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**CITY OF NEW YORK**  
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## **PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**Wednesday, May 12th, 2021, 6:30 pm**

**Hon. Karen Horry, Chair**

Meeting began at 6:30 pm and was held via Zoom link. The meeting was chaired by Hon. Karen Horry, Committee Chair.

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Chair, Hon. Karen Horry, Hon. Barbara Nelson, Hon. Marcus Wilson, Hon. Terri Wisdom, Hon. Karen Dixon, Hon. Derek Perkinson, Hon. Tahanie Aboushi and Hon. Nadine Pinkett

**Committee Members Absent:** Hon. Kevin Bitterman

**Board Members Present:** - Hon. Donna Gill

**District Office:** District Manager Shatic Mitchell, Jasmin Heatley (Community Assistant)

**Guests in attendance:** Michele A. Roberts, Executive Director, National Basketball Players Association (NBPA), Dan Gladstone, Sr. VP - Business Development and Grassroots Basketball (NBPA), Chris Jean - Sr. Dir. Grassroots Basketball, Sherrie Deans (NBPA) - Executive Director, NBPA Foundation (NBPAF), Clarence Nesbitt NBPA General Counsel (NBPA), Steve Simon, Manhattan Chief Of Staff (NYC Parks) Christine Dabrow - Chief Marketing & Development Officer (NYC Parks), Karina Smith - Chief of Staff to the Assist. Commissioner for Community Outreach and Partnership Development and Shena Kaufman (NYC Parks), Shena Kaufman Parks Manager Districts 10 & 11 (NYC Parks), Bruce Lincoln (Executive Director Harlem Lacrosse), John Reddick (Central Park Conservancy), Robert McCullough (Board President - Each One Teach One), Dana White, Dianne Harrigan-Hubbard, George Ball, Gregory Baggett (APRSNA), Harriet Addamo, Iris. G., Jacob Glazer (SWA/Balsley), Velma G., Jamie Baez, Ken Conyers, Malcom A. Punter (HCCI), Marie Littlejohn (ACP, Jr. Blvd. Malls), Mary Williams, Michelle Portillo, Minah Whyte (Assemblyman Al Taylor), Richard Cox (EOTO Rucker Pro Legend), Richard Williams, Ron Cabbage (SWA/Balsley), Ryan Ngala, Tony Thompson, Rasheedah Ali, Susana Montes, Rose Williams, Jasmin Williams Susana Montes, Vernon Ballard (APRSNA), Zakiya DeGraffe (Dir. Hansborough Rec. Ctr.- NYC Parks), Samuel White, Abena Smith (32nd Prct. Comm. Council), LeRoy Whethers (Honeys & Bears), Jerald Braddock, Jr., Aarian Punter (Rucker Pro Legend) and Cheryl Marius (Marius Family)

### I. Welcome/Introductions

II. Presentations. **Holcombe Rucker Park Greg Marius Basketball Court Renovation Design Plans - NYC Parks and National Basketball Players Association** - The National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) (**Michele A. Roberts, Executive Director, NBPA**, Dan Gladstone, Sr. VP - Business Development and Grassroots Basketball, Chris Jean - Sr. Dir. Grassroots Basketball, Sherrie Deans - Executive Director, NBPA Foundation and Clarence Nesbitt NBPA General Counsel) and New York City Parks (NYC Parks) (Steve Simon, Manhattan Chief Of Staff, Christine Dabrow - Chief Marketing & Development Officer, Karina Smith - Chief of Staff to the Assist. Commissioner for Community Outreach and Partnership Development and Shena Kaufman - Parks Manager Districts 10 & 11) presented cutting edge plans for refurbishment and upgrade to the Greg Marius Basketball Court and to garner community feedback. The 3.05 acres Holcombe Rucker Park (Park ID M216) is located on West 155th Street and Frederick Douglass Boulevard. Many who played at the park in the Rucker Tournaments achieved a level of fame for their abilities, several going on to play in the National Basketball Association (NBA). The park is named after Holcombe Rucker, local teacher and a playground director for the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Rucker started a basketball all tournament in 1950 in order to help less fortunate youth stay off the street and aim for college careers. Rucker gave black players at opportunity to play at a time at the start of the NBA founded in 1949, there were only about 1 or 2 blacks per team. There were few opportunities like the Harlem Globe Trotters where teams of blacks played together. Players who didn't have the opportunity to go to college had the opportunity to go to the Rucker to play. Many NBA players have played at the court after gaining prominence, while many others developed their basketball skills at Rucker prior to becoming notable in the sport, including: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Rafer Alston, Kenny Anderson, Nate Archibald, Metta Sandiford-Artest, Sylvester Blye, Conney Hawkins, Roger Brown, Julius Erving, Bill Bradley, Joe Hammond, Earl Manigault, Jackie Jackson, Richard "Pee Wee" Kirkland, Larry "Bone Collector" Williams, Rafer "Skip to My Lou" Alston, Herman "Helicopter" Knowlings, Conrad "McNasty" Macrae, Charlie Scott and Wilt Chamberlain. Needless to say, the "Rucker" as it is known is a treasured Harlem gem. NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio joined former NBA players and celebrities on June 26th, 2017 for a ceremony to rename the court "Greg Marius Court." is named in honor of Gregory Marius (1958-2017), founder and CEO of the popular Entertainers Basketball Classic at Rucker Park. Mr. Marius, a lifelong Harlem resident, founded the Entertainers Basketball Classic in 1982, when he was a young rapper with the group known as the Disco Four. Initially organized as a tournament between rival hip-hop crews, Marius's basketball showcase ingeniously connected the worlds of basketball and hip-hop. Expanding on Rucker Park's existing history as a place where neighborhood talent could play sports celebrities, Marius invited basketball stars to the weeks-long tournament. The growing number of players from the NBA drew enormous crowds, and in 1984 the tournament moved from Fred Samuel Playground (formerly Readers Digest Park) to Holcombe Rucker Park. Since its founding, NBA superstars like Kobe Bryant, Allen Iverson, Stephon Marbury, Lebron James, and Shaquille O'Neal have held court at the Classic. In the 1990s, Marius expanded his vision integrated entertainers like Michael Bivins, Fat Joe, Jay Z, P. Diddy, Alicia Keys, Beyoncé, Rihanna, and Mary J. Blige in the program. Political and business leaders such as United States President Bill Clinton and NBA Commissioner David Stern have also joined the jubilant crowds at the Entertainers Basketball Classic. The main features of the plan to refurbish the .26 acre court include: (1) custom-made basketball goals, styled after the backboards and hoops in the 30 NBA arenas and practice facilities; this will be the only outdoor court in the world with these high-quality goals, (2) a new surface for the court, eliminating the cracks and other defects in the

current pavement, (3) new bleachers and team benches, (4) new scoreboard, (5) new gates and (6) repairs to the fence. The court will also have the potential for events outside of basketball tournaments such as concerts; and The NBPA and NYC Parks held a Community Preview meeting on May 4th, 2021 to present design plans for refurbishment and upgrade to the Greg Marius Basketball Court and to garner community feedback. The project has an approximate budget of \$360,000 which will be funded by the NBPA. NBPA will provide free youth-focused programming for a three year period. The pilot program will be reassessed after the three years. NYC Parks and the NBPA will collaborate to oversee design and construction, and provide maintenance and repairs to ensure that the new facility continues to serve the public at the highest standard. It is recommended that NYC Parks upgrade the Holcombe Rucker Park Playground and landscape entailing a Pro-Rucker Legend theme. NBPA and NYC Parks anticipate that the project groundbreaking will take place on August 16th, 2021. Construction is expected to be completed in October, 2021. The NBPA is working with NYC Parks to develop a plan to minimize inconvenience and to identify interim locations for all existing programs including the National Association of Each One Teach One Rucker Pro Legends Summer Program during the construction period.

**Outcome:** The Committee voted unanimously to support through a full Board Resolution the upgrade of the Greg Marius Basketball Court at Holcombe Rucker Park while preserving its renowned character through these renovations and to be referred to the Executive Committee for a June full Board vote.

## I. Discussions

- a. **Seneca Village - Juneteenth Commemoration - John Reddick (Central Park Conservancy)** On June 19th, 1865, more than two years after then-President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, the news of the end of slavery reached Texas via orders from a Union Army general. One year later, in 1866, freed slaves began celebrating Juneteenth as the day they knew they were free. Now an official public holiday in New York State, Juneteenth marks the end of slavery, celebrates Black culture and accomplishments, and acknowledges the systemic injustices people of color continue to face today. In Central Park, Juneteenth provides an opportunity to learn about Seneca Village, the predominately Black community that existed on the site before the City built Central Park, and to reflect on its relationship to emancipation. On June 19 and 20, Conservancy staff will offer in-person and virtual tours of the Seneca Village site and will be available to answer questions, offer free resources, and orient visitors to a self-guided exhibit, Discover Seneca Village. June 19th - 20th. For further information visit: <https://www.centralparknyc.org/celebrate-juneteenth-at-seneca-village>. **Advance registration is required for all tours.**
- b. **CB 10 Park Safety in COVID -19**
  - i. All Park workers must wear masks - vaccinated persons can opt not to wear masks if not in a crowded area. All other precautions remain in place.
- c. **CB 10 Parks - Updates -**
  - i. The NYC Parks Urban Rangers are in the process of hiring Nature Adventure Guides who will start in late June and will be able to lead Ranger programming at the East River Esplanade (Harlem River Park) at 142nd Street at 1:00 pm for Pop-Up programs on Thursdays, July 8th, 22nd, August 5th and 19th. Local area

schools and youth programs can request The Natural Classroom school application for the Fall at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/programs/rangers/natural-classroom/apply>

## II. Voting:

### a. Voting by Voice Vote

- ii. Motion made by Hon. Barbara Nelson and seconded by Hon. Terri Wilson. (Hon. Tahanie Aboushi, Hon. Karen Dixon and Derek Perkinson were not present for the vote) **Motion: To Support Resolution for Refurbishment of The Greg Marius Court in Holcombe Rucker Park.**

**Outcome:** Quorum was present : Unanimous to support: 5 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions (Voice Vote: Hon. Karen Horry - yes, Hon. Nadine Pinkett - yes, Hon. Marcus Wilson - yes, Hon. Terri Wisdom - yes and Hon. Barbara Nelson - yes)

## **I. Old Business**

- a. William McCray Playground - West 138th Street Sinkhole - Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer has allocated \$1.1 million and Councilman Bill Perkins has allocated \$200,000 for repair of the area which is located inside of the swing area of the playground which is adjacent to the St. Mark the Evangelist School located at 55 W. 138th Street. The funds will become available as of July 1st. The Committee is still awaiting an assessment from NYC Parks as to the current condition of the sinkhole.
- b. Exonerated Five Subcommittee - waiting for an Agreement review and approval from NYC Law Department for pro-bono web site development. The MBPO helped to secure a \$4500 grant from the Fund for the City of New York which will be received and disbursed to the web developer by Partnerships 4 Parks for start-up costs.
- a. Hansborough Recreation Center and Pool - NYC Parks determined that the pool requires more extensive repairs and will be presenting revised design plans at the June Parks & Recreation Committee meeting. The Honeys and Bears are seeking an alternative site in Manhattan that can accommodate their needs as seniors. They are also in need of group transportation.
- b. RFB for A. Philip Randolph Square and Fred Samuels food vendor carts is still pending and expected to be released in June.
- c. William Atmore Byrd Classic Basketball Court renaming inside of Langston Hughes Playground still pending - renaming to be announced in mid to late June
- d. Commemorative Mural to fallen Firefighter Lt. Michael Davidson in Renaissance Playground - Request for schedule for return to June Committee meeting.
- e. NYC Multicultural Festival scheduled for June 5th - Jackie Robinson Park - still pending receipt of COVID-19 safety precautions plan.

## **II. New Business - None**

## **III. Announcements**

- a. NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver (2014 to present) will be leaving in June 2021 and joining a civil engineering firm based in North Carolina. Commissioner Silver has lead the Parks Department since 2014 and oversaw more than 800 capital projects to-date during his tenure. Commissioner Silver is a dedicated public servant who continues to strengthen parks in Manhattan Community Board 10, demonstrating his commitment to ensuring that every New Yorker has beautiful outdoor spaces to enjoy. CB 10 wishes Commissioner Silver the very best in his new endeavors. We thank him for his exemplary service.
- a. The NYC Parks Urban Rangers will lead Ranger programming at the East River Esplanade (Harlem River Park) at 142ndst Street at 1:00 pm for Pop-Up programs on Thursdays, July 8th, 22nd, August 5th and 19th. Local area schools and youth programs can request The Natural Classroom school application for the Fall at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/programs/rangers/natural-classroom/apply>

- b. Discover Seneca Village. June 19th - 20th. For further information visit: <https://www.centralparknyc.org/celebrate-juneteenth-at-seneca-village>. **Advance registration is required for all tours.**

**IV. Adjournment** - Motion made to adjourn by Hon. Barbara Nelson and seconded by Hon. Nadine Pinkett

**Meeting was adjourned at 9:55 pm.**

*~ Respectfully submitted by Parks and Recreation Chair, Hon. Karen Horry ~*