

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
Minutes for Tuesday, January 10, 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. **Others in Attendance:** Pat Courtney; George Mihaltses, Miguelina Aristy, Dana Sunshine, Amy Geduldig & Danita Nichols, New York Public Library; Hjordis Perez Matos; Jennifer Hoppa & Charlene Edwards, NYC Parks; David Huggins; Paul Kittas; Ira Gershenhorn; Sara Fisher, Friends of Inwood Hill Park; Marcus Moore; Sara French; Nancy Bruning; Kam Frank; Charlie Reynoso, New York Restoration Project; Jennifer Bristol, Ft. Tryon Dog O; Simon Kawitzky & Dwan Stark, NYC Housing Preservation & Development; Laurie Tobias-Cohen, Congressman Espallat; Steven Harris; Fred Small; Jeirse Fogel; Greer McPhaden; C/M Ydanis Rodriguez & Jose Louis.

- Elizabeth Lorris Ritter **called the meeting to order** at 7:05pm with welcoming remarks and updates:
 - **December resolutions regarding Inwood Hill Park Nature Center & Dyckman Outdoor Fitness Area** were passed unanimously by the full Board (29 in favor, none opposed or abstaining, 1 not voting due to conflict) at its December 20th meeting. The former was approved by the Public Design Commission with a recommendation for using colors that are more naturalist; the latter goes to the PDC later this month.
 - Paul Kittas had raised some questions regarding the **landmarking of the Old Croton Aqueduct**. He would like to include elements in Highbridge Park in the landmarking. The request doesn't come from NYC Parks; it must be done by an individual or organization to the State Historic Preservation Office, which would then reach out to NYC Parks. Paul will follow up w/ Charlotte Fahn of the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct. He also announced an upcoming Harlem Promenade Tour on Sunday, January 22nd at 11am; meet at 155th & Edgecombe Ave, wear comfortable shoes, and bring binoculars. The tour will conclude at Dyckman St at about 1pm.
 - The first round of grants through **Partnerships for Parks Inwood Parks Initiative** through the \$300k gift to the community from Columbia University in exchange for their development at Baker Field was made last week. Seventeen local community groups have been granted \$89,650 as first round recipients. Grant allocations ranged from \$1,000 to \$10,000 and will help groups bring improvements, events, and stewardship projects to fruition, revitalizing Inwood Hill, Muscota Marsh, and Isham Parks. The \$300,000 grant program launched in August 2016, and is administered by the City Parks Foundation. Recipient organizations were: Conservancy North, Eagle & Condor Community Center, East Winds Inc., Friends of Inwood Hill Park, Harlem River Community Rowing, Hudson Cliffs Baseball League, Inwood Art Works, Inwood Owners Coalition, Inwood Sprouts, Literacy Inc., Isham Park Restoration, Moving Forward Unidos, Muscota New School Parent Association, PS98 Shorakapok Elementary School, Recycleday Morning, The Tibet Fund, and the Uptown Soccer Academy. Projects include a large-scale native plant restoration initiative; a monarch butterfly pollinator garden, a park-based childhood literacy program with four reading events, a summer film festival featuring local Inwood artists and films; improvements to the pathways in Bruce's Garden; biodiversity walks and educational field trips exploring Muscota Marsh; and full-size youth soccer goals for Dyckman Fields, as well as the establishment of a new soccer tournament there and dedicated park revitalization efforts. There will be three additional grant cycles until the remainder of the \$300,000 in funding is allocated. Deadlines are 3/1/17, 8/1/17, 3/1/18. Grant requests may range from \$500-\$15k. All projects must be completed by 12/31/19. For information and to register for a consultation, visit www.partnershipsforparks.org or email Grants@CityParksFoundation.org.

- Presentation from J. Hood Wright Recreation Center: Charlene Edwards, Deputy Center Manager (7:20pm):** Ms. Edwards gave a brief overview of the programs offered at the J. Hood Wright Recreation Center, including cultural events, educational programming, fitness programming, She also announced upcoming events, including a billiards tourney for adults, and a Valentine's Latin Dance gala on February 3rd from 6pm-8:30pm. For more information on the Latin Dance gala, please contact Fabiola Ramos: Fabiola.ramos@parks.nyc.gov. The Center is also looking to have a health fair; Ms. Edwards was advised to reach out to the Aging and Health/Environment Committees for brainstorming and networking.
- Presentation by the New York Restoration Project (NYRP) regarding woodlands restoration in Highbridge Park: Charlie Reynoso (7:22pm)** NYRP has been doing a lot of work in Sherman Creek as well as parts of Highbridge and Ft. Tryon Parks. They have a proposal in to NYC Department of Environment Conservation for reforestation in the area along the Harlem River Drive between W. 184th & W. 186th Streets, behind Laurel Hill Terrace and Yeshiva University. They scope of work would include removing invasives and planting a thousand trees. They work in close collaboration with NYC Parks' Forestry Division and Natural Resources Group. CB12 has previously passed resolutions supporting NYRP's work of a similar nature in Sherman Creek. The proposal was met with universal approval and applause, but CB12 doesn't have a mechanism for Letters of Support other than resolutions, and the General Meeting is after the grant deadline. *[Note: The Executive Committee passed a supportive resolution at its meeting on Jan. 12th.]*
- Inwood Affordable Housing & Library Development Project: Simon Kawitzky, Assistant Commissioner, for Neighborhood Development & Stabilization, NYC Housing Preservation & Development and George Mihaltsis, VP, Government & Community Relations, New York Public Library (7:28pm)** The NYPL and HPD are looking to explore options regarding the redevelopment of the Inwood NYPL branch library for a new branch and affordable housing. Especially with publicly owned sites we want to get input and feedback regarding uses and programming at the library, zoning, design, levels of affordability for the housing, etc. There will be community workshops on Wednesday, January 25th (4pm-8pm) and Saturday, January 28th (10am-2pm), with a third session added on January 31st (5pm-9pm). All sessions will be at the Inwood branch library, 4790 Broadway. The sessions are drop-in; one is not expected or required to stay for the entire 4-hour session. A variety of times are offered to suit convenience and scheduling needs of the community. There will also be a kiosk at the Library, and an online survey (<https://www.nypl.org/locations/inwood>). The purpose of the workshops is to get feedback to help craft the Request for Proposals (RFP) which we anticipate issuing in the spring. We would plan to come to the full Board in March.

NYPL recently re-opened the Washington Heights branch's 3rd floor, a \$2m renovation with a tech and education center for youth. Currently working with the Robin Hood Foundation which is funding \$5m for a new Inwood Branch library, with another \$5m to be contributed by HPD. The Inwood branch was founded in 1893 and has been in Inwood since 1902. The current building was approved by the City Planning Commission in 1945, and was opened in 1952. Although there was a recent renovation, it needs a new boiler, rook, façade, HVAC, and other infrastructure improvements. It is beloved in Inwood, but we know we can do better for the community. These are active spaces, not just for quiet reading. We want to know what kind of library the community wants, and what kind of programming. Each community is different. We are redoing branches with HPD on Roosevelt Island and Staten Island; shared report on those community visioning processes.

Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez thanked all who attended and CB members for their service. Spoke about the importance of technology. We can get not only a new library but also 100% affordable housing. Can we also build on the soccer field /running track on Vermilyea Ave. between Academy & Dyckman Streets? Can we have a 75-seat auditorium? We should be open and creative.

There were many questions and comments:

- Osi Kamminer: Please have a paper survey available at the CB12 office for those who do not have internet access.
- Mitchell Glenn: We must maximize this amazing opportunity for the library and for housing.
- Richard Lewis: Can we multiplex community space? Great idea for athletic/recreational space. Also, when speaking of affordable housing, “100% affordable” for whom?
- Sally Fisher: This is an opportunity. Why didn’t we hear about this sooner? This was in a public report two years ago. How do we address the needs of the community during the closure of the library (i.e., during construction)? A: The library is city-owned. This is one of the busiest branches, with 189k visits and 245k items loaned annually. It is one of seven branches open seven days/week. We don’t always provide temporary library services, often referring visitors to neighboring branches, but in this case we will do it here, either with a temporary storefront or a mobile library. Also noteworthy: Kingsbridge (Bx), Highbridge (Bx) and Stapleton (SI) branches all saw bumps of 30% or more when they reopened with beautiful new spaces.
- Nancy Bruning: It’s great that we’re talking about affordable housing. It’s very important for public health: people can’t be healthy if they’re homeless! But is not land city-owned? What is the true extent of the environmental impact on the electrical grid, , overcrowded school overcrowded transit, and more? A: I don’t know if a full environmental impact statement (EIS) will be required, but we will research and have an answer on that at the workshops. The legal structure of any development deal will depend on the final RFP.
- Gerry <lastname illegible> has been reading about other similar developments elsewhere that the Robin Hood Foundation has worked on with the City, and they have included luxury housing and not affordable. Things start out 100% affordable, and then it switches. A: we are firmly committed to using our financing programs to make this fully affordable. We are not relying on underlying loans. Our levels of subsidy are very clear. The workshops are the best place to memorialize community goals in this regard.
- The Chair clarified a bit about AMI, that the income disparity of the county means that we might need to look at basing AMI on the Community District or the local ZIP codes rather than Manhattan, and at levels of less than 100% AMI, e.g., 40% / 60% / 80%.
- Pat Courtney: Question #21 regarding building height on the online survey is misleading; it assumes people understand what are the various levels of affordability, but the question asks an obvious and leading question about if people want to see “more affordable housing”. Saying something about “ensur[ing] the design of building is appropriate...” isn’t enough to elicit an accurate response based on real trade-offs. There was a brief tangential discussion about data issues in the survey, and HPD/NYPL agreed to clarify that online question.
- Hjordis Perez Matos: There should be a video campaign and digital format. They could use 3-D printers. In terms of affordability: not just for whom, but also for how long? A: we prefer for extended period, usually 30 years, but it can be renewed to 40, 50, even 6- years or longer. Also the units would be rent-stabilized regardless. We encourage and heavily will weight proposals with longer affordability.
- Mitchell Glenn: Tall buildings are almost universally shunned. Also re: AMI, there’s a thicket of problems if the charge is either too-high density, or too-high cost.

- Greer McPhaden: What is a library today? Since founding a few years ago there have been many changes in how people read and how they use libraries. A few years ago, e-books accounted for 5%, now it's 50-25%. People order books and other materials online and pick up at their branch. NYPL is working with the city on afterschool programming, early learning, and more. ESL classes have gone from 3k enrolled to 10k enrolled. We fell in love at Carnegie libraries with their big, open spaces and reading rooms, but we need meeting rooms, tech centers, etc.
 - Jennifer Hoppa: Was Dyckman family involved w/ library? A: No that was the Dyckman Institute.
 - Richard Lewis: FiOS situation is bad there. How will NYPL surmount that to provide better digital capabilities? Is it possible to have relationships with universities to get journals and other scholarly publications? A: we will have digitized 1.2million items. We pay subscription and make available what we can. We have borrowing privileges with CCNY and NYU for some items, with Princeton & Harvard for some other collections. We plan to increase holdings' availability to the public, and also have would wire the new building for highspeed broad banded.
 - We currently have borrowing privileges from Germany/Alsace, as well as for materials from Princeton and Harvard, we well as being sired for high-speed broadband.
 - Pat Courtney: Larger footprint, not too high. Something community will be thrilled for word.
 - Jeri & Sally: reiterated support for library, and the importance of talking the survey. A: (Steve) the survey is primarily on for people who can't make it to the workshops.
 - Jennifer Hoppa: I applaud HPD & the NYPL for voting to add a third workshop/session.
 - Simon & George: All are encouraged to attend at least one session, or otherwise to reply to the survey. Please help spread that word.
- **Parks Department Update from Jennifer Hoppa (8:40pm):** There are more than \$50m in capital improvements in various stages of planning and development for Northern Manhattan Parks:
 - Highbridge Anchor Park: Consultants heard public input at our meeting in December and through the on-line portal. On Monday, January 31st at 6:30 p.m. at the Highbridge Rec. Center they'll be reporting back on what they heard and identifying some potential first phase projects for implementation. You can also follow the progress of this Anchor Parks project, and any other NYC park capital project, on the NYC Parks Capital Tracker website: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/planning-and-building/capital-project-tracker>
 - Highbridge Water Tower: \$2.5m. The Highbridge Water Tower is a separately funded project proposed to be completed in two phases. The initial phase is funded and is in final design. This project will open the tower to the public after making necessary safety improvements and other repairs, including to the windows, roof, and stairs. A contractor will be sought in 2017. The unfunded Phase II project would include work unrelated to the building opening but important for the long life of the building, such as painting. It would include a new permanent wheelchair ramp. Also, Parks would like to make a long-standing community request happen, the installation of electronic, programmable bells in the tower to replace the original carillon installed in 1958 and destroyed in 1985.
 - Audubon Playground \$7.7m; report T/K in the spring re design following recent scoping meeting.
 - Staircase behind Anne Loftus has been awarded for a \$1.3M job. Construction to start in spring.
 - Inwood Nature Center exterior of building/stabilization \$2.5M went through Public Design Commission who have asked NYC Parks to revisit the exterior color. A meeting/working group session will be held with those interested in planning for the Ranger programming/interior of the Nature Center at a later date.
 - Inwood Nature Center Restrooms: water line work starts this spring- an \$800k project. Bathrooms are expected to reopen Spring 2018.

- Dyckman Green Gym \$250k Public Design Commission Review is expected later this month.
- Design Consultants are being procured for the exterior restoration of the Morris Jumel Mansion.
- Dyckman Farmhouse will have roof restoration work done. Another project on the building recently funded by BP Brewer and CM Rodriguez are ADA-compliant public restrooms.

Upcoming programs in Northern Manhattan Parks:

- Thanks to everyone who brought their Xmas trees out to Mulchfest this past weekend.
- Morning Fitness at Fort Tryon, meet at Heather Garden: Tues/Thurs 8:30am -9:30am; Sat 8:30am – 9:30am
- Shape-Up Programs:
 - Body Sculpt 360 at Highbridge Recreation Center: Tues, 6:30pm- 7:30pm
 - Total Body Take Over at Highbridge Recreation Center: Thurs, 7pm-8pm
 - Cardio Blast Fitness at J. Hood Wright Recreation Center: Mon, 6:30pm- 7:30pm
 - Senior Chair Fitness at J. Hood Wright Recreation Center; Sat, 9:30am – 10:30am
 - Zumba at J. Hood Wright Recreation Center: Sat, 10:30am – 11:30am
- Shape Up NYC's Fitness Party at Highbridge Recreation Center, Thurs., 1/12, 6pm – 9pm
- Inwood Green Neighborhood: Forest Restoration (Payson Ave. & Dyckman St.), Sat, 1/14
- Rangers: Nature Illustrations Basic Workshop in Inwood Hill Park, Sat, 1/21, 2:00pm- 3:30pm
- Registration for Ranger program starts on Weds., Jan. 18th.
- Highbridge Anchor Park Community Report Back Event: Mon., 1/31 at 6:30pm.

6. Announcements (8:52pm):

- Jennifer Bristol, Ft. Tryon Park Dog Run: request that NYC Parks and apartment supers not use salt for snow/ice as it's injurious to dogs' paws.
- Sally Fisher: Northern Manhattan Arts & Culture will be having its monthly mixer on Jan. 19th.
- Various individuals announced other upcoming events and distributed flyers.

There being no new business, the meeting was adjourned at 9pm.

Respectfully submitted: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter