

Public Safety and Environment Committee
February 20, 2018, 7:00 PM
433 1st Avenue (NYU School of Dentistry), Room 220

Present: Ronnie White (Chair), Kathleen Kelly (Vice Chair), Andrew Gross, Matthew Roberts, Ann Seligman, Lou Sepersky, David Tsin

Excused: Paige Judge

Absent: Fred Arcaro, Elvy Barroso, Dan Devine, Bea Disman, Ava Goldman, Molly Hollister, Joseph Parrish, Susan Steinberg

Guests: Claude L. Winfield, Manhattan Community Board Six (CB6); Noah Genel, Business Integrity Commission (BIC); Sal Arrora, BIC; Dan Brownell, BIC; Justin Wood, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest; Lieutenant Bekim Kalicovic, NYPD 13th Precinct; Kevin FitzGerald, CB6; Christina Li; Stanley Davis, 344 East 28th Street; Patricia Davis, 344 East 28th Street

Call to Order and Adoption of the Agenda/Previous Meeting's Minutes

Ronnie White called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

No motion was made to adopt the agenda or adopt the minutes from the previous committee meeting.

Committee Business

Agenda Item #1: Presentation from Lieutenant Bekim Kalicovic of the 13th Precinct

Lieutenant Kalicovic from the 13th Precinct introduced himself. He said that last year finished up very low as far as crime is concerned, the lowest in the borough. He also noted the change in leadership recently in the precinct, with Detective Steve Hellman being the new commanding officer in the 13th Precinct. The year has started out well overall. Felony assaults have gone through a rough patch, but overall the year has started out well. The bulk of felony assaults happen in the shelters (BRC and Bellevue) as well as in Bellevue Hospital. Robberies have been even for the 28-day period, though 20% of the robberies in the precinct have happened underground. Pickpocketing remains prevalent in transit. A lot of these robberies come from people leaving bags unattended. Grand larcenies are up 6% for the year as a whole, and these crimes are very difficult to combat. Overall he feels like the precinct has a good control on crime, even though it's still getting dark early in addition to the weather being really warm.

CB6 Vice-Chair Claude L. Winfield asked what sort of strategy the precinct has with electric bikes, considering how much of a problem there is. The lieutenant says that the precinct has an aggressive stance on e-bikes, having 15-20 bikes confiscated on average each time they dedicate themselves to enforcement of e-bikes (a couple of times a week). The lieutenant also points out that some businesses now see the e-bikes as a quicker means of making deliveries.

Cody from the CB6 office asked about the northwest corner of 14th and 1st Avenue. The little convenience store in that area saw its liquor license pulled last year after underage auxiliary officers made purchases (and the NYPD got SLA people involved and licenses were taken away). There is a food stand also nearby that's open throughout the night. Grand Papaya is open throughout the night. Duane Reade is open late.

The lieutenant also says that work has been done with Bellevue to do remodeling to that shelter so that it's made less dangerous and more appealing than sleeping on the streets.

Ann Seligman asked how much of what is being seen with the homeless problem in the district has to do with mental illness. The lieutenant says that a lot of what goes on has to do with mental illness.

Committee chair Ronnie White asked a series of questions: First, how many of the tamper-proof mailboxes have been installed in the district? Second, has the effort to clean up graffiti in the district been maintained? Also, what are the plans for policing the L train area when that train gets shut down? The answer is that with the mailboxes, he doesn't know the exact number.

Agenda Item #2: Presentation from Dan Brownell, Commissioner of the Business Integrity Commission (BIC).

He explains that BIC is, among other things, deals with carting trucks, which is a dangerous industry, especially as many companies in NYC don't operate safely.

He gave a history of the BIC and on how they were formed in 1996 to help take dangerous/illegal activities out of the carting industry (including organized crime, which was a major problem in the truck carting industry when the industry was formed). They regulate public wholesale markets in NYC as well, and they also review applications for carting companies.

He talked about the application process for BIC, as well as the various work that BIC does. He also discusses the reasons that people can be denied applications that come through BIC (whether it be recent convictions, connections to organized crime, lying, or other means), and failure to pay taxes and liens.

Conversation then diverted to safety issues with many of these carting trucks. Someone pointed out about how there are trucks speeding on the streets, how people ride on the step of the truck, and how people ride on the back of the truck (even though all of these activities are illegal).

Andrew Gross asked why carting companies need to be used, and whether private companies need to be used. The BIC commissioner explained that in NYC residential waste is handled by DSNY while commercial waste is handled by private companies.

It is recommended by BIC that people from the public call (212) 437-0500 about any issues encountered. They rely on the public to provide BIC with information.

Ann Seligman asked about how she didn't see safety records and consumer complaints as part of the list of things to be reviewed for carting companies. BIC says that they're hoping to see safety records added as a criteria.

Claude asked about processes such as when applications get reviewed and what sort of routes there are. BIC mentioned that applications get reviewed every two years, and as for routes, there's a zone collection system that the city will implement so that there are fewer companies working on collection in the city (though the city is probably 3-4 years away from seeing that go online).

Andrew Gross else brought up the fact that there's this issue with people from these trucks screaming at 5:30 AM. He complains that it is very disruptive, even if it sounds minor as compared to people getting killed by the trucks. It was recommended by BIC that they call in to report the issue.

There were other concerns about continued crashes involving carting trucks, but BIC mentioned that still, overall, crashes continue to go down with the carting companies.

Justin Wood from New York Lawyers for the Public Interest suggested that it would be a good idea to reduce the number of miles these drivers drive. This way, it would result in less fatigue and fewer accidents. He pointed out that other industries, such as health care and airlines, have regulations that keep their workers from getting too fatigued, and he thinks that the carting truck industry should experience something like that. BIC concurs.

Kathleen Kelly asked about how many people actually know that it's illegal to ride on the step of the truck. The response is to call the number provided in the presentation if any issues are noticed.

The topic then changed to recycling and the enforcement of recycling regulations.

Andrew Gross asked about what the core issue is in this industry. The response from BIC is that organized crime is still the pervasive problem, even if it's not quite as big of a problem as it used to be.

Cody asked if any of the carting companies have unionized or attempted to unionize. The response is that Teamsters have represented people in some of the larger companies, but there has also been a major problem with fake unions. His experience is that if it's a non-union carting company, the carting company is not very good. It's acknowledged that this is a blanket statement but that this is usually true as well.

Ronnie White asked how, with the safety plan, the agency will be proactive in trying to anticipate issues that are going to arise in the future. Will there be any sort of contingency to deal with matters such as driverless cars. The answer is that the agency initially just wants to have in writing their safety plan from their own company; that being said, this will be a first step.

Kathleen Kelly also asked if, for a rule of the safety plans written by the carting companies, they show that they didn't add a stair to their truck. There wasn't a clear answer.

Claude asked about dealing with different components of construction debris. BIC said that, from their understanding, it's actually not that bad to deal with components with construction debris.

Cody asked about whether we're looking at city council legislation regarding these carting trucks. The reply is that the legislation to form BIC in the 90s had to do more with organized crime than with safety issues. BIC hopes that there can be legislation so that there's no question that BIC can enforce safety issues as well.

Kathleen Kelly asked about zoned collection, and this was responded to. The response is that there's work being done on figuring out what the best collection system is.

Agenda Item #3: Update on the Bollards

There was then an update on the bollards. There's hope to discuss this issue at the next meeting, and to hopefully support the City Council resolution on the bollards.

Old/New Business

There was no old/new business

Chair's Report

The chair's report was waived.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Ronnie White at 8:25 PM.

Minutes submitted by: Brendan Birth (CB6 Staff)