

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
January 12, 2021 @ 6:30pm (via Zoom)

Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Daryl Cochrane, Ass't. Chair; Francisco Lopez; Nobles Crawford; Sally Fisher; Barbara Frazier; Danielle Jettoo; Alexis Marnel, Public Member; Ayisha Oglivie; Edda Santiago; Nayma Silver, Public Member. **Other Board Members:** Richard Allman; Steve Simon. **Staff:** Paola Garcia. **Elected Officials/Agencies/Institutions Represented:** Natalie Adele Bartlett & Espino, MBP Liaison; Jennifer Hoppa & Maria Febus, NYC Parks; Leslie Peoples, Ricardo Hinkle, & Craig Church, NYC Parks Capital/Design; Wendy Lorenzetti Olivo, NYS Assemblymember Al Taylor; Megan Byrnes, Morris-Jumel Mansion; Alexander Campos, Hispanic Society Museum; Martin Collins, NoMAA. **Also Attending:** Roberto Abramowitz; Nadya Ali; Trish Anderton; Cynthia Carrion; Marisol Casimiro; Deirdre Cipolla; Lorial Crowder; Jerry Culligan; Ira Gershonhorn; Paul Kittas; Keltha McAulay; Ted Minos; Melissa Moschitto; Esteban Munoz, Empire BlueCross; Reena Nazir; Alex Pellitteri; Steve <no lastname provided>; David Sykes, Uptown Soccer; C. Wheeler, America SCORES NY; Josh White.

The meeting was called to order at about 6:34pm by the Chair.

1) Welcome, Opening Remarks and Updates

- Welcome to all. Zoom has been great for increased participation, but does make for a more difficult time for interactive discussion such as can be had in person. Please make use of the chat and know that we are monitoring that and will answer throughout the meeting, either within the chat or live as part of the discussion.
- No update on Bennett Park as we were unable to do outreach as discussed at the last meeting. This discussion will be deferred to the February meeting.
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2) Jennifer Hoppa Parks Report (6:40pm)

Announcements:

- Thanked all who contributed to MulchFest: 1,367 trees brought to Inwood Hill Park mulching, and 383 to J. Hood Wright Park. These have been mulched and will be used as trees and ground cover in our parks.
- Highbridge Rec. Center continues to be used as a walk-in FREE CoViD testing site. Open 7days, 9am-7pm. There's a bit of a wait, but not too much. The line forms outside, so it's safe if also a little chilly. The site offers PCR & rapid CoViD tests, antibody testing, and flu vaccines. T
- J. Hood Wright Rec. Center is now a childcare center; apply online through the Learning Bridges Program.
- Budget Cuts are citywide but volunteering and stewardship has increased. There have been 8,300 volunteers in uptown parks alone; Highbridge Park has 2k volunteer hours logged!
- Announced then-upcoming stewardship events, Friends of J. Hood Wright Park monthly volunteer days; Fort Tryon Park Dog Run stewardship day on Jan. 30th, 9am-11:30am.
- Announced then-upcoming events, including Fort Tryon Rocks! Geology Hike Jan. 31st, 11am-noon.

Updates on Parks Projects:

- Audubon Park Playground between 169th and 170th next phase has been completed. Bathroom building will be ready for summer.
- Bike Paths along the Harlem River from 155th to Dyckman Streets will be repaired. Bike Path along Henry Hudson Parkway from Dyckman to 181st Streets also will be repaired. Retaining wall and sinkholes will be addressed. The wooden deck bridge over the Amtrak tracks is in design and approvals are in place; DoT should be starting construction in late summer.
- Contract for new bathrooms at Adventure Playground was just awarded; construction should begin in early spring and take about 18 months.
- There will be a public scoping meeting late February (date TBA) to discuss community vision for upgrade to the Dyckman Rest area at the northern terminus of Highbridge Park, across from the 1-train entrance.
- OMB has released funds for the Inwood Nature Center. The project is now advancing through procurement; anticipate construction to begin by summer and take 18-24 months for completion.

Q&A:

- Barbara Frazier: will CitiBike affect the Dyckman Rest project, and will a representative be at the scoping meeting? Also pledged to contact leaders at the Dyckman Houses as well as tenants in her building to come to scoping meeting. A: Parks is coordinating and finalizing CitiBike stations with DOT; this will NOT interfere with the design process.
- Danielle Jettoo: Does Sanitation mulch trees that apartment buildings put out for trash. A: yes.

3) **Parks Department Presentation on Proposed Reconstruction of Dyckman Soccer Field (6:57pm)** by Leslie Peoples (Designer); Ricardo Hinkle, Landscape architect; & Craig Church, Project Manager

- There's about 660 acres of park land in CD12, much of it sloped. Flat area for soccer is at a premium; the soccer field at the northern end of the Dyckman Ball Fields is flat, but there are some issues with the drainage and grade, as well as the need for some protective fencing to keep balls from going into the Hudson River. This project will literally be levelling the playing field (!), including raising it up and installing artificial turf surfacing and an 8" retaining wall to anchor the turf.
- The area is also used for passive recreation, i.e., walking on the adjacent pedestrian path, sitting in benches along the path, and enjoying the panoramic views.
- The project will cost \$8.2 million from Mayoral-directed funds: \$6.2 million from FY18 Neighborhood Development Fund, and \$2.5 million FY20 SoGR funding. Construction will take about a year and this area of the park will be closed to the public during construction.
- The site is 2.6 acres. The proposed field will be 147' x 300', and the total turf area will be 182' x 340'.
- The field will include an ADA-compliant seating area at a 5% grade, with a 13' ramp and seven benches, with room for companion seating. The design includes a flush tree pit for a mature tree. There will also be room for people to bring lawn chairs. The seating area is limited by the required safety zone for the playing fields as well as by existing tree root structures, and the need to maintain an ADA-compliant path along the western perimeter of the field between it and the water's edge.
- There will be an on-site storm water retention/detention and below-grade drainage system. (Details TBD w/DEP.) The project also plans to extend the water lines from further south in the ballfields to provide drinking fountains, bottle refills, and a sports mister; these additions are subject to the (currently unknown) condition of the underlying pipes.
- The walkway near the Hudson River will be reconstructed and will have a 12' chain link fence along the western perimeter, and turning to run for 20 feet along the northern & southern perimeters, to ensure soccer balls do not go in the river. The fence will not take away any space from the existing walkway. *[Note: subsequent to the presentation but prior to the publication of these minutes, Parks proposed a lower design for the fence, reducing it to 8'.]*
- Natural turf will be converted to a synthetic turf field. The synthetic turf will not include the rubber crumb infill, which makes for a hotter playing surface.
- No trees will be removed.
- Important to note that a portion of the field is in the flood plain, but community call for a soccer field was so strong, the agency felt it is appropriate to build this project anyway.

Q&A

- Nayma Silver: How will the walkway be constructed and why is the seating the walkway area? A (Ricardo): there is no space in the Amtrak area on the other side for seating and ADA safety compliance. It will not narrow the path on the walkway.
- Nobles Crawford: Where are the trash cans on the field? A: (Ricardo) they are located on the southern extreme on the field, just did not include pictures of it on the drawing.
- Danielle Jettoo: How does the size compare to a pro field? Is the water fountain touchless (i.e., foot operated)? Are the light fixtures historic and will they be preserved? A: (Ricardo) the field is smaller, as it is a junior size field but double the size of the one at Highbridge. It should be remembered that a public

park has to accommodate fields for other uses, including other sports (e.g., baseball) as well as passive recreation. There is not sufficient space for a pro size field. Currently there is not a plan for a touchless or foot-operated touch water fountain but they will look into it. (The Committee was in support of this.) The light fixtures are not historic; they will be replaced in kind.

- Barbara Frazier: Is there a midway bathroom that can be explored between the baseball and soccer field? A: (Leslie Peoples) This is cost-prohibitive and well beyond the scope of the project, it would have to be investigated if it is even possible due to existing plumbing and/or if pipes can be installed in that area. The closest plumbing/sewage is 1500+ feet away, so it's very expensive to extend. There was at this point a considerable discussion of the need for bathrooms.
- Barbara also asked if the field will shift since it's built on a landfill? A: no. The field will be surrounded by an 8" curb which will anchor the turf and prevent shifting. Q: Is there any modification for a shorter field? A: (Ricardo) yes; the goals are moveable and the field size can adjust downwards as needed for youth play.
- Darryl Cochrane: Will there be any changes to the drinking fountains in the south area of the field? A: (Ricardo) no. Will the benches on the outside of the chain link fence be repaired? A: (Leslie) No, this is outside of the scope of the project. A: (Jennifer Hoppa) we can make repairs to those benches as part of ongoing maintenance.
- Ira Gershenhorn: Can bike racks be included in the design? A: Yes, we will add that.
- Roberto Abramowitz: What about fencing behind the goals on the north and south sides? Balls might go too far to recover, and this affects play. A: (Ricardo) it was considered early on but due to expense it was not included in this stage of the project. Ricardo also noted that the project was designed with open space in mind, and for people to be able to have unobstructed views of the water. Q: since there is no housing near the soccer field, can lights be added to help people play at night? A: (Ricardo) there is no funding available for it in this phase. Q: Can solar panels be considered? A: There are no solar panels for sports lighting; not powerful enough. Lighting is cost-prohibitive, and would have to be a separate project. It was recommended that we keep this in mind as a budget priority in the next budget ranking cycle.
- Someone asked where the construction staging would be. A: That's up to the contractor, but probably in the hockey rink just south of the proposed field reconstruction project?

There was a considerable discussion regarding the fence, whether it should be higher, and whether it should wrap around to extend to behind the goals. Based on the consensus of the Committee and in consideration of preservation of the views for passive recreation, it was agreed that the fence should be no higher than 12', and that the wraparound should not extend further than the 20' proposed at either bend.

It was agreed to pass a resolution supporting the proposed project, with the following additions:

- Add hands-free, foot-operated water fountains
- Work as hard as possible to ensure that the proposed water features be included in the final execution of the project (subject to underground conditions beyond the designers' control)
- Add bikes racks
- Include garbage cans in the design
- Make explicit in the reso our approval of siting in a flood plain
- Reiterate the importance of bathrooms, and our request that a comfort station be funded.

This passed unanimously 9 Committee Members, & 2 Committee Public Members, & 1 Board Members in favor, with 1 Board member not voting due to conflict.

4) Brief Parks & Cultural Organization Updates* (8:07pm)

- **NoMAA / Martin Collins:** Martin Collins announced the 2021 arts stroll poster contest (LIZ: I didn't hear the due date on this). Juan Pablo Duarte Foundation presents the "Reimagined" exhibit by Diana Grace Manalastas through January 22nd (Tues - Saturdays 12- 5 call to make a reservation). Dyckman Farm House continues with events to coincide with their ongoing exhibit, Unspoken Voices: Honoring a legacy

of Black America . Join the Zoom event: My Soul Sings of Freedom: An Interactive Musical and Spoken Word Workshop with artist Gwendolyn Black Jan 23, 2021 @ 2:00 PM

- **Morris-Jumel Mansion / Megan Byrnes:** CoVIDA - Homage to Victims of the Pandemic, the public art installation by Andrea Arroyo, extended through January 31st. Thursdays and Fridays at 11am and 1 pm are set aside for seniors and immunocompromised visitors to enjoy a safe, self-guided visit at the museum. Tuesday, January 19th, 7-8 p.m: MJM Parlor Chat, in conjunction with Word Up Community Bookshop: An evening of conversation and poetry with native New Yorker and storyteller Roberto Carlos Garcia. Garcia will share poems from his latest collection of poetry, [Elegies] (2020), and reflect on the topics of love, family, mourning, and the weight of history on the eve of the Presidential Inauguration.
- **Hispanic Society / Alexander Campos:** The online concert series is ongoing and available on the Hispanic Society website. Check the website for updates. A new outdoor exhibit will be occurring in the Spring - details to follow. After an extensive international search, the new executive director, Guillaume Kientz, formerly of the Kimball Art Museum in Ft. Worth, TX & the Louvre, has been announced and will start in February or March.
- **Friends of Inwood Hill Park / Sally Fisher:** Thanks to everyone who helped make MulchFest a big success. We have milkweed seeds available if you'd like to plant them.
- **Riverside Inwood Neighborhood Garden (RING) / Barbara Frazier:** The Christmas tree and menorah lighting was a big success and the lights are still up as people have really been enjoying them and find them a source of comfort. The Ring Garden is accepting composting, check the website for information.

*excludes events which were then-upcoming, but held prior to publication of these minutes.

5) Old Business / New Business / Additional announcements (8:50pm)

- There was no old or new business
- The Chair announced a Hanukkah klezmer concert on Zoom on Weds. 12/16 at 7pm.

In consideration of recent events and everyone's Zoom fatigue and there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm.

Respectfully submitted: Alexis Marnel & Liz Ritter