



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10
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PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, January 14th, 2015, 6:30pm

Hon. Karen Horry, Chair

Meeting began at 6:35 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: Steve Simon – Borough of Manhattan Chief of Staff (NYC Parks), Shamell Martin (Partnership For Parks), Kieishsha Y. Garnes - Manhattan Manager Parks and Recreation CBs 10 and 11 (NYC Parks), Esther Crump (St. Nicholas Houses), Taylor Seargent (Frederick Douglass Academy student), Jorge Martinez (Frederick Douglass Academy student), Christopher Kim (Frederick Douglass Academy student), Stephanie Gullen (Frederick Douglass Academy student), Azania Jackson (Frederick Douglass Academy student), Ebony Downs (Frederick Douglass Academy student), Jon Ernsberger - Landscape Supervisor/Senior Designer -Capital Projects Division (NYC Parks), Olalea Boelchare (NYC Parks), Glover Brown (NYC Parks), Alexander Han -Deputy Director of Concessions Revenue (NYC Parks), Santiago Zindel (NYC Parks Fellowship & Conservation Corps), Kercena Dozier - Director of Community Relations (Department of Homeless Services), Kenji Williams, Michael Wolraid, Lawrence Tery, Paul Whelan, Lester Benjamin, Alan Daves, Bruce Wheeler (City Parks Foundation), Nicole Yearwood - Director of Community Relations (City Parks Foundation), Rose Williams (Friends of Courtney Callendar Playground), Lori Parker (Friends of Courtney Callendar Playground), Bryan Phillips (Friends of Courtney Callendar Playground), John McBride (Electric Ladybug Garden) and Daniel Irizarry (Electric Ladybug Garden).

PRESENTATIONS

A. NYC PARKS DEPARTMENT - ST. NICHOLAS PLAYGROUND NORTH

RENOVATIONS - LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT- Jon Ernsberger – The park, located at West 130th Street and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard, has been designated as one of the city's 35 parks in high-need communities that will receive funding as a part of the Community Parks Initiative program (CPI). The park renovations will be implemented from 2015 to 2016. The funding will also include ongoing maintenance post-renovations. The CPI program, launched by Mayor Bill DeBlasio and Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, is a

multi-faceted program designed to invest in under-resourced public parks located in New York City's densely populated and growing neighborhoods with higher-than-average concentrations of poverty. CPI's first phase will target 35 community parks through a \$130 million capital investment that promotes the full re-creation of these parks, \$7.2 million in expense funding for Fiscal Year 2015, and \$36.3 million in capital funding from the Department of Environmental Protection for green infrastructure improvements at these sites. CPI's first phase will target 55 neighborhoods across the five boroughs, reaching approximately 220,000 New Yorkers living within a 10-minute walk of the targeted parks. In its entirety, the initiative's first phase represents over \$173 million in capital and expense funding.

CPI represents the first phase of *NYC Parks: Framework for an Equitable Future*. The framework outlines NYC Parks' commitment to increasing the accessibility and quality of New York City's parks in neighborhood's throughout the five boroughs through a dynamic series of immediate steps and long-term initiatives to support sustainable, equitable park development and implement a targeted level of service improvements across the parks system.

The presented design suggested: (1) passive and active amenities, (2) green infrastructure, (3) upgraded access with respect to additional and/or more strategically located entrances, (4) coordination of amenities with the upcoming comfort station, (5) an adult fitness area paired with a ½ basket-ball court in addition to a proposed full court with spectator seating. The Community and Board suggested that bucket swings should be incorporated for younger children.

Outcome: Parks presented information regarding proposed playground design and is still interested in gathering community feedback. Time frame: One year for design (current phase) 9 months for procurement and one year for construction. Parks will return in March or April with more detailed design for presentation. At that time Board will be asked for a resolution. The comfort station will be a separate project.

DISCUSSIONS

- A. COURTNEY CALLENDAR PLAYGROUND COMFORT STATION RESTORATION** - Courtney Callendar Playground is located on 5th Avenue from West 130th Street to 131st Street. The group is requesting to continue the process to rebuild the Courtney Callendar Playground comfort station initiated by Juanita Washington (now deceased). The comfort station was promised to be built 12 years ago. The plumbing is currently in place. The building needs to be constructed. The original comfort station was dismantled during a playground reconstruction/renovation and was never replaced as promised. The playground is used : (1) from June-August by Jim Couch and one women's basketball tournament (2) by summer stage during the month of July (3) by community PAL July – August and (4) 365 days per year by nursery schools, public and private schools, local residents and site of 32nd Community Council Police annual

back-to-school event. East Harlem's Courtney Callender Playground is named after New York City's first African-American Deputy Commissioner of Cultural Affairs. Callender began his career in Parks & Recreation, where he established the Community Relations division, which initiated the policy of including neighborhoods in park decisions. Callender served as Community Relations Officer from 1966 to 1969 until Commissioner August Heckscher appointed him Deputy Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, three years after the Office of Cultural Affairs was transferred from the Mayor's Office to the Parks Department. In 1936, the City purchased a portion of this site from Charles and Mary McClean, and acquired the rest of the property by condemnation that same year. The playground was built across from P.S. 133, in East Harlem, on the corner of Fifth Avenue, between East 130th and 131st Streets, adjacent to Saint Ambrose Church. In 2000, Councilmember Perkins allocated \$672,000, and Borough President Fields allocated \$225,000 to fund a major renovation of Courtney Callender Playground. Before the project, the playground contained old, worn, and splintering play equipment, a basketball court, and an abandoned, sealed building. The new project, designed by Claire Dudley, removed the old building, rebuilt the basketball court, added bleachers, and brought the installation of colorful, modular play equipment, new chess tables, new fencing, and security lighting. Rare Amur corktrees (*Phellodendron amurense*) line the entire playground, and huge Trees of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) stand within the park providing visitors with shade and intriguing examples of nature's beauty

Outcome: The group submitted a petition and presented. Letter of Support or Resolution approach must be determined. Parks expressed interest in the project and will explore options for reinitiation of the abandoned project.

B. NYC PARKS DEPARTMENT - CONCESSION STANDS - Santiago Zindel

Parks has two agreements with City Parks Foundation for Summer Stage at Central Park; to operate (1) summer concert series and (2) food and merchandise concessions. The current three-year agreement expires in August 2014. Permission is being requested from the *Franchise and Concession Review Committee* to renegotiate the sole-license agreement.

City Parks Foundation (CPF) is a nonprofit organization that creates programs in parks throughout all five boroughs of New York City. The programs are designed to enrich and connect New Yorkers through free and accessible arts, sports, education and community-building initiatives. SummerStage, a program of City Parks Foundation, presents performances of outstanding artistic quality, free of charge, to serve the diverse communities of New York City.

Outcome: Summer Stage has offered to reach out to any designated entities recommended by CB10 with respect to seasonal employment and volunteer opportunities. NYC Parks is in support of the sole license agreement renewal as it is in support of the myriad services that City Parks Foundation provides around the city.

C. **HOMELESSNESS & CB10 PARKS - Kercena Dozier - Department of Homeless Services (DHS)/ Director of Community Relations** – The Parks Department Manager for CBS 10 and 11, Keishsha Garnes reports that Parks has been making progress with the homeless problem in A. Philip Randolph Square and is still not considering replacement of the benches at this time. A specially formed task force has been dispatched to Harlem River Park, Marcus Garvey Park, Jackie Robinson Park and A. Philip Randolph Square. They dismantled temporary homeless structures and removed bedding, furniture, tarps, shopping carts and luggage. Homeless men can be seen sleeping on benches around the basketball courts and sprawled out on a soccer field by day, then hunkering under an overpass at night. After a decade in which the number of homeless people on New York City's streets had fallen by almost 25 percent, 2014 has seen an uptick in their number: On a single day in January, the population of the so-called street homeless was 3,357, representing an increase of 6 percent from the year before. A result has been a growing number of homeless encampments in the city's parks, traffic squares and plazas. The attendant behavior – like public urination, sleeping on benches and violating the blanket 1 a.m. parks curfew – has led to tensions with neighboring communities. A recent NY Times article all, the city's homeless population is at a record high, with 57,676 people living in shelters as of early November, in addition to the growing numbers on the streets. In the past month, Mayor Bill de Blasio's office has convened an interagency task force to address the issue. As part of that effort, the city has identified 25 sites where the street homeless are congregating in large numbers. The sites include parks, private buildings, vacant lots and bridges, which have become priorities for the outreach teams who fan out across the city's five boroughs daily to engage people living on the streets. The Committee will be exploring a strategy to more holistically approach the collaboration of city agencies and the Community to create long term and viable

Outcome: DHS will follow-up at February meeting with recommendations for long term solutions. Ms Dozier will apprise DHS of CB10 concerns.

D. **2017 BUDGET PRIORITIES** – Only Chair and one Committee Member present. Item will be discussed at February Committee meeting. NYC Parks Department Borough of Manhattan Chief of Staff Steve Simon will return for the discussion.

E. **237 WEST 111TH STREET ELECTRIC LADYBUG GARDEN** -John McBride – The Garden, block 1827, lot 14 (239-37 West 111th Street – 0.116 acres), located between Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Blvd and Frederick Douglas Blvd. has been padlocked by HPD. The Community Garden group is requesting support of maintaining the garden which was recently licensed.

The NYC Department of Housing Preservation (HPD) recently published a list of city-owned sites that housing developers can apply to build on. Developers will have the opportunity to submit proposals for nearly 180 locations. Of more than

1,000 HPD-owned vacant lots, approximately 74 have community gardens, according to research from *596 Acres* (a community land access advocacy group that provides online tools neighbors can use to clear hurdles to community land access. The tools turn city data into information about particular pieces of land and connect people to one another through simple social networking functions).

Gardening groups are required by the Parks and Recreation Committee to provide a letter of understanding addressed to NYC Parks Green Thumbs and HPD that the property use can be rescinded by HPD at will.

Outcome: The Electric Lady Bug Gardening Group will be soliciting petition signatures from the Community in support of the continuation of the Community Garden project for submission to the Executive Committee. The Committee sentiment is that the community concerns have merit and should be explored. The group is requesting a letter of support.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

A letter was issued from the Committee advising the NYC Parks Department Manhattan Borough Commissioner William Castro of the concerns of Lenox Terrace residents around boiler emissions from Hansborough Recreation Center located at

A quorum was not present so there were no action items. Four of the six standing members were excused.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

