

**Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee Meeting  
Columbia University Muscota Marsh & Campbell Sports Center / May 6, 2014**

**Committee members present:** Mitchell Glenn, Chair; David Kach; Richard Lewis; Liz Ritter; Juan Mejia.

**Additional Board Members present:** Osi Kaminer, Maurice Owen-Mickaane. Felipe Wityk Sanchez

**Community Members present:**, David Van, Anina Young, Roger Meyer, Kirsten Norderval, Nancy Bruning, James Addiss, Barbara Clark, Chris O'Sullivan, Bob Clark, Kevin McKeon, David Brodherson, Leslie Xema, Libby Howland, Sheila Massey, Robert Bussello, Davis Hall, Perseval Barley, Gail Addiss, Carole Mulligan, Jonathan Spencer, Steve Hansen, <illegible> Spencer, Jacqueline Rosen, Paul Kittas, Elizabeth Sheriden, Sally Fisher, Jennifer Hoppa (NYC Department of Parks & Recreation).

**Mitchell Glenn, Chair, called meeting to order** at 7:14pm, remarking that it was appropriate to have a meeting of the Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee in a park. The first order of business was a discussion of Columbia University's Muscota Marsh, build in satisfaction of the public waterfront access requirement in exchange for developing a large parcel of waterfront property. In a presentation by Gail Addiss and related lively discussion of same, the following were noted:

- The acreage of the Muscota Marsh is well under the legal threshold for public access as compared to the size of the developed parcel. Also there are concerns as to what additional development might occur which public access would be satisfied prospectively by this small park. The Parks Department representative noted that this was a process undertaken and approved by the City Council and the City Planning Department, and is outside of the Board's purview at this point.
- The plantings are unestablished and the placement of protective barriers, both for the plantings, and for the water's edge, are unattractive and apparently haphazard. The Parks Department representative stated that these are temporary, to protect the plantings and the public. Once the plantings, placement of which were delayed by Hurricane Sandy, are established, the storm fencing and protective ribbons will be removed. Placement of unsightly orange plastic barriers was a temporary measure during the winter; these will be replaced by something more attractive and fitting to the site.
- The safety plan for the park is unclear. Although CU has agreed to responsibility for the Muscota Marsh, it is not clear how this will be integrated into safety/enforcement for the adjacent, and much larger, Inwood Hill Park. DPR representative noted that it is the agency's hope that a significant portion of the \$300,000 promised to the community by CU would be used for dedicated Parks Enforcement Patrol officers.
- It also in unclear what are the various agreements governing the use of the park and the dock. These are subject to an Agreement signed by CU President Lee Bollinger, but not co-signed by any community party, in April, 2011. A copy of this is to be placed on-line, on the CB12 website so that the public easily can access it. The use of the dock is subject to an Agreement between CU and the Parks Department; the DPR representative stated that this is available online at the DPR website, as are the many concession agreements that DPR has with other community groups for this and other parks, e.g., New York Restoration Project, Inwood Little League, Inwood Canoe Club, La Marina, etc. The Committee Chair agreed to make the link available on CB12's website.
- The public used to be able to access the bathrooms in the tennis bubble; this is important as there are limited public sanitary facilities in Inwood Hill Park. The placement of a fence outside of the Bubble renders the entrance unwelcoming and suggests that the facility (and its restrooms) is not available to the public.

- Although not strictly related to the Muscota Marsh itself, the issue of ADA access to the football stadium during games, as well as public access to the track also were raised. CU stated that the hours of public use of the track are posted, although these do change seasonally according to the use by student athletes. They agreed to provide ADA access to the stadium during games.
- There was some discussion of the lights on the stadium, which stay on even after athletes leave the field. CU responded that the lights are timed and go off by 10pm.
- The meeting moved over to the actual dock, where there was an extensive discussion as to permitted use of same. There are a gate and chain at the top of the dock indicating that access is by permit only, and that those without a permit may not be on the dock for any reason, even if they are not launching a craft. Many people found this requirement unreasonable; DPR stated that a seasonal permit granting access not only this dock but to every public DPR dock in the City is easily obtainable at nominal cost. She further stated that the permit is necessary as the application includes a liability waiver and the certification of knowledge of certain water rules, regulations, responsibilities and safety standards, as well as a statement with regard to the applicant's ability to swim.

As it was becoming dark, the meeting briefly adjourned to move inside to the Campbell Sports Center.

**Jennifer Hoppa / monthly update of DPR projects:** Based on additional feedback in line with last month's meeting, Ms. Hoppa reiterate that DPR 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. (See discussion below under Old Business.) In addition she reported:

- The Inwood Nature Center was devastated by Sandy; DPR still is working with FEMA on coverage of repairs to same. Entrance to the bathroom has now been segregated from the main entrance to the center so that the bathrooms might remain open even after the Center has closed, and can be locked/unlocked by PEP officers or other DPR personnel, rather than having to rely on the Park Rangers. The Rangers are located temporarily at the Payson Playground Education Center during the Nature Center's renovation.
- Highbridge Park Rec Center grand re-opening next week; it's had a significant renovation which not only placed changing rooms on the pool deck for use during the summer, but bridges the two sections of the center, and opens up the interior use for 4-season use. This is also helpful in attracting a concessionaire for the proposed use of the pool as an ice rink during the winter.
- Drums Along the Hudson: June 1<sup>st</sup> in Inwood Hill Park's Gaelic Field, 11am-6pm, rain or shine.
- "It's My Park!" Day for planting & clean-up in Ft. Tryon Park on May 17<sup>th</sup>, and at parks throughout the District during the month of May.
- Isham Park water service project will be starting at the end of the month. The capital contract involves several work areas: along Seaman Ave. & Isham St.; at Seaman & 214<sup>th</sup>; the Isham Alley at 212<sup>th</sup> St.; up along the perimeter of Bruce's Garden at Park Terrace East and PTE Circle. (No work will take place inside of Bruce's Garden itself); the Family Memorial Bench Circle; and the bluestone circle area on the upper lawn. DPR is working with the local Girl Scout troop in the Alley to transplant plants so that they won't be compromised during the Alley's water-line and drainage installations. DPR ardeners will also be moving some shrubs at Seaman/Isham & Seaman/214<sup>th</sup> to new locations to make room for backflow preventers (RPZs) as required by DEP for water service. As part of this contract, DPR identified four storm-damaged trees that are dying and/or destabilized and will need to be removed. These are invasive Norway Maples on the slope up from 212<sup>th</sup> St. which some members of the community have long requested be removed due to their potential danger. One other tree slated for removal is the shaft of a dead black locust (no branches or leaves). Several new trees are or will be planted along the Seaman

Avenue perimeter of Isham Park, as part of DPR's street tree planting contract, and replacement trees have been planted along Park Terrace West.

- The Harvest Dome was the subject of a photo essay/article in the May issue of "Dwell" Magazine, and received a 2014 award from same.
- Reminder regarding the kick-off for NoMAA's 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Uptown ArtStroll will be in Highbridge Park on Thursday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 6pm-8:30pm

**Nancy Bruning / free fitness opportunities in Northern Manhattan Parks** There are many free exercise opportunities in our local parks, including a Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday morning fitness walk in Fort Tryon Park funded by the Ft. Tryon Park Trust; a Monday/Wednesday morning yoga walkabout in Inwood Hill Park. Hike the Heights is coming June 7<sup>th</sup>, to coincide with National Trails Day. Groups will start at Central Park West & W. 110<sup>th</sup> Street and at the RING (Broadway/Dyckman/Riverside) and converge at the water tower in Highbridge Park. Green Gym Day is the following Day, June 8<sup>th</sup>, with a walk beginning at CPW & W. 110<sup>th</sup> Street and going all the way to the RING.

**Old Business: La Marina** There was a brief discussion of capacity issues and a request to clarify the number of permits, the permitting agency, the capacity granted by each permit and whether these are cumulative or if one permit limits another. There also was continued discussion of the need for better control of traffic and noise emanating from La Marina. It was the sense of the room that the presence of a business at the end western terminus of Dyckman Street is better for public safety than an empty lot, and that it would be detrimental to return to the days of that being a vacant property, but that capacity issues must be resolved in a way that enables the business to thrive while not having a negative impact on the peace/quiet of a largely residential area. Specifically there was concern with the number, frequency and size of proposed special event permits at La Marina during the summer. Rather than pass a resolution limiting the venue to a specific number of events, it was suggested that the Committee and Board Chair write a letter to the DPR Commissioner and Revenue Division (with copies to La Marina, C/M Rodriguez, and C/M Levine in his capacity as Council Parks Committee Chair) stating CB12's concern with regard to noise and traffic.

**New Business: WHIN & DINE** 10-day initiative to encourage dining out in Washington Heights & Inwood. Many restaurants are offering a \$26.95 *prix fixe* 3-course meal special from May 12<sup>th</sup> – May 23<sup>rd</sup> as an effort to introduce their cuisine to new diners, and to encourage residents of and visitors to enjoy Northern Manhattan many fine dining options.

The meeting adjourned at about 8:45pm.

Respectfully submitted: Liz Ritter