

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
November 9, 2021 (via Zoom)

Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Nobles Crawford, Assistant Chair; Daniel Bonilla; Sally Fisher; Barbara Frazier; Alexis Marnel (Public Member). **Excused:** Danielle Jettoo, Edda Santiago. **Absent:** Ayisha Oglivie; Nayman Silver-Matos (Public Member). **Other Board Member(s):** Steve Simon. **Agencies & Representatives:** Kimberly Butta, Jennifer Hoppa, & Gabriella Keller, NYC Parks Department; Natalie Espino, MBPO; Nicholas Hughes, Columbis University. **Staff:** Paola Garcia. **Also Attending:** Jumirna Alcober; Christina Alphonso; Trish Anderton; Bob Barnett, Harlem River Community Rowing; Jennifer Bristol, Ft. Tryon Park DOG; Timothy Brown, Dorothy McGowan Garden; Robert Brunner, HDR Architecture & Engineering, Inc.; Ian Caddick, RowNY; Maggie Clarke, RING & Moving Forward/Unidos; Cassandre Collazo, Inwood Girls Scouts; Pat Courtney, Volunteers for Isham Park; Tim Frasca; Loretta Henke; Hilary Hinzmann; Adam Martinek; Katherine O'Sullivan, Moving Forward/Unidos; Radaisy Ramirez, HS for Health Careers & Sciences; Kelly Ray, Highbridge Neighbors; Dave Thom; unidentified caller.

The meeting was called to order at about 6:34pm by the Chair.

1. Welcome, Opening Remarks, Updates & Announcements, (Liz Ritter, Chair) <6:35pm>

- **Moment of silence:** for the 20th anniversary (on Thursday) of AA587 crash and the 83rd anniversary (today) Kristallnacht.
- **Brief procedural notes:**
 - Thanks to Nobles for taking minutes. Solicited a volunteer for December; Sally volunteered.
 - Comments in Q&A aren't "public" because they are not viewable so they must be narrated in the course of being answered. They may not be addressed as they are written, but know that we see them and it's not necessary to keep commenting. Blowing up the chat is the equivalent of shouting out at a public meeting, which you wouldn't do, so please don't do that here.
 - Agenda items requiring public discussion (which is pretty much all of them!) must be raised in advance so that the public knows it's being discussed. The updates are for informational purposes; they are not meant as discussion items.
- **Highbridge Water Tower** is OPEN! Tours 1pm-3pm one Sat/Sun monthly; reservations required.
- **Dominican Film Festival** begins tonight at the United Palace. Danny Bonilla, is representing the Committee so he is excused. SHOUT-OUT to him for completing Sunday's NYC Marathon, in <4 hours!
- **Broadway** is BACK; GO! It's wonderful, and it's safe! Vaccination & masks required.
- Update on **FY '23 Capital & Expense Budget Priorities:** Unfortunately our Committee's priorities were not as not highly ranked as in prior years. Top 5 priorities were 911 upgrade, upgrade to 157th IRT, repairs to W. 174th btw. Audubon/Amsterdam Ave., bioswales & other green infrastructure (which was one of our priorities, but through the Health/Environment Committee), and WiFi upgrade. Our #1 & #2 Committee priorities (reconstruction of the Little Red Lighthouse and path paving in our various parks) came in at #25 & #17, respectively. On the expense side, the Board's top 5 priorities were more funding for mental health services, for food pantries, for a full-time COVID vaccination site, for legal representation for housing, and for housing for families at risk of becoming homeless. This Committee's top two priorities, extension of the additional \$25mm annual "Play Fair" funding for parks, and an interpretive signage program at the Inwood Sacred Sites, were ranked #11 & #24, respectively.
- LU presentation on **proposed development at 4650 Broadway.** This is a development that is seeking higher height than would be allowed due to the inclusion of a supermarket under the City's FRESH program for "food deserts." Since the Committee had unanswered questions they didn't pass a reso. But NYC Planning must receive CB input by Dec. 9th so CB12 must offer any feedback this month. The LU Chair recommends that the Executive Committee pass a reso OPPOSING the application due to concerns about height, negative impacts on landmarked views of Ft. Tryon Park, negative development precedent in the Broadway corridor, and that the area is not in fact a "food desert".
- **Inwood Ceremonial Sites & proposed BRC shelter:** BRC has taken title to the property at 3966 Tenth Ave. (@ W. 212th St.) and will proceed. (This will go through Housing/Human Services Committee.

- Columbia University has advised that reconstruction of the public (NYC Parks) **Muscota Marsh floating dock** is scheduled to begin on November 17th, and is expected to be completed by January 2022. The project team will provide weekly project updates to the community. If you want to receive these updates, email Sandra Harris (sh533@cumc.columbia.edu) to be added to the project list-serv.
 - **RowNY Boathouse at Sherman Creek**: going before PDC as a consent agenda item (no additional public testimony) next week. Sally objects due to lack of publicly accessible bathrooms and other issues.
 - **Fort Tryon Park restaurant concession** (old New Leaf Café): no update; still in process w/Parks.
 - **Hispanic Society**: Gilded Figures: Wood & Clay Made Flesh; free exhibit open to public.
 - **Margaret Corbin reenactment**: Sunday, 11/14 noon-3 (Café Lawn) w/ Zaq Landsberg talk @1:15pm (Linden Terrace).
2. **Brief programming updates (~1-1/2 min. each) from cultural & friends-of-parks orgs <6:50pm>**
- **Nicholas Hughes (Columbia University/Haven Plaza Liaison)**: Tuesday before Thanksgiving (11/23, 11am-3pm) hosting a Fall Fest community get together. Planning a Holiday light presentation, likely to take place Dec. 1st; discussions ongoing w/community stakeholders.
 - **Sally Fisher (Friends of Inwood Hill Park)**: Gave us an update on recent waterfront clean-up & daffodil planting, and other upcoming events.
 - **Ian Caddick (RowNY)**: A few more spots remaining in our high school student rowing program: e-mail info@rowny.org if anyone knows any students interested. We are looking to restart our veterans' rowing program; gauging community interest. Q (Sally) Are you doing programs for middle schoolers? [A] Perhaps in the spring, but for right now no due to COVID restrictions.
 - **Barbara Frazier (RING)**: 30th annual tree lighting on December 5th, hopefully featuring Mr. & Mrs. Claus.
 - **Jennifer Hoppa (NYC Parks)** Announced upcoming free programming, including Water Tower tours on 12/4 & 12/12; Ft. Tryon Park Trust nature photography course on 11/13; Margaret Corbin reenactment on 11/14; Rangers' foliage hike on 11/14; Black Friday tour on 11/25; "Great Trees of Inwood" tour on 11/28. See www.northernmanhattanparks.org for more info on these and other events.
 - **Natalie Espino (MBPO)**: Governor Hochul announced a major \$450 Million "Bring Back Tourism, Bring Back Jobs" Inclusive Recovery Package, including: \$100mm for tourism workers, including creative workers; \$100mm return to work program, with a capitated bonus to help bring workers back; \$200mm small business fund for newer businesses formed after 2019 and in eligible for other relief; and \$25mm each for convention/event centers and a global marketing campaign. It is unclear if nonprofits are included in the \$200mm pool for small businesses, which seems to be repurposed funds from previous relief package for small businesses. Needs legislative action in January.
 - **Martin Collins (NoMAA)**: Join us at 7:30pm every Thursday on Zoom & FaceBook Live to meet local artists. Also announced then-upcoming workshop on Grant Writing for Artists, part of NoMAA's ongoing technical assistance workshop series. Visit our website (www.nomaanyc.org) for our newsletter with artist opportunities and upcoming events, and to add your own events to our calendar!
 - **Kelly Ray (Highbridge Park Neighbors)**: We are a new group working in Highbridge Park, with a focus on the W. 190th entrance and the dog run. We had a successful stewardship event on 10/31 with support from NYC Parks and are planning future clean-up events.
 - **Cassandre Collazo (Inwood Girl Scout Troop)**: Shout-out to Rangers Rob & Lisa, who run a toddler nature & music program, Tuesdays at 10am, through 11/30.
 - **Timothy Brown (Dorothy McGowan Garden)** We'll be holding a holiday gift market of locally made items on Sat. afternoons, weather permitting. Stop by! (W. 158th St., btw. Broadway & Amsterdam Ave.)

3. Brief NYC Parks report (Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Administrator) <7:10pm>

- **Highbridge Water Tower** completed & open.
- **Highbridge Rec. Center** will be undergoing a \$4mm HVAC renovation/upgrade.
- Parks is pulling permits from DoT for the **Henry Hudson Parkway bike path**. The contractor will only need brief closures of the wooden deck bridge and will be minimally disruptive to cyclists/commuters.
- **Anne Loftus Playground** groundbreaking was 10/20. The construction fencing was a changed so the Broadway benches are now accessible, and 6 new benches in the plaza by the A-train have been added.
- **Audubon Playground comfort station** should be opening soon; just awaiting some electrical work.
- **Msgr. Kett Playground** contract about to be awarded.
- **Dyckman Street sidewalk** at the southern perimeter of Inwood Hill Park currently being repaired.
- **Ft. Tryon Park promenade retaining wall crash** is currently in the bidding process. It will be fully paid for by the culprit's auto insurance (GEICO).
- **Ft. Washington Park pre-fab comfort station** awarded. (\$3.5mm)
- **W. 186th St. basketball** is fully funded and will proceed.
- MBP funded \$250mm for **pathway work in Ft. Tryon & Inwood Hill Parks** to repair the worst sections.

4. Proposed reconstruction of retaining walls in Inwood Hill, Isham & J. Hood Wright Parks and the Dorothy McGowan Memorial Garden (NYC Parks & HDR Architecture & Engineering) <7:17pm>

- \$12.269mm Mayorally-funded program to repair five retaining walls within four sites in CD12M and two in the Bronx (Aqueduct Walk & the Bronx River Park). The project is currently in design and was scoped back in June. Anticipate completion of design by June '22; one year for procurement. Construction should take one-two years, and will be staggered/phased, with multiple sites worked on simultaneously.
- **Inwood Hill Park:** 85' length of retaining wall along Payson Ave., north of Beak Street. This work will necessitate removal of one tree, which will be replaced.
- **Isham Park:** 45' section which collapsed three years ago along Isham Alley. This project, which will repair the wall and stabilize the adjacent slope, was this Committee's #1 capital priority two years ago. The project will also repair 10' along the memorial circle in the upper park. One tree will need to be removed and will be replaced.
- **J. Hood Wright** project will repair the retaining wall along W. 176th St. (near Pinehurst Ave.), reconstruct the parapet, and maintain the stability of the adjacent sidewalk.
- **Dorothy McGowan Garden** (@ W. 158th St., btw. Broadway/Amsterdam) will repair/reinforce two overlapping walls plus a third wall at the back of the garden. One tree, which is growing into the retaining wall, will be removed. Parks has an agreement with owner of neighboring property for access.
- **Q&A:** In response to a question from the public: In addition to the tree being removed near the Isham memorial circle there was a tree which was removed a couple of years ago due to damage. Can this also be replaced? A: We will do that if we can fit it within the current budget. Q (Sally): Is there a way to speed-up this work? A: The design and procurement process takes how long it takes, but we certainly can prioritize the Isham Park work in the hope of doing that first. Q (Timothy Bowen): Thank you for this work, which is much-needed! Can the work in the McGowan Garden be timed so as not to conflict with the growing season? A: We can do our best to accommodate that.
- There being no further discussion, that **Committee voted unanimously (5-0-0-0) in favor** of a resolution in support of this project as presented.

5. **Presentation from Bob Barnett, Hudson River Community Rowing <7:43pm>** Gave a 101 on the organization, which is funded with grants/donations and run by volunteers. Founded 12 years old and until moving to Inwood 5 years ago ran their programming out of Roberto Clement State Park in the Bronx just across the Harlem River. Primary mission: to offer accessible, affordable rowing to the communities of NYC. Last year HCRC had planned to provide a robust menu of programming and services out of Muscota Marsh, but were unable to do so due to COVID as well as issues with the Muscota Marsh dock. Current response to the program has been very high. They also have a great relationship with RowNY in sharing equipment and location. Next year, the organization hopes to be back at the Muscota Marsh dock, with “get on the water” programming for people already interested in rowing and “learn to row” programming for the crew-curious. They also will be working to increase their daily availability for community rowers, including bilingual programming for Spanish speakers. This is all contingent upon availability of equipment, interest, and coaches. HRCR’s 10-year plan is to evolve into a larger, professional organization that resembles the community rowing programs found in Boston and other cities. Sally asked if HRCR’s partnerships with other community organizations end next year? A: Our partnerships are negotiated on an annual basis, so our current agreements must be renewed. We currently are working that and while it is time-consuming the renewal process for 2022 should be more streamlined than starting from scratch. That said, it will take additional effort to get back-up-and-running following the COVID stoppage.

There being no old or new business, **the meeting was adjourned at 8:02pm:** motion by Nobles; second by Sally; no objection.

Respectfully submitted: Nobles Crawford & Liz Ritter