

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
May 14, 2019 (CB12 Conference Room / 530 W. 166th St., 6th fl.)

Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter (Chair), Daryl Cochrane (Asst. Chair), Domingo Estevez, Mitchell Glenn, Francisco Lopez, Alexis Marnel (Public Member); **Absent:** Barbara Frazier (vacation); **Excused:** Karen Taylor. **Other Board Members in attendance:** Isidro Medina, Omar Tejada, Nobles Crawford, Sarah Fisher. **Also Attending** (28 total): Shiloh Holley (Morris-Jumel Mansion); Tiffany Braby (Morris-Jumel Neighborhood Assn. & Morris-Jumel Mansion); Pat Courtney (Volunteers for Isham Park); Julie McCay (Inwood Canoe Club), Paul Jeffries (NYC Football Club); Diego Quintera (sp.?.; J. Hood Wright); Vanessa Rodriguez (J. Hood Wright handball courts); Jennifer Hoppa & Charlene Edwards (NYC Parks); Aaron Simms (Inwood Art Works); Natalie Espino (MBPO); Ryan Desso (artist); Steve Harris (Inwood Canoe Club); Irfan Ahmed (Mayor's Fund); Edison Gayle; Bob Barnett (Harlem River Rowing); Obed Fulcar (Friends of Sherman Creek); Maria Taveras; Yasmin Martinez; Jorge Rodriguez; Pedro Guadalupe (Community League of the Heights); Zahkiya Brown (America Scores); Jacob Morris; Cynthia Carrion (School in the Square); David Sykes (Uptown Soccer); Trish Anderton (Inwood Canoe Club); Samson Jacobson & Sarah Brady-Stack (for Warner Bros.)

- 1) Call to order by the Chair (6:40pm) with introductory remarks, update, & announcements:
 - Announcement of then-**upcoming events**; multiple flyers in back of room and on tablem including multiple **"It's My Park!" clean-up events** and June 1st **RowNY open house**.
 - Update re: **ArtStroll** events in June, including **open studios** on June 8th (Inwood & northern Washington Heights, 179th – 220th St.) & June 15th (southern WH & West Harlem, 135th-178th St.). Guide is now available online and throughout the neighborhood. Opening reception Tues., May 28th, 6pm-8:30pm at the United Palace.
 - **Hike The Heights** on Saturday, June 1st, with hikes through Highbridge Park from various points in Inwood & WH and converging on the Sunken Playground (W. 167th/Edgecombe Ave.) for a celebration.
 - Update on La Marina: Still in court w/ multiple suits from Manhattan River Group. NYC Law Department has asked Court to lift stay so that Parks can take action it deems appropriate, which could include terminating license. As of this afternoon Court has not taken any action. *[Note: Court subsequently terminated MRG's concession at the marina; there has been no action taken regarding the restaurant concession, which remains closed and the matter remains in litigation.]*
- 2) Update on May 1st **Land Use Committee meeting and presentation from MADD Equities** regarding proposed building on NW corner W. 207th St. & Ninth Ave. Most of that presentation related to the Land Use and Housing aspects of the development – please refer to LU minutes for a fuller summary – but there are some considerations relevant to Parks. Ms. Lorris Ritter attend LU in lieu of requiring a second presentation this evening. LU will offer its comments in a reso in June, and will incorporate any concerns of this Committee. The development will include a landscaped public area. Perimeter will be constructed in a way that allows for seamless integration with North Cove area when NYC Parks develops that site into an accessible City park. Much of the surfacing of the landscaped public area will be porous to allow for water recapture and to reduce runoff contamination. Although a "green roof" was not part of the current plan, the developer is open to considering this feature for the benefit of avian wildlife habitat.
- 3) Brief Cultural Programming Updates (6:57pm): **Inwood Art Works** announced the return of **FilmWorks AI Fresco**, NYC's only free bilingual (Sp./Eng.) film series, every Monday night (weather permitting) in Inwood Hill Park's Gaelic Field, as well as a Music Movies series at the Morris-Jumel Mansion select Fridays in June.
- 4) **Brief Programming Update from the Morris-Jumel Mansion** (7pm):
 - Shiloh Holly (new ED) announced that MJM received capital funding for ADA/accessibility improvements through Participatory Budgeting! They're also getting ready to transition from Spring to Summer programming (Indoor to Outdoor), and took time to talk about summer programming, including summer camps for kids 6-11 (passed out flyer with camp information). Also opening two new exhibitions at the Mansion (famous cartoonist work and pop-up art works by neighborhood students).
 - Board member Tiffany Braby shared information (and flyers) about the Mansion's May 23rd Educator Open House, an opportunity to reintroduce educators to all the Mansion has to offer students.

5) **NYC Soccer Initiative** (7:05pm): Irfan Ahmed - Mayor's Fund for NYC

- Launched the \$3mm NYC Soccer Initiative three years ago with sponsors (Adidas, US Soccer, etc.) and support from the Mayor's Office to fund, build, and maintain 50 soccer fields throughout the City. They have worked with NYC Parks, NYCHA, DoE, and with community groups to identify sites, and have built 20 fields in two years. They are looking to build 10 fields this year.
- Recently identified a spot in J. Hood Wright Park (in the middle of the northern edge, by the Pinehurst Ave. entrance to the park, just west of the basketball/fitness/handball areas) as a great place for a mini-soccer field. The area will be approximately 4,500 square feet (90' x 50') with a 4' sideline and back-fencing where appropriate. Kids already play soccer there, so it's organic to the current use. Jennifer mentioned a new soccer facility going in at Highbridge Park that will alleviate the "permit congestion."
- The soccer pitches come with free training and gear, implemented by a local community based organization. America Scores, which operates a free program 3 days/week for 24 weeks in the spring & fall funded by DYCD and based in PS173 across the street, 100% backs this position and voiced support, and is willing to provide free summer programming. Cynthia Carrión & David Sykes of Uptown Soccer were also enthusiastic. Liz reminded the assembly that some years ago there had been interest in building a soccer pitch in JHW Park, but there was no funding.
- The pitch will be and all-weather low-maintenance acrylic. The installation takes about 3-6 weeks to complete and costs \$60k-\$70k, all paid by the NY Soccer Initiative; pending approvals it could be ready as soon as this fall. It is important to the Committee that it be accessible.
- A resolution in support of this proposal passed unanimously (5 Committee, 1 Public Member, 1 Other Board, 18 members of the public).

6) **On-location Filming of "In the Heights"** (7:25pm): Samson Jacobson (Locations Dept. for Warner Bros.)

- This film of the Broadway smash by WH local Lin-Manuel Miranda will begin filming this summer. About 70% of the filming will be on-location, an unusually high proportion. The neighborhood is an integral part of the story, and it was important to the filmmakers to capture the local flavor and to portray the neighborhood in a positive light. The locations staff are local to the neighborhood, and sensitive to lessening the impact on the community that filming often has.
- They went through the different proposed set locations and how they're looking to make the filming as seamless as possible for the community. Main filming area will be in/around W. 175th St. & Audubon Ave. to capture the iconic backdrop of the GWB. Filming will be from June 3rd through mid-July, working in coordination w/ NYPD and NYC Office of Media & Entertainment. It's not going to be shooting every day, and they're coming -up with plans to help the local parking situation, including "buying back" garage parking receipts for local residents unable to find street parking on those blocks. They will be putting up signs in the neighborhood a week before filming, and will work w/ local media for film alerts.
- Union contracts require breakfast catering, but lunch will be "walk-aways," i.e., vouchers for local eateries in lieu of catering trucks. This reduce the parking impact and supports the local economy. They are working w/ the BID and other local businesses to develop a list to give to cast/crew.
- They also discussed contributing to neighborhood groups (i.e youth sports leagues, parks, June 1st street festival) and still looking for more.
- They're looking for local people to be Production Assistants, and have an open call for paid extras on June 1st at 269 Wadsworth Ave. (near W. 187th St., across from St. Elizabeth's Church) and a rolling submission via email (theheights@gwcnyc.com; call 212-685-3168/visit www.gwcnyc.com for info).
- They also would like to film in Tunnel Street, that street that connects Broadway to the 191 1-train entrance at St. Nicholas Ave. In order to have complete control over the space for filming, they are requesting an overnight (10pm-6am) closure, and parking on both sides of Broadway, from W. 188th – W. 192nd Streets/Fairview Ave. They will provide a shuttle for people wishing to exit to Broadway from the 191st St. stop. They are proposing a Friday night; there was a little push-back stating that a

- weeknight would be preferable as it would be a lesser inconvenience. A presentation was made last week to the Traffic & Transportation Committee, which supported the idea.
- A resolution supporting the proposed overnight closure of Tunnel Street for Warner Bros. filming of “In the Heights” passed: Committee 4-0-1-0; Public Member 1-0-0-0; Other Board 2-0-0-0; Public 10-0-0-0.

7) **Isham Park conditions report** by Pat Courtney, Volunteers for Isham Park (7:58pm): Although this park recently received a \$750mm project to bring water service to its various gardens and to do some repairs and plantings, this thorough presentation detailed retaining wall collapses, degraded bluestone steps and historic markers, rat holes, and the need for general maintenance (e.g., painting of walls, mowing, path repaving, tree trimming, and repair of steel-tube & chain link fencing, etc.). The Isham Memorial area at the eastern end has issues with its retaining wall, and the Isham Alley at the southern perimeter shows signs of settling/sinking. VIP has done thousands of hours of gardening and clean-ups in consultation w/ NYC Parks, which oversees/approves all of their work. Some of these conditions are merely unsightly, others are outright dangerous. It was requested that the Committee keep all of this in mind when we do our Expense & Capital Budget Priorities Ranking in the fall so that Parks can get the funding to address these issues. Jennifer noted that the retaining wall work will get folded into an upcoming Capital Project for retaining walls, based on its level of severity. She also stated that Parks needs a lawnmower. Kudos to this volunteer group for their efforts in maintaining and advocating for this park, and to the Parks Department for their beautiful completion of the recent capital project.

8) **NYC Parks Report from Northern Manhattan Administrator**, Jennifer Hoppa (8:30pm):

- There has been a rabies vaccination trap/release program on raccoons in Inwood Hill Park. Parks continues to monitor the situation, but there have been no new confirmed cases of rabies.
- 38 upcoming public event (see flyers).
- \$262mm in various capital projects, not enumerated in consideration of the time; willing to answer specific questions, of which there were none.

9) **Fort Tryon Park: Possible Renaming of Ft. Tryon Park (Jacob Morris)** (8:40pm):

- This is just the beginning of a discussion, not a reso item. (Yet?) History of William Tryon was given: a General so brutal that even the British loathed him; he was banished to NYC after various failings at his prior station in NC. He was also a central figure in a plot to kill George Washington. In light of this legacy, do we want to have a park named after him, and if not, after whom/what might we re-name it?
- This question has come up a couple times in the past, so it’s not a new issue but definitely warrants periodic re-examination, particularly in light of new scholarship and of the current civic debate on namings of and memorials to figures of dubious history.
- Jennifer Hoppa noted that the park is named after the Fort that was there and which American patriots defended, not after William Tryon himself. She presented images of the monument built by Americans for Margaret Corbin in 1909, noting that and they referred to the Fort so valiantly defended as “Fort Tryon”. The Americans also named their neighborhood “Fort Tryon” and referred to it as that up until WWI. Two different mansions were named “Tryon Hall” and “Tryon Terrace” in the early 1900s, in land that eventually became Fort Tryon Park. Jennifer also passed out several NY Times articles from the early 1900s that show how the Americans referred to their fort as “Fort Tryon.”
- Several people pointed out that since the Fort was named after the man, this may be a distinction without a difference.
- Several people noted that the Morris-Jumel Mansion is named, in part, after Col. Roger Morris, a Royalist who left the colonies and returned to England on the eve of the Revolution. So there is an argument for keeping the name as a nod to historical reality, not as an honorific.

- A member of the public commented that “history is complicated.” We need more education so we can learn from history, and not necessarily erase all of the names of the bad actors.
- Sally: sometimes we change names based on the offense given. Asked about the commission looking at monuments, but it was noted that this is looking only at actual monuments in public places, not at the names of parks or other public places themselves.
- Daryl: Does Parks have a mechanism for this? A (Jennifer): we try to focus on the positive, not the negative. We do a battle reenactment every year to explain the Colonist & British perspectives, and educate people about Margaret Corbin and the heroism of defending that Fort. There is also a monument to her and that battle within the Park.
- Liz suggested perhaps more information on signage in the Park, such as is in Javits Playground.

There were a few additional announcements, and no mail or new business; the meeting adjourned at 9:07pm.

Respectfully submitted: Nobles Crawford & Liz Ritter