

**Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee**  
**April 13, 2021 @ 6:30pm (via Zoom)**

**Committee Members Present:** Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Daryl Cochrane, Assistant Chair; Nobles Crawford; Sally Fisher; Danielle Jettoo; Francisco Lopez; Edda Santiago; Alexis Marnel, Public Member; Nayma Silver-Matos, Public Member. **Excused:** Barbara Frazier. **Absent:** Ayisha Oglivie. **Other Board Members Present:** Mary Anderson, Richard Allman, Tanya Bonner, Steve Simon. **Staff:** Paola Garcia. **Elected Officials, Agencies, & Institutions Represented:** Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator; Leslie Peoples, Ricardo Hinkle, Chris Crowley, & Craig Church, NYC Parks Capital/Design; Shiloh Holley, Morris-Jumel Mansion; Alexander Campos, Hispanic Society Museum; Martin Collins, NoMAA; Emma Cillekens, Mighty Writers; Coach Dave Crenshaw, Hike The Heights; Chris Whittaker, Washington Heights Chamber Orchestra; Robert Barnett, Harlem River Community Rowing; Yvonne Stennett, Community League of the Heights; Jeremy Kohomban, Children's Village; Stewart Desmond, Broadway Mall Association; Anastasia Galkowski, Riverside Park Conservancy; Jeanine McAdam, Friends of Bennett Park; Daniel Glover, Bennett Park Parents; Rachel Cytron, RowNY. **Also Attending:** Beth Alberty; Angela Allard; Meghan Alvarez; Trish Anderton; Andrea Arroyo; Gabriella Barnstone; ancy Berlinger; Gabriela Biel; Karen Blundell; Anne Bowers; Lori Bridenstine; Jason Cowan; Andrew DaSilva; Zoltan Deniflee; Stephen DesNoyer; Claire Dudley; Drew Wildman Foster; Miki Friedmann; Michael Gorn; Shannon Goss Treusch; Dana Gae Hanchard; Molly Hein; Loretta Henke; William Hennessey; Peter Johnson; Yayoi Komiyama; David Kremenitzer; Jana La Sorte; Ruth Lilienstein; Joseph Lott; Carlos Manzueta; Olga Marder; Edith Marvel; Keltha McAulay; George McKirdy; Cara McIlwaine; Pattie McNab; Cheramie Mondesire; Katherine O'Sullivan; Radaisy Ramirez; Dorrie Rosen; Louie Rueda; Loretta S; Dina Saffan; Jane Sheffield; Tracy Shields; Jonathan Simon; Erin Slattery; Navaz Smith; Jane Solomon; Jonathan Tichler; Jennifer Vanasco; Kathryn Whyte; Dena Wolk; Steven Y.

The meeting was called to order at 6:34pm by the Chair Elizabeth Lorris Ritter.

- 1) **Welcome, Opening Remarks, Updates & Announcements, (Liz Ritter, Chair)**
  - March Reso re: proposed parks names passed unanimously by Executive Committee (13 votes)
  - Open Culture program, street culture program which enables arts organizations to have ticketed events in public streets was expanded to include six locations in CD12 including Cumming St. btw. Seaman Ave./Broadway, Jumel Terrace btw. W. 160/162 Streets, Bennett Ave. "between W. 181/182 Streets" (the latter of which doesn't actually intersect w/Bennett Ave.) and Dyckman St. btw. Broadway & Payson Ave. The two Dyckman blocks have since been removed from the program. Permits are issued by the Mayor's Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO). There are a number of prohibitions and guidelines with respect to noise, size, capacity, structure and required through-clearance on both the street and the adjacent sidewalk; visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cecm/cultural-events/guidelines.page> for details. The mechanism for community input to the permitting application process is unclear. (Note: the District Manager stated at 4/19 Executive Committee meeting that he'd follow up w/SAPO for more information.)
  - Representative from the Lenape Center was unable to attend this evening, so the continued discussion of parks (re-)namings will be moved to the June agenda; Sally Fisher to follow up.
  - "We Love Pop-ups" presentation deferred to May agenda due to scheduling conflict.
  
- 2) **Broadway Malls Association <6:51pm>**: Stewart Desmond gave a brief refresher presentation on upcoming installation which was to have been installed last year but was postponed due to COVID. (See 3/10/20 minutes.) It's now planned for mid-June and will be in place for about 6 months. The artist is Jon Isherwood. His substantial pieces, representative of totemic art, are made of marble from Carrara, where Michelangelo quarried for the David and other works. One piece, a 5' work of flower forms, will be sited in CB12M, in Ilka Tanya Payán Park at W. 157<sup>th</sup> St.
  
- 3) **Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Update <6:56pm>**
  - NYC Parks is launching a Litter Ambassador's Program for five high-volume sites including the W. 218<sup>th</sup> St. & Seaman/Isham entrances to Inwood Hill Park, Fort Tryon Park, and Highbridge Parks' High Bridge Lawn & Sunken Playground. Encouraging neighbors to help steward by giving them bags to help keep the park clean as they make use of our parks. The program will run from May 1<sup>st</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>, and also has a "Junior Litter League" to work with schools and youth groups. For more information, contact Maria Febus: [maria.febus@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:maria.febus@parks.nyc.gov).
  - Sally asked about removal of brick patio and twig structure in the Clove area of Inwood Hill Park. Jennifer shared, NYC Parks has begun process of removing this structure due to its negative impact on

an environmentally sensitive area. Liz referred to the March minutes as this was covered extensively last month. Sally noted that a petition opposing this action was filed in the past week on Change.org and had gathered nearly 450 signatures.

- Danielle requested clarity on how officers will approach policing in the parks around marijuana smoking in parks given new legislation on the substance. Jennifer confirmed that smoking of any substance in parks is not permitted, and smoking of marijuana will be handled in the same way as cigarettes, cigars, and hookah.

- 4) **NYC Parks Schematic Presentation: Bennett Park Lawn Restoration Project (Ricardo Hinkle & Chris Crowley, Parks Capital Design)** <7:11pm> Parks is seeking a resolution from the Board to approve their proposed design for the restoration of the central lawn in Bennett Park, located between Ft. Washington & Pinehurst Avenues and W. 183<sup>rd</sup> & W. 185<sup>th</sup> Streets. This is a heavily-used lawn. There is a decades-long history of attempts to restore it using natural turf but the active use repeatedly had reduced the grass to compacted dirt in a short period of time.
- There was a scoping meeting on October 29, 2020 attended (via Zoom) by many members of the public, who provided feedback and shared their concerns both with respect to the design and the park's use. The total budget for the project is \$1.1 million, with FY '20 funding through the Manhattan Borough President (\$850K) and City Council Member D10 (\$250K).
  - The central lawn will be replaced with tufted nylon turf that does NOT have rubber crumb, and does not have the same issues with overheating as does the rubber crumb style turf. It is a durable surface suitable for multi-use, with drainage so it can be sprayed clean. Parks uses this material elsewhere; locally it was used and has been well received in the recently renovated Audubon and Highbridge Park Adventure Playgrounds. The turf will be maintained with periodic power cleaning by Parks staff. The lawn is suitable for picnicking and passive recreation, as well as for active play, including catch/toss and general running around, but is not suitable for organized ball games.
  - The central lawn will be about 3300 square feet, which is smaller than the current lawn. The play area will be consolidated, and the lawn itself as well as the historic rocky outcrop will be accessible for people in wheelchairs and strollers.
  - The proposed synthetic turf will protect the existing trees by avoiding their drip lawn and making use of only a smaller area outside of their canopy for the synthetic turf lawn.
  - Stone screening in the tree pits just south of the synthetic lawn area will be replaced by harder surfaces (brick pavers) to enhance accessibility, provide clearer delineation of tree pits, and address longtime community concern over migrating gravel.
  - There will be an unfenced planted berm east of the central lawn. The berm will rise 2.5-3.5' in the center, with planting that are 2'-4' high. There will be a temporary protective fence for the first three years while the plantings establish themselves.
  - The surfaced play area at the Park's southern end and the Park's planted perimeters will be unchanged.
  - All of the seating currently in place will remain; there will be no additional seating.
  - There will be no dog run in the Park, and leashes are required at all times.
  - After design completion and review by the Public Design Commission (PDC) the project will go into procurement, a 6-9 month process. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2022, ideally after Labor Day so as not to disturb the summer season.
  - The Playground will remain open to use during construction and the Park will remain accessible through the W. 185<sup>th</sup> St. & Pinehurst entrance, which does not have stairs.
  - After a lengthy discussion including Q&A from Committee Members and members of the public, during which various aspects of the design were clarified, the Committee voted unanimously in support of the proposed project as described: 9 Committee votes + 1 non-Committee Board Member in favor, and 1 Board Member Not Voting Due to Conflict.

- In light of the ongoing discussion of renaming Bennett Park which is likely to conclude while this capital project is still in process, the Chair recommended that the Resolution contain languages which reflects this, as well as requests that the design be able to accommodate signage regarding the Park's name and history. This was approved unanimously.

5) **Presentation on proposed Arts Culture & Training (ACTS) Center in The Eliza by Jeremy Kohomban (President & CEO at Children's Village) & Yvonne Stennett (Executive Director of Community League of the Heights/CLoTH).** <8pm>

- The Eliza is a new affordable housing development on Broadway just north of Dyckman Street, on the lot currently occupied by the New York Public Library's Inwood Branch. The Library already has been relocated to a temporary site nearby.
- In addition to 174 rental units (studios and 1-, 2-, & 3-bedroom units affordable to households earning 60% AMI and below, with 70 units permanently affordable), the project will include a new state of the art library; an Arts, Culture, & Technology ("ACTS") Center; Universal Pre-K; an NYC First STEM Center with a STEM-focused workspace; and a rooftop garden for use by residents and community organizations.
- There will be a small theatre, with a maximum capacity of 40-45 adults or 60 children.
- The construction project is scheduled close later this month, with construction expected to begin two months afterward. The building is scheduled to open by the end of 2023.
- The aspects housing and affordability, etc. were discussed in the Housing & Human Services Committee and are outside of the purview of this Committee; this presentation is only regarding the ACTS Center. Presenters requested suggestions from the Committee as to programming and ideas for community collaborations.
- Francisco suggested offering financial literacy workshops for youth at the Eliza.
- Tanya requested that cultural programming be inclusive of all groups in the area.
- Nayma suggested the establishment of a liaison between the Committee and leadership at The Eliza, to share updates on a continuous basis. Liz encouraged CLoTH & Children's Village periodically to attend this Committee to enhance networking opportunities with CBOs, and to connect with other Committees as well, especially Aging and Youth/Education, in addition of course to Housing. She drew specific attention to Hike The Heights & Mighty Writers which would both be presently briefly in the next agenda item.
- Nayma also suggested including a music recording studio to attract many youth from the area.
- In response to comments that they were looking to partner with local groups for programming in the parks, Sally suggested they speak with Friends of Inwood Hill Park and the Washington Heights/Inwood Food Council.
- Sally also suggested movable walls be considered in the ACTS Center to allow expanded capacity in distinct program areas, especially the theatre.

6) **Brief Parks & Cultural Organization updates** <8:45pm> <Note: then-upcoming events occurring prior to distribution of these minutes are generally omitted.>

- **Emma Cillekens: Mighty Writers Program** offers FREE online cooking classes for kids and families: every Thursday 6-7pm with registered dietitian Noemy Jorge who grew up in Washington Heights. Also collaborating with Children's Arts & Science Workshop (CASW) to offer a hybrid photography. Info: [emma@mightywriters.org](mailto:emma@mightywriters.org).
- **Coach Dave Crenshaw, Hike The Heights:** This year we're encouraging many simultaneous hikes Uptown each with its own community stories. Sat., June 5<sup>th</sup>. If interested in organizing local hike contact Coach Dave: [TeamDreamersuptown@gmail.com](mailto:TeamDreamersuptown@gmail.com) / 347-538-1752.
- **Shiloh Holley: Morris-Jumel Mansion** many upcoming events!
  - Then-upcoming Con Edison Family Day: Virtual Earth Day Gardening Workshop

- Then-upcoming Virtual Parlor Chat: "Taking Liberties"- Artist Talk w/Felipe Galindo (Feggo) about his Statue of Liberty Illustrations.
- Pop Up Exhibit: Veteran Voices Project: Capturing the Oral History of NYC Veterans held in Partnership w/the NYC Dept. of Veterans' Services; on view until the end of the month.
- Self-Guided Walking Tours partnership w/Jane's Walk, May 7-9: (1) From Farmland to Uptown: Exploring the Former MJM Estate; (2) Exploring Black History Around MJM.
- Completion of the reinterpretation of two period rooms in the Mansion (French parlor and Eliza's Bedchamber) is pending for the end of the month. Formal unveiling is pending.
- **Martin Collins, Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMAA):** Join NoMAA April 19<sup>th</sup> for Sound Waves & Brain Waves with Grammy nominee Miguel Zenon and Columbia University's Zuckerman Institute. Info [www.nomaanyc.org](http://www.nomaanyc.org). Washington Heights-Inwood artists & arts organizations may register their arts & cultural events to be published in the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance weekly newsletter, and in this June's Uptown Arts Stroll guide, at <https://www.nomaanyc.org/submit-event/>. Stay up to date via [www.nomaanyc.org](http://www.nomaanyc.org) or email [artstroll@nomaanyc.org](mailto:artstroll@nomaanyc.org) with any questions.
- **Sally Fisher: Friends of Inwood Park:** To celebrate the 51<sup>st</sup> (and COVID-canceled 50<sup>th</sup>) Earth Day, Friends of Inwood Hill Park is hosting its 5<sup>th</sup> annual Earth Day Festival, April 22-April 24. On May 1, FIHP will host the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Riverkeeper Sweep, a day of service for the Hudson River and its tributaries. There will be two cleanup sites this year: Inwood Hill Park (9am-12pm) and the Dyckman Street Boat Marina (10am-1pm). From 12-1pm at the Dyckman Pier, they'll also be making sailboats out of repurposed wood and sails, concluding the event with a Riversweep Regatta.
- **Bob Barnett, Harlem Community Rowing:** offers free introductory rowing programs for the community and on-water recreation. Mentioned Academy Street Waterfront Park and asked to have this on the agenda for a subsequent meeting.
- **Chris Whittaker, Washington Heights Chamber Orchestra:** Pop up chamber music concert series is starting now. Musicians from the Washington Heights Chamber Orchestra "pop-up" in the park, various locations in Washington Heights & Inwood Saturday April 17 2-5pm, Sunday April 18 1-3pm & Saturday April 24 2-5pm, Sunday April 25 1-3pm . All their events are listed at [www.washingtonheightsorchestra.org](http://www.washingtonheightsorchestra.org) or [WHCO.nyc](http://WHCO.nyc)
- **Nayma Silver-Matos, Project Beauty Experience:** A leadership & cultural program for girls celebrating 7 years of service Uptown. Enrollment period now open for girls 8-14. Community workshop is scheduled for 4/17 at NYCHA Dyckman Houses. Info: [www.ProjectBeautyUSA.org](http://www.ProjectBeautyUSA.org).
- **Jennifer Hoppa: NYC Parks:** Shared multiple upcoming initiatives including Inwood Hill Park Rangers interborough hikes (Inwood Hill Park to Henry Hudson Park in the Bronx); Fort Tryon Park Trust Stewardship day and 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary documentary. Ping-pong tables at Ft. Tryon now open. Ann Loftus Playground renovation begins construction next month. In response to Daryl's question about Gorman Park, Jennifer reported that part of the retaining wall contract was approved; Parks is waiting on approval of the construction supervision contract.
- **Alexander Campos: Hispanic Society:** Offering ongoing virtual programming for youth and adults. Sign up for news blast about arts workshops/events at [www.Hispanicsociety.org](http://www.Hispanicsociety.org). There will be an event for Cinco de Mayo and Annual Virtual Benefit at end of May.

Tanya Bonner wished to recognize that today is the **first day of Ramadan** on behalf of those in the community observing this holiday.

There being no further business, the **meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.** (Motion by Daryl, second by Nobles, approved by acclamation.)