

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
February 11, 2020
Juan Pablo Duarte Foundation Community Space at the GWB Bus Station

Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Daryl Cochrane, Ass't Chair; Domingo Estevez; Francisco Lopez; Rosy Perez; Alexis Marnel, public member. **Excused:** Richard Allman, Nobles Crawford, Barbara Frazier, Ayisha Oglivie. **Absent:** Karen Taylor. **Other Board Members:** Sally Fisher. **Also in Attendance:**

1) The Chair called the meeting to order with welcome & opening remarks (6:36pm):

- **Thanks to Juan Pablo Duarte Foundation** for hosting the meeting. Pointed out terrific artwork: life-sized Dominican Carnival characters by Carlos Daniel Viñales which made for a particularly festive meeting venue. The Gallery is open 10am-6pm Monday-Friday, and for special events; folks are encouraged to return, and to tell friends about this exhibit.
- **Moment of silence** for death earlier today of Ladysmith Black Mambazo founder Joseph Shabalala
- **Update on New Leaf Café:** No updates; Parks still negotiating w/another RFP respondent.
- **Lenape Street co-naming:** Moving to next month's agenda as there are no updates.
- **Juan Pablo Duarte Foundation Community Space:** Laura Acosta, Executive Director welcomed everyone to the space, which is available for free to community organizations to use as a meeting, exhibition, or programming space. JPDF has had school groups come to view their current exhibition, *Sabor Y Carnival*. The Foundation's space is also a designated Census2020 hub. She distributed census cards and discussed the importance of getting proper counts as it affects funding on every level and every single budget item in every community. They will have two staff at the center with tablets who will be able help those who are uncomfortable with the Census and the technology. Contact: www.facebook.com/jpdfoundation/ @juanpabloduartefoundation

2) Brief Programming Updates from Cultural & Friends-of-Parks Organizations (6:46pm)

- **Riverside Park Conservancy:** Anastasia Galkowski introduced herself as the new Community Engagement Coordinator. Riverside Park extends from W. 120th to W. 181st Streets along the Hudson River. She is seeking to increase their volunteer base and wants to connect with many organizations as possible in addition to getting increased funding for free programming in the park.
- **Morris-Jumel Mansion:** Shiloh Holley, Executive Director introduced the new Program Manager, Megan Byrnes. Ms. Holley announced a free lecture series on 2/12 and 2/27 at 7 pm in honor of Presidents Day and Black History Month. More info available at www.morrisjumel.org
- **The Hispanic Society:** Alex Campos, Director of Development, announced the 1st Saturday of every month as an additional day (to Tuesday and Thursday) to view the Sorolla Vision of Spain Gallery; go to www.hispanicsociety.org to sign up for a free tour. The museum continues to be closed on a regular basis as it undergoes major renovations. Also announced current traveling exhibitions.
- **Friends of Inwood Hill Park:** Sally Fisher announced the 2020 Earth Day celebrations on April 25th & 26th, the 9th annual Hudson River Sweep on May 2nd, and an open community painting *plein air* workshop & exhibit on June 25th - 28th.
- **NoMAA:** Joanna Castro announced deadline for Uptown ArtStroll poster contest is 2/24, and a call for submissions for PSA videos for Census2020/Make Manhattan Count (deadline 3/2).
- **Inwood Art Works:** Alexis Marnel on behalf of Aaron Simms: 2/17, 7pm-9pm, Inwood Film Festival Announcement Party (free); 2/24, 7pm-9pm, "Broadway Off Broadway" best-of-Tonys cabaret series (\$10.00 reservations required); 3/2, 6:30pm-8pm, Uptown Artists Networking event (free). All events at the Indian Road Cafe.
- **NYC Parks:** Jennifer Hoppa: 16+ free events in parks this month and many opportunities for stewardship (e.g., clean-ups & plantings. For the school vacation week the Urban Park Rangers

have an educational nature series. Announced a call for artists for sculpture for Fort Tryon Park's Linden Terrace. Fort Tryon Park is celebrating its 85th birthday with various activities including monthly trails days.

3) NYC Parks capital/operations/programming report: N. Manhattan Parks Admin J. Hoppa (7:04pm):

- **Coyote Update:** Sightings in Inwood Hill and Fort Tryon Park. Cameras are being installed. There is no evidence of denning (as in Central Park); coyotes appear to be coming in from Queens & the Bronx. Call 311 if you see a coyote and be specific regarding time and location. NOTE: Coyotes need to be kept wild: DO NOT feed them! Also, make sure to walk dogs on leash when not in a specified, fenced dog run. If you do see a coyote, make yourself BIG and MAKE NOISE!
- **Highbridge Park Guide** now available in Spanish. Distributed copies at meeting.
- **Inwood Nature Center** is fully funded, thanks to \$1.5 million additional allocation from the Mayor.
- **Public Scoping Meeting** for the artificial turf in Bennett Park to be announced (probably March).
- **Javits Playground update:** passed the last of the safety inspections on 2/7. There are still some tree hazards which the contractor is looking to remove or mitigate.
- **Anne Loftus Playground:** bids that came in look good, so we will be looking to start that project as soon as possible, though obviously not until after Javits re-opens.
- Domingo asked what effect if any the hold on the Inwood rezoning would have on the **Msgr. Kett Playground** renovation? A: none; the project is fully funded and is already in process.
- Alexis requested of CBOs generally to please always have bilingual flyers for community events.

4) Presentation from DDC on Payson Playground fuel tank replacement (7:09pm):

- Part of citywide, multi-agency initiative to replace fuel tanks. There is no contractor yet. The tank stores fuel used to heat the adjacent Park House Educational Center at 269 Dyckman St. (opposite Henshaw St.), currently used by Urban Park Rangers while the Inwood Nature Center awaits renovation. Fuel tanks have a useful life of about 20 years, and this is older than that, so there is some urgency though there is no evidence of degradation or leakage from the current tank.
- 1,000 gallon storage below ground tank to be replaced with an ABOVE ground tank in accordance with new environmental regulations. The tank will be approximately 4' tall x 11' long x 6' wide, slightly larger in size due to regulations but the same capacity. It will be vehicle-resistant (12k# at 10mph), fire-resistant (two-hour rating), and ballistic-resistant.
- The old tank will be removed and cleaned. Soil testing will be done prior to new tank installation.
- They will remove plantings and tank, and replace everything in kind. Northern Manhattan Parks staff will provide additional plantings with the goal of providing year-round beauty/visual interest.
- Anticipate presenting to the Public Design Commission in March. Anticipate construction at the end of summer 2020. The project will take one-two months to complete and will not have any impact on the nearby Playground or the operation of the adjacent field house.
- Sally Fisher stated that the Health and Environment Committee should have a presentation about this and asked: Why is it coming out of ground? A: easier to visually inspect on a regular basis. Also larger size due to new safety regulations would be prohibitively expensive and impractical to locate below-ground due to bedrock and established adjacent infrastructure.
- Ira (member of public) asked if there any plans for solar panels? A: No. Why is Parks still using fossil fuel? A: Because that is what the current equipment is set up to burn and we do not have the funding to completely change over the energy source. The tanks currently use #2 oil and B5 biodiesel (i.e., a blend with up to 5% bio-fuel) and can step up to B20 then B50 and ultimately B100 bio-diesel fuel. Jennifer Hoppa also pointed out that use of solar panels would require cutting down a lot of trees due to the placement of the building. The crowd noted the incredible irony of this fact. ; Types of oil: Fossil Fuel. Still, based on the discussion it was agreed that we can

encourage Parks (and other agencies) to explore solar and other renewable energy sources in future projects.

- Jennifer Hoppa stated that the move to solar is difficult because the technology is not yet refined.
- All oil will be compatible up to B100. Biodiesel is a mix of diesel and soybean oil to make it more sustainable and will continue to improve as technology arises.
- A resolution in support of the proposed plan as presented, with the additional suggestion regarding renewable energy was passed unanimously by the Committee (6-0-0-0), with the non-Committee Board Member abstaining, and the eligible public members voting 2-1-0-0.

5) Presentation from United Palace Executive Producer, Mike Fitelson (7:46pm)

- Presentation on programming and organization at the United Palace is about. Opened in 1930 as a vaudeville house & movie theatre; this year we celebrate its 90th birthday. The United Palace is composed of three different entities:
- First: the United Palace of Spiritual Arts, founded 1969, a non-profit, nondenominational religious institution. Xavier Eikerenkoetter, son of the founder Reverend Ike, retired in 2017, and a new Board of Directors came in. The UPSA embraces spiritual artistry with self-produced, online, and in-person programming. There is a ministerial team of seven Pastors, and diverse programming. Future plans include 180-190 days of activity developing the spiritual artistry concept.
- Second: United Palace of Cultural Arts, a non-profit founded 2012 to benefit the community, exists to educate, uplift and unite community through arts and culture. Gives developing artists space to create. Supports/hosts various community events including nine large-scale local events (e.g., Young People's Chorus, PS/IS187 Film Festival, Uptown ArtStroll, NY Dominican Film Festival, People's Theatre Project, District 6 Youth Cultural Event) with hundreds of artists performing, 90% of them youth. Budget is ~\$250k, including support from ConEd, NYC Council, DCLA, LMCC, and royalties from the Hip-Hop Nutcracker which they developed.
- Third: United Palace LLC, the organization's for-profit rental arm of the organization, featuring many big-name acts (including Ms. Lauryn Hill on Feb. 22nd!), rentals for graduations and other community events, movie premiers, self-produced film series, and location shoots. We also rent the second floor of the Annex and are in talks with a new tenant whom we hope to be able to disclose soon, once the agreement is finalized.
- Announced upcoming film series, *Movies at the Palace / Our Favorites from Warner Brothers*: Mon, Feb 10: The Philadelphia Story (intro by Kelli O'Hara); Wed, Mar 18: Beetlejuice (Alex Brightman); Mon, April 13: The Color Purple; Sat, May 16: Lord of the Rings trilogy; June: Summer Party movie; July: Some Like It Hot; Aug.: Batman ('89); Sep: The Great Gatsby (2013); Oct.: Little Shop of Horrors; Sat. Nov 21 or 28: Fantastic Beasts (with intro by Dan Fogler); Sat. in Dec.: Holiday celebration movie.
- Announced a new three-year contract with Hill Song Church, which will hold three mega-services every Sunday bringing approximately 9000 guests into the neighborhood, which benefits the surrounding local businesses.
- Re-carpeted entire building. Installed 40' LED video wall. In process of updating marquee; lights will be up the end of March. Built new recording studio.
- Employ over 40 full-time staff, half of whom live locally (Harlem/WH/Inwood), and an additional 100 p/t event-specific staff (security, front-of-house, janitorial) supplied by local vendors.
- Domingo raised traffic concerns. Also asked how they plan to support uptown organizations without making it financially prohibitive. He raised the example of UP not being able to accommodate Word Up's book launch of SC Justice Sonia Sotomayor's children's book. Mike said that it was not about not wanting to support Word Up it was that they didn't have enough lead

time, they just had a book launch and they were going over budget with the allotted monies from the non-profit entity.

- Daryl asked what was being done to reach out to local workforce development for help with events (i.e. security). Liz suggested Mike connect with Domingo who is head of CB12M's Business Development Committee, to connect to NMIC, WH BID, NYC SBS/WorkforceOne and other local jobs and vocational development programs. Domingo agreed to work on this, noted that CUNY/Hostos has certification programs for security guards. Mike agreed that this aspect of community development is well within the United Palace's mission.
- Francisco asked if the movies are free (no); is there a conflict of interest between for profit and nonprofit (no); do they sell liquor (no, they used licensed vendors).
- Joanna Castro stated that the lobby series will be missed and asked if they will still be supporting Groove With Me, and Danza!Highbridge (yes). Lobby series will not return because the small audience didn't justify the expense.

6) Citizens Stewards: Defer to March as person drafting possible reso was not in attendance.

7) New Business (8:28pm): Sally Fisher spoke of NYC Council Intro 1524 that will ban the use of pesticides (such as Round-Up and Rodeo) containing the chemical glyphosate, which is believed to cause cancer and has been banned in about 40 countries around the world. She wants to ensure that CB12M supports this Intro and passes a resolution calling on its Councilmembers to co-sponsor. The Chair noted that while these chemicals are used to an extent in Parks, they also are used in other areas (roadways, train/rail right-of-ways, etc.) and by other agencies, and that it would likely make more sense to have a resolution go through the Health & Environment Committee; she will follow up with that Committee's Chair. Jennifer Hoppa also noted that the herbicides can be very useful in areas where it is difficult to get staff to remove invasives, and that more staff are needed particularly if pesticide use is curtailed.

(8:30pm) There being no further business, Rosie Perez offered a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Daryl Cochrane and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted: Alexis Marnel; edited by Elizabeth Lorris Ritter