

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee

November 13, 2018

CB12 Conference Room (530 W. 166th St., 6th fl.)

Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter (Chair), Daryl Cochrane (Asst. Chair), Barbara Frazier, Mitchell Glenn, Richard Lewis, Domingo Estevez, Nobles Crawford (Public Member). **Absent:** Karen Taylor. **Other Board Member:** Richard Allman (also representing NYS Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa). **Also Attending:** Julie McCoy, Steven Harris, & Trish Anderton, Inwood Canoe Club; Charlene Edwards, Jennifer Hoppa, Stephen Hamson, & Whitney Talcott, NYC Parks Department; Henry Sutter, Anita Flanagan, & Jean Jaworek, W. 181st St. Beautification Project; Terry Lorden; René Cuenca, Partnerships for Parks; Meghan Alvarez, Row New York; Leena Charlton; Tammy Nelson; Hon. Al Taylor & Erika Rodriguez, NYS Assembly; Jana La Sorte, Natalie Espino, MBPO

- 1) **The meeting was called to order** at about 6:35 by the Chair, with announcements of then-upcoming events, and a shout-out to St. Spyridon Church for their recent fair; mark your calendars for Nov. '19. Housekeeping notes for this evening's agenda, and updates:
 - NYPL & "Little DR" items removed from agenda as no one from NYPL or CarriBeing was in attendance.
 - Based on public testimony at the General Meeting about space use at the Armory, this item was referred to the Health & Human Services and Parks & Cultural Affairs Committees. PCA is taking the lead from HHS, which deferred the matter to their December meeting as most of the principals were unable to attend the November meeting; PCA will defer to December as well.
 - The Board completed its FY '20 Capital & Expense Budget Priority Rankings last month. Because of the dire needs for mental health, housing, and other services, Parks projects and programs were not as highly ranked as in prior years.
 - Updated Manhattan Waterfront Greenway Plans (see file copy for details) is an additional investment by the City in northern Manhattan's waterfront. Whatever are the controversies surrounding the Inwood rezoning, including a pending lawsuit against the City by a group of Inwood residents, this is a positive investment consistent w/CB12's previously articulated capital priorities.
 - There will be a public hearing at Monday (11/19/18)'s Executive Committee on a proposal to landmark the area of Park Terraces East & West btw. W. 215th/218th Streets. The proposal is also on the Landmark Preservation Commission's calendar for Nov. 20th, hence the urgency to hear the matter at the Executive Committee. Although this is primarily a Land Use matter, there is the opportunity to include Isham Park's Hearst House, currently derelict and owned by the adjacent Seventh Day Adventist Church school.
- 2) **Presentation of Proposed Design for reconstruction of the Pinehurst Ave. Step Street terracing & gardens.** The project is considered a "replacement in kind," will cost a total of \$400k, and is funded by Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer (\$225k) and Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez (\$175k), and is expected to take 21-24 months for procurement and construction. Design is expected to be completed by mid-spring. (Parks is finalizing the grading plans and locating where the timbers are going to go, followed by a draft planting plan.) Several members of the West 181st St. Beautification Project ("W181BP") – representatives of which already had seen the Parks Department plan and provided feedback, much of which was incorporated into a revised plan – provided additional feedback with regard to plantings and other operational concerns.

The terraced gardens are reminiscent of a Parisian streetscape, with seasonal plantings on either side of a step-street extending on Pinehurst Ave. between W. 181st and the cul-de-sac south of W. 183rd St. The step street itself was reconstructed 16 years ago by DoT/DDC, but the adjacent terracing on either side has degraded due to rotting timbers and burrowing rats, making it harder for the W181BP volunteer gardeners to work. There is also spalling (deterioration) on the concrete stairs, poor lighting, and inadequate water sourcing which is itself not up to code (no RPZ backflow preventer).

Stephen Hamson & Whitney Talcott, NYC Parks Department gave a thorough presentation on the existing conditions and their proposed mitigation (concrete repairs, new timber, regarding, pest management, new water, repair bench, improved LED lighting) and replanting plan, the goal of which is to make the garden safe and maintainable while retaining its charm.” The garden’s eight trees would be maintained as would the large wisteria at the base of the stairs, though pruned consistent with good gardening practices. The plan will also use recycled plastic lumber cribbing in lieu of wood timbers for longer life, below-grade steel mesh hardware cloth in lieu of burlap cloth which is not successful for rodent control, and remove ivy which is both invasive and “rodent friendly”. Plantings will be primarily shrubs and annuals, rather than perennials.

There was a lengthy discussion of the need for a better waste management solution for the garden and bench areas to help with rodent control. As DSNY is unlikely to add another waste bin to its route, and since the open-mesh cans do little to control rodents, it was suggested to work with local elected officials, local businesses, and possibly the BID – which may be extending west to Ft. Washington Ave. and beyond – to install a “big belly” waste receptacle.

In response to questions by the Committee and the public, Parks agreed to:

- work with NYC Department of Health (which leads the City’s rat eradication efforts) to coordinate with the adjacent buildings and businesses on rodent abatement, and with the Department of Environmental Protection on any corrections to nearby street drains as they may relate to pest control;
- use aggressive rodent abatement, using the more human and environmentally-friendly CO2 method;
- work with W181BP and adjacent buildings to facilitate access during construction if the W181BP or other community group organizes a mural (or murals) on the adjacent building walls;
- provide adequate notice, as is their practice, of any shutdowns of the staircase, though these are believed to be very minimal;
- locate their construction dumpster on the north side of W. 181st St. at the base of the stairs so as to minimize any loss of parking (the area is not currently a legal parking space, so there should be no impact);
- work with local businesses to ensure minimal impact during construction staging (again, likely to minimal-to-nil); and
- continue to work with the W181BP on all aspects of the project, including the planting plan.

A resolution in support of the proposed project was approved unanimously, with 6 Committee members, 1 other Board Member, and 19 members of the Public in favor.

- 3) There was a short break in the proceedings to **acknowledge the presence of Assemblyman Taylor**, who introduced his new Chief of Staff, Erika Rodriguez.
- 4) **Julie McCoy – Inwood Canoe Club** Incorporated in 1902, ICC is the oldest continuing operating paddle sport club in New York City. Their boat house is located on the Hudson River just south of La Marina. It is a private membership organization that offers some programming to the community, as opposed to a non-profit organization serving the community at large. Anyone can join if they show an interest in paddle sports and a willingness to participate in member events including not only the public rowing days (Sunday mornings from Memorial Day to Labor Day), but also member service days to provide maintenance to the facilities and surrounding area. After passing a probationary period, members are given keys to the boathouse and space (pending availability) to store a canoe or kayak, and are able to use the facility at will. They would like to

offer additional hours, but are limited by their volunteer resources, and the safety requirements of a 1:4 ratio of guides to program attendees; there also are limits of expanding the season earlier or later due to

water temperature. It was suggested to try adding maybe just one weekday evening during the season; the few extra hours might be a manageable addition to their volunteer capacity. They also do offer special guided tours on the water and are open to working with community groups and youth programs. Based on suggestions of various Committee members regarding possible networking venues, they are also open to outreach through the Highbridge & J. Hood Wright Rec Centers, and the District 6 Parents Association Presidents Council. ICC is not affiliated with RowNY or Columbia University Boathouse (which do crew, a different sport). There was also a discussion on how to get funding from the DA from drug recovery such as funds "Saturday Night Lights" youth basketball programming to fund paddling programs. There are a number of restrictions that may not make this practical, but ICC will follow up w/ the Manhattan DA's office. It was also suggested to write an OpEd in for the Manhattan Times, and to add perhaps just one weekday

5) Jennifer Hoppa - Capital Update (in addition to items reported last month):

- a) \$206 M in capital improvements slated for Northern Manhattan Parks
- b) Inwood's Dyckman Green Gym is completed. It's beautiful w/views of the Cloisters Tower & the Hudson.
- c) Wallenberg's 3/5 courts in Highbridge Park have been refurbished and re-sealed.
- d) Javits Playground Reconstruction: Underway
- e) J. Hood Wright's Outdoor Fitness Area is under construction.
- f) Audubon Playground: Construction slated to begin 11/19, so the site will be closing to the public. Working w/DOT, 33rd Pct., and CM Rodriguez office to help the school get their play street for recess.
- g) Highbridge Anchor Parks Phase I: Construction slated to begin 12/17, so be prepared for the area from Laurel Hill Terr., north of 181st Street to Dyckman Street to be closed to public access.
- h) Inwood Ballfield 1: Public Scoping Meeting 12/4 at 6:30pm at the Muscota New School. Please come out and let others know about it so that they can help shape the future of the ballfields.
- i) Highbridge Water Tower: Received bids, is in procurement, with potential Feb. '19 start.
- j) Highbridge Dyckman Rest will be getting a \$5M overhaul, as was requested in the Anchor Parks Master Plan and the public input sessions on Parks in the Inwood NYC Plan. POA with the City
- k) Highbridge Park Con Ed Work: continues along the eastern edge; repaving of sidewalks to follow.
- l) Fort Washington Waterfront: \$19M in infrastructure improvements: Inwood Canoe and Kayak's boathouse pier, the bulkhead/revetment there and the public Dyckman Pier/Beach area. (POA Tracker)
- m) Fort Washington Wooden Deck Bridge: \$5M+ capital project is in procurement.
- n) Inwood Soccer Fields: \$6M was allocated as part of the Inwood NYC Plan/POA to redo the soccer fields and provide water service to the north end of of Dyckman Fields. Design to start 2020.
- o) Inwood Bluestone Staircases: MTA is currently reconstructing these and doing associated pathwork as part of their ongoing partnership with NYC Parks in Inwood Hill Park. Essentially done.
- p) Fort Tryon Park's Anne Loftus Playground: We had a second scoping meeting. [Note: a petition to add basketball to the site subsequently was received.]
- q) Morris-Jumel Mansion: repair & repainting of the Octagon Room is underway, almost complete.
- r) Monsignor Kett Playground: Public scoping meeting for this \$14M renovation likely for early 2019
- s) Re: Fort Tryon Park sign on the Henry Hudson Parkway: there have been 6+ recent crashes, so DOT will replace it with a brown historical sign, which won't be as pretty as the current sign but will be highly reflective and hopefully less likely to be damaged by vehicle crashes.

Note: all Rezoning/POA Capital Projects will be including in the future tracker for Inwood:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/operations/performance/neighborhood-rezoning-commitments-tracker.page>

6) Announcements / New Business

- Charlene Edwards (J. Hood Wright Rec Center): this facility is being transitioned to a Senior Center in 2019. Summer kids' programming in playground will still continue. This came as a surprise to the Committee; Jennifer will follow up and report back to the Committee as to how this decision was made, though realistically this will not be much of a change since the vast majority of the programming at the Center was senior-focused. Special programming for the community will still be done at the Center.
- Regarding the status on Duarte State Park, Jennifer stated that the expectation based on feedback of local merchants and stewardship groups, is to continue to keep it closed. There have been meetings w/social service providers, law enforcement and city officials as to how to alleviate the unsavory activity through social services and support while protecting the public.
- Public Art in Inwood Hill Park/Persuasive Visions is up through March 1st. It is interactive.
- Thank everyone who came out and joined NYC Parks' Forestry, Horticulture and Natural Resources Group, the Natural Areas Conservancy and REI to improve Inwood Hill Park this past weekend. Fifty volunteers improving more than a quarter mile of trail.
- Columbia University, Parks, Congressman Espaillat, and BP Brewer celebrated the restoration of the WWI Monument at Mitchel Square last week. Parks sculptor designed a way for the bayonet not to be vandalized.
- Fort Washington Amtrak Bridge is reopened for public access to the waterfront! Its narrow given the deteriorated edges, but it does allow public access and prevents the use of the detour. Thanks to CDOT
- Sunday December 2nd: New York City Naturalist Club Tree ID in Inwood Hill Park 1pm - 2:30pm.

There being no additional business, **the meeting adjourned at 8:48pm**

Respectfully submitted: Nobles Crawford & Liz Ritter