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CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

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PARKS AND RECREATION

Committee Minutes

Wednesday, September 8th, 2021, 6:30 pm

Hon. Karen Horry, Chair

Meeting began at 6:35 pm and was held via Zoom link. The meeting was chaired by Hon. Karen Horry, Committee Chair.

Committee Members in Attendance: Chair, Hon. Karen Horry, Hon. Barbara Nelson, Hon. Terri Wisdom, Hon. Derek Perkinson, Hon. Kevin Bitterman, Hon. Dr. Maurice Franklin, Hon. Shamier Settle, Hon. Wilma Brown, Hon. Verna Diggs, Hon. Marcus Wilson, Hon. Tahanie Aboushi

Committee Members Absent: Hon. Karen Dixon

Board Members Present: Board Chair Hon. Cicely Harris, Hon. Donna Gill and Hon. Deneane Brown Blackmon

District Office: District Manager Shatic Mitchell, Jasmin Heatley (Community Assistant)

Guests in attendance: Steve Simon (Manhattan Chief Of Staff, NYC Parks), Shena Kaufman (NYC Parks Manager Districts 10 & 11), Leslie People's (Iris G., Zakiya DeGraffe (Director, Hansborough Rec. Center NYC Parks), Chauncey Parker (NYPD Deputy Commissioner For Community Partnerships), Marie Warsh (Historian, Central Park Conservancy), John Reddick (Director of Community Engagement Projects - Central Park Conservancy), Ysabel Abreu (MBPO - Community Planning Board Coordinator/Community Liaison CBs 8, 10 and 11), (Jana LaSorte (Administrator of Harlem Historic Parks), Caledonia Jones (Manhattan Borough Historian Emeritus), Paul Covington (Honeys and Bears), Azure Thompson, Sharon Priess (Malcolm X Boulevard Beautification Group), Abena Smith (32nd Pct. Comm. Council), LeRoy Whethers (Honeys & Bears), Gregory Baggett (APRSNA), Ty Jones, Samuel White, Travis Berry, Pharein Griffith, Z. Starman, RaShon White, Dietra Kelsey, Alexis Marnel, Grace Parker, Aisha, Diana, Sharon Preiss, Prince, Meredith Linn (CPC) Teffone Herring, Sharonne Salaam,

I. Welcome/Introductions and Remembrance of Those Lost During 9/11

I. Presentations.

- a. **Seneca Village** - Although the pandemic presented a setback to the planning for a permanent exhibit the project has progressed. Focus has been on new research on the history of Seneca Village and its inhabitants as well as promotion of existing resources and development of new resources and programs. There was a really big event for Juneteenth over the course of the weekend and included a few tours per day. An app was developed to facilitate the interpretative signage that is strategically placed throughout the footprint of the historic village. The site can be visited in-person or virtually. Information is being made more accessible to reach wider audiences; locally, nationally and globally, and is now included in a park-wide audio tour. The history of Seneca Village was featured on “CBS Sunday Morning” . Members of Central Park Conservancy and the Seneca Village Project NY Historical Society were interviewed. (1) “Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room” will open at The Metropolitan Museum of Art on November 5th, 2021 and run for two years. The exhibition is designed to engage visitors in an immersive experience of the period room by embracing the African and African diasporic belief that the past, present, and future are interconnected. The exhibition's narrative is generated by the real, lived history of Seneca Village, a vibrant community founded predominantly by free Black tenants and landowners that flourished from the 1820s to the 1850s just a few hundred yards west of The Met's current site. In 1857, the City of New York destroyed Seneca Village, using eminent domain to seize land for the construction of Central Park. The exhibit acknowledges the injustice while asking: What if this community had the opportunity to grow and thrive?

Outcome : Marie Warsh will return to the October meeting to provide further updates.

- b. **Colonel Charles Young Playground** - The ballfield will be upgraded to a multi-sport state-of-the-art field by the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation; a not-for-profit that has built 103 synthetic turf fields across the United States, including the Bronx and Queens. The upgrade will provide sports choices for our youth, including baseball, football, soccer, rugby and lacrosse. \$5 million funding is secured. C.C. Sabathia committed \$500,000 to the project. Faulty stadium lighting had to be replaced recently. An exterior track round the back periphery of the park from 143rd Street to 145th Street is being recommended and would require additional funding. In addition, a canopy over the chess table area has been requested by the community. A plaque to commemorate neighborhood resident Odessa Sims who was tragically fatally wounded while sitting in the park in 2016 was previously discussed. Mrs. Sims’ death prompted community outrage and a galvanizing of the community to improve the park’s safety. A commemorative statue of Colonel Charles Young, entailing the Colonel’s story is also recommended. Approvals from the Public Design Commission and other agencies will be required. The Community Board will need to provide a letter of support upon review of completed design plans.

Outcome : Chauncey Parker will return to the October meeting to provide update and garner Community Board input for the ribbon cutting ceremony for the opening of the refurbished Colonel Charles Young Playground basketball court located at 145th and Malcolm X Boulevard scheduled for early November.

- c. **William McCray Playground Sinkhole - William McCray Playground** - The sinkhole repair project is underway and is currently in the pre-design testing phase. Due to the subsidence in the playground area - probably four 10 foot borings will be extracted from

the site and also test pits will be made. The borings will provide information about the subsurface: composition of the layers that lie beneath; past reconstructions; slabs of the former buildings that were left in place and any underlying debris as well as permeability. Subsurface material will be removed, area will be stabilized and all new fill-in will be made. Brand new, state-of-the-art playground equipment will be installed after the removal and fill-in process is completed. The projected plan includes the lowering of the front fence to improve playground visibility and ADA compliant bench seating. The projected timeline: Boring work to begin early November, report to be released by December and design phase to begin in January. Green infrastructure may be incorporated which would employ plant beds to absorb water run-off on the site to mitigate drainage issues.

Outcome : Parks will provide a report on the investigative findings in December and return to the Board in early 2022 with design plans for the new playground area

II. Discussions

a. CB 10 Park Safety in COVID -19

- i. Park employees who have not been vaccinated must be tested every week in order to remain employed. All Park workers must wear masks - vaccinated persons can opt not to wear masks if not in a crowded area. All other precautions remain in place. Event group capacity remains limited to 200 and may be increased to 500 in July.

b. CB 10 Parks - Updates -

- i. **Renaissance Playground** - Park has been spruced up with painting of playground equipment and refurbishment of the basketball court. NYC Parks does not have funds at this time to do a complete renovation and will take one year for completion.
- ii. **Fred Johnson Playground** Construction to begin on new bathroom which will be moved from the back of the playground to the front. Non-construction areas of the playground will remain open.
- iii. **Rucker Park** will celebrate the opening of the newly refurbished Greg Marius Court at Holcombe Rucker Park on Saturday, October 9th, 2021 at 1:00 p.m., The renovation was generously funded by the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA). The world-famous basketball court is being renovated with the installation of a new playing surface featuring a mural by Harlem native and rapper A\$AP Ferg, a state-of-the-art scoreboard, new custom basketball hoops and new bleachers. NYC Parks' Marketing & Development Office is identifying funding to upgrade the Rucker playground and little ball field.
- iv. **Harlem River Park** - NYC Parks advises that there is a challenge to installation of a comfort station in the park because sewage lines may not be present to facilitate the proposed structure. NYC Parks Urban Rangers are providing nature study workshops to local area schools and youth organizations.
- v. **Jackie Robinson Park** - The park is once again starting up events and participated in the NYC Homecoming week; hosting the premiere Blood Brothers: Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali at the amphitheater . There was an attendance of about 400 people. The park participated in the city CleanUp Corps which was very effective and had great results; especially helpful in view of staff

shortages. Free soccer clinic being proposed for the park. Donated backboards donated for the basketball courts to be installed. The Park is looking for residents who are interested in gardening. There is reportedly a hazardous mud slick that occurs after truck deliveries and needs to be cemented over to avoid slips and falls. NYC Parks has been advised and will address. The mud slick developed after completion of the recent renovations on the park. Jackie Robinson Park will be hosting a Block Party to galvanize neighborliness and promote park usage and stewardship. The event which is a collaboration between Harlem Historic Parks, NYPD and Community Board 10 is scheduled for Saturday, September 18th.

vi. Hansborough Recreation Center - Re-opening as of September 13th. Face masks, ID and proof of vaccination are required to enter the facility. Registration is currently taking place. Free memberships are being offered (through December 31st 2021) to NYC residents 12 and over who are vaccinated - current memberships for 11 and younger remain in place - even though vaccinations are not available for this age group. No NYC Parks indoor pools open at this time. Visit NYC Parks: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/> for updates. Guidelines being developed for safe swimming indoors. Honeys and Bears, Harlem's world renowned synchronized swimming group would have requested a meeting with Hansborough Management to discuss pool updates and alternatives during the interim of the pool re-opening. The Honeys and Bears suggested protocols being used at Asphalt Green as a model for safety procedures: <https://www.asphaltgreen.org/about/covid-19-preparedness/covid-19-policies-and-procedures-at-asphalt-green#SWIM>

c. District Needs Statement - Committee Members have been asked to review the District Needs Statement for 2020 and provide comments and or suggestions.

III. Voting:

There were no voting items

I. Old Business

a. Exonerated Five Subcommittee - Board Chair Cicely Harris has directed that the subcommittee will be dissolved and replaced by a Task Force.

I. New Business -

- a.** Exploration of the development of a strategic plan for Community Board 10 parks. Dr. Maurice Franklin will provide a synopsis of what the plan should entail in advance of the October meeting for Committee discussion.
- b.** Planning for Spring 2020 P&R Annual Community Outreach Event featuring NFL Veteran and Chicago Bears Defensive Coach Mike Adams

II. Announcements

- a.** We welcome and look forward to working with Interim NYC Parks Commissioner Margaret Nelson.
- b.** The Honeys and Bears will be hosting a gala birthday party in celebration of two of their members who will be turning 99 years young!!!

- c. The NYC Parks Urban Rangers will lead Ranger programming at the East River Esplanade (Harlem River Park) at 142nd Street. Local area schools and youth programs can request The Natural Classroom school application for the Fall at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/programs/rangers/natural-classroom/apply>
- d. Sunday, September 12th is National Grandparents Day!!!!
- e. Jackie Robinson Block Party!!!! Saturday, September 18th, 11 am - 5 pm - 148th Street to 149th and Bradhurst Avenue
- a. Discover Seneca Village. For further information visit: <https://www.centralparknyc.org/activities/tours/seneca-village-virtual-tour> .
Advance registration is required for all tours.
- b. Hansborough Recreation Center is offering free one year memberships to individuals aged 12 and up who have been vaccinated against COVID-19. Advanced registration and proof of vaccination is required. The Center will be open beginning Monday, September 13th. Registration is available now.
- c. “Roof-top Painting Under The Stars” being offered by Hansborough for 3 Thursday evenings from 5-7 pm beginning September 30th. Advanced registration is required via Event Brite.

III. Adjournment - Motion made to adjourn by Hon. Barbara Nelson and seconded by Hon. Tahanie Aboushi

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

~ Respectfully submitted by Parks and Recreation Chair, Hon. Karen Horry ~