



Hon. Marquis A. Harrison  
Chairperson

## CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

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### **PARKS AND RECREATION**

#### **Committee Minutes**

**Wednesday, November 8th 2023, 6:30 pm**

**Hon. Karen Horry, Chair**

Meeting began at 6:35 pm and was hybrid and was held in the Community Board District Office Conference Room and via Zoom link. The meeting was chaired by Hon. Karen Horry, Committee Chair.

Committee Members in Attendance: Chair, Hon. Karen Horry, Hon. Philip Desgranges, and Hon. Lynn Woodley.

Committee Members in Attendance via Zoom: Hon. Derek Perkinson and Hon. Tahanie Aboushi.

Committee Members Absent: Hon. Nathan Quist, Hon. Elvin Garcia, Hon. Darryl Jenkins and Hon. Jaran Manzanet.

Board Members Present: Dominick Boyce,

Board Members Present via Zoom: Board Chair Hon. Marquis Harrison

District Office: Miguel Walters (Community Assistant ).

Guests in-person attendance: Bob McCollough (Each One Teach One, Inc.), Cheryl Marius (The Entertainers' Basketball Classic - EBC Rucker Park), Charles McNeil (Rucker Park/FCS), Malcolm Punter (HCCI), Richard Williams, Carl Nelson (New Yorkers For Parks) and Abena Smith.

Guests in attendance via Zoom: Dave Williams (NYC Parks District 10 and 11 Manager), Lane Addonizio (Central Park Conservancy), Diane Jackier Kestenbaum (Central Park Conservancy- VP for Program Management - Capital Projects), Nicholas Koster (Central Park Conservancy), Danielle White, Bob Rumsey (Central Park Conservancy - Landscape Architecture Studio Director), Nicholas Koster (Central Park Conservancy), Caitlin Traver (Central Park Conservancy), Abena Smith, Gary & Carole, \*\*\*\*759, Malcolm Punter and Rose Williams,

#### **I. Welcome/Introductions**

#### **II. Presentations**

##### **a. Rucker Park Walk of Fame & Holcombe Rucker Statue**

A coalition of The Holcombe Rucker Family, The Greg Marius Family, Each One Teach One and HCCI presented a proposal to enshrine the historic legacy of Rucker Park through the installation of a Rucker Park Walk of Fame Promenade and a statue of the renowned Holcombe Rucker.

Since 1969, Holcombe Rucker Park has been a source of incalculable pride and entertainment for Harlemites as well as basketball enthusiasts the world over. What began in 1956, with Holcombe Rucker's youth tournament, which would lead to 700 Harlem youth receiving college scholarships, was carried on and expanded with each passing generation. Bob McCullough continued this legacy with the Rucker Pro Am tournament and Each One Teach One program, providing young people a source of pride and inspiration for decades. Greg Marius would take up the mantle with the Entertainer's basketball Classic, inspiring countless youth from NYC and beyond to achieve greatness. Both of these tournaments inspired basketball players the world over and drew the respect and participation of some of the world's greatest athletes and cultural icons.

The coalition is at the beginning phase of the visioning process and is requesting the Board's support in garnering Community support.

Outcome: In the absence of a quorum no vote was taken, however, the sentiment of the Committee was to move the proposed resolution on to the Executive Committee.

#### b. New Yorkers For Parks - 1% Campaign

New Yorkers For Parks (ny4p) is advocating for the increase to one percent of the City's annual budget towards parks and green spaces, ensuring adequate funding for staffing, maintenance, and other critical park needs.

On April 26, 2023, the Mayoral Administration released the Executive Financial Plan for Fiscal 2023-2027 (Executive Plan) which includes a proposed Fiscal 2024 budget of \$106.7 billion. This report offers a review of the Department of Parks and Recreation's (DPR) Fiscal 2024 Executive Budget, including proposed budget actions taken in the Executive Plan

The DPR's projected Fiscal 2024 budget of \$610.4 million represents 0.6 percent of the City's proposed Fiscal 2024 budget in the Executive Plan. Parks and green spaces provide numerous benefits to communities, including promoting physical and mental health, providing spaces for community gatherings and events, improving air quality, climate resiliency and cooling, and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. Many parks and green spaces have experienced neglect and underfunding, resulting in deteriorating conditions and limited programming options. Many large U.S. cities allocate more than one percent of their city budgets to parks, which has resulted in significant improvements to parks and green spaces in those communities. San Francisco spends 1.6 percent of its municipal budget on parks, Los Angeles spends 2.9 percent, Chicago 4.3 percent and Minneapolis 5.3 percent.

The 1% for Parks campaign has garnered widespread support from community organizations, advocacy groups, and residents who recognize the importance of parks and green spaces the health and well-being of our communities.

New Yorkers For Parks is garnering Community Board supports from throughout the City for the 1% for Parks campaign and is urging elected officials to allocate for the increased funding in the New York City budget.

Outcome: In the absence of a quorum no vote was taken, however, the sentiment of the Committee was to move the proposed resolution on to the Executive Committee.

c. Central Park Conservancy - West 85th Street Playground

Central Park Conservancy (CPC) presented design plans to upgrade The Abraham and Joseph Spector Playground (aka the West 85th Street Playground) located at 86th Street St, west of the West Drive in Central Park. The playground is located within the boundaries of the Seneca Village Landscape exhibit site which spans from 82nd-89th Streets on the West Side. The playground is one of Central Park's largest and was originally constructed in the 1930s as the Marginal Playground #16. CPC renovated the playground in 1994, keeping the same footprint. Most of the remaining features and the layout of the current playground date from this 1994 renovation. Play features were removed for safety reasons, due to deterioration, creating more significant space for free play. The large sand play area is a dominant feature of the playground as it currently exists. The playground is shaded by large canopy trees and includes seating with wood-and-concrete benches inside and at the entrance and a surrounding landscape that is predominantly lawn with scattered, large canopy trees and areas of rock outcroppings.

Ongoing investigations into the history of Seneca Village, the predominantly African-American community that existed from 1825 to 1857, decades preceding the park's construction, have provided detailed information on the location of pre-park features within and adjacent to the present-day playground. The area that is currently occupied by the playground would have been near an important center of activity within Seneca Village, with churches, homes and important streets.

Today, CPC's Seneca Village-focused tours often use an area near the playground entrance as the first stop to orient visitors to the exhibit. In the past year, the Conservancy has held several community meetings to discuss the landscape, restoration, interpretation and commemoration of Seneca Village with historians, descendants, community members and park users to determine how to emphasize the enduring physical features of the site, highlight its history, and honor the memory and significance of Seneca Village. CPC will continue these conversations in the coming year and come back to the community with proposals for commemoration once they have been established.

The Project Goals reflect the goals of the Plan for Play initiative to:

- Improve the relationship between the playground and the park
- Enhance the quality and variety of play experiences
- Maximize user accessibility
- Ensure compliance with current safety standards
- Preserve unique and successful aspects of existing designs
- Practice sustainable design and construction
- Design innovative solutions\
- Enhance the distinctive topography and site features of the surrounding landscape
- Create an accessible route from the west side and to West 84th Street playground; and

The Scope of Work includes:

- New protected water service, drainage infrastructure and manual irrigation infrastructure
- New benches, pavement, drinking fountain, and plantings
- Reconfiguration of the playground entrance area to better accommodate Seneca Village-related gatherings, tours, programming, etc.
- New perimeter fence to be replaced with lower, 4' high fence. Improve overall playground layout to better integrate the playground within the landscape and give more space to mature trees

- New play equipment including swings and play structures/climbers. Water and sand play areas will be included; and

CPC acknowledges the prominence of this playground within the Seneca Village site and re-envision the playground as a play and family gathering space connected to the surrounding landscape. Construction is expected to start in summer and take a year. Once it reopens, it will be renamed the West 85th Street Playground. The upcoming project will move the location of the playground slightly north and cut down on the overall play space from 26,196 to 24,937 sq. ft. There will be the movement of 2 large oak trees further out into the landscape; better aligning the playground entryway. A suggestion was made to incorporate a learning opportunity for children around the history of Seneca Village. A picnic area underneath the tree canopy within the playground fencing is also being proposed. CPC conducted extensive community outreach including surveys based upon direct interviews with park users over a six week period; varying days and times of their visits, posting of a survey link inside of the playground as well as in 2 different CPC newsletters. The community feedback has been used to shape the design plans.

Outcome: In the absence of a quorum no vote was taken, however, the sentiment of the Committee was to move the proposed resolution on to the Executive Committee.

III. Voting - The meeting did not have quorum. The sentiment of the Committee Members in attendance was to forward the following voting items to the Executive Committee:

- a. Resolution\_Rucker Park Walk of Fame Promenade & Holcombe Rucker Statue
- b. Resolution\_New Yorkers For Parks - 1% Campaign
- c. Resolution\_Central Park Conservancy - West 85th Street Playground

#### IV. Discussions

##### A. CB 10 Park Updates .....

- a. Harlem River Park - Dates for community meeting with NY Economic Development Corporation regarding waterfront still pending. The MBPO Day of Action held a volunteer park cleanup of the park on November 4th at which time a homeless encampment was removed by PEP and Parks Maintenance. DHS was present. The park has a high rate of recidivist encampments. The Greenway is moving forward low foot traffic is resulting in desolation and under-utilization of the area. Increased activities will deter nefarious activity.
  - i. Harlem Historic Park/ Jackie Robinson Park Update - Staff is doing a phenomenal job with leaf removal. An encampment was removed along Edgecombe Avenue. There is a high rate of recidivist encampments. Volunteer youth group will be painting the benches. Rat abatement treatments are ongoing. Mulch has been spread from 147th to 149th Streets bulbs are to be planted before the frost in front of the bandshell.
  - ii. Jackie Robinson Park Conservancy Updates - No update at this time.
  - iii. Hansborough Recreation Center Updates - NYC Parks will provide the Community Board with an extensive update.
  - iv. Howard Bennet Playground - Play equipment is outdated and needs to be upgraded. Work orders will be submitted for comfort station repairs.
  - v. Brigadier General Charles Young Playground - Peripheral lighting was repaired and playground is efficiently illuminated during evening hours.
  - vi. Drill sampling to assess area safety is still ongoing and is scheduled for November 9th. Rat abatement will increase to facilitate capital project groundbreaking.

- vii. Brigadier General Charles Young Triangle - No update at this time. DOT has not installed safety bollards - issue will be referred to Transportation, Landmarks and Historic Preservation Committee.
- viii. St. Nicholas Park So. - Procurement phase completed - construction phase pending. No further update at this time.
- ix. William McCray Playground - Project is in procurement phase. Drill sampling to assess area safety is still ongoing. Committee will request an update from NYC Parks at December meeting.
- x. Renaissance Playground - Renovation is pending. Installation of multiple water/sprinkler systems is recommended by Parks.
- xi. Courtney Callendar Playground - Comfort station reconstruction still pending to become a NYC Parks capital project. Community advocacy is ongoing.
- xii. A. Philip Randolph Square - DOT is considering a request for removal of parallel parking spaces adjacent to the park. The design phase is not completed at this time. Leaf litter removal has been ongoing. Grass has been pruned. There has been major improvement in deterring homeless encampments and recidivism due to police presence.
- xiii. Frederick Johnson Playground - The comfort station is 90% complete; water lines are connected and awaiting final modifications. Tennis court cranks have been replaced. Some net replacements are pending. Tree pruning was completed November 3rd. Stray cats have been sighted in the area.
- xiv. Fred Samuel Playground - Letter of Support for park upgrades was passed by the November Full Board
- xv. Harlem Lane Program (Percy E. Sutton Playground) - Work being done on south end of park.
- xvi. Langston Hughes Playground - no update at this time.
- xvii. Hancock Square - No update at this time.
- xviii. ACP, Jr. Malls - No update at this time. Committee will reach out to Regional Manager Robert McLean and Marie Littlejohn (Friends of ACP, Jr. Malls).

New park hours of 6 pm closure instituted due to Daylight Savings time. Bathrooms will be closed between 4 and 4:30 pm. Night lights will be activated at 4:30 pm.

Commissioner Perez will be leaving office on Friday, November 10th. Paul D'Amor will be the interim Acting Commissioner. We thank Commissioner Perez for his service and wish him well in his new endeavors.

#### V. Old Business

- a. CB10 Master Plan - NYC Parks Presentation pending
- b. Harlem River Park Greenway - NYC EDC pending
- c. Letter in Support of upgrades to Fred Samuel Playground was passed by the November Full Board and will be sent to NYC Parks Commissioner Sue Donoghue

#### VI. New Business - Committee will explore an annual Committee outreach activity.

#### VII. Announcements - None

VIII. Adjournment - Motion: Hon. Philip Desgranges, Second; Lyn Woodley. Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

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