

PARKS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES

September 1st, 2015

Committee members Present

Mitch Glenn, Chair
Osi Kaminer, Asst. Chair
Domingo Estevez
Richard Lewis

Committee Members Absent

Kelley Boyd (resigned)
Barbara Frazier
Elizabeth Lorris-Ritter (excused)
Juan Mejia

Board Members Present

Mary Anderson

Public Member

Public Member Absent

Patti Jacobs

Guests

Paul Kittas (Coogan's Bluff), Basia Nikonorow, Trish Anderson (Inwood Canoe Club), Pat Courtney (Friends of Isham Park), Daniel Mercado (DPR Manager), Peter Levy, Diogenes Abreu (NMIC), Elaine Delgado (Hispanic Society of America), Kevin McKeon (Inwood Canoe Club), Sisa Martinez, Ganelia Hernenguez, Arelis de La O (Union Comunal), Roralta Haraugo, Mauther Pabon, Nioly Luis, Marcia Nishio, Gary Dearloorm, Joel Yoffie, Sara A. Fisher (Friends of Inwood Hill Park), Obed Fulcar (Friends of Sherman Creek)

The meeting was called to order at 7:15pm

1. Budget Priority for fiscal year 2017 will be discussed at October's meeting
2. Barbara (Basia) Nikonorow, Partnership for Parks;

Partnership for Parks' mission is to assist community members who want to become engaged in the stewardship of their parks and green spaces and learn how to make them better and to support them. Among the programs sponsored by PFP:

Technical Assistantship Program: offers training and workshop opportunities for people to interact with one another from the neighborhood, the borough and the whole city. In the meetings people bring ideas from other parks, empower one another and engage in conversations about new ideas.

Volunteer Program: offers loans for stewardship in parks to small groups. The It's My Park Day event will take place on October 17th and Partnership for Parks will bring tools to various parks for clean up and beautification. There is an application process for this program and more information is available from Partnership for Parks coordinator Basia at Barbara.nikonorow@parks.nyc.gov.

Community Parks Initiative will inject \$120mm from the City Council and \$10mm from the Mayoral Fund to quickly and dramatically improve 35 parks throughout the City. Additionally, the goal is to get community members involved and participating in the capital improvement process through envisioning sessions on how people would like to see their parks. The essence of the program is to engage schools, tenant associations, Community Boards and nearby groups to participate in Community Visioning.

Catalyst program: Focuses on a single park, such as Thomas Jefferson Park, to engage and create groups for long-term community development in underserved parks. Connect with people and bring park communities together.

Partnership Academy: Coming up on September 24th at the Arsenal, this session is about activating your park and includes information on event planning and stewardship.

3. Paul Kittas “On Coogan’s Bluff” Mobile App.

Paul developed an application available on iTunes that follows the path of the old Croton Aqueduct in the wooded area called *Coogan’s Bluff* in Highbridge Park. This is a walking tour that shows some digital information along the pathway. The 1848 aqueduct is still under the path but is not accessible.

4. Arelis de La O - Union Communal Friends of Audubon Playground;

Members of the Audubon Playground community are concerned about the state of the playground that has become a magnet for drug addicts and criminals. Per the Friends of Audubon Playground group, the long-term solution to the lack of security is to renovate the playground and make it a place for families. After numerous meetings the group decided on the following required actions:

- Eliminate the temporary Annex building
- New restrooms
- Recreational area for children
- A separate recreation area for youth
- Resting areas with benches and tables
- Enhanced green areas
- Additional lighting and new gates
- Water fountains and sprinklers for summer
- Preserve the turtle sculpture

After visiting other playgrounds in the district the Group noticed a disparity between the Audubon playground and those in wealthier areas such as Bennett Park and Javits Playground. The Group is asking to restore the park to its original layout. The group would like to get \$5,000,000 for a complete renovation of the playground.

The Committee asked that the group come back to the PCA meeting in October for the 2017 budget discussion and request letters of support from DPR and DOE stating their position on the Playground.

5. Inwood Hill Park Nature Center update;

The first round of ADA restroom work (\$250,000) that was funded by former Council Member Robert Jackson has been completed. The contract for the second part (\$700,000) to connect water service back to 218th street is approaching the bidding out process. Construction of the second phase will likely start next spring and with completion scheduled for the summer of 2017.

FEMA is still finalizing their funding allocation (\$490,000) for reconstruction of the building. Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez allocated \$600,000 but the total design and construction cost is estimated at \$1.7 million. DPR is working to secure additional funds for this project and \$750,000 is expected from the Deputy Parks Commissioner.

No flood safeguards or resiliency mechanisms were built into the renovation of the Nature Center. Raising the building up, which is one flood mitigation method, is too expensive to implement.

6. DPR update

- Highbridge opening: 6,000 people came to the opening event on July 25th
- Highbridge K5 run will take place in October; date TBD
- National Night Out in Inwood Hill Park
- A few movie nights were held in the park
- 200 volunteers came to the park, painting over graffiti and weeding
- Ice skating rink and bicycle rental in Highbridge Park are out for RFP
- The ADA / bicycle ramp on the west walkway at Dyckman St. was opened September 4th
- Isham Park water project was completed
- City funding for the new New York Restoration Project modular building at Sherman Creek was secured and a contractor was selected. In October the final design will be presented to the Public Design Commission.

7. Old Business: Concessions

In May at our monthly committee meeting representatives of the DPR and the Mayor's office appeared to answer our questions regarding concessions management. David Cerron, DPR Revenue Division representative, needs to return to the committee with answers to our questions. Parking on the sidewalk at La Marina remains an issue and needs to be addressed.

The discussion will continue next month

The meeting adjourned at 9:15pm