

**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; Sally Fisher; Barbara Frazier; Francisco Lopez; Alexis Marnel, Public Member; Ayisha Oglivie; Edda Santiago; Nayma Silver, Public Member. **Committee Members Excused:** Nobles Crawford; Danielle Jettoo. **Other Board Members:** Richard Allman; Curtis Young. **Staff:** Paola Garcia. **Elected Officials, Agencies, & Institutions Represented:** Natalie Espino & Nelson Andino, MBPO; Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Parks; Shiloh Holley, Morris-Jumel Mansion; Alexander Campos, Hispanic Society Museum; Lorial Crowder, Community League of the Heights; Martin Collins, NoMAA; Cecily Harris & Karen Horry, CB 10; Laurie Tobias Cohen, Congressman Espaillat's Office; Miguel Guadalupe, Bowery Residents' Committee (BRC); Karen Taylor, While We're Still Here; Rachel Cytron, Row NY. **Also Attending:** Christina Alphonso, Trish Anderson, Robert Barnett, Tati Espino, Ira Gershenhorn, Elliott Avi Gitler, Paul Kittas, Keltha McAulay, Jacob Morris, Reena Nazir, Katherine O'Sullivan.

The meeting was called unofficially to order at 6:32pm by the Chair in the absence of a quorum, which was achieved at 6:47pm.

**1) Welcome, Opening Remarks, & Updates**

- Last month's resolution in support of the Parks Department's proposed design for the restoration of Inwood Hill Park's Dyckman Ballfield's soccer field was approved unanimously, with 42 votes in favor and one Not Voting due to conflict.
- It is an honor if also a coincidence to have several items of Black history uptown on our agenda this evening, during our February meeting in Black History Month: Inwood's African-American & Slave Burial Grounds; commemoration of The Exonerated Five in Central Park/CB10M; and the Harlem Heritage Markers Project in Manhattan's Community Boards 10, 9, & 12.
- Miguel Guadeloupe from Bowery Residents' Committee (BRC), a homeless outreach and services organization made a brief presentation about an upcoming series of meetings they are having to learn more about a site they recently purchased at 3966 Tenth Avenue for a homeless shelter. When they learned the land had been a cemetery for enslaved people they halted their construction plans to learn more about the history, as well as the community's needs and wishes for honoring this history. BRC has partnered with the Manhattan Borough President's Office and the Dyckman Farmhouse Museum, and has engaged the services of La-Verna Fountain, President, Meaningful Communications Matter LLC to moderate a series of three community conversations (hosted virtually on Zoom) in consultation with Peggy King Jorde, who played an integral role in the preservation of the African-American Burial Grounds in lower Manhattan. The first meeting was on January 27<sup>th</sup>; a second session will be held bilingually on Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>, and a final session on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>. Participation is open to all. Mr. Guadalupe also noted the Dyckman Farmhouse's ongoing Wednesday evening lecture series, *Talking About Race Matters*, ongoing through March 10<sup>th</sup>. (Visit [www.dyckmanfarmhouse.org](http://www.dyckmanfarmhouse.org) for details.)

**2) Jennifer Hoppa Parks Report (6:47pm)**

**General Updates:**

- Snow Removal: Since Upper Manhattan has the largest amount of open park space, it takes more time to get it all cleared. The Parks Department's now removal team reports to DSNY for snow clearing, which prioritizes paths and the roadway transportation network for clearing. *[Several people expressed gratitude for the generally good plowing in/around our local parks.]*
- If you see wounded wildlife, call 311 or contact me so we can reach out to the Urban Park Rangers and trained wildlife rehabilitators. Do not attempt to capture and "save" the animal, which can injure both it and you. Recently a Good Samaritan found wounded hawk in Fort Tryon Park and called 311; it was nursed back to health and it will be released back into the wild.
- Trails: the Student Conservation Association will be volunteering to help clear Inwood Hill Park Trails.
- Last month a driver crashed into an 86-year-old historic parapets while driving on a pedestrian paths in Fort Tryon Park, just south of the Cloisters Lawn. The car was abandoned but the NYPD located the owner.

Barricades are up and safety measures are in place, and Parks is working to repair the parapet/wall. The City's lawyers are working with the owner's insurance company on reimbursement for the repairs.

#### **Capital Project Updates:**

- The High Bridge water tower has resumed construction following NYC's construction pause due to COVID.
- The Highbridge Park Adventure Playground's new comfort station is due to break ground in June.
- Completion of Highbridge Park's Grand Stairway on Laurel Hill Terrace is anticipated by the end of April, but is weather-dependent. Subsurface infrastructure work is being done in conjunction with Con Edison.
- There will be a Public Scoping Meeting for the Dyckman Rest project (along the northern perimeter of Highbridge Park at Dyckman Street & Nagle Ave. adjacent to the 1-Train) on Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm - 8pm, on Zoom (<https://www.nycgovparks.org/reg/community-input-meetings/10540>). We need CB12M's help to publicize this within the community; particularly important to have input from the Dyckman Houses which are across the street.
- Ann Loftus Playground renovation project is on pause due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Reconstruction of the Henry Hudson Parkway Bike Path (from W. 179<sup>th</sup> to Dyckman Streets) is fully designed. There may be some temporary closings or re-routings; I'll have a full report on that next month.
- The NYC Office of Management & Budget has lifted its pause (due to COVID) on contract procurement; Parks can move forward with contract procurement & construction for Inwood Hill Park's Nature Center.

#### **Other Announcements:**

- There is COVID testing at the High Bridge Rec Center operated by NYC Health & Hospitals, 7 days/week, 9am – 7pm, offering COVID-19 antigen testing (including rapid testing) and antibody testing.
- Jay Hood Wright Park Senior Center is operating as an emergency child care center.
- Outdoor Skills Survival 101 - Inwood Park Rangers Inwood Hill Park Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>, 1pm-2pm.
- Nature Exploration - Inwood Park Rangers Inwood Hill Park Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>, 1pm-2pm.

#### **Q & A**

- **Natalie Espino (MPBO Liaison):** What is the outreach being done regarding sports league permits that require CPR certification (which might be difficult to get during COVID)? Can you bring in people who are already certified? A: Recreation division is already spearheading this. She will find out and send the info along to Natalie. Jennifer also stated that the leagues should be getting notifications. *[Jennifer subsequently replied that per NYC Law Department guidelines, CPR certification is required. Leagues are welcome to get training privately and at their own expense or to participate in free certification classes offered by the Parks Department.]*
- **Nayma Silver (Public Member):** asked clarifying questions about the location of the Dyckman Rest, as well as procedures for ensuring participation by NYCHA residents, and was assured that, as with previous projects (e.g., the Street End Parks, Msgr. Kett Playground, etc.) there would be extensive outreach to the Dyckman Houses. Barbara Frazier is also working on this, as is C/M Rodriguez.

### **3) Brief Parks & Cultural Organization Updates\* (7:21pm)**

- **Natalie Espino / Manhattan Borough President's Office:**
  - Manhattan Community Board applications for new members are due February 22<sup>nd</sup>.
  - Last week when DoT announced locations for their new Open Culture Streets initiatives there were ZERO locations north of 116<sup>th</sup> St. At the MBP's urging, DoT agreed to extend its deadline by 24 hours to accept suggestions for uptown locations. In response to the MBP's urgent call 116 responses were received in less than 12 hours; hopefully DoT will include some of these suggestions. DoT will be putting out a citywide call for another round of designations in a few months.
- **Martin Collins / Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMAA):**
  - The Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance is seeking visual art images & spoken word video submissions for: In/Out – Light/Dark: Women in the Heights and Art in Our Time. Deadline is February 28<sup>th</sup>. Open to self-identified women artists working or residing in El Barrio, Inwood, Washington Heights, Inwood,

Harlem & El Barrio. Free online application at: [www.nomaanyc.org/2021/01/open-call-in-out-light-dark-women-in-the-heights-and-art-in-our-time/](http://www.nomaanyc.org/2021/01/open-call-in-out-light-dark-women-in-the-heights-and-art-in-our-time/).

- The 19<sup>th</sup> Uptown Arts Stroll begins with the annual poster contest for artists in Washington Heights, Inwood & West Harlem (W. 135<sup>th</sup> to W. 220<sup>th</sup> Streets). The grand prize winning artist will receive \$1,250 and the banner on all publications; second prize winner receives \$500, and third prize \$250. Deadline is March 30<sup>th</sup>. Visit [www.artstroll.com](http://www.artstroll.com) for complete information and to enter the contest.
- **Shiloh Holley / Morris-Jumel Mansion:** Veteran Voices: Capturing the Oral History of NYC veterans, in partnership with NYC Department of Veterans' Services, on view through March 7<sup>th</sup>. Also announced several then-upcoming programs for Valentines' Day, Presidents' Day, and the mid-winter school break.
- **Alexander Campos / Hispanic Society:** The Hispanic Society Museum has a monthly concert series as live YouTube events. February 22<sup>nd</sup> will include excerpts from the Spanish opera *Apollo y Dafne*, one of several in a series that will lead up to the full performance of the opera in June. March 31<sup>st</sup> will be a live conversation about the opera with guest artists Esteban La Rotta (baroque guitar) & Camille Zamora (soprano). In May (date TBD) we'll have a live performance of Spanish baroque music for violin and harpsichord from the eighteenth century, featuring works by Jose Herrando, Juan de Ledesma, Juan Oliver y Astorga, & Marianna Martinez. This program is supported in part by public funds from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and NY State Council on the Arts.
- **Rachel Cytron / Row NY:** We have a few spots left in our rowing program for high school students, students with disabilities and veterans. All programs are remote during the winter. Interested students can email [rcytron@rownewyork.org](mailto:rcytron@rownewyork.org).
- **Chris Whittaker / Washington Heights Chamber Orchestra:** Announced a live webinar, *Digital Audio & Video for Musicians 101* on Sunday, Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>, at 8pm; and a streaming recital series on Sunday nights at 8:30pm beginning with *Exponential Ensemble*, Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>. Visit [www.washingtonheightsorchestra.org](http://www.washingtonheightsorchestra.org) (or [www.whco.nyc](http://www.whco.nyc)) for more information. They are also looking to do a series of pop-up concerts in various parks this spring; details TBD.
- **Paul Kittas:** announced upcoming neighborhood walking tours; visit [www.heightsites.com](http://www.heightsites.com) for more info. Also noted that he's a "41-miler," having hiked the length of the route of the old Croton Aqueduct, from Bryant Park through Manhattan, the Bronx, & Westchester.

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

#### 4) **Presentation: Karen Horry, Chair, CB10 Parks & Recreation Committee and Cicely Harris, Chair, CB10 to Support an Exhibit in Central Park to Commemorate the Exonerated Five and Social Justice (7:34pm)**

**CB10M is seeking letters (or resolutions) in support** of their proposal for a permanent installation in Central Park to commemorate the Exonerated Five: five Black and Latino teenagers from Harlem who were wrongfully convicted and prosecuted for the brutal and vicious rape of a white woman in Central Park in 1989. The five teenagers – Antron McCray, 15; Kevin Richardson, 15; Raymond Santana, 14; Korey Wise, 16; & Yusef Salaam, 15 – were subjected to life-devastating consequences as a result of this gross miscarriage of justice. The five youth served their complete sentences, between 6 and 13 years, before another man, serial rapist Matias Reyes, admitted to the crime, which was substantiated with DNA testing. Based on this new evidence, the NYS Supreme Court vacated the convictions of the five previously accused youth. The City of New York agreed to a financial settlement on June 19, 2014, but a financial settlement can never repay what was taken. The experience of the Exonerated Five did not just traumatize these men and their families; it had resounding ramifications throughout the Harlem community which are still felt today.

Ms. Harris gave introductory remarks, and Ms. Horry walked the Committee through a powerful, moving, and detailed presentation on both the proposal and CB10's process in researching and designing it. This included many community meetings over an almost two-year period beginning in October 2019, culminating

in the passage of a resolution by CB10M in June, 2020, and the formation of a subcommittee whose exploratory work continued in the summer of 2020. CB10M's process provides a helpful roadmap to CB12 as it contemplates the renaming of several of its parks in response to ongoing concerns about race and representation. In our current time of reckoning on race in our country and our city it is vitally important to engage in ongoing dialogue on and commemoration of this event to serve as an enduring lesson of an injustice that must not be repeated. A commemoration should be designed to be compelling as well as accessible to the viewing experience. It should be inviting and pervade a sense of community ownership. For too long members of the community have been made to feel that their park was not for them. Visitors should be able to reflect on the human cost of systemic racism and explore the roles and responsibilities of individuals, society, and government when confronting racism, injustice and institutionalized inequities. The installation should educate the public about what led to the conviction and subsequent exoneration of "the Central Park Five," including the historical context about policing in New York City at the time. The proposed project is anticipated to be completed by April 2022.

While it is not the business of any Board to dictate what is done in other districts, this matter is of borough-wide, citywide, and national importance; the lingering trauma is felt in communities of color, including this one. Liz requested a motion for a resolution: Ayisha offered one in support of CB10's proposal; this was seconded by Darryl. The motion passed unanimously with 7 Committee Members and 2 Committee Public Members voting in favor and none opposed; 2 Board Members also voted in favor.

5) **Parks Renaming (8:15pm):** As part of the ongoing conversation regarding the renaming of Bennett Park, Assistant Chair Darryl Cochrane offered a list uptown parks and playgrounds, both in their entirety or sections within same, as possible areas to rename, given the breadth and scope of suggestions made for renaming of Bennett Park and the playground within. He & Liz went on a driving tour of the neighborhood last week and came up with a comprehensive though by no means exhaustive list for consideration:

- Bennett Park
- Bennett Park playground (northern end)
- Bennett Park recreational area (southern end)
- J. Hood Wright Senior Center
- J. Hood Wright playground
- J. Hood Wright's GWB overlook
- The western gate of Morris-Jumel Mansion/Roger Morris Park
- Highbridge Park Recreation Center
- Highbridge Pool
- Highbridge Park ballfields & basketball courts
- Highbridge Park lawn south of the rec center
- Highbridge Park Adventure Playground
- Highbridge Park staircases at Laurel Terr.
- Highbridge Park entrances
- Highbridge Park urban farm (at Ft. George Hill)
- Ft. George Playground
- Bennett Rest
- Fort Tryon Park volleyball courts, table tennis, & terrace by 190 A train (Ft. Washington Ave.)
- Fort Tryon Park north & south gates
- Fort Tryon Park gazebo
- Fort Tryon Park house near the gazebo Fort Tryon Park café lawn
- Fort Tryon Park Dongan Lawn
- Fort Washington Park Promenade along the Hudson and/or the circle at the end
- Ft. Washington Park triangle sliver at Staff St.
- Ft. Washington Park promenade south of Dyckman St. (past Inwood Canoe Club)
- Dyckman Pier (just north of the marina)
- Dyckman Marina
- Inwood Hill Park's Dyckman ballfields
- Bridge connecting west and east Inwood Hill Park
- Inwood Hill Park Nature Center
- Inwood Hill Park Peninsula
- Inwood Hill Park rest overlooking Spuyten Duyvil
- W. 202<sup>nd</sup> – W. 206<sup>th</sup> St. street-end Parks & any new sites created in the rezoning
- Tennis Courts in all parks (IHP, FWP)
- Various dog runs
- W. 181<sup>st</sup> Street overlook of GWB / Hudson River (DoT)
- W. 181<sup>st</sup> St. pedestrian bridge (DoT)
- The playground at W. 180<sup>th</sup> St. & Cabrini Blvd. (note: this is PANYNJ property, not NYC Parks)

As we see from the previous discussion on the Exonerated Five, this conversation can and should evolve over many months with much community input, not something to be decided in haste. Q&A followed:

- Ayisha: Is the intention to rename all or parts of Fort Tryon? A (Liz): That is another discussion but there are many things within that park that are named separately and we need not name all of the component parts. Additionally, the entire Park could be renamed if that is a recommendation that the community supports and the Parks Commissioner agrees to. Ayisha: a park can be renamed for a living person at the discretion of the Commissioner; does not have to be after someone who is deceased. She specifically noted Harry Belafonte naming. A (Liz): it's all at the discretion of the Commissioner with community input. More important right now to focus on our broader goals and agree on what we are trying to accomplish rather than on the process minutiae. Let's figure out what we want to do, and then figure out how best to do it, so as not to limit our possibilities based on what we think we can/cannot do.
- Sally Fisher: Would like to add the entirety of Inwood Hill Park to the list
- Jennifer: In the 1980's the City Council did have purview of renaming. Many recent renamings have been done by the Commissioner at the behest of the community.
- Richard Allman: suggested separating Highbridge Park into two parks at 181<sup>st</sup> Street
- Ayisha: would like to see a playground named for Stan Lee (of Marvel Comics)
- Alexis Marnel: would like to see something in the neighborhood named for Maria Callas, to honor this daughter of our neighborhood, and the strong presence of a Greek community in Washington Heights for many years.
- Shiloh Holley: Thanked everyone for the list. In particular the mention of the Morris-Jumel Mansion gates & Roger Morris Park compliments initiatives at the Mansion and how they relate to historical legacies.
- Jacob Morris: Plaque in Fort Tryon Park for Margaret Corbin as the first female Revolutionary War hero is inaccurate as she was defending what was then called Fort Washington, not Fort Tryon.

- 6) **New Business (8:50pm):** Karen Taylor, a former CB12M Member (and member of this Committee), and Executive Director of *While We Are Still Here* (WWSH) received foundation support for a Harlem Heritage Markers Project. Two grants from the New York Community Trust and the Pomeroy Foundation totaling \$45k are for fabrication, design, and installation of signage. There are a total of 25 sites, and the NYC Economic Development Corp. has Sites in CD12 include the Audubon Ballroom (site of the assassination of Malcolm X), and 409 & 555 Edgecombe Ave., where many greats from the Harlem Renaissance & Civil Rights movement resided. WWSH is seeking a letter of support to be included with their application to the City to install the markers. They have received one from CB9 and are awaiting one from CB10. This proposal was supported unanimously by the Committee Members (7 + 2 Public Members). Liz noted that the Board passed a resolution about a Harlem Heights Heritage Area in March 2002 as well as resos for street co-namings on Edgecombe Ave.; as this is consistent with that, a new reso might not be needed: the Chair may be able to sign a Letter of Support on the basis of prior the Board resolution. She will craft both versions, and defer to the Chair/Executive Committee as to which action is preferred. *[Note: upon consultation, the Parliamentarian suggested that a reso would be most appropriate. As only 3 members of the Board in 2002 are still on the Board, it seemed reasonable to go with a new reso rather than a Letter based on the almost 20-year-old reso.]*

**There being no further business,** Sally made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Daryl and approved by acclamation. **The meeting was adjourned at 9pm.**