

**Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee**  
**April 13, 2020 (held virtually via Zoom)**

**Committee Members Present:** Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Daryl Cochrane, Ass't. Chair; Nobles Crawford; Sally Fisher; Danielle Jettoo; Francisco Lopez; Ayisha Oglivie; Alexis Marnel & Yomaris Smith, Public Members. **Other Board Member:** Barbara Frazier, Jonathan Nuñez-Frometa. **Staff:** Paola Garcia, Ebenezer Smith. **Also Attending (23 members of the Public in attendance):** Alexander Campos, Anastasia Galko, Riverside Park Conservancy; Jahaira Guerrero, James Cataldi, Jerry Culligan; Nancy Fiaschetti, Pied Piper Children's Theatre; Jerry Culligan, Rocky's Dog Run; Joanna Castro & Martin Collin, NoMAA; Shiloh Holley, Morris-Jumel Mansion; Ryan Desso, artist; Trish Anderton & Steve Harris, Inwood Canoe Club; Amanda Kraus, RowNY; K Fitzgerald; Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator; Jenn Bristol; Nancy Preston; Jeanine McAdam; Maggie Clark, RING; Julie McCoy; & 2 screen names: anna & amamani.

**1) The meeting was called to order** at about 6:32pm by the Chair.

- Announcement that this meeting is being recorded (audio only); intro of Committee members. Reminder that while there are many questions and issues in these extraordinary times regarding public health, public safety, the economy, mental health, education, housing, and so many other issues, this meeting will focus on issues within the Committee's purview, i.e., parks, recreation, and cultural affairs.
- Welcome and quick disclaimer on likely technical difficulties as we learn to use this new Zoom platform.
- Shout-out to Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and her staff on the stellar organizational support provided to CBs, and the services & information they're giving to New Yorkers during this time.
- Playgrounds are closed, as are ballfields, courts, dog runs, and skate parks. Parks are open, but park-goers not from the same household \*must\* be vigilant to stay at least 6-feet apart from each other at all times. We are blessed uptown with hundreds of acres of parks and as you can see from my changing photo gallery of Zoom backgrounds spring is in full bloom. Safe use of our parks – i.e., alone, or with a friend at a distance – is an excellent way to get exercise and work through some of the anxiety and tension that can come from self-isolation. The Parks website has trail maps, and also links to many at-home activities, from exercise to home gardening, to science-and-nature education, and more.
- In terms of culture, these are very difficult times. Theatres are dark; all performance are cancelled for the foreseeable future; libraries, museums, and all cultural institutions/organizations are closed; and people have to remain indoors alone or just with their household members. Rather than thinking in terms of "social distancing" we must think of ways to maintain social connection even while maintaining physical distance. Often the arts are a powerful way to help process through loss, grief, and challenge. There is a wealth of art and culture available online, both from established organizations that have opened their collections, archives, and libraries to the internet and have made their staff available for many and varied teaching and performing opportunities. Online performance venues have popped up all over the globe, and social media platforms are replete with performances of all kinds: most for free, a few for admission or suggested donation, and many with optional "tip jars" through various financial transfer apps. Many artists and performers have seen their livelihoods disappear overnight; NoMAA and other cultural umbrella organizations are working to provide resources to support the arts & entertainment communities in this time. NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital's northern Manhattan Fund is available not only to businesses but also to non-profits adversely affected by COVID-19. Robin Hood Foundation, Actors Fund, Broadway Cares, and many other organizations also helping.
- I will be circulating a listing of parks & culture information from the MBP's excellent daily digest and other sources. Please share any information you have with me so I can include it.
- March 10<sup>th</sup> resolution offering public feedback on the proposed Request for Proposals for a restaurant concession in Fort Tryon Park was not sent to the full Board due to the unprecedented interruption of Board business (and general affairs) due to the global Coronavirus pandemic. Since the goal was to pass public feedback to the Parks Department Revenue Division, the Executive Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting could just be sent to Parks. This was done, and the Revenue Division has acknowledged receipt of same and confirmed that it will be taken into consideration.
- No update on a street co-naming in Inwood to honor the area's Lenape history; still anticipate forwarding a reso & petition to the City Council for its consideration either in June or December.
- Please complete the Census! It determines funding and public service at every level of government.

- 2) **Assistant Chair Daryl Cochran, who also works for the NYC Commission on Human Rights, addressed the issue of parks accessibility during COVID (6:45pm):** Overall, discrimination (harassment) has been down. Often because it takes place on the streets, and nobody is out at the moment. However, discrimination has increased for Asian, Jewish and LGBTQ communities. Talked to the different agencies the Human Rights agency is coordinating with, to track this data. No instances in parks themselves, from what's known. Call 311 and ask for "Human Rights" if you'd like to report an issue.
- 3) **NY Parks Update - Jennifer Hoppa - (6:52pm; break at 7pm for Emergency Worker recognition)**
- Quick parks business updates on COVID operations since their positions are considered Essential. People can still enjoy the 600 Acres of parks.
  - Promoted the "Parks at Home" series. Born from the need for people to stay inside, there is a platform that can be used for meditation that uses Park imagery, virtual tours and other educational services, online. Can be accessed at [www.NYC.gov/parks](http://www.NYC.gov/parks).
  - 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary memory book is up. and can still be submitted to (Jpg with memory copy in the text of the email): [info@forttryonpark.org](mailto:info@forttryonpark.org)
  - Parks workers have been provided with PPE, with more on route.
  - Fort Tryon Park Trust bought lunch for all the uptown Parks workers from Tryon Public House. Great way to thank our parks workers and also support a struggling local business.
  - Jennifer Bristol (member of the public) asked a question about security & enforcement in parks, in relation to social distancing and breaking into playgrounds. A (Jennifer Hoppa): we have Parks employees, PEP, & NYPD, but we cannot be everywhere all the time. Please continue to use parks safely, educate neighbors, and also call large gatherings into 311.
- 4) **Brief Parks & Cultural Organization Updates (6:51pm; interrupted for Parks update; resumed at 7:21pm)**
- **Sally Fisher (Friends of Inwood Hill Park):** Discussed the services/equipment that is being provided for people that would like to work in the park
  - **Ryan Desso:** Offered well wishes, thanks for the Zoom, & general observations on the state of affairs.
  - **Amanda Kraus (Row NY):** Suspended Boathouse Programs, and running remote support for student athletes (i.e., virtual tutoring, workouts and support). New Boathouse has funding to continue moving forward with dev. for the next 3 months.
  - **Alex Campos (Hispanic Society):** Society had planned to do a joint community event with The Met for the sesquicentennial (150<sup>th</sup> anniversary), but the event has been delayed. Trying to increase the online programming experience, and have added several new videos to website. Also gave an update on the educational curriculum integration into the schools. Still offering group tours of the museum (sign-up on website), but virtually. Creating an online concert series since in-person is not possible at this time.
  - **Shiloh Holley (Morris-Jumel Mansion):** Mansion is closed to the public, but developing online programming. There's a virtual tour of the mansion currently on the website.
  - **Anastassia Galko (Riverside Park Conservancy):** Park volunteer virtual training on 4/14 from 6-8pm
  - **Johanna Castro (NoMAA):** This is National Poetry Month, and week of 4/15 is NY Immigrant week. There's a coloring contest based around the Census; can be submitted online. Slowly transferring to virtual programming (Virtual Open Studios).
  - **Trish Anderton (Inwood Canoe Club):** Water is still too cold to paddle without protective gear; have enforced social distancing rules within the boathouse/dock. Since public programs were supposed to begin at the end of May but that seems unlikely, we are looking into other options.
  - **Nancy Fiashetti (Pied Piper Children's Theater):** Still keeping the kids engaged, especially since their show had to be cancelled during COVID. Trying to help The Y to provide their teens to give check-in calls to seniors. Still looking for possibilities to put on the production in the parks, for the kids.
  - **Jim Cattaldi (North Cove):** The Cove is doing well and is open to the public. Although the gate remains locked, one wall of fencing has been removed, so the area is accessible.

- **Ayisha Oglivie (PRX Gym):** The gym is offered a free two-week exercise challenge and instead of a few dozen people signing up, thousands signed up! The gym has transitioned this challenge into a virtual challenge. Another free two-week challenge will begin on April 27<sup>th</sup>.

#### 5) Discussion of Citizen Stewards in Parks (7:45pm)

- Nobles talked about the importance of having a level of “officiality” to stewards of our parks, based on the discussion that was had in Committee a couple of months ago regarding the North Cove. These volunteer contributions are important and should be recognized and supported.
- Jennifer mentioned programs like this actually exist via permanent volunteer training to work with the Parks Dept. to coordinate scope of work. Accessed on the website; when training is complete, you receive a permit or lanyard that identifies to anyone who might enquire your credentials to be working in the park.
- These are some of the resources for how people can get involved in volunteering in and/or advocating for their local park it, as well as how to get Natural Area Volunteer Training, how to become a Super Steward, and/or Citizen Pruner. Sally noted that she has taken the training to become a Citizen Pruner.
  - Stewardship Resources via NYC Parks: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/reg/stewardship>
  - Partnership for Parks Trainings: <https://cityparksfoundation.org/workshop-trainings/>
  - NY4P/Partnership for Parks tool kit: <http://www.ny4p.org/client-uploads/pdf/Other-reports/NY4P-Improve-Your-Park-Quick-Guide.pdfAction>

There being no old or new business, **the meeting was adjourned at 8:01pm** (motion by Nobles; second by Danielle & Daryl; no objection) though the Zoom continued for a few extra minutes so people could visit with each other.

Respectfully submitted: Nobles Crawford & Liz Ritter