

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee

September 10, 2019

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

Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter (Chair), Daryl Cochrane (Asst. Chair), Nobles Crawford, Domingo Estevez, Rosy Perez. **Excused:** Barbara Frazier, Ayisha Ogilvie. **Absent:** Francisco Lopez, Karen Taylor, Johanna Castro (Public Member), Alexis Marnel (Public Member). **Other Board Members Attending:** Richard Lewis (Chair) Sally Fisher, Matt Levy, Bruce Robertson, Steve Simon. **Also Attending:** Leslie Peoples, Jon Ernsberger, Jennifer Gonzales, & Jennifer Hoppa, (NYC Parks); Karr Washington; Ken Stevens (Dyckman Youth Worldwide); Trish Anderton (Inwood Indivisible); Richard David (Kasirer), Amanda Kraus (Row NY), Jon Becker & Jim Goldman (The Hudson); Mike Fitelson (UPCA); Lisa Salinas, Macarena Carrizosa, & Jocelyn Canteras (CUNY Journalism/NYC News Service); Jeannine McAdams (Friends of Bennett Park & HeightSites); Lloyd Feng; Paul Kittas (Heights Tours), Chris Davalos (Morris Jumel Mansion), Margaret Connors McQuade & Alexander Campos (Hispanic Society), Charlie Reynoso (NYRP); Natalie Espino (MBPO); Paul Hintersteiner; Steven Harris (Inwood Canoe Club); Pat Courtney (Volunteers for Isham Park); Ryan Desso.

6:37pm The meeting was called to order by the Chair with welcome, announcements, & updates.

- June Reso re: NYRP Living Shoreline passed the full Board unanimously.
- Filming for “In The Heights” wrapped and it was successful. Much money was spent in the community including on meal services (rather than catering trucks), and there were general good feelings about the production from the community
- JHW Soccer Pitch is under construction, with completion anticipated in early October
- Immigrant Research & Performing Arts Center RFEI has been released; there will be an information session probably later this month or early October (date TBD).
- Brief summary of La Marina settlement in Federal Bankruptcy Court, resulting in termination of both licenses with Manahattan River Group. Administrative Code changes were made to allow Parks to run the marina directly; Hudson River Community Sailing will continue to operate for the season and an RFP for the programming component going forward w/ the 2020 season has been released. The license for the restaurant has been transferred to Jimmy Goldman, whose affordable and family-friendly BBQ/seafood restaurant, “The Hudson,” had a soft opening last weekend. Details to be discussed at greater length at a separate CB12M Informational Meeting on Thursday 9/12/19 at IS52; please attend.

6:55pm Brief Programming Updates from various community arts and cultural groups

- Friends of Inwood Hill Park (Sally Fisher): Drum circle Saturdays at Shorokapok, 1pm-2:30pm; Second Nature Outdoors family day on 11/9.
- Natalie: MBP Hispanic Heritage event in Maggie Peyton Gallery at MBPO opening Mon. 9/16.
- Inwood Art Works is having a fundraiser for their programming on Weds, 9/25.
- NY Restoration Project (Sherman Creek) - Final movie night on Tues. 10/1 @7pm (Aquaman).
- Hispanic Society – Serolla Gallery reopening 9/17 on Tues/Thurs for tours by appointment.
- NYC Parks: Passajes Interactive Performance 9/21, Medieval Festival on 9/29 in Ft. Tryon Park, 11:30am-6pm; Little Red Lighthouse Festival on Sat. 10/5, noon-4pm; and many other events.
- Morris Jumel (Chris): Ghost Hunting (buy tickets); exhibit currently on display on the history of the Polo Grounds.
- Friends of Bennett Park (Jeanine): Clean-up on Sat. 10/5, 10am-1pm.

7:09pm Row New York Sherman Creek Community Boathouse + Learning Center Update: Amanda Kraus, Founder & CEO, gave a brief history of the project and RowNY’s mission to “provide middle & high school students with year-round athletic conditioning, academic tutoring, and college- and career-readiness activities.” They gave a presentation two years ago regarding their plans to build a new

boathouse to replace the aging, defective, and inadequate Peter J. Sharp Boathouse located on the Harlem River near the eastern terminus of Dyckman St. This evening she gave a presentation of the proposed building, which as part of NYC Parks' review will be going before the Public Design Commission next month for approval; RowNY is seeking CB12M support for the design for what will be a sole-source concession. So far all of the funding is private, but as the project is not yet fully funded RowNY is open to public funding for the part of the remaining balance.

- The design will include both classroom and practice/exercise space, and will be designed for flexibility so as to enable community use for meetings and events in the evenings.
- The building will be fully and universally accessible.
- The new building will accommodate double the programming capacity, including for seniors and for para/adaptive rowing.
- There will be public access to the dock similar to the dock at the Muscota Marsh (i.e., public permitted use), though latched for public safety.
- In order to maximize public access to the waterways for different types of human-powered boating, RowNY is in conversation w/Parks around some kind of storage racks for other such craft (e.g., kayaks & canoes) somewhere on the property.
- Looking to break ground in the spring of 2020; construction anticipated to take 2 years.
- It is not clear what will be the ultimate fate of the Peter J. Sharp Boathouse, which is not viable for prolonged use due to inherent design flaws and inability to float from silting at that location.
- Domingo asked about the percentage of students in the program who come from CB12M. Amanda didn't have that specific information but will furnish it. *[Update: of 111 children served last year, 42 (38%) live within CB12M; an additional 24 (22%) are from Harlem or Marble Hill for a total of 60% local youth.]*

A resolution supporting RowNY's proposed plan with the addition of some kind of public kayak/canoe storage (exact location TBD) passed unanimously: 5 votes of the Committee, 14 members of the Public.

7:42pm Proposed Renovation for Msgr. Kett Playground: Jon Ernsberger (NYC Parks Landscape Designer) described the project, the design of which is based on substantial feedback received at the January 29, 2019 public scoping meeting held at the Dyckman Houses, with representation from many different users of the playground (seniors, youth, parents w/ young children, basketball, fitness enthusiasts, etc.). The design requires approval by the Public Design Commission. The proposed design includes a completely re-done children's play area with a graded spray area and integrated, accessible features and those for sensory play as part of Parks' efforts to improve various kinds of accessibility in all new playground designs Citywide, as well as a small sensory area on the eastern perimeter with higher plantings to provide a modest noise and visual buffer. (The planting will not be higher than 3 feet so as to maintain sightlines.) The plan also includes a regulation-sized full basketball court suitable for tournament play (orientated east-to-west) and a junior court (oriented north-to-south); fixed bleachers at the southern perimeter of the courts and an area for portable bleachers along the northern perimeter of the courts (themselves located in the SW corner of the site); two (down from four) handball courts; a small area central open area suitable for group exercise classes (e.g., Zumba, tai chi, yoga, etc.); two areas with integrated, accessible fitness equipment at the eastern perimeter and in the SE corner; "big belly" solar-powered trash receptacles; water fountains with bottle fillers; increased lighting; and benches for seating both inside and along the exterior perimeter. The comfort station will be relocated to higher ground to accommodate new floodplain mapping, and will include larger restroom areas with more fixtures (three toilets or urinals + two sinks in each of the male & female bathrooms) than the current footprint allows per code, as well as baby-changing tables in each restroom. Parks anticipates a nine-month procurement and contracting process to begin in the spring of 2020, to break ground in early 2021, and for construction to take approximately one year. The Comfort station is on a separate timeline from the rest of the playground.

There were the following questions, feedback, and requests:

- Will there be WiFi? Steve Simon: Parks is hoping to expand WiFi throughout parks generally, but that is not part of this project.
- Ken Stevens: Be careful with the entrance on the Tenth Ave. side. It is a high-volume pedestrian crossing, particularly with Inwood Academy diagonally across the street. Parks may also need to revisit the lighting so that the entrance is safe and well-lit.
- Notwithstanding the value of incorporating sensory play into design generally, this small area does not in any way meet the needs for a special sensory playground, and the public and Committee support revisiting the placement of such a facility in the Anne Loftus playground when the area along its eastern (Broadway) perimeter is renovated in a(n as-of-yet unfunded) renovation.
- Because there is ample room within the redesign of a completely new comfort station, the Committee recommends having the men's and women's each be smaller and with only two fixtures, with a third, gender-neutral family bathroom. This would be a benefit to those preferring a gender-neutral facility, as well as to those of one gender in wheelchairs or otherwise needing assistance accompanied by a caretaker of another gender. To avoid the problem of not having locking doors on bathrooms themselves, it was suggested to have either a doorless partial wall to provide visual privacy, or a locking toilet stall within the bathroom.
- Domingo stated that the design in southern end of the playground feels cluttered and crowded, there is very little room between the courts, and there is the potential for conflicts, errant balls, etc. It was suggested to take a little bit of space from the fitness area in the corner, so as to move the handball courts and junior basketball court over a few feet and provide a more substantial buffer around the basketball courts.
- One member of the public objected to basketball courts as being "male dominated." Another member of the public later spoke with the Chair after the meeting regarding the importance of sports opportunities for girls and women, and that basketball is certainly not just for men. The Chair apologizes for not seizing on the teachable moment with regard to a frankly sexist remark.

Parks projects to have contractor on board by the end of 2020, with one year construction (sans comfort station). Presentation given on the plan for the area. A resolution supporting the proposed design with the above recommended changes (additional lighting; a third, gender-neutral/family bathroom; more space around basketball courts) passed without opposition: Committee 5-0-0-0; Other Board Members 3-0-1-1; Members of the Public 8-0-1-0.

8:38pm Hispanic Society of America Renovations & Capitol Plan Alex Campos. The facility is old and very much in need of repairs to the roof and HVAC systems, as well as to the terraces; additionally it was never designed with accessibility in mind so making it accessible is a real challenge and expense. They have a new team of architects and a new capital plan. The focus is on the Main Building (a/c, security, lighting, fire & safety); to improve accessibility; restore the Terrace itself and make it available for more public uses; and to open a special exhibition gallery in the East Building (formerly the home of the Museum of the American Indian, which moved to the Customs House downtown many years ago). The Museum is free, and will remain so when it reopens. While the museum is closed for renovations they have been providing substantial public programming at other area institutions, as well as educational programming for local school (e.g., Gregorio Luperon, 21st C Academy, IS52, PS210, etc.) These are not single-sessions but workshop series throughout the school year. They also are pleased to be re-opening the Sorolla Gallery on Tuesdays & Thursdays by appointment. In consideration of the time the presentation was briefer than the one given last week to the Land Use Committee; please reference those minutes for more details. The vote in favor of a joint resolution with Land Use supporting the HAS's capital plan and calling on our elected officials to help fund this vital resource was unanimous: Committee 5-0-0-0; Other Board Members 5-0-0-0; Members of the Public 14-0-0-0.

9:10pm NYC Parks Capital & Programming Report (Jennifer Hoppa)

- More than three dozen upcoming free public events in parks throughout the District, in addition to those announced earlier (distributed flyers) as well as multiple stewardship events past and future; visit www.northernmanhattanparks.org/events for information.
- Temporary closure of the ramp and greenway at Highbridge Park's Adventure Playground (at W. 165th St.) due to a retaining wall collapse. Signage directs people to the W. 167th ramp and stairs for access.
- Javits Playground renovation delayed due to issues with one of the subcontractors which has since been resolved. Anticipate completion in October; meanwhile there is a "pop-up playtime" program with a Playground-in-a-Box in the subway terrace area Tu/Th 2-4pm & Sat. 10am-4pm put on by the Fort Tryon Park Trust.
- \$5million High Bridge Water Tower construction kick-off on Monday, 9/9.
- 181st St. step street renovation project bid will be advertised on 9/25; due back 10/18; anticipate construction to begin in April 2020.
- Councilmember Rodriguez allocated additional funds for the Inwood Baseball Ballfield renovation to include additional ballfields, as well as lighting of Ballfield #1.
- Bennett Park received \$1million+ (\$850k from MBP, \$250k from C/M) for a high-quality artificial turf field for the center area, in lieu of the central lawn which has proven difficult to maintain due to high use.
- FEMA rejected the first round of bids for the renovation of the Inwood Hill Park Nature Center. When Parks put it out to bid again, responses came back in July \$1.5million+ higher than budget, so Parks will work with electeds to get additional funding, and will re-re-bid the project. Meanwhile, the Urban Park Rangers continue to work out of the Payson Center as a visitor center and for public programs.

9:18pm FY'21 Capital & Expense Budget Priority Rankings Liz gave a brief run-down of last year's project ranking and explained process for this year. We will take last year's list, remove any items that have been completed or are otherwise no longer applicable, and add whatever items have come up in the past year in Committee discussion. Please come prepared next month to discuss and rank these items. After each Committee has ranked its capital & expense items, the full Board will rank the aggregated list to submit to OMB as part of the budgeting process.

9:22pm Old Biz/New Biz/Mail Paul Kittas announced that he is now a "citizen archaeologist" and that a portion of the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail has been designated as a flagged site for archeological review by SHPO should federal and state funding be used for a project there.

9:24pm There being no additional business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted: Nobles Crawford & Elizabeth Lorris Ritter