

Long Branch Partners Meeting 5/18/21

Attendees: Annie Tulkin, Agar Mbdiana, Randi Drewry, Reemberto Rodriguez, Kelly Umana, Claudine Schweber, Maureen Larenas, Josue Canas, Randi Drewry, Lisa Buttner, Birtucan, Vanesa Pinto, Pazit Aviv, Sara Mussie

Agenda:

Reopening public facilities in Long Branch as the pandemic subsides:

- The Long Branch Community Center will not reopen until Jan 2022
- There are concerns about reopening some of these facilities back to the community such as the community center and library.
- We also have concerns about park access.
- Annie Tulkin says the community center has been converted to a homeless shelter for men. Some men have been drinking and lighting fires in the woods. Children have been feeling unsafe in areas around the community center. All of the recreation programs at the center have been moved to other community centers. Apparently, kids can be bused to other centers. Can we get some of the services/programs moved to other local facilities in Long Branch instead of busing kids out of Long Branch? We need to think of long term planning as well. How can the County better communicate with the community about the community center? Maybe, a monthly update would be helpful. It would also be nice knowing what services are offered at the shelter? How can the community help the shelter as well? How can we increase communication around the community center?
- The Tess Center's current status of openness is unknown as they are waiting on the County decision. The building is closed to the public. However, they have been seeing clients.
- Vanesa says that so far she has been hearing terrible things from the community. One example of these things includes a lack of spaces for children to play safely. Lisa also says she was doing an event with Audubon where she noticed that nearby where she noticed things like a group of men loitering and drinking by the bridge.
- Vanesa shares good news about a community led event.
- Lisa expressed how the community emphasized that their favorite asset was the pool. She is not sure how the pool will operate while the men's shelter is still operating at Long Branch Community Center.
- Bruce asks Reemberto who at the County we can communicate with on these issues? Reemberto says that he is the cheerleader on the ground. He says his work only works with other people participating. He commends Annie and Vanesa's work with helping to get concerns expressed from the community.
- Reemberto says that having homeless men being around children is not a negative he is seeing, The social services department needs to ensure that there is no criminal activity or anything coming from these men.
- Lisa in chat: I appreciate Reemberto's comments that having a homeless shelter next to family residents should not have to be problematic. I don't think anyone is suggesting

that. I do think specific experiences should be explored to better understand the behaviors that make neighbors feel unsafe, and how/what social services could be strengthened to reduce the discomfort.

- As a start, it would be helpful to understand how the shelter operates, the hours, services and procedures. The shelter is being operated by the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless.
- Josue from the Tess Community Action Center asks if he sees biases for mask wearers in the future for purposes of identifying people by showing their face. How can we reduce the biases? Bruce says he cannot answer this. He thinks every institution has to maintain their own efforts to reduce biases while applying safety standards as things change.
- Vanesa has good news: CONEXO (a community led group) is leading a 4 stop walking tour at Flower Ave Park on Friday 5/21 at 5 pm with participation from Evan Glass. The Director of Parks is also coming. Reemberto is also invited. Piney Branch, the library, and the community center are the other stops. At each stop, there will be a passionate community member speaking on 1 of 4 important topics: 1. Parks and spaces for children 2. Safety of the roads 3. The library-when are they going to have access? 4. The Long Branch Community Center issues
- Reemberto in chat: OK w/u if we invite key County agency Directors to meet with the community at the invitation of the LBP to address specifically the Rec Center / Shelter, the library, pool, and vicinity issues? [1] Amanda Harris, HHS; [2] Robin Riley, Recreation; [3] Mike Riley, Parks; [4] Anita Vasillo, Libraries; and, [5] Comm. McBain, Police?

Getting all Long Branch Residents vaccinated

- There will be a vaccination clinic on 5/20 that is being led by CHEER, Clifton Park Baptist Church, Lorig Charkoudian's office
- This will be the Pfizer vaccine
- Kelly's team has also been doing outreach to schools in trying to get those 12-17 vaccinated. For example, Blair High School.
- Kelly can share flyers to those who are interested in sharing.
- Reemberto says we have vaccinated $\frac{1}{3}$ of the county. We need to focus on getting young POC vaccinated.
- Reemberto says we are working with FEMA and the state to bring in mobile vaccination units. We may do something at the old hospital as well. There will also be a meeting tomorrow to try to see if we can get materials distributed at certain grocery stores.
- Reemberto says we have not been focused on those who are hard hesitant. We are focusing on those who are somewhat hesitant or have some misinformation about the vaccine. We have to continue focusing on outreach even beyond the summer.
- Pazit says currently the County has interests in bringing vaccine clinics to rental housing communities. We want to make convenience key for people. Pazit says doing very small

clinics would be okay as well at these places. Pazit puts contact info in the chat for any further questions: Pazit.aviv@montgomerycountymd.gov

- Kelly shares her experience going to Home Depot and asking those around Home Depot about registering for the vaccine. She was able to register 4 people. One of the biggest concerns from the community was that they did not know who to talk to. They felt like they could not go to a pharmacist or a doctor. Kelly emphasizes having personal conversation with people one on one is key in getting those vaccinated as people have expressed having many questions, but not someone who can answer those for them.
- Kelly says beyond CASA, we need additional community health based organizations to reach out to our communities. For example, when booster shot season comes, we need information spread throughout our communities again. Kelly shares in the chat: Would love to share the blog we posted about this!
<https://www.communitycheer.org/single-post/cheer-empowers-local-communities-and-promotes-vaccine-access>
- Vanesa says we cannot underestimate the power of our communities and their leaders. They have been helping us tremendously especially at CHEER.
- Lisa says how can we officially compensate community members to conduct these outreach efforts.
- Pazit says currently there is a convo about bringing a vaccination site to MegaMart.
- Lisa says it would be helpful to know the qualifications for a site: Pazit says mostly outside. The needs are pretty modest.
- Kelly in chat: How do we become involved in the decisions of where the sites are located? Pazit says you can email them places for suggestions.
- Reemberto asks if anyone has connections in PG County to do clinics?
- Lisa in chat: People have been asking about the Community Center on Merrimac
- Pazit says we also have a program for those who are homebound. Contact: Pazit.aviv@montgomerycountymd.gov with their name address and phone number.