

**Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee**  
**February 12, 2019**  
**CB12 Conference Room (530 W. 166<sup>th</sup> St., 6<sup>th</sup> fl.)**

**Committee Members Present:** Elizabeth Lorris Ritter (Chair), Daryl Cochrane (Asst. Chair), Barbara Frazier, Mitchell Glenn, Francisco Lopez, Nobles Crawford (Public Member). **Excused:** Domingo Estevez, Karen Taylor. **Other Board Members:** Richard Lewis (Chair), Richard Allman, Sally Fisher, Bruce Robertson. **Also Attending (30 total Attendees):** Jon Greenfield (YU Gov't relations), Michael Schnall (New York Road Runners), Steve Harris & Trish Anderton (Inwood Canoe Club), Aaron Simms (Inwood Art Works), Charlene Edwards (Parks, J. Hood Wright Rec. Center), Kim McNeal (NYC Parks, Recreation Director), Liz DeMayo, Hannah Miller, Danielle Drisler, Adam Fran, Avi Gitler, Josh Rosen (La Marina/Manhattan River Group), Jim Goldman (Brother Jimmy's BBQ), Tim Koelle, Steward Desmond (Broadway Malls Assn.), Lenishamarie Lopez (GDS), Jeanne Ruskin (Northern Manhattan is Not 4 Sale), Charlie Reynoso (NYRP), Jennifer Hoppa (NYC Parks), Meghan Alvarez (RowNY), Johanna Castro (NoMAA), Vanessa Levy, Sylvia Cuesta, Natalie Espino (MBPO), Katherine O'Sullivan (Moving Forward/Unidos), Lisa Ahearn & Bob Barnett (Harlem River Community Rowing), Jeffrey Croft (media/blogger)

1. **The meeting was called to order** at 6:33pm by the Chair, Liz Ritter.

**a) Disposition of last month's resolution re Anne Loftus playground (6:38pm):** The resolution passed by the Committee was amended by the full Board to include a "Resolved" clause calling on the Parks Department to include a special needs playground in the Monsignor Kett playground, which will be receiving a \$14 million renovation. Subsequent to this, there has been a new petition circulated in the community (400+ signatures) for a special needs playground in Anne Loftus Playground instead of at Msgr. Kett, and instead of the basketball half-court at Anne Loftus. Barbara argued strongly for Anne Loftus as a better site not only because it is more central, but because it has less street and noise and no elevated train, both of which are anathema to a portion of the very population a special needs playground would be designed to serve.

- In consideration of time, we'd like to send the signature petitions to the Parks Dept. with our support, and ask for them to come back with a possible ADA compliant playground design, either in addition to or in lieu of the basketball.
- Since the new proposed schematic would have to come back to this Committee and to the full Board for final approval, if it doesn't meet our needs in consideration of all information provided to the Committee at that time, we could reject the design. So it is in Parks' interest to incorporate this feedback into the new design. If they can figure out a way to include both features, so much the better.
- Barbara offered language to accompany the petitions to be forwarded to Parks.
- Barbara suggested that elements like David Rockwell's Imagination Playground / Playground in a Box with the moveable pieces was compatible with the Olmsted intent for Anne Loftus and could help meet the needs of the special needs population.
- Daryl added that there are only seven special needs playgrounds in Manhattan, none above 99<sup>th</sup> street, and only one in the Bronx, far away, in the Pelham section.
- Community member Carolina Pichardo, who has a special needs child and works with children has written a letter in support of a special needs playground at Anne Loftus, which will be added to the materials sent to Parks.
- Ms. Hoppa asked if there couldn't be special needs elements at both Anne Loftus Playground and Monsignor Kett, given the apparent demand.

**b) Update on Ft. Washington Armory space issues (6:50pm):** A resolution in support of the GDS Program and calling on the Department of Homeless Services to stay their Notice of Eviction to GDS passed overwhelmingly. (No votes against and 1 or 2 abstentions.)

**c) La Marina Concession Update (6:52pm):** Recap of previous conversations within the committee (see 12/11/18 & 1/8/19 minutes) and resolution passed unanimously by the full Board on 12/18/18. A

vendor interested in working with the Manhattan River Group to provide a new restaurant at the now-shuttered concession has reached out to the Borough President's Office and a number of community stakeholders as well as with the WH BID. The MBPO suggested that they reach out to CB12M, both this Committee and Business Development, as well as the Parks Department. Josh Rosen (of MRG) and Jimmy Goldman (of Brother Jimmy's BBQ) gave a brief introduction of their concept, which would include a move towards a more family-oriented restaurant vs. a party scene. Mr. Goldman distributed a packet of information, press clippings, and reviews on his franchise, which has been in business for many years and has restaurants in the tri-state area, FL, and MD. "Our effort is to find a path forward for the coming season. Helping Gerald & Josh out would be a swan song for me." As there wasn't a formal presentation, there was nothing to consider, or to approve or deny, and nothing to add to or change the Board's position per the December resolution. Francisco asked about community integration from a culinary stand-point.

2. **Brief Programming Updates from NoMAA, NMAC, Inwood Art Works (7:08pm)**

- Aaron Simms (Inwood Art Works): Inwood film festival upcoming March 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Johanna Castro (NoMAA): Update on current installation. Announcement about "Women in the Heights" exhibit and events in March. Uptown Art Stroll poster contest deadline is February 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Daryl: promotion of World Pride art events in May-July, and the Stonewall 50 Consortium for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Liz suggested working w/ LGBTQI Task Force; Richard Allman said this is in the works.
- Sally Fisher: Earth Day Festival (April 20<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup>) in Inwood Hill Park
- Jennifer Hoppa: announced a showing of her husband's art work at the Indian Road Café through March 2<sup>nd</sup>; this is his first show of his own work after curating 50+ shows there.

3. **Jennifer Hoppa's NYC Parks Report (7:15pm)**

- Successful Trails Day last weekend in Inwood Hill & Highbridge Parks.
- Scoping meeting last week for Msgr. Kett Playground renovation. Very well attended by the community, including residents of Dyckman Houses. Ms. Hoppa encouraged people who were unable to attend the meeting, but had thoughts or ideas for Monsignor Kett to e-mail them to [Jennifer.hoppa@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:Jennifer.hoppa@parks.nyc.gov). Input early in the design process is best, as it minimizes design changes later on, which cut into the overall project budget.
- FEMA rejected construction bids received for the Inwood Hill Park Nature Center; Parks is in the process of rebidding and hopes to receive bids that will be approved late Spring.
- Barbara asked whether Dyckman Rest (northern perimeter of Highbridge Park, along Dyckman St.) was being rehabilitated as part of the Highbridge Anchor Parks process. A: it will be renovated as part of the Inwood Rezoning funding, w/public scoping in FY '20.
- EDC issued an RFP issued for design for Sherman Creek improvement: \$42 million for Academy St. – 201<sup>st</sup> St.; \$8 million for the North Cove.
- Francisco asked re: the Javits Playground completion date? A: July 2019.
- Jennifer introduced Kim McNeill, NYC Parks Chief of Manhattan Recreation, who oversees the borough's Recreation Centers and their associated programs. She gave an update on the J. Hood Wright Rec. Center, which is now a "single-focused" rec. center, with new hours of operation, 9am-6pm. Currently they have about 30 people up until the afternoons, with much lower use in the evenings (8-12 people). Youth come afterschool, around 3, to use computers and for homework help. Parks felt it's a better use of limited resources to focus programming in the earlier hours for the most users.

4. **NY Road Runners (Mike Schnall) Mile Markers in Inwood Hill Park (7:30pm)** Recap of NYRR's many community runs and other events. "Our mission is to help inspire people through running." The NYRR mile markers provide wayfinding and mileage throughout the park for self-orientation. Gave a brief

presentation including proposed locations and what the markers would look like in situ. There would be 17 30" tall, 8" wide markers forming a 1.8-mile loop from Seaman/Isham Avenues around the ballfields to the 218<sup>th</sup> St. peninsula and back to the entrance, with a 1-mile inner loop turning at 215<sup>th</sup> St. NYRR pays for and maintains the markers indefinitely and in perpetuity. Similar markers have been installed in Astoria and Cunningham Parks in Queens and are planned for parks in Brooklyn and the Bronx and on Staten Island in addition to Inwood Hill Park; Parks has requested that NYRR consider future installations in Central, Prospect, and Van Cortlandt Parks. If approved, the markers would be installed later this year or in the spring of 2020.

- Barbara: Who pays for this? A: NYRR is responsible for installation and maintenance.
- Barbara: Graffiti? A: The markers are graffiti resistant; NYRR has an on-call contractor
- Mitchell: Branding or other advertising? A: No.
- Daryl: English and Spanish language? A: Public Design Commission gave narrow approval regarding content on the signage because it's just a "companion" to the foundational (main park) signage. Also, most of the relevant information is numerical, not text.
- Sally: Resistant to more signs in the park, especially considering why most runners have technology to help them find their way and mark distance. A: This signage is for everyone, not just runners. Also there's heavy consideration with regard to placement so as not to disrupt vegetation and be respectful of the tree canopy and root structure.
- Richard: Are they bi-directional? Also, the signage should be horizontal not vertical because people could trip on the signs and hurt themselves. A: Yes, the signs are bi-directional, with context ("You Are Here") map on the top of the marker.
- Nobles: Uptown art integration a possibility? A: No. PDC wants the signs to be as unobtrusive as possible, and for content to be minimal.
- Daryl: Do people stop and stretch on these? A: That's not the primary design goal, but yes, it is rigid firmly rooted enough and that they won't be knocked out of the ground.

**A resolution in support of the proposal passed:** Committee 6-0-0-0; Other Board Members 2-0-1-0; Public 11-0-1-0.

5. **Stewart Desmond / Broadway Malls Assn Exhibition (7:55pm):** The current exhibition, Kathy Ruttenberg's "In Dreams Awake," which has been very popular and stimulated much public discussion, will be concluding in March. The next exhibition, "Birds on Broadway," by Nicolas Holiber in conjunction with Avi Gitler Gallery and the Audubon Mural Project, will be installed in May, and will remain for eight months. Presented the aesthetic nature of the sculptures and the reasoning behind the project (to function as a "sister project" to the mural project). There will be a total of 12 installations between W. 66<sup>th</sup> & W. 168<sup>th</sup> Streets, with two placed within CB12M, in Mitchel Square Park (W. 167<sup>th</sup> St.) and Ilka Tanya Payan Sq. (W. 157<sup>th</sup> St.). The oversized sculptures will be made of recycled, found wood. (No reso required.)
6. **YU Pedestrian Plaza Renovation & Funding Request / Jon Greenfield (8:09pm):** Amsterdam Ave. already has a pedestrian plaza between W. 184<sup>th</sup> & W. 186<sup>th</sup> Streets which ConEd had to rip up due to subsurface infrastructure repairs. Yeshiva University seeks to refurbish this space into something nicer than what was there before, and which mirrors the functionality and feel of the recently installed Plaza on W. 185<sup>th</sup> St. between Audubon & Amsterdam Avenues. YU is looking to create a public space; Jon gave the history and current-state of the space. The space would be at grade, and would not involve any loss of parking or travel lanes. YU has entered into a maintenance agreement with the DoT, so they are responsible for maintenance and security. YU is seeking a Board Resolution, in addition to their efforts in partnership with community stakeholders. Such a resolution will come through the Traffic & Transportation Committee, not Parks & Cultural Affairs, which is merely discussing the matter as part of the outreach, and will share same with T&T.

- Mitchell: Who's paying for this? A: We are seeking funds from the City, State and Federal government through whatever public funding may be available, and have institutional resources and donors to help fill any funding gaps.
  - Barbara: Why has it been closed-off to traffic for so long? A: It was closed a long time ago – no one remembers when exactly, but it was per an action by the Board of Estimate which itself was abolished in 1990 – to provide both traffic calming on Amsterdam Ave. and to a place to rest in an area otherwise devoid of same.
  - Barbara: Food trucks? A: This hasn't been considered and is unlikely to be so.
  - Daryl: Estimate for completion? A: one-year timeline
  - Sally: Any way to move some concrete out, and put in permeable pavers and more green, for water recapture? A: Something they could incorporate into the design, as they work with the city on other aspects. They've spoken with forestry about trees.
7. **Harlem River Community Rowing / Bob Barnett & Lisa Ahern (8:24pm):** Wholly volunteer rowing club, founded 12 years ago, to provide accessible/affordable rowing to NY community and champion the use of the Harlem river. Relocated two years ago to Inwood from Roberto Clemente State Park (across the Harlem River in the Bronx). They currently offer Saturday & Sunday and 1-2 weekday evening programs per week during June, July, & August. Working with Parks Department to expand and offer more, free programming this year. They also received a grant from Partnership for Parks. Q: What's the difference between HRCR and RowNY? A: RowNY has a specific mission to serve NYC youth in an effort to bolster educational & character excellence through sports, as well as college scholarship opportunities; HRCR's scope is more for the general public/community, including adults. Jennifer noted that they also provide services for veterans and those with mobility impairments.
8. **Announcements / Mail / New Business (8:32pm)**
- Natalie for MBPO: deadline to apply to CBs extended to 2/25
  - Natalie for MBPO: Please attend the State of the Borough address on 2/24
  - Dr. Seuss celebration on Saturday March 2<sup>nd</sup> at Highbridge Rec. Center
  - Many events at J. Hood Wright, including classes in art expression, painting for beginners, and Latin music movement therapy, now through March 23<sup>rd</sup>.
  - Fitness classes (fitness circuit, jogging, various workouts) on Thursdays, Fridays, & Saturdays at J. Hood Wright Rec. Center, now through March 23<sup>rd</sup>.
  - UP Theater Co. is having it's an annual "Onward & UPward" fundraiser on Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>. Lots of great things for auction/raffle. We are honoring Word Up's Veronica Liu. Tickets: \$40.
  - June is "ArtStroll Month"; stay tuned for details.
  - Announced then-upcoming meetings of the Washington Heights Food Council, and a Pied Piper Children's Theatre town hall.
  - Notification (NY Restoration Project) of "Oyster Castles" pilot project in Sherman Creek.

There being no further business, **the meeting was adjourned at 8:37pm.**