

## **Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee**

**Tuesday November 12, 2019 @ 6:30pm**

**CB12 Conference Room (530 W. 166<sup>th</sup> St., 6<sup>th</sup> fl.)**

**Committee Members Present:** Elizabeth Lorris Ritter (Chair), Daryl Cochrane (Assistant Chair), Richard Allman, Domingo Estevez, Barbara Frazier, Ayisha Oglivie, Rosy Perez, Alexis Marnel (Public Member). **Committee Members Absent:** Nobles Crawford; Francisco Lopez, Karen Taylor. **Committee Members Excused:** Joanna Castro (Public Member). **Other Board Members Present:** Sally Fisher. **Also Present:** Adrian Rosas; Pat Courtney, Volunteers for Isham Park; Meghan Alvarez, RowNY; Trish Anderton & Steve Harris, Inwood Canoe Club; Mara Mingues <illegible>, NYP; Francisco <illegible>; Rosa Yolanda Pineda; Miriam Young; Jennifer Hoppa (NYC Parks Department), Jin Maillard; Yaulina <illegible>; Dainea Wrangle; Yol<illegible> Bennin Balliod; Anthony Mendoza; Ruben <illegible> Nicole Colon; Mike Fitelson, United Palace.

### **1) Welcome, Opening Remarks, & Updates** (6:45pm in the absence of a quorum, which was achieved at 6:48pm.)

- Liz Ritter announced sign in and asked attendees to fill out Committee evaluation forms at the conclusion of the meeting if they so choose, to provide feedback on how meetings are run.
- Regarding agenda, members of the Inwood Canoe Club were in attendance for a presentation which they requested to the District Manager, Ebenezer Smith, who failed to communicate this to the Committee Chair, who agreed to add their PowerPoint presentation to the agenda.
- Update on Msgr. Kett Comfort Station: last month's reso opposing the design due to lack of family-friendly/gender-neutral bathroom was passed by full Board 37-1-0-0. It was noted that standardized parts allow for quicker turnaround and lower construction costs while the use of non-standardized parts can cause expensive and lengthy delays, but Commissioner Silver agreed to look at the possible use of trough-style sinks.
- CB12M FY'21 Budget Priorities: Our Committee's priorities did well in the overall Board rankings, though (appropriately) housing-related items were 6 of the top 10 capital priorities. Seven PCA Committee capital items (Isham Park retaining wall & stairs, Hispanic Society Museum, Inwood Hill Park Nature Center, Wallenberg Playground Basketball, African- & Native-American Burial Ground Markers, Anne Loftus sensory playground, path repaving/repair in our three largest parks, and repairs to Ft. Tryon Park's Linden Terrace) were within the Board's top 25 items.
- NYRR mile markers in IHP approved by Public Design Commission and will be installed soon.

### **2) Brief Programming Updates from various community arts & cultural groups** (6:54pm)

- Inwood Art Works is presenting a free indoor Star Wars movie series every Wednesday, 11/13-12/18, at 7:30pm at Good Shepherd School Auditorium (620 Isham St.).
- Harlem 20/20 is presenting #OurStoriesNYC, storytelling by LGBTQIA People of Color at Word UP! Friday 11/15, 6pm-8:30pm.
- NoMAA events: Annual Technical Institute 2019 Community Displacement and the Arts: 400 years to the Future, Saturday, 12/7 at Alianza Dominicana Cultural Center 11am-5pm; Arrival Stories Open Mic at Buunni Coffee Inwood 4361 Broadway December 13th 7-9 pm
- Friends of Inwood Hill Park: 750 people for ShriekFest; Inwood Hill Park Forest School 18 mos-5 years 6 sessions; 11/17 Payson Forest restoration project.
- WHIN Food council: Thanksgiving potluck Date TBA
- Riverside/Inwood Neighborhood Garden (RING): Annual Tree & Menorah lighting Date TBA
- Domingo: Juan Pablo Duarte School/PS132 kids are doing a book launch on 11/19 at the Juan Pablo Duarte Community Foundation at GWB bus terminal.
- Jennifer announced many upcoming events, including Fort Tryon Battle of Fort Washington (11/17, noon-3pm), Dyckman Farmhouse Bilingual Storytime w/ Literacy, Inc. (11/20, 3pm-4pm), Highbridge Rec Ctr. basketball game (12/6 at 6pm) and Family Astronomy at the Highbridge Water Tower Terrace (12/6, 6pm-7:30pm).
- Mike Fitelson, United Palace: North By Northwest, Friday 11/15 at 6pm.

**3) Parks Update from Northern Manhattan Parks Admin., Jennifer Hoppa (7:04pm)**

- Rabies Outbreak: two raccoons in Highbridge Park on Edgecombe Ave. and a skunk at Inwood Hill Park on Payson Ave. tested positive for rabies. Vaccine has been dispersed (looks like ketchup packets) which are not harmful to dogs, but be careful w/ pets on leash. If you see an animal acting lethargic or vicious or otherwise strangely, call 311 and DO NOT approach.
- Bids are currently being reviewed for the 181<sup>st</sup>/Pinehurst Ave. step street renovation
- Bennett Park scoping meeting to be held in March. Plan is to replace heavily-used central lawn with artificial turf as it already is degraded despite recently having been replaced.
- Scoping meeting to be held for lighting at Inwood Hill Park's Ballfield #1.
- Barbara Frazier brought up the issue of netting on Ft. Tryon Park's rocky outcropping along Bennett Ave. Jennifer responded that there was a pre-scope meeting for Gorman Park and the same contractor will do repairs on Bennett Ave. but it has to go through Landmarks first.
- Darryl Cochrane asked for an update on the pedestrian overpass Inwood Hill Park. Jennifer stated that there currently is no funding for that project.
- New Leaf Café: no update; Parks is reviewing proposals. Current contract expires 1/22/20; there should be an update by next PCA Committee meeting (12/10/19).

**4) Street Co-Naming near/adjacent to Inwood Hill Park for Lenape heritage (7:17pm)**

- Barbara stated that we should speak with people of Lenape descent, not necessarily confined to Inwood, but also those further upstate in the Hudson Valley and in the Poconos and other surrounding areas. She also suggested we need to consider names that has to do with what was grown, what are the season, how they experienced the land, not just the names of people who may have lived/died here.
- Sally Fisher stated that we should reach out to George Stone Fish for suggestions as he is of Lenape ancestry. Liz suggested Nadema Agard, Luis Ramos, and other Inwood locals.
- Liz suggested to table the discussion so that we may honor this street naming appropriately and do it well. Will follow up with Sally Fisher and others to ensure that they are available for a discussion at a subsequent meeting.

**5) W. 186<sup>th</sup> St. Basketball Court (Rosa Yolanda Pineda) (7:26pm)**

- As discussed at previous meetings, the basketball courts are in a vacant lot formerly occupied by a building which burned down. The foundation is hollow. She looking to the community for what they might want in that space in terms of programming.
- Rosa stated that Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez allotted \$400k for the renovation. Jennifer confirmed that the funding was secured but the project costs more than that and per OMB & Comptroller rules cannot proceed unless and until it is fully funded. Rosa will also need to find out what agency it will be put through.
- The Basketball courts gate should be locked every night. Jennifer stated that Parks will work with the 34<sup>th</sup> Precinct to resolve the problem.
- Rosa wants the three acres behind GWHS to be a community green space. She led a community clean up initiative, "*Connectamos*," over the summer, though there remain many unhealthy trees in danger of falling over. This is Dept. of Education (not Parks Dept.) property, so work must be in conjunction w/DoE, not Parks; she has an upcoming meeting w/the GWHS principal.
- Sound Permit: Rosa spoke of her difficulty in getting a sound permit to have a summer cultural festival after the Dominican parade. Various people noted that the issue is not objecting to a festival, but the problem with locating it behind the nursing home (Isabella). Barbara suggested that Rosa work with the 34<sup>th</sup> Precinct Community Council (of which Barbara is Secretary) & C/O Andrea to find a new space where the festival can be held.

**6) Guttman Community College/CUNY social work students (7:45pm)**

- Group of students were here for a project regarding a grant proposal to learn more about the disappearing cultures of Inwood. Although the item was not on the agenda and should have been part of New Business, the Chair exercised discretion to add the item at this point in the agenda to accommodate the students' scheduling needs, and the Inwood Canoe Club presenters agreed to let the young people go first.
- A spirited discussion ensued.
- Members of the committee also offered perspective: Rosy Perez reminded everyone that this area has gone through many cultures through the years: Greek, Jewish, Irish. She stated that she did not feel safe in her neighborhood until the mid 2000's until gentrification began; Ayisha Oglivie recommended the students watch the PBS documentary, *Decade of Fire*, and noted that there is a difference between culture, programming, and events. Domingo Estevez discussed the complexity of culture, class, and gentrification.
- Liz encouraged students to begin with questions not conclusions. She suggested students speak with local artist entrepreneur Tony Peralta; NoMAA ED Joanna Castro; Laura Acosta of Juan Pablo Duarte Community Center at GWB bus terminal; Mino Lora of People's Theatre Co.; Word Up; Alianza Dominicana Cultural Ctr.; and other organizations to gain different perspectives, and will forward their contact info.

**7) Inwood Canoe Club (Steve Harris & Tish Anderton) (8:03pm)**

- Kayaking & canoeing tours, including Sunday open house, Memorial Day to Labor Day, 9am-noon. This summer they provided 1,225 trips to 1,083 individuals. Revenue is generated by membership dues, donations, grants, volunteers, and local business sponsorships. They are working w/Parks to add a new 40'x20' section for additional storage to their license.
- They also provide free youth programs in conjunction with non-profits throughout Manhattan.
- Additional programs include Heroes on the Hudson, in which disabled vets can enjoy waterfront activities; and Plastic Patrol, a Hudson River clean up event that helps to collect floating trash and notifies manufactures of products that they find how much waste was attributed to their specific companies.
- ICC also does weekly water quality testing in partnership w/ Columbia University.
- Ayisha asked about levels of certification and how members can get certified. Steve replied that they can assist with certification and also referred everyone to their website ([www.inwoodcanoenyc.org](http://www.inwoodcanoenyc.org)) and to [www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org) for more information.
- Barbary asked if the instructors were certified in paddlesports? A: yes.. She suggested that they contact the DA office for a higher level of funding similar to "Friday Night Lights" programs which are funded through forfeitures. Canoe Club reps stated they receive such funding from funds seized on a federal level.

**8) John Higgins, concerned Inwood neighbor (8:24pm):** Serious dumping of tires at the park north of Dyckman by the railroad tracks; shared numerous photos. Liz suggested he register a 311 complaint online and upload the picture that best depicts the situation. Jennifer requested that he send her an email with the pictures. Mr. Higgins suggested a chain link fence. He was informed that nothing can be done until it is determined under whose jurisdiction the land falls: State? City? DOT? Parks? Amtrak? Liz also asked him to send a detailed email with the photos and describing the exact location to both Jennifer and CB12M District Manager Ebenezer Smith with a copy to Liz so we can work together to identify the responsible party/ies and the best course of action.

**9) New Business (8:30pm)**

- Barbara asked that the fortification of Hart Island, a cemetery that dates back to the 1860's that is mainly for the poor and forgotten, be put on a future agenda for discussion. Erosion has caused graves to be washed into the sea and it requires fortification so that those that are buried there can rest in peace and dignity.
- New School Student Miriam Young spoke as she is working on a project regarding the 2020 census and is visiting various CB meetings because our district was very successful in terms of high participation in the 2010 census. There were many reasons for this, including a concerted effort by the Board, elected officials, and CBOs, as well as substantial expenditures to hire many canvassers. Domingo, who was a canvasser for the 2010 census spoke of his experience in this work. Reassurances that information is confidential and NOT shared with ICE or law enforcement was probably effective last time, but given the current political climate 2020 may well be different.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:47pm.**

Respectfully submitted & edited by Alexis Marnel & Elizabeth Lorris Ritter