Workforce development- for people who are new to our country with specific skills around technology and engineering- City has a long term contract with an organization called Upwardly Global. They provide for placement for these special skills- an epidemiologist who was working with Instacart due to being unable to convert her work from abroad to here is now working with Upwardly Global, Perscolis with a bridge program for low wage workers who don't feel like they can move into a career
6. Hellen- there are people from Cameroon, Sierra Leone with education who might be appropriate for these jobs

John Brill- do they need to live in Takoma Park?

Grayce- No.

Kelly- if we do identify someone what is the referral process is like

Grayce- please refer them to me and I will refer them to the right program manager to get them ready to get certified

Ethiopian community center in DC- English classes and job coaching for community members from East Africa language skills and putting together a basic resume

Lisa- there is a husband of someone I am working with with a background in IT, this week he went in a van to Philadelphia and it seems that there might be some form of exploitation that is happening and if this is something that these organizations that are partnered with Grayce can help him find solutions

Grayce- being perceived as uneducated which mostly happen to East and West Africans, there is a part that each of us play that can contribute to the betterment of these families

Vanessa- the program for English classes or Spanish literacy classes: for Spanish native speakers that never went to school: for people from Guatemala with 29 dialects to help them with dialects, we teach them morals, civics, finding information on the metro, resources in the area, finding services available to them

Issue of the opening of the long branch community center-

Bruce-

Long branch community center will not be reopening for about a year and is now a men's homeless shelter

Bob Geiger, Annie Tulkin, Sligo Branview Citizens Association, CHEER and Montgomery Housing Partnership have been collaborating on advocacy around this closure and the loss of facilities and programs it poses for the Long Branch Community. Members of this group who have been talking with the rec departments, Parks Department, and recently with the County Executive. To make up for the loss of facilities and programs This community is still facing challenges from covid and we need to be expanding resources. We are also now talking to the county council for support

There needs to be a more concerted effort

We need to bring in new resources

The impact of losing the center is losing the facilities

Housing situation-

Some people are not able to stay and what can we do to strategically address this potential threat to our community

John- rent stabilization: various tools such as zoning tools, subsidies for renters

Broader picture- welcoming inclusive county, this is an opportunity to make this happen

Things are going to change, how things change are not predetermined, part of a group of people that are working on this issue, we can work on specific situations such as health and places to play, there is a good chance that we might end up with a different kind of community

If we do not address the housing displacements and this will disrupt the community and this will disrupt the lives and the communities of this center so there are two avenues we can talk about

1. Getting people who are facing eviction housing assistance coordinated and concerted effort: which has stopped a number of evictions effectively Intervention and negotiation along with landlords mitigates the problem in many cases
2. The problem is so large that emergency rent stabilization will be needed for the areas around the Long Branch Purple Line Stations to prevent displacement.
3. Long term solution: long branch housing community development housing process: identify communities of expanding affordable housing and implement that.

Grayce: there are 3 legal providers: homeless aid, legal aid, and CASA to provide protections until the moratorium Bigger solution: paying off the balance

In terms of rent stabilization: most of our nonprofit housing providers are working with landlords to hinder eviction processes

The amount a tenant is eligible to receive is 12,000 dollars

As property owners are selling the county are reviewing these: right of first refusal and they are negotiating with landlords so that they do not exceed the amount that has been discussed

A list of properties with regulatory agreements: group can focus on putting full attention to this

Long Branch Housing Relief Task Force:

Based on this discussion Bruce Proposed that there be a Long Branch housing relief task force to make sure Long Branch Partners are aware of programs and resources to prevent mitigation, provide rent relief and find other means to reduce and mitigate housing displacement. : Grayce Wiggins, John Brill, and Lisa Buttner all agreed to participate.