

Waterfront/Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday February 1, 2012 at Broadway Housing 583 Riverside Drive 7th floor

Meeting called to order at 6:45 pm

CB9 Members in attendance: Arnold Boatner (Co-Chair), Brad Taylor (Co-Chair), Savona Bailey-McClain, Carol Singleton

CB9 Public member in attendance: Jen Silverman

Public attendees: Michael Palma-Montefiore Park Neighborhood Assn, Basia Nikonorow-Montefiore Park Neighborhood Assn,

Minutes of January 2012 Meeting adopted

Presentations and discussions:

US Parks Service rangers gave an update on proposal to close Grant's Tomb due to a mandated 4% cut in the parks service budget. Grant's Tomb would be closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Cuts could be implemented within a month. Lengthy discussion followed on developing alternatives to avert the closure. Savona Bailey-McClain suggested establishment of a "friends" association to augment staff. Public attendee Michael Palma suggested drafting a letter to Congressman Rangel requesting he intercede on behalf of community. Brad Taylor stated he had already initiated a call to Congressman Rangel's office. Savona Bailey-McClain also suggested reaching out to community institutions nearby for help in lobbying on behalf of the tomb, ie. Riverside Church.

Rangers also discussed Black History Month activities being planned. Rangers also stated that they will add meeting attendees to the email distribution to notify of upcoming community events. There was a suggestion by Basia Nikonorow that the parks service explore the feasibility of establishing a food cart for refreshments to encourage tourists visiting the tomb to visit for longer periods of time.

Carol Singleton suggested a food concession also be explored at the Hamilton Grange to help raise funds in support of the Grange. Arnold Boatner gave an overview of how the Hamilton Heights Homeowners Assn. was established as a support organization to aid in the restoration of Hamilton Grange. Brad Taylor asked if the consensus of the committee was to draft a resolution in support of Grant's Tomb and everyone agreed.

Next was an update from Joe Rusciello from the city parks department. He gave an update on lighting problems in Morningside and Jacob Schiff Parks. He also discussed an increase in the number of homeless people loitering in city parks. Carol Singleton complained that PEP officers have been lax in patrolling the parks and addressing the issue of homeless loitering. Rusciello also stated that the lighting in the dog run in St. Nicholas was not working due to a lighting vault not working.

Carol Singleton asked Rusciello about the feasibility of establishing a refreshment cart in St. Nicholas Park in support of Hamilton Grange. Rusciello said he would follow-up on her request. Savona Bailey-McClain raised the issue of trash in Montefiore Park. Trash cans have been stolen and not replaced in the park. There was also discussion of soil erosion in all of the parks and the need for more seeding of the grass areas.

Savona Bailey-McClain also raised the issue of the Broadway malls above 145th Street being poorly maintained and the need for increased cleaning and soil compaction problems being addressed. Rusciello cited staff reductions as the primary reason for the lack of the malls not being cleaned as frequently as desired.

Arnold Boatner raised the issue of dog runs being established in Riverside Park and the lack of follow-up from the parks department on the Brooks Nicholson group proposal to establish a dog run. Rusciello said he would follow-up with John Herrold of the parks department.

Basia Nikonorow raised the issue of lack of maintenance for the sidewalk on the viaduct on the 12th Avenue.

Old Business:

Brad Taylor gave an update on the forum conducted by chairperson Georgiette Morgan-Thomas concerning barbecue activities in Morningside Park. Residents near the park are threatening to sue the parks department. A lively discussion followed on the issue of barbecuing in all of the parks as well as the noise sometimes associated with it.

New Business:

Discussion of the goals for the committee to address this year. Among the suggestions were establishment of more "friends" associations for parks and other areas.

Savona Bailey-McClain mentioned there will be no bicycle rental sites above 79th Street. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the selection process for the bike sites. A decision was made to invite the vendor and DOT to come to a general board meeting to discuss the selection process for the bike sites.

There was also discussion that there will be no participation by West Harlem Piers in Navy Fleet Week.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:25pm

Submitted by Arnold Boatner