



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10
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PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, February 11th, 2015, 6:30pm
Hon. Karen Horry, Chair

Meeting began at 6:50 pm and was held in the Manhattan CB10 conference room. The meeting was chaired by Hon. Karen Horry, Chair.

Committee Members in attendance: Barbara Nelson.

Committee Members Excused: Derrick Graham, Troy Gethers, Lupe Moreno and Dabney Montgomery.

Guests in attendance: Kieishsha Y. Garnes - Manhattan Manager Parks and Recreation CBs 10 and 11 (NYC Parks), Rosetta Williams (Friends of Courtney Callendar Playground), Lori Parker (Friends of Courtney Callendar Playground), John McBride (Electric Ladybug Garden) Lawrence Terry (Electric Ladybug Garden), and Daniel Irizarry (Electric Ladybug Garden). Elizabeth Smith, Rasheed Hislop (NYC Parks – Green Thumb)

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

- A. A letter of inquiry was issued to NYC Manhattan Commissioner William Castro regarding the restoral of a comfort station in Courtney Callendar Playground on February 6th in follow-up to the January Committee meeting.
- B. An e-mail was issued to Kercena Dozier, Department of Homeless Services (DHS) Director of Community Relations requesting a follow-up from DHS with respect to CB10 concerns around CB10 Parks. Ms. Dozier was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict the February Parks and Recreation Committee meeting or provide any representation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A. NYC Department of Parks and Recreation intends to issue a non-significant Request for Proposals (RFP) for the sale of specialty food from mobile food units at various locations city-wide.

DISCUSSIONS

A. ELECTRIC LADY BUG COMMUNITY GARDEN- John McBride - Mr. McBride submitted a 364-signature petition along with supporting documentation including a letter of support from City Councilman Mark Levine, records of extensive media coverage and a City Hall rally. There is concern for loss of community green space, which unlike parks, provides for gardening and associated activities designed to enrich and strengthen local CB10 neighborhoods. In addition, these gardens serve as active sites for food collection, and organic waste composting.

The group is requesting support for the four CB10 community gardens which are threatened with closure. It was discussed that the lots can only sustain small buildings with a miniscule number of units that would only accommodate 20% affordable housing. The four affected CB10 community gardens are;

- Harlem Grown Greenhouse on West 134th Street, Lot 1918, Block 51
- Harlem Valley Garden on West 134th Street, Lot 1919, Block 5
- Garden managed by Heaven Bound Church of Christ Holy Temple, Inc. on West 133rd Street, Lot 1918 Block 16
- Electric Ladybug Community Garden on West 111th Street, Lot 1827, Block 14

The Committee reviewed the drafted Land Use Resolution for Affordable Housing in Infill Development with respect to community gardens and edited the draft to reflect that the Committee's sentiment is to not support the use of active community gardens for development. The Committee and Community are however, in support of the City's efforts to use publicly-owned sites that are not community gardens for the development of low-income housing. It is acknowledged that there are alternative sites that can be selected. Other HPD-owned plots can be considered that are under-utilized and perhaps even larger. These sites could be developed to produce a greater number of affordable housing units for low-income families.

This position is alignment with the Borough President Gale A. Brewer who issued a letter dated February 10, 2015 to Mayor Bill de Blasio and HPD Commissioner Vicki Been stating that:

"While I recognize the value of developing vacant and underused parcels and returning them to the city's tax roll, particularly for the development of affordable housing, I am gravely concerned that many of the Manhattan properties identified in the RFQ are currently active community gardens managed by and flourishing under the care of local residents..."

*Gardens, greenhouse, and urban farms are invaluable assets to the communities in which they are located and must not be destroyed for the sake of expanding residential development. **The active gardens under HPD's NIHOP and NCP RFQ must be removed to prevent losses to New York City's neighborhoods.***

The Electric Ladybug Garden group will be attending the upcoming Land Use/Landmarks Committee meeting scheduled for 2/19.

Outcome: The Committee will forward the edited Resolution for Affordable Housing in Infill Development to Chair Brian Benjamin of the Land Use Committee with the recommendation to **not support** the use of active community gardens for development, but rather to support the use of publicly-owned sites that are not community gardens for the development of low-income housing.

B. COURTNEY CALLENDER PLAYGROUND COMFORT STATION – Borough of Manhattan Chief of Staff Steve Simon of NYC Parks has been in dialogue with the group and on Monday, February 9th called to inquire as to how many stalls would be required for the comfort station. The group was greatly appreciative of the letter sent from the Committee to NYC Parks in support of the project and inquiry into the current status of the comfort station. The Friends of the Courtney Callender Playground would like the Board to continue in its oversight of the process to restore the comfort station facility.

Outcome: The Committee will continue in its efforts to maintain an ongoing dialogue with NYC Parks in progressing towards restoration of the Courtney Callendar Playground comfort station.

C. 2017 BUDGET PRIORITIES – The Committee discussed the need for both capital and expense budget projects for CB10 in such areas as recreational programming, renovations of Lasker (Central Park) and Jackie Robinson Pools, improved fencing, increased park personnel, i.e., park enforcement, park associates to coordinate park activities and volunteer recruitment.

Outcome: The Committee will follow-up with discussion of budget priority requests and discern a tentative listing of capital and expense priorities for submission to the Board.

D. PARKS AND RECREATION COMMUNITY EVENT – The Committee is planning a youth sports education event featuring NFL Safety Mike Adams of the Indianapolis Colts, a 2015 Pro Bowl Player and 12- year veteran . The event will focus on self –esteem, motivation and football sport safety. The targeted group will be local –area youth ages 5 – 19 who have interest in football. Harlem football little leagues will be contacted.

Outcome: The Event is scheduled for Saturday, March 14th and will be located at the Dwyer Cultural Center.

PRESENTATIONS

A. **NYC PARKS GREEN THUMB - Rasheed Hislop**– The presentation outlined the myriad services provided by the NYC Parks’ Green Thumb (GT) Division in support of community gardens. The agency is also responsible for site registration and licensing. The program assists over 600 gardens throughout the city. The GT mission is to educate and support community gardens and urban farming in NYC while preserving open space. Mr. Hislop succinctly identified the vital role of community gardens as hubs of community-building. He clearly outlined how they provide integral environmental, educational, economic and social benefits.

Outcome: Rasheed Hislop, Deputy Director of NYC Parks and Recreation Green Thumb would like to return to present before the full Board at the March 4th General Meeting.

A quorum was not present so there were no action items. There was one Committee Member present in addition to the Committee Chair. Four of the six standing members were absent.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.