

## HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - JULY 9, 2015

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Steve Simon (Chair), Elizabeth Lehmann, Juan Mejia, Arlene Schulman, Beatrice Hall (Public Member).

**ABSENT:** Wanda Garcia, Andrea Kornbluth, Terriell Peters, Luis Tapia.

**OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Osi Kaminer.

**GUESTS:** Deirdre Parker, NYC Transit; Robert Lamagna, Ronald Alevras and Josh Gillespie, all from HDR Inc.; Robert Guimento and Julio Batista, NY-Presbyterian Hospital; James Cataldi; Roger Meyer; Nancy Preston; Obed Fulcar; Martin Collins; Sara Fisher.

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The meeting was called to order at 7:13 pm.

### 1. Presentation by NYC Transit on proposed wetland mitigation at North Cove in connection with floodwall installation at the 207<sup>th</sup> Street subway yard

Deirdre Parker, Assistant Director, NYC Transit Government & Community Relations, began by explaining that as a result of major flooding caused by Superstorm Sandy, MTA-NYCT has developed a plan to mitigate future flood damage and build resiliency at the subway yard. Water not only entered the yard but also flooded the Dyckman Street and 207<sup>th</sup> Street stations on the A line during Sandy. A floodwall will be built on the east side of the yard along the Harlem River. This plan was presented to CB 12's Traffic & Transportation Committee last October and supported by the full board. The proposed wetland mitigation being presented tonight will provide a benefit to the community.

Robert Lamagna, Project Manager, HDR Inc., the consultant working for MTA-NYCT, began the Powerpoint presentation. He said the new seawall to be built along the bulkhead will be 11 feet higher than the existing wall. (There would be a gap between the old and new walls.) It will enter the yard before reaching the cove, which is directly south of the yard, and will not extend along that shoreline.

Josh Gillespie, Environmental Compliance Manager, HDR Inc., said the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, which have to approve the mitigation plan, require 1:1 mitigation to offset the loss of water and habitat displaced by the floodwall. The mitigation could be done anywhere in the area but NYCT would prefer to do it in the community. Based on the 1:1 formula, they propose to remove .4 acre of debris from the tidal wetland in the North Cove. The timber piles would remain as waterfowl perch habitat.

Ronald Alevras, Senior Wildlife Biologist, HDR Inc., said the debris removal would take place in three different fields in the cove. The debris above the water prevents light penetration into the mudflat, which has "substantial aquatic value," such as being a feeding area for shrimp and striped bass. Once the debris is removed, "you will get increased water flow along the bulkhead and the cove will function better." He said the area on the east side, where the new floodwall will be built, is underneath a relieving platform and is "shaded all the time and gets no light, so there is no aquatic life." As a result of the proposed mitigation, he said there will be ".4 acres of better habitat."

James Cataldi, of the Manhattan Wetland and Wildlife Assn., who has been leading the cleanup of the North Cove in recent years as a volunteer, said it would be "environmentally and ecologically catastrophic" if the cove were completely cleaned. He said he feared there would be less wildlife because the habitat for birds, egrets, etc. would be removed.

Gillespie said the food source is in the mud and wildlife should still flourish without the wood debris.

#### Questions

Fisher: could you also clean garbage on the shore?

A: That's not part of the mitigation project.

Meyer: can you place soft edges along the floodwall?

A: No, the floodwall is in the water.

Shulman: how would heavy equipment get to site from 207<sup>th</sup> Street? Would it displace wildlife?

A: No

Simon: we are being told that PT-129, commanded by JFK after PT-109 was destroyed in the Pacific by the Japanese in WWII, was tied up at the pier in the cove and sank there in the 1970s. As part of your project, could you perform an underwater investigation to see there are any remnants of the boat at the bottom of the river?

A: we will not have that type of equipment.

Simon: what is the timetable for the project?

Rashmi Shah, NYCT design manager: hope to award the contract by the end of the year and to begin construction in the second or third quarter of 2016. Construction of the floodwall would take four years. Efforts would be made to minimize impact on A train service. The mitigation would have to be done first and would take only a few weeks.

Kaminer: can you improve the design of the plain, steel wall? This was raised last October.

Parker: we can look at the design.

Fulcar: you should make the presentation available on-line.

2. **Ambulatory Care Changes at the Allen Hospital** -- Robert Guimento, VP, NYPH Ambulatory Care Network, said NYPH plans to relocate and consolidate a variety of specialty care clinics now at the Allen Hospital: orthopedic surgery, neurology, urology, coumadin, ophthalmology and a small amount of podiatry and vascular services. None of these clinics operate full-time and most duplicate services at the main campus. 4,000 annual visits by 1,600 individuals, most of which receive their primary care at the Broadway Practice or the AIM clinic. The schedules of the clinics at the main campus are such that patients can still be seen at the same time but just in a different place. The impact of the change will be mitigated by deploying "navigators" to reach out to all the patients to explain how they can get to the new services. The plan is to start rescheduling patients in August for appointments in September. The hospital is working closely with the physicians, who are "very supportive." Six employees are being relocated; there is no job loss. He said the idea to consolidate these services has been under consideration for awhile, but it may have become a higher priority after NYPH recruited three "world-class" spine surgeons from St. Louis and created a special unit for them at the Allen Hospital.
3. **NY-Presbyterian Hospital Report** – Julio Batista, Director of Community Affairs, reported as follows:
  - The Lang Youth program graduated 13 students on 6/23.
  - The scaffolding outside the new entrance for the renovated Morgan Stanley Adult Emergency Department on Broadway at W. 167<sup>th</sup> St. will start to come down by the end of the week.
  - The discussion regarding explaining the proper utilization of the ER to the public is ongoing. Signage at the Urgi-Care Center at 21 Audubon Ave. is being changed, and it will be renamed the Urgent Care Center. Efforts will be made to draw people into the primary care centers. A celebrity may be used in an advertising campaign, as suggested by the committee chair..
4. **Isabella Geriatric Center Report** – Betty Lehmann, Director of Marketing & Communications, reported as follows:
  - The renovation of the recreation hall, funded by the City Council, will begin Jan. 2016. The Borough President is allocating funds for audio-visual equipment.
  - We're opening the third rehab floor, a total of 120 beds.
  - Annual health fair will be held 10/7. CB 12 can co-sponsor and have a table.
5. **Old Business** –S. Simon reported that the Scorecard street cleanliness ratings for our district improved to 86.1% in June; getting us closer to the 90% mark needed to retain the reduced Alternate Side Parking schedule. The best sector was MN 124 (Inwood) at 95.8%. The worst sector was MN 122 (W. 171<sup>st</sup> St. to W. 183<sup>rd</sup> St. east of Broadway and then up Fort Washington Ave. to Fort Tryon Park) at 79.2%. Our Fiscal Year 15 average was 85.4%. A. Schulman: recycling cans have been installed on some streets, as the Sanitation representative discussed at last month's meeting. Fulcar: can just the sector(s) with poor ratings lose the ASP reduction? A: no, it would apply to the whole district.

The committee continued its discussion from last month regarding the need for a "suicide prevention" fence on the George Washington Bridge. S. Simon: Linda Stasi, in a recent Daily News column, questioned why it should take nine years to erect the fence: "How can this 4,760-foot steel wonder spanning the Hudson have been built in four years in 1927, but will now take half that time just to replace the ropes and more than twice that time to put up a fence? Have we gotten dumber?" The Daily News reported just two days later that a woman may have jumped off the bridge, which would be the 13<sup>th</sup> GWB suicide this year. There were 17 suicides from the bridge in 2014, one more than in 2013.

J. Batista: why can't they install netting as was done at the Golden Gate Bridge?

A. Schulman: we should invite the Port Authority to explain why it would take so long to construct the fence and what can be done in the meantime.

It was agreed that this issue should be on the agenda for the committee meeting in September or October, depending on when we will hear the recommendations from the NYPH task force on improving mental health services for youth in our community.

6. **New Business** – S. Fisher asked how our budget priorities made out in the newly adopted FY 16 budget. S. Simon said he would check. She also suggested that we request an update on the pending legislation restricting the sale of hookahs in view of the fact that people have been seen using them in local parks. A. Schulman said she spoke to Council Member Rodriguez's office, who told her there was no change in the status of the legislation. S. Fisher also asked the committee to revisit the issue regarding the use of plastic bags in stores. B. Hall asked whether there was an update on the complaint regarding fumes being emitted from 156-08 Riverside Drive West. S. Simon said he had not heard back from the District Manager.
7. **Announcements** – S. Fisher: Friends of Inwood Hill Park is holding a stewardship event on Saturday and again in August. She is conducting water quality testing and can report on it at a future meeting.
8. **Discussion on NYCT's wetland mitigation plan for the North Cove** – The committee members and community members had an extended discussion regarding the plan and the presentation that was given earlier. J. Cataldi said he had spoken to the NYCT consultants outside the meeting and was now convinced that the mitigation plan would be beneficial to the cove and to the community and that CB 12 should support the plan. He said he had been promised that floating wood outside the three debris fields would not be removed and that construction would begin on the third quarter of 2016 so as not to disrupt the migratory patterns of waterfowl.

Motion by Lehmann / Mejia: To support NYC Transit's wetland mitigation plan for the North Cove with the understanding that the floating wood outside the debris fields would be left in place, that construction would not start until the third quarter of 2016 and that the design of the floodwall be reviewed in an effort to make it more attractive. We recommend that NYC Transit work closely with the Manhattan Wetland and Wildlife Assn. as the plan is implemented, and we look upon this project as part of an ongoing partnership with NYC Transit to maintain and enhance the cove and to work on other mutually beneficial community improvement projects. The motion was approved by the following vote:

	Yes	No	Abstain
Committee Members	5	0	0
Members of the Public	4	0	0

The resolution will be presented at the CB 12 meeting in September.

This meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Steve Simon