

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
March 9, 2021 @ 6:30pm (via Zoom)

Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Daryl Cochrane, Ass't. Chair; Nobles Crawford; Sally Fisher; Barbara Frazier; Danielle Jettoo; Francisco Lopez; Alexis Marnel, Public Member. **Excused Absence:** Edda Santiago, Ayisha Oglivie.

Absent: Nayma Silver, Public Member. **Other Board Members:** Mary Anderson, Tanya Bonner. **Staff:** Paola Garcia. **Elected Officials, Agencies, & Institutions Represented:** NYS Senator Robert Jackson; Natalie Espino, MBPO; Laurie Tobias Cohen, Congressman Espaillat's Office; Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Parks; Shiloh Holley & Meghan Alvarez, Morris-Jumel Mansion; Alexander Campos, Hispanic Society Museum; Martin Collins, NoMAA; Maggie Clark, RING; Obed Fulcar, Friends of Sherman Creek; Rosa Yolanda Pineda, Conectemonos; Shawn Folz, Ft. Tryon Park Trust. **Also Attending:** Trish Anderton; Nelly Benavides; Robert Barnett; Deborah Barrett; Ian Caddick; Emma Cillekens; Cassandre Collazo; Ira Gershenshorn; Sheree Farmer-Johnson; Eric Johnson; Jahzeel Montes; Katherine O'Sullivan; Eleanor Quallo; John Rumely; Ryan Spass; Monica Williamson.

The meeting was called to order at about 6:36pm by the Chair.

1) Welcome, Opening Remarks, & Updates

- Update on February Resolutions regarding CB10 Exonerated Five commemoration & Harlem Heritage Markers Project: both passed the full Board unanimously.
- Observed a moment of silence for Jeanlee Poggi, founder of W. 181st Beautification Project and Dolphin Park, and James "Bird Man" Cataldi, preserver of Inwood's North Cove, who died on Feb. 24th & 26th, respectively. There will be a mass for James at Good Shepherd Church on March 24th at noon.
- Update on Inwood's African American and Native American burial grounds and ceremonial pit: conversation ongoing; many CB12 members and other community stakeholders were able to participate in well moderated public sessions sponsored by BRC in collaboration with the Dyckman Farmhouse Museum & the Manhattan Borough President's Office. Kudos for a healthy and constructive conversation.
- Update on Dyckman Rest scoping meeting: productive meeting with good public participation. Jennifer will be reporting more in her report. Deadline for public feedback is tomorrow, so get comments in if you haven't already.
- HPD & CLoTH will be giving a presentation on the proposed Arts Culture & Training (ACTS) Center in The Eliza affordable housing development on Broadway btw. Dyckman/Cumming Streets at our next meeting (April 13th).
- WH CORNER Project has a new space! They've been struggling since they lost their lease in August 2019, and had been operating out of trailers on Amsterdam Ave. Their new, beautifully renovated home is on W. 180th St. near Amsterdam Ave., with ample room for programming.
- Update on WH/I Noise Task Force: Tanya Bonner spoke on the inception of the task force (21 members currently). Working hard learning about the issues and how the policies and procedures function. Beginning to engage with agency representatives, local government officials, and other stakeholders. The goal of the Task Force is to ensure that NYPD, PEP, Parks, etc. have a plan in place before the warm season begins to a "healthy quality of life" summer. Liz noted that she is working with the Public Safety Committee Chair to ensure that all of the relevant enforcement agencies attend the May Committee meeting.
- Interest in holiday-themed pop-up festivals in parks: Committee member Francisco Lopez, who is also Assistant Chair of the Business Development Committee noted that he learned of a Chicago-based group would like to bring holiday-themed festivals (e.g., Halloween/Fall Harvest; Christmas) to uptown parks. Francisco will invite them to present in April.

2) Brief Parks & Cultural Organization Updates (7:02pm) <Note: then-upcoming events occurring prior to distribution of these minutes are generally omitted.>

- **Emma Cillekens (Mighty Writers):** Organization focused on literacy through many different educational and well-being workshops, operating in Washington Heights since 2020. Our mission is to help kids to think and write clearly. The first workshop has been a Family Cook Night, focused on the Dominican community. Free on Thursday nights, 6pm-7pm on Zoom. Working on developing more programming and bilingual workshops, including a photography workshop w/CASW.
- **Shiloh Holley (Morris-Jumel Mansion):** Veterans Voices pop-up exhibition will continue through April (Thu. - Sun), open to the public. Also spoke of then-upcoming PARlour Chats, and a feminist walking tour of Harlem for Women's History Month. Provided a survey asking for input on how MJM can better serve the community
- **Martin Collins (NoMAA):** Join Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance 7pm Thursday, March 18th for the 11th annual Women in the Heights exhibit opening online, and Sound Waves & Brain Waves with Grammy nominee Miguel Zenon & CU Zuckerman Institute at 7:30pm Monday, March 22nd; more info at www.nomaanyc.org. Community Board 12 & 9 artists may enter Uptown Arts Stroll Poster Contest by March 30th for your chance to win \$1,250 grand prize, \$500 2nd & \$250 3rd prize; info & application at www.artstroll.com. NoMAA's new website is coming soon! Register your events www.nomaanyc.org
- **Rosa Yolanda Pineda (Connectemonos):** Looking to inspire inter-generational "agents of change" together for community welfare. Gave an update on the spaces they are looking to use for their organization and the steps to adjust the designating permits for space usage: working on an MOU w/ Dept. of Education regarding the Urban Farm on Ft. George Hill near GWHS, and looking to Parks Dept. to change the permitting at the W. 186th St. Basketball Courts from sports-only to special events. Dr. Pineda also noted that she wanted to form a Friends of Highbridge Park; Jennifer recommended again that Connectemonos work with the NYC Parks Foundation.
- **Alexander Campos (Hispanic Society Museum):** Announced then-upcoming Young Curators/Architects Spring 2021 in partnership with A. Philip Randolph High School and Yale College of Architecture, and a then-upcoming video artmaking workshop. Announced a new monthly program on the 8th of the month on Women in the Hispanic Society Museum & Library, beginning with yesterday's installment on International Women's Day on Anna Hyatt Huntington; see the program here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_GiYIYKANU. April 8th will feature La Roldana. March 31st is the next event in the Concert Series on Apollo & Daphne, with a live conversation with guest artists Esteban La Rotta (baroque guitar) and Camille Zamora (soprano): part conversation, part lecture-demonstration, listen in on the musicians of Sonnambula as they describe the intriguing complications of learning an opera that no one knows, featuring Elizabeth Weinfield (viola da gamba and direction) with guests Esteban La Rotta (baroque guitar) and Camille Zamora (soprano).
- **Maggie Clarke (Riverside Inwood Neighborhood Garden):** RING is in its 37th year; we're a little behind in planning our annual events due to COVID restriction. Looking for input/advice from the Parks Department on what is permissible. Jennifer answered: 50-person cap still in place, so RING can do programs that accommodate the occupancy. Must also provide COVID safety plan/protocols. As far as the Governor's 200-person gathering limit revision, Parks is still working out how to make this available locally.
- **Sally Fisher (Friends of Inwood Hill Park):** 350 families participated in last weekend's eWaste recycling event sponsored by the Lower East Side Ecology Center in partnership w/Parks.

Announced Earth Day Celebration in Inwood Hill Park on April 24th. Riversweep on May 1st will have two locations this year; details still being worked out.

- **Jahzeel Montes (Internal Creations):** Arts non-profit with a mission to develop leadership through learning the classical guitar. Launched the MIH Victory Clinic (W. 180th St.) program to aid therapeutic recovery from substance abuse. They receive their funding through the City Council & the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Expanding the program into Holyhood Church by either May or following academic year. Also announced a then-upcoming free concert for the community. For more information, visit internalcreations.org. Liz suggested he reach out to the Cabrini Shrine which is always looking for local musicians for their hour-long "Making Space for Serenity" on Wednesday evenings.
- **Jennifer Hoppa (NYC Parks Department & Fort Tryon Park Trust) Programming Updates):** March 27th Spring Migrants birding tour at 10am. Also on the 27th the Trust kicks-off Broadway clean-up initiative from 12-4. Announced many then-upcoming events, including a monthly clean-up by the NYC Mountain Bike group on the 2nd Saturday of every month in Highbridge Park from 10am-3pm.

3) Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Parks Update (7:34pm)

Announcements:

- Parks Renaming Project: Deadline is now March 16th/ See Parks Website for details and the process for this 2nd round of the Juneteenth Project.
- Temporary Public Art Installations on the Broadway Malls & the Linden Terrace that had been delayed by COVID, to be installed beginning in May.
- Expecting to Release the RFP for the New Leaf Café (restaurant concession in Fort Tryon Park) in the near term. When it gets released I will circulate the notice to the Board. (*Ed note: this was released on March 12th.*)
- Reforestation Work in Inwood Hill Park: someone is erecting a teepee structure within the Shorakkapoch Nature Preserve's clove, which is hurting an already degraded area of the forest by adding soil compaction. Unfortunately it's also attracted fires. We are working with Parks' Natural Resources Group on a Reforestation Project there, and will be doing a tree planting in early May to remove the structures and plant trees. We'd love CB 12's help in doing public education about the structures being an attractive nuisance and harming the forest.
- Official statement from Parks Department regarding Special Event Permits/COVID Restrictions: *"We are aware of the announcements made by the Governor regarding outdoor gathering capacities. The City is still interpreting what this means for our permits. More information will be provided to you once the City and NYC Parks has made a determination on applying the State's standards to our permitting policies. Until then we ask for your patience"*
- Tennis Permits: If you purchased and received a tennis permit in 2020, you will get a new one for the 2021 season in the mail. There is no need to re-apply for your tennis permit and there will be no additional charge.
- Sports Fields Permit Applications Update: Field and court permits are now available for low and moderate risk sports for the spring and summer season (March 17 - August 31, 2021). We are currently reviewing permit requests and issuing permits received during the spring and summer sports application period, which ended January 15, 2021. However, we will continue to accept new permit requests for the spring and summer season, and we will review them in the order that we receive them.

Capital Projects:

- Greenway closure for reconstruction for 4 months late this summer; addressing the sink holes and retaining wall conditions between 180th & 200th Streets. Will need to reroute pedestrians and cyclists onto the sidewalk and on street bike lane network during construction and are working with NYCDOT on that route.
- Inwood Nature Center: Unpaused. Working to get a Certificate to Proceed from OMB and then intend to award to a construction contractor. Hopefully the firm is willing to take the pre-COVID rate; if so, construction will begin late summer/early Fall.
- Monsignor Kett Playground: Procurement has resumed, earliest it would be awarded and construction would start is Fall.
- Anne Loftus: unpaused. Contract to be awarded; construction likely to begin late May.

Q&A

- **Daryl:** Why are the people putting up structures in Inwood Hill Park? A: A lot of people are relying on the parks for mental health, and that parks are a good place to just get away.
- **Barbara:** In the Monsignor Kett meetings, there were numerous suggestions that were well received and incorporated. Can Parks submit the revised plans to the Committee because usually no one gets to see them after the public's comments. A: I can request them. It will be a rendering of what will be built, but will ask the Capital Division for it.
- **Deborah Barrett:** had raised a concern earlier in the meeting that the elevated level of street noises has already begun. She was invited to address this concern during this portion of the agenda, but had already left the Zoom.
- **Maggie Clarke:** Greenway Issues - trying to get funding committed for projects to fix the Greenway. Spoke with Congressman Espaillat. Will the path have the same footprint? A: Yes; can't take footage from the HHP roadway. In terms of adding the water-level route, this is a complicated area in regards to the required permissions and permits, including from DEC, and an easement from Amtrak. It's also currently cost-prohibitive: the most recent estimate was \$65 million, and that was 4 years ago. This is a long term vision project. Non-motorized vehicles on the greenway are increasing. Q: Is there a plan for enforcement, especially before summer? A: Will alert her staff and her colleagues south of her area.
- **Cassandra Collazo:** Senior Inwood Girl Scout Troop 3205 leader, and wanted to give props to the Park Rangers for making amazing experiences for her troop. Special shout-out to Ranger Rob. Secondly, having a tree planted in Inwood Hill Park in commemoration of two children that drowned there a year ago. She also asked if possible to get a plaque of some kind. A: Yes. Especially on a park bench, and possibly have a dedication ceremony.

4) **NY Parks Renaming (8:15pm)**

While the Committee is still working on the issue of renaming Bennett Park, there are, as discussed at the previous meeting, many opportunities around the District for parks and areas within parks (e.g., lawns, playgrounds, etc.) to be named, and there is a long list of people and events for whom such an honor is appropriate, including the recently-deceased Jeanlee Poggi & James Cataldi. We are pausing that conversation for this month to consider the more immediate and time-sensitive question of recommendations for namings to honor African-Americans within CD12 parks pursuant to the Parks Department initiative mentioned by Jennifer, the deadline for which is March 16th. While it is the longer-term goal of this Committee to offer a comprehensive list of namings/renamings District-wide, this evening we have the opportunity to make

recommendations in the form of a resolution, which would then go to the Executive Committee for approval since it meets the day before Parks' deadline.

Daryl: What is the timeframe & process for other constituencies (e.g., LGBTQ community) to be recognized with namings? A: Parks Commissioner Silver is leaving so there is a particular push to complete the next round of the current initiative, but there will be additional rounds of namings. Also any recommendations can always be sent to naming.suggestion@parks.nyc.gov. CB12 can also put forth a resolution for a proposed naming, renaming, or set of (re)namings.

After a lengthy discussion of prominent African-Americans in the community, and potential areas to be named, the Committee agreed (Nobles, Sally, Alexis, Daryl, Barbara, Francisco, & Liz in favor, Danielle opposed) to recommend naming Highbridge Park's skate park for Jean-Michel Basquiat. Although he was not a CD12 resident, his art is deeply rooted in NYC street & graffiti culture, consistent with the general ethos of the skate park. The Committee also agreed unanimously on the following additional recommendations:

- Name the large lawn in Highbridge Park south of the Rec. Center for our former member, Isaiah "Obie" Bing (this in lieu of the triangle across from where Obie lived, as it's already named Juan Pablo Duarte Sq.);
- Name the Highbridge Recreation Center for Constance Baker Motley, the great civil rights attorney and noted NYC/NYS political figure who lived at 409 Edgecombe; and
- Name the lawn in Highbridge Park across from the Morris-Jumel Mansion between for noted theatre critic and author/playwright, Lawrence ("Larry") Neal, who lived (and whose widow still lives) nearby.

- 5) **Pending NYS legislation to legalize cannabis (MRTA / CRTA) (9:07pm):** Gave an update of proposed NYS legislation and noted recent forum by the Business Development Committee on this issue, which affects most of CB12's Committees in some way. Wanted to get input from our Committee to pass on to the BDC, whose Assistant Chair, Francisco Lopez, is also a PCA member.

A big concern is that legalizing recreational use of marijuana might increase smoking of it in parks. It was noted that smoking of any substance (including cigarettes, hookah, & vaping) in parks is illegal, so this would be an additional enforcement issue. Sally raised the concern that we need to pay much more attention to the health impact of recreational use, particularly on young people whose brains are still developing; for this reason she opposes legalization of marijuana for recreational use. There followed a robust conversation on where people can smoke, since it's not allowed IN parks, but is allowed on perimeters. We will revisit this once there's a clearer recommendation from the rest of the Committees.

There being no additional business, **the meeting was adjourned at 9:51pm.**