

PARKS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES

February 3, 2015 – CB12 office

Committee members Present

Mitch Glenn, Chair (MG)
Osi Kaminer, Asst. Chair (OK)
Kelley Boyd (KB)
Juan Mejia (JM)
Elizabeth Lorriss-Ritter (LR)
Richard Lewis (RL)

Committee Members Absent

Board Members Present

Public Member Present

Patti Jacobs (PJ)

Public Member Absent

Guests

Kevin McKeon – Inwood Canoe Club, Danica Doroski – Partnership for Parks, Lucas Acosta - CM Rodriguez’ Office, Amy Slattery - CM Levine’s Office Mike Fitelson - UPCA, Jennifer Hoppa – NYC DPR, Gail Addiss, Natalie Espino - CM Levine’s office, Sara Fisher, Trish Anderton, Osaliki Sepulveda - Alianza Dominicana

The meeting was called to order at 7:14pm by the Committee Chair Mitchell Glenn with introductions and welcome.

Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez’s office - Lucas Acosta addressed the committee and public to share information about submitted legislation to ban hookahs and hookah paraphernalia sales by businesses that get less than 50% of their earnings from tobacco and Hookah related sales. This law would make it illegal to sell the goods at the grocery stores and bodegas where they’ve become increasingly popular. It would also ban hookah smoking of shisha (tobacco is already banned) at bars that offer up the pipes but get most of their revenue from booze or food. Hookah bars - defined as spots where most of the business comes from smoking - would not be affected. Smoke shops would also be allowed to keep selling hookah related items.

Sara Fisher advised the committee that there are two bills being considered in the City Council. CM Rodriguez’s intro addresses sales while the other bill addresses use.

JM: Asked what % of establishments would be affected? *Mr. Acosta did not know %.*

LR: Asked for language for a resolution in support by CB12. Discussion ensued as to whether PCA should get involved in this issue. A vote was taken of all attendees.

Question 1: In favor of banning outdoor use of hookah.	Result: Committee 5-1-1-0 Public: 5-0-0-0
Question 2: In favor of banning indoor use of hookah.	Result: Committee 6-1-0-0 Public: 6-0-0-0
Question 3: In favor of banning hookah apparatus sales.	Result: Committee 3-4-0-0 Public: 3-2-1-0

RL: Asked 1) if there was any “grandfather clause” that would incent the targets of the legislation to stockpile shisha. *Mr. Acosta did not believe there was any such provision being contemplated.* 2) If there had been any thought given to electronic hookah. *Mr. Acosta did not believe there was any provision for e-hookah, which to his knowledge has not yet been invented, but did believe that if it were invented it would be governed by the same law that governs e-cigarettes.*

CM Levine's Office - Amy Slattery addressed the committee and public to share the CM activities in the Council as it relates to Parks. CM Levine has introduced a bill (Intro 384 which amends Local Law 28) which "should pass next week" that will require Parks Conservancies (e.g. Fort Tryon Trust, Central Park Conservancy) to report the money they raise. Currently they only report what they spend.

Additional legislation regarding Parks is addressed by Intro 154, which asks DPR to report spending and accessibility in Parks properties on a park-by-park basis. Jennifer Hoppa explained that currently spending is reported by Parks Districts. She is concerned that reporting by park may create the perception that spending is unfair but asserted that there are many ways to analyze parks spending, and one reasonable analysis would be based on usage. Ms. Slattery announced that the Northern Manhattan section of the Parks budget would get input from CMs Levine, Rodriguez and Mark-Viverito.

MG: Asked whether Intro 154 as currently written would include a line for the Adventure Playground in Highbridge Park. His concern is that it has fallen into disrepair even though \$98M is being spent to upgrade many areas of Highbridge Park (Water Tower, Bridge etc.) Ms. Slattery responded that Adventure Playground is a part of Highbridge Park and will be included in the financials for the entire park.

United Palace Cultural Arts - Mike Fitelson (MF) addressed the committee and offered to host a PCA meeting at the theater. He explained that the United Palace is three things:

1. It is owned by the Eikenrotter Family and serves as a place of worship at noon on Sundays.
2. It is a booking operation for concerts, private parties and other events.
3. It is the base for the United Palace of Cultural Arts (UPCA), which is a non-profit whose Executive Director is Mr. Fitelson. UPCA presented 11 popular New York City-themed movies last year, and has continued this popular series in 2015. UPCA also collaborates with other Arts organizations, including People's Theater Project, The New York Youth Symphony, RIOULT Dance NY, the Harmony Program and also sponsors its own programming, including The Hip Hop Nutcracker. The upcoming launch of a new series, "The Crackalackin' Season of Classical Music" will feature at least 10 events from October through May. UPCA also offers Afterschool classes on an ongoing basis and they are all free. New Programs include a Visual Arts series on Saturdays and an upcoming Lobby Series, details to follow.

JM: Asked for MF to supply the Family Center at New York Presbyterian – Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital with materials and thanked UPCA for the previous performances at the hospital.

Sara Fisher: asked about the recent de-calendar of the UPT from the landmarks list – and later re-calendar - and what that means for the Theater. MF advised that UPT will not seek landmark status because repairs and maintenance become more complicated and more expensive with landmark status and because there is a very benevolent and caring owner who would not violate the features of the facility that make it landmark-quality.

LR: Advised that Senator Espailat office is staying close to the landmark-related developments at UPT. She also shared her belief that having places on the Landmarks Calendar without any real intention to landmark may negatively impact the process and other pending projects.

PJ: Was receptive to LR comments, however, remains concerned about de-calendar of potential landmarks.

MG: Stated that relying on the benevolence of the owner to protect what most people feel is a landmark is a bad idea.

Gail Addis: Inquired about whether the theater was on the Nation Register of Historic Places. Answer: No.

Parks Department Update: Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator - Ms. Hoppa brought the updated Inwood Hill Park and Heather Garden pamphlets for review. Advised that people could get them and distribute throughout the community. Ms. Hoppa also shared that CM Levine hosted a meeting on Natural Resources to plan ecological inventories of parks. Ms. Hoppa said that the Natural Resources Group could use more money to do more. In March and

April she expects an infusion of help from volunteers who will assist with the inventory work.

MG: Asked for direct feedback from Parks on our FY 2016 Budget priorities list.

A. Reforestation Project:

- 13,356 trees have been planted in Northern Manhattan. Of those, 3285 were street trees in CB12. This list is culled from 311 reports of trees missing, dead or damaged. The remaining 10,071 were planted in Inwood Forest, Highbridge and Ft. Washington Parks. There are still trees to be removed and when they are they will be replaced vis-à-vis a planting contract. NYC Parks' Central Forestry, Borough and Natural Resource Group foresters have a regular process of assessing tree planting opportunities, storm damage, invasive infested areas requiring restoration and other planting opportunities in Northern Manhattan Parks.

RL: Asked what criteria is applied to determine if a tree is "dead". JH directed the attendees to go to the website where all that information is readily available but also agreed to bring the info to next meeting.

B. Capital Projects

- Isham Park water service project continues to slowly advance.
- Fort Tryon Steps project- Design has been approved for the steps to be replaced from Annie Loftus up to Cloisters (144 steps). Estimated completion 2016.
- New Leaf Restaurant's roof project is delayed because it must be at least 32° F to proceed with asbestos abatement.
- The High Bridge continues to advance and construction should be completed by Memorial Day.
- High Bridge Water Tower Terrace project is also progressing.
- Inwood Hill Park: The place markers have been delivered but ground must be thawed a bit more before they can be installed. The positions of the markers have already been uploaded to 911.

C. Upcoming Programs /Activities

- Jennifer listed an extensive series of events in Northern Manhattan Parks. Please consult the Parks Dept website for more information.
- Festivals Season! Open call for any ideas of groups or associations for Parks to partner with to create more events.

Old Business: The committee had a brief discussion regarding the outstanding request to have the appropriate members of DPR speak to the committee to better understand Park Concessions; specifically, the terms and conditions of concessions, special event permitting and revenue. Chairman Mitchell Glenn agreed to continue to pursue booking of one or more speakers to address all concerns.

New Business: No new business was proposed.

There being no mail and no further business, the meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 8:32.

Respectfully submitted: Kelley S Boyd on February 5, 2015