

PARKS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES

March 12, 2019 (530 W. 166th St., 6th floor conference room)

Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Mitch Glenn; Barbara Frazier; Francisco Lopez; Domingo Estevez.

Absent: Daryl Cochrane, Ass't. Chair. **Excused:** Karen Taylor, Nobles Crawford (Public Member). **Board Members Present:** Sara

Fisher. **Other Attendees & Guests:** Paul Kittas (Coogan's Bluff), Chris Whitney (Friends of Inwood Hill Park), Laura Daigen-Ayala, Trish Anderson & Steven Hailis (Inwood Canoe Club), Jenn Bristol, Jose Martinez, Ira Gershenhorn, Ryan Desso (Freedom Visuals), Barbara Peck and Bob Barnett (Harlem River Community Rowing), Jennifer Hoppa (NYC Parks), Meghan Alvarez (Row New York), Aaron Simms (Inwood Art Works), Natalie Espino (Manhattan BP's office), Joanna Castro (Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance), Alexis Marnel & Shiloh Holley (Morris Jumel Mansion), Tiffany Braby (Morris Jumel Neighborhood Association), Christopher Kelly (Inwood Hill Park Conservancy), Allegra Le Grande, Yvonne Anderson-Bill (Pied Piper Children's Theater).

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:35pm by Liz Ritter, welcomed everyone and gave updates & announcements:
 - a. **Announcements:** A listing of upcoming events. Natalie Espino of the Borough President's office provided a listing of the BP's upcoming events.
 - b. **Friends of Bennett Park** about their concerns regarding the central lawn which has become denuded of grass and a request to the Councilmember to fund its restoration, their submission of a planting plan for the Parks' southern perimeter, and a clean-up event on April 13th.
 - c. Paul Kittas – The Landmarks Preservation Commission has agreed to accept and review Paul's submission requesting a site evaluation of the **archeological significance of Coogan's Bluff** and the stone work built there 175 years ago for the Croton Aquaduct to bring water from the Highbridge south into Manhattan.
 - d. A discussion of the **La Marina** situation. Manhattan River Group (MRG) would like to reopen this May as a branch of the restaurant Brother Jimmy's. But the proposal MRG submitted to the Parks Department is part of a settlement offer for the ongoing litigation initiated by MRG, and is not available for public discussion, so this item has been removed from this evening's agenda. When there is a proposal to look at – MRG's Josh Rosen indicated it would be in a week or two, and certainly by next month – we will review it and report the Committee's/public's discussion back to the full Board. Parks suggested that the process would take some time and it was unlikely that any decisions would be made by that time. The Committee and public agreed that it would be helpful to have rep. from Parks Revenue and/or legal division so that we are sure that what is being presented by the Licensee is consistent with what Parks has under consideration.
2. **Cultural Programming updates (7:09pm)**
 - a. Sally Fisher with Chris Whitney of **Friends of Inwood Hill Park**. Earth Day event will be 4/28 instead of 4/22 because of a religious conflict (Easter & Passover). Other upcoming events were mentioned.
 - b. Aaron Simms – Exec. Producer, Inwood Art Works. The **Inwood Film Festival** starts this week, and is almost sold-out. Please come. Tickets/info: www.inwoodartworks.nyc.
 - c. Joanna Castro, Exec. Dir., **Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMAA)**. Listed upcoming events, including Women in the Heights art exhibition which opened last week and has closing reception/Artists' Talk on Friday 3/29, 6:30-8:30pm at the Rio II Gallery (583 Riverside Dr. @ W. 135th St.) and the Uptown Arts Stroll.
 - d. **Morris Jumel Mansion** – Alexis Marnel, Director of Community Outreach. There may be an actual rose from Monticello in the garden, which led to a discussion of upcoming events.
3. **Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Parks (7:21pm)**
 - a. There are **rabid raccoons** in the city, including 4 in/around Inwood Hill Park. There are no known bites or exposures to these animals. Information regarding how to protect oneself and pets against rabies as well as what to do in the event of a bite by an animal was shared. There was a question as to how well and how quickly the public is being informed about this.
 - b. Brief summary of recent work along 4.2 of **Inwood Hill Park's 10 miles of trails**. Thanks to Chris & Sally of FIRP for their efforts. We will have a presentation next month from Parks' Natural Areas Conservancy.
 - c. **Highbridge Anchor Parks Phase I project** beginning. Sections north of 181st St. will not be accessible.
 - d. A review of 24+ **upcoming free events** throughout the District parks was brought to our attention, including annual shearing of the heather in Ft. Tron Park on April 13th.
 - e. **Anne Loftus renovation update**. Since it is a Scenic Landmark and considered a masterwork of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the design plan needs to respect the spirit of the original design. The design is undergoing changes based on CB12 Parks Committee input to January's presentation as well as feedback from the

Landmarks Preservation & Public Design Commissions (LPC & PDC). There are no plans to add pavement embedded lights to the design, to remain truer to the original design; there are budgetary considerations as well. **The half basketball court will remain** as this was specifically addressed repeatedly at the public scoping meetings, and there was a 200-signature petition supporting basketball at the site. Parks agrees with the second (500-signature) petition received that Anne Loftus currently offers many amenities that are suitable for special needs kids and that the revised fountain redesign will also account for this population.

There were several changes for us to review, though.

- i. **More spray fountains** coming out of the pavement, of lower volume. Barbara Frazier was disappointed at how low the spray fountain water flows are as represented in the current design. She maintains that 35 gallons per minute is a reasonable flow. Most of the fountains here are below 15 and some as low as 2. She requests that Parks pursue a waiver from DEP for higher flow.
 - ii. **More greenery and fencing** has been added between the basketball court and other activity spaces and the rest of the space to protect passersby.
 - iii. **More drinking fountains** (increased to 4).
 - iv. Parks stated it isn't necessary to wait for the capital project to add amenities for the special needs population. They'll be looking to add such amenities in the interim, including procurement of an **Imagination Playground in a box**, with its moveable, self-directed elements, suitable to all ages/levels of children.
 - v. The play features along the eastern perimeter of the Playground are outside the scope of this project. This would be a good idea for a future capital project, at which time a special needs play area, of which there are none in Upper Manhattan and which is uniquely suited to this particular site, could be added to this area.
 - f. Allegra Le Grande requested that Parks make planning meetings **more inclusive of parents of young children and children with disabilities**, citing museums' advisory boards as an example of inclusion. Domingo agreed.
 - g. **An additional resolution was deemed unnecessary** as the points are covered in our original resolution from January, PDC already has approved the design, and LPC approval is pending.
4. **NYC Greenway (8:23pm)** Ira Gershenhorn advocated for its **expansion north of the GW Bridge along the Hudson River**. He presented his research and opinions:
- a. An easement will be required from Amtrak to move the fence protecting the tracks to make room for a path to the bridge.
 - b. Ira acknowledges that it is unusual for a pedestrian path to be placed next to a high-speed rail line.
 - c. He provided pictures of where a potential path would go. Images were recorded at high tide to show the minimum space available.
 - d. In certain locations a bridge type structure will need to be created over the shoreline.
 - e. Jennifer Hoppa noted some of the difficulties facing a project of this kind, including expense, and private ownership (by Amtrak) of much of the right-of-way.
5. **Preliminary 2020 Capital & Expense Priorities (8:40pm)**
- a. CB12's final budget rankings are completed each October, after a discussion in committees in September. This is a first glance of the response from agencies and the Office of Management & Budget (OMB).
 - b. Unfortunately the CB12 2019 final rankings distributed for consideration were different from those submitted to OMB, so it was impossible to have a complete discussion of the agency responses.
6. **New Business (8:50pm): Yvonne Anderson-Bill, Pied Piper Children's Theater of NYC** Artistic Director: PPCT is a secular program of Holy Trinity Church, engaging children ages 5-19 from WH & Inwood, and used their space at no cost. PPCT seeks interim space while the church undergoes a major renovation, and to raise funds to pay for same.
- a. Upcoming events are listed; visit www.ppct.holytrinityinwood.org for more info.
 - b. Several children's theater programs are discussed.
 - c. Planning for the dislocation, Pied Piper is now a 501(c)(3) organization and is raising money on its own. There will be a fundraising gala on May 18th for their 20th anniversary. Please come.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02pm.