

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
Minutes for Tuesday, March 7, 2017
530 W. 166th St., 6th floor

Committee members present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Osi Kaminer, Assistant Chair; Mitchell Glenn; Darryl Cochrane; Natalie Espino; Richard Lewis; Karen Taylor. Excused: Barbara Frazier. Absent: Domingo Estevez. **Other Board members present:** Richard Allman, Anita Barberis. **Others in Attendance:** Karen Harry, Chair, CB10 Parks & Recreation; Trish Anderson, Inwood Canoe Club; Jen Arnold; Maria Lara; John Rumely; Charlotte Fahn; Sam Levy; Paul Kittas; Avi Gitler; Lars Karlson; Dorothy Dohoney; John Williams & Allen Juba, MKW & Associates (and several other MKW graphics and design staff who didn't sign in); Emily Walker; Dianne Pobuda; Bethany Hogan; Herbierto Mateo; Regina Gradess; Ken Goody; Jon <illegible>; Athena Moore, Manhattan Borough President's Office; Jennifer Hoppa & Charlene Edwards, NYC Parks; Joseph Tutt; Hedy Hernandez; Judith Amaro; Sara Fisher, Friends of Inwood Hill Park, NMAC; Tirso Santiago Piña; Paul <illegible>; Paul Rubenfarb, WH Handball Assn.; Dave Crenshaw, Team Dreamers Uptown; Oliver Grubn; David Huggins; Ira Gershenhorn.

7:10pm **Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair, brought the meeting to order with brief announcements.**

7:15pm **Audubon Mural Project - Avi Gitler, co-organizer** Mr. Gitler is a WH resident who owns an art gallery on W. 150th & Broadway. The goal of this project, which works with local and global artists, is to beautify the neighborhood. The artists have painted 70 bird murals in the Washington Heights area. All are viewable for free to the public. All are based on a list of 314 North American birds that are endangered, of which about 140 pass through New York City. The project is partly self-funded, and receives support from the Audubon Society and grants from the Rubin Foundation and other sources. Next big thing: large mural at 162nd St./Broadway, to be completed over the next 2 months. The project is always scouting for new locations between W. 135th & W. 193rd Streets, but is flexible. For more information, donations, etc., visit <http://audubonmuralproject.org> or email muralproject@audubon.org.

7:25pm **Highbridge Park Anchor Park Initiative— Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator** Please see prior months' minutes for background on this project. A design team is here this evening to present both the Master Plan for Highbridge Park and a proposed Phase I project for the \$30 million Anchor Parks Initiative. Additional projects will be developed, designed, bid, and constructed concurrently. The conceptual Master Plan Goals include connectivity north to south, play opportunities, bathrooms, complete repair of water tower, wayfinding, and grand entrances. John Williams, MKW Landscape Architects, gave a thorough presentation of the Master Plan, development of which will continue through Spring '17. Potential improvement locations include: the Sugar Hill Luminaries lawn; Polo Grounds Section; southern entrance to Croton Aqueduct path to the High Bridge; Adventure, Sunken, & Fort George Playgrounds; repairing stone retaining walls north of the Sunken Playground; Lighting; improve southern pathway to the High Bridge and from W. 190th to Dyckman Streets; additional gathering spaces; north-south linkage between ballfields and skatepark, and other places in the central sections; renovating W. 187th St. stairway; grand entrance at Dyckman St.; and improving Dyckman Rest.

Al Juben, MKW Landscape, gave a presentation of the Phase I Plan, which focuses on the northern end of the park. The project's goals include more accessibility, improved connectivity, more gathering spaces, improvements to lighting and safety, repaving paths, and adding benches. \$10.1 million is planned for this phase, leaving \$19.9 million for future phases. Work will focus on three main locations: the Laurel Hill Terrace Grand Staircase renovation; a new sitting area where the Harlem River Drive meets Dyckman Street; and pathways between bullets 1 and 2 (see map). There will be a rain garden, porous pavers and other green infrastructure. Following CB12's recommendation, the Phase I proposal will be submitted to the Public Design Commission.

Comments/Questions: (1) Osi asks for replacement of all chain link fencing. Jennifer responds that better fencing is expensive, so a balance has to be maintained between replacing fencing and achieving other goals. (2) Karen asked for solar lighting. Jennifer responds that there is much tree cover, making solar problematic. (3) Member of public requested signage enhancements. (4) Member of public inquired as to timeline. Jennifer tells us to figure on 3.5 years per phase. Phases will proceed concurrently. Phase 2 planning will begin in May. (5) Two members of public requested hand ball court improvements, including restoration of 8 courts that were repurposed for basketball courts. (6) Daryl requests Croton Aqueduct trail enhancements (future phase) to be made ADA compliant. MKW said they would try but there are challenges due to altitude changes.

The Committee unanimously resolved (7-0-0-0) to support the proposed Phase I project, reiterating the other priorities for subsequent phases. The one Board member still in attendance also voted in favor. The public concurred 10-0-0-0.

9pm **“While We Are Still Here” project, Karen Taylor** The Mission to preserve Harlem’s cultural heritage, in particular 409 and 555 Edgecombe Avenue. WEB DuBois, Marjorie Elliot, Paul Robeson, Cassandra Wilson, Count Basie, Thurgood Marshall all lived in these buildings. Karen would like to see cultural heritage built into any new construction/development projects in CBs 9 and 12. She would like to see the Community Boards support creation of these standards and regulations, so that the history does not get lost. Karen notes the Indian Ceremonial Pit and Slave Burial Ground recently found at 10th Avenue and W. 211th Street, and would like to see this commemorated as well.

9:10pm **New Yorkers for Parks, Emily Walker** NY4P issues report cards on the quality and state of NYC parks. Latest initiative is on neighborhood-sized parks, for example, Sara D Roosevelt, J. Hood Wright. Manhattan neighborhood parks did the worst of the 5 boroughs, ranging from an 87 for Riverside Park down to 63 for Sara D Roosevelt. The goal of this project is to promote a Community Parks Initiative Phase 2 to improve these neighborhood parks. Daryl asked why accessibility is not covered in the grades. Emily responds that renovation requires accessibility consideration. Liz asks that accessibility needs to be acknowledged in some way in these reports.

9:22pm **Announcements:**

- NoMAA call for artists for the June ArtStroll; kickoff event will be May 31st at the United Palace.
- March is Women’s History Month; many events including exhibit opening at MBPO 3/20.
- Inwood Film Festival – March 17th & 18th.
- Highbridge Pool Upgrade petition up on Facebook from the Highbridge Splash Club.

9:25pm **Parks Update, Jennifer Hoppa**

- Inwood Hill Nature Center water service: work to begin in May. Bathrooms to open Spring ‘18.
- High Bridge Water Tower work to begin shortly.
- Anne Loftus staircase work began Monday; expected completion within 12 months.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm.

Respectfully submitted: Mitchell Glenn; edited by Liz Ritter.