

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee Meeting
530 W. 166th St., 6th fl. ~ April 1, 2014

Committee members present: Mitchell Glenn, Chair; Karen Arthur; David Kach; Richard Lewis; Elizabeth Lorris Ritter; Chris O'Sullivan. **Committee Members absent** Juan Mejia; Ulises Noboa.

Community Members present:, Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Department of Parks & Recreation; Kevin McKeon, Inwood Canoe Club; Sara A. Fisher; Katherine O'Sullivan; Nancy Prince; Osi Kaminer; Fidel Malena, C/M Levine; Mary Anderson; E. Benjarano, NYC Dept. of Design + Construction; Marilyn Nunez, NYC DDC; Ali Mallick, NYC DDC; Ellen Macnow, NYC DPR; Charlotte Fahn, Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct; Kelly (?); Katherine O'Sullivan; Moving Forward Unidos; Danica Doroski, New York Restoration Project; Osi Kaminer; Eddie Santos; Licette Cohn, Francis Shenan; Kathy Scarborough; Joanna Castro, Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance; K. (?); Steve Harris, Inwood Canoe Club; Led Black; Ky Williamson, Rotary Club of Inwood; Karen Marrero Chong, International Healing Center.

Mitchell Glenn, Chair, called meeting to order at 7:05pm. The first order of business was an April Fool: a prank PowerPoint presentation regarding repurposing of several of our beloved parks as parking lots.

Charlotte Fahn from Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct spoke as a representative of this all-volunteer group that partners with the staff of the Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park. She also spoke in opposition to the proposed erection of LG Electronics' new USA headquarters in Englewood Cliffs, NJ that threatens the historic scenic vistas along the Hudson River and the integrity of the Palisades Interstate Park.

Ms. Fahn also described in detail, with the accompaniment of photos and historic sketches, the history and construction of the Old Croton Aqueduct. The aqueduct was a 41-mile marvel of engineering built to convey fresh water - *solely* by means of gravity - to the NYC reservoir located at the current site of the New York City Research Libraries near 42nd Street and 5th Avenue, for purposes of sanitation, firefighting, and disease mitigation. Built between 1837 and 1842 primarily by Irish immigrant labor, the aqueduct was designed on the Roman model, with masonry channels (in this case, a 7 ½ by 8 ½ ft. enclosed tunnel) and a gravity-feed declivity of 13 ½ inches per mile. Although the original holding dam for the aqueduct is now underwater and the New Croton Aqueduct now runs below that, eventually a dozen dams fed into the tunnels, and the remaining dam spillways are a spectacular sight. The original aqueduct followed the course of the Hudson, turned east in Yonkers to Tibbett's Brook, and then traversed the High Bridge to a receiving reservoir in what is now Central Park. Ventilation along the enclosed aqueduct allowed air in to freshen the water in keeping with sanitary practices of the era. Earthen berms supported the tunnel to mitigate the effects of freezing and thawing on the integrity of its stones packed with mortar. Roads passed underneath its archways, and, at Ossining, the aqueduct passed over the river, and several buildings were actually built over it. Currently, there is public display access at a diversion structure for the tunnel works and The Keeper's House (the only remaining Overseer's House) at Dobb's Ferry, which has been restored by the Friends. Most of the 26-mile park in Westchester Country, which has been designated a National Historic Landmark, consists of the scenic trails running atop the above-ground tunnel.

Katherine O'Sullivan of Moving Forward Unidos presented a summary of concerns about quality of Life issues in Inwood related to the La Marina restaurant concession granted by NYC DPR at 348 Dyckman, along the Hudson River. Concerns stem from apparently conflicting limits on capacity enumerated by the DPR contract and the New York State Liquor Authority license, as well as claims of after-hours music, and cabaret activity without the appropriate NYC licensing. Ms. O'Sullivan stressed La Marina's

problematic off-site impact on Henry Hudson Parkway access, nightlife activity in the Dyckman area and on its residential neighbors, especially after the restaurant closes.

The Committee also read a letter from La Marina's owner, Manhattan River Group, LCC, which stated it could not attend tonight's meeting because of insufficient advance notice. The letter stated that there have been numerous reviews by various NYC & NYS regulating agencies, and La Marina has found to be in compliance.

Led Black, a community blogger (the Uptown Collective), characterized the presentation as a "mishmash of misinformation", and termed the advent of La Marina as a shining example of how the community has progressed from an era of crime and drugs.

Eddie Santos of Papisito's, President of the Northern Manhattan Restaurant Association, and a manager of La Marina during its first year of operation noted that while the waterfront destination was popular, there was capacity control, and that on several occasions the gates were closed because capacity limits were reached. He also noted that going to social media to air grievances, rather than to the proprietors, was not helpful.

Chair Mitchell Glenn expressed his opinion that the goal in dealing with any issues cannot be to close the restaurant. He noted that La Marina is not going away, so we need to work together.

Chris O'Sullivan [no relation to Katherine] referenced the work of CB's Traffic & Transportation Committee, of which she also is a member, on traffic issues related to La Marina, which resulted in accommodation and dialogue.

Mr. Santos commented that we will see improvements year by year.

Jennifer Hoppa added that Parks is working with La Marina to clarify the limits of what is allowed and to make sure that La Marina complies. There are traffic issues that need work, and revenue adjustments to be made. Parks wants to solve those for the benefit of the community.

Kirsten, a Seaman Avenue resident, delineated three issues: getting back to the original DPR contract, engaging in dialogue without threats, and getting away from what she termed the race-baiting of new residents. She also opined that a DPR concession contract is by its nature a public matter.

Karen Marerro Chong of Fort Washington Love your Block Beautification Project distributed flyers and talked about the event that will take place on Saturday, May 3rd from 12 to 4 pm along Ft. Washington Avenue between 178th and 179th Streets. The project is funded by a grant of the Citizens Committee for New York City.

Danica Doroski, Volunteer Coordinator for New York Restoration Project spoke about the history and accomplishments of NYRP, and about upcoming events planned by NYRP for our parks this Spring. Founded in 1995, the non-profit organization began its work in Washington Heights and Inwood at Highbridge Park and at the Sherman Creek Park wetlands doing ornamental gardening. NYRP now offers volunteer opportunities throughout the Spring and Summer at both parks. This year they will also be showing free outdoor movies with the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, as well as participating in the NOMAA Arts Stroll and sponsoring the Hike the Heights event. Other ongoing projects include the Riley-Levin Children's Garden Beds in Swindler's Cove, plant installations at PS5, Nagle Avenue planting, and 10th Avenue plantings. NYRP is also initiating a neighborhood composting project with drop-off and free finished compost distribution.

Marilyn Nunez and Ali Mallick of the NYC Department of Design & Construction updated the community on the progress of the rehabilitation of the High Bridge. The project, costing an estimated \$62 million, began in 2012 and is now scheduled for completion in late 2014. About \$14 million of the work has been completed, and the crew is working double shifts to catch up. Historic railings have been deleading and replaced. The aqueduct pipe requires repair, even though it is no longer in use. DDC is trying to salvage the original pavers (bricks for the walking pavement). Of the two kinds to be seen on the Bridge, the herringbone design was believed to be part of the original 1848 structure, and the running bone design used for the replacement steel span (1938). The remaining herringbone (about 35% of the whole bridge) will be used for the Bronx and Manhattan plazas, and new brick will be matched with the old. For the steel span portion, all new pavers will be laid down. Deleading has also revealed corrosion on the stringers (steel support elements) that needs to be addressed. Epoxy paneling will strengthen the corroded pipe.

Jennifer Hoppa of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation reported on the progress of projects in the area and upcoming events.

- ADA access to the Hudson River greenway at Dyckman St. is under construction (part of PlaNYC).
- Finishing touches are being put on the Dyckman ball fields.
- Work on the Orville and Wilbur Wright playground continues.
- Ball field 6 (Degroat) in Inwood Hill Park is moving forward.
- At the John T. Brush staircase, the DOT issue with lighting is being rectified.
- Pathways to the Billings arcade, near the entrance to Ft. Tryon Park, are being restored.
- The Shearing of the Heathers will take place on Saturday, 4/5 at FTP.
- The Earth Day Festival will be held Saturday, 4/26.
- Urban Rangers Day is set for Saturday, 5/3.
- DPR is partnering with Bread & Yoga to provide free fitness programs in the parks.
- The Ft. Tryon Park fitness programs continue.
- DPR plans to have NoMAA kick off the 11th Annual Uptown ArtStroll in Highbridge Park.

Ms. Hoppa also announced Mitchell Silver's appointment as Commissioner of Parks. An Economic Development Official in Raleigh, North Carolina, he also headed the American Planning Association. Previously, in New York, he ran Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger's uptown office.

Announcements

- Fidel Malena, Community Liaison for City Council member Mark Levine, noted that the Councilman is promoting visiting parks as a way of enjoying increased fresh air in NYC.
- Liz Ritter informed the committee of UP Theater's upcoming fundraiser on Monday 4/7 at Papasito's.
- United Palace of Cultural Arts (UPCA) is conducting a fundraising campaign to restore its screen at The United Palace. Plans are in the works to screen "King Kong" 4/27.
- Rotary Club of Inwood is holding an Earth Day celebration on Friday, 4/25.
- The Rotary Club is also kick-starting an Anti – Dog Pee and Poop Campaign

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:09pm.

Respectfully submitted: David Kach