

**Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee**  
**January 11, 2022 (via Zoom)**

**Committee Members Present:** Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Nobles Crawford, Assistant Chair; Jumirna Alcober; Daniel Bonilla; Sally Fisher; Barbara Frazier; Edda Santiago; Alexis Marnel (Public Member). **Absent:** Danielle Jettoo, Nayma Silver-Matos (Public Member). **Other Board Member(s):** Mary Anderson; Steve Simon. **Agencies & Representatives:** Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Parks Department; Natalie Espino, Manhattan Borough President's Office; Laurie Tobias-Cohen, Congressman Adriano Espaillat, Assemblymember Al Taylor. **Staff:** Paola Garcia. **Also Attending:** Genesis Abreu; Christina Alphonso; Nelson Andino; Julia Attaway, Cabrini Shrine; Trish Anderton; Robert Barnett, Harlem River Community Rowing; Deborah Barrett; Jason Beltre, Washington Heights CORNER Project; Ilya Bernstein; Abra Bigham; Alexander Campos, Hispanic Society; Charito Cisneros; Lucina Chavez; Jasmine Coles; Cassandre Collazo, Inwood Girl Scouts; Martin Collins, NoMAA; Pat Courtney, Volunteers for Isham Park; Lorial Crowder; Rachel Cytron, RowNY; Steve DesNoyer; Jennifer Edgar; Mike Fitelson, United Palace; Adam Fran; Timothy Frasca; Ira Gershenhorn; Bernard Grobman; Frances Hall & Steven Harris, Inwood Canoe Club; Steva Stowell Hardcastle; Loretta Henke; Hilary <no lastname>; Shiloh Holley, Morris-Jumel Mansion; Paul Kittas; Maria Lara; Cheramie Mondesire; Sky Pape; Sam Poole; Sarina Prabasi; Radaisy Ramirez; Kelly Ray; Hyben Robles; John Rumely; Carlos Sanchez; David Sykes, Uptown Soccer; Karen Taylor, While We Are Still Here; Cristobal Vivar.

**The meeting was called to order at 6:35pm by the Chair with Welcome, Opening Remarks, Updates & Announcements (Liz Ritter, Chair):**

- Reminder that free monthly Sunday movies return to the United Palace on Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Parks is in negotiation with a resposdee to last spring's RFP for the Ft. Tryon Park restaurant concession and expects to make an announcement in the next few weeks. Jennifer Hoppa noted there will be a public hearing of the Franchise & Concessions Review Committee (FCRC) once the concession is awarded; the CB will be notified. Barbara asked for a copy of the RFP; Liz to re-send RFP to Committee members for review. *[Update: Liz circulated RFP right after meeting.]*

**1. Brief Programming Updates from cultural & friends of parks organizations <6:44pm>**

- **Martin Collins, Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance:** Small grants (between \$2,500 and \$5,000) for individual artists residing in Washington Heights and Inwood; Uptown Arts Stroll Poster Contest- three levels of prizes which include cash awards (\$1,250 for first prize, \$500 and \$250); hourly rental studio space available at 4140 Broadway. Please email [info@nomaanyc.org](mailto:info@nomaanyc.org).
- **Frances Hall, Inwood Canoe Club:** Too cold now for programming but already planning for 2022 public programs. In 2021, Sunday morning Open House resumed and nearly 300 guests paddled; 60% of those were from CD12 (ZIP codes 10032, 10033, 10034, & 10040). There was a new online signup system created and mandatory vaccination for guests and volunteers. Looking to offer opportunities for children and families in 2022.
- **Alexander Campos, Hispanic Society Museum & Library:** Upcoming Panel Discussion on influence of Mexican muralists: Jan. 28<sup>th</sup> 10am-noon; attendance limited to 50 people. New exhibitions featuring 400 years of drawings from notable 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> C. artists from the Iberian Peninsula & Latin America; "Nuestra Casa" (Feb. 17<sup>th</sup> through end-April) will highlight objects from our permanent collection especially from overlooked artists. Drawing workshops, postponed due to Omicron, will resume in Feb. for 100 Gregorio Luperon students.
- **Sally Fisher, Friends of Inwood Hill Park & WHIN Food Council** Mulchfest 2022: Tree Chipping + Mulch Giveaway at IHP Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>. NYC Parks Forestry chipped 1k+ trees, creating a mountain of fresh mulch to nourish street trees+gardens. We distributed bags of mulch, made sachets, and joined NYC Parks Stewardship volunteers to spread mulch around our street trees to insulate them from the cold. (Mulch still available; email [friendsofinwoodhill@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofinwoodhill@gmail.com).) We gave out mini grow kits and hot drinks and hosted a food drive for St. Jude's community fridge (205<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>). Food Council has launched the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of our Grow From Home project to put food gardens on local families' windowsills. We provide edible plants to grow/harvest at home, and all the supplies/training. Free! Limited; apply by Jan. 21: <https://www.whinfoodcouncil.org>.

## 2. Brief NYC Parks Report (Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator) <7pm>

- COVID Testing centers: J. Hood Wright & Highbridge Recreation Center
- Upcoming programs: Highbridge Water Tower (re-opened on October 27<sup>th</sup>), you can climb up 200 feet and get amazing views. January 15<sup>th</sup> 1-3 pm; must pre-register on Parks website. Additional dates posted each month.
- Ft. Tryon Park Trust: (Jan 15<sup>th</sup>) Join Mike Feller, former Chief Naturalist of NYC as he leads a winter tour of Inwood Hill Park. Visit [www.FortTryonTrust.org/events](http://www.FortTryonTrust.org/events) for info on programs.
- Urban Park Rangers: (Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>) Geology tour of Ft. Tryon. Meet 11am at Broadway/Arden; (Jan 30<sup>th</sup>) Bald Eagle Watch. Meet @ Payson Parkhouse (Dyckman St.). Info: [www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks).
- Capital Project Updates:
  - a. \$22M reallocated for the reconstruction of Dyckman Pier; Parks is taking this project over from EDC. There will be a public scoping meeting in mid-Spring (~April?). Noted that the Inwood Canoe Club is a concessionaire through a public process.
  - b. Upcoming construction phase of multi-site retaining wall project: Bennett Avenue rock face, Fort Washington Park's /Manhattan Waterfront Greenway from 180<sup>th</sup> to Dyckman, and Gorman Park. Additional retaining walls (per our recent reso) are currently in design: Isham Park, Inwood Hill Park woodland near Payson Avenue, J. Hood Wright Park handball court, & Dorothy McGowan Community Garden.
  - c. Highbridge Park Phase 1 should be completed within two months.
  - d. Please visit the Laurel Hill Terrace Grand Staircase that was part of an \$11M restoration that CB 12 advocated for. Beautifully restored.
- Snow Removal Procedures/Priorities: Parks partners with Sanitation. Priorities are roads and roadways; Parks lends plow trucks and staff to Sanitation to assist with those locations. Within parks, the priorities are subways, bus stops, bike paths, and paths where people have to pass through, followed by park perimeters, then interiors and playgrounds.
- Barbara Frazier: question about young people who want to sign up to be snow? Jen: sanitation has per diem workers but she doesn't know of their process. Sally: there is a FaceBook group for volunteers to help with snow removal, "Inwood Shovelers;" Trish Anderton shared the link.

## 3. Natalie Espino, Manhattan Borough President's Office <7:12pm>

- Staff is working remotely and reachable.
- MBP Mark Levine released his 16-point COVID plan. This includes the creation of a COVID Task Force and appointment of former Deputy MBP & Washington Heights's own Aldrin Bonilla as COVID Czar.
- MBP is asking for extension of the Eviction Moratorium, which expires on Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>, and for greater access to counsel for rental tenants. He is also requesting extension of Open Meetings Law changes which allow CB and other public meetings to be held on Zoom.
- Testing & vaccination pop-up site happening at the Manhattan North office (431 W. 125<sup>th</sup> St.), Monday-Friday, 9am-2pm in partnership with Somos.
- Community Board Re-Appointment Portal is now open.
- Friday (Jan. 14<sup>th</sup>) is Natalie Espino's last day with MBPO. Liz, Sally, and others expressed gratitude for Natalie's service, and wished her luck in her new endeavors.

## 4. Presentation by Jason Beltre, Washington Heights CORNER Project (WHCP) <7:20pm> Jason is the Director of Community Initiatives and Impact, covering Washington Heights, East Harlem and the

Bronx. The CORNER Project just signed 30-year lease in Washington Heights at 500 W. 180<sup>th</sup> St. and also is merging with NY Harm Reduction Educators (NYHRE), located in East Harlem, to form OnPoint NYC. The 180<sup>th</sup> St. facility currently operates a drop in center offering opportunity for respite, food, clothing, medical care, referrals, detox, and other resources. They are looking to expand the services they offer: to install showers and laundry services (2 washers and dryers); add a roof garden; and open a café to employ their clients once the hardware store that occupies the first floor of the building moves. WHCP is committed to working with the community and serving as a community leader to address many issues such as food insecurity, holding COVID testing/vaxx services for their clients and the larger community, hosting “La Nevera” community fridge, etc.

Open, public use of drugs, as well as the detritus (needles, etc.) became much more prevalent when WHCP lost its lease on W. 181<sup>st</sup> St. in August 2018. While they continued to provide services from vans located first on W. 181<sup>st</sup> St. & St. Nicholas Ave., and then on Amsterdam Ave. & W. 181<sup>st</sup> St., capacity was limited. The public also incorrectly attributed this increase to the presence of the vans, rather than the absence of the full-capacity site. Already with the opening of the new site last year these numbers have begun to decrease; their kiosk program has expanded from nine to 13 kiosks, and the Outreach & Public Safety Team (OPST) from two people to five. WHCP continues to work with the Parks Department and NYCT to address the problem of syringes in our parks and subways, and with local schools to do cleanups of nearby areas.

OnPoint NYC recently became the first Supervised Consumption sites (a/k/a “safe injection site” or “overdose prevention center”) in the US, following a model commonly used in other countries, including Canada. Since opening on Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> there have been 1600 supervised uses. The staff provide a clean and safe place to consume drugs, including providing clean paraphernalia; they do NOT provide the actual drugs, and users are not allowed to take used paraphernalia with them when they leave, but may get clean supplies. The WH staff have intervened in 56 overdoses, which resulted in ZERO deaths, and only one 911 call. Fentanyl is in most of the heroin supply – 100% of samples tested contain some fentanyl – and other drugs as well. Our staff are prepared to handle these situations, to reverse ODs immediately: “we want to lift the burden on the community, law enforcement, and the healthcare system.” Every use in the supervised site is one less use on the street, in a park or public restroom, etc. This is also what helps to build rapport and provide a path to treatment.

The WH site uses a peer model, staffed by former users who have been able to manage their use or maintain sobriety. The East Harlem site uses a medical model, staffed by MD/RN/PA/NP. Those interested in touring either location to learn more about what they do are welcome to contact Jason (646-938-8601 / [jason@cornerproject.org](mailto:jason@cornerproject.org)). WHCP is funded mostly from donations but they are exploring other funding options. Currently, Jason estimates that the breakdown is as follows: 90% private funding, grants/city funding is 10%. They have applied for more funding from the city and are receiving COVID-related funding since they are hosting COVID vaccine clinics on Tuesdays in partnership with DOH and Star network. They also partner with NYC Health & Hospitals Corp. for COVID testing and vaccination vans near Highbridge Park, Tues.-Sat., 11am-7pm).

The WH site is only open 9am-8pm, but they are looking to expand, initially to 7am-11pm, and then to 24-hours. They are currently hiring at entry-level as well as LCSW. They have a volunteer program though that’s currently on pause due to COVID.

There was a robust Q&A:

- Nobles: What do you need from a marketing perspective? Offered professional marketing help.
- Alexis: asked about creation of hygiene center; noted that Tide helps set up laundry centers.
- Nobles: what is law enforcement response? Jason: we are working with local PD in all three communities. Recently did a presentations at 34<sup>th</sup> Pct. roll call, which was a good exchange of information. We've had visits from local PD to tour our facilities and understand our services, and "they are on board." We have had some issues with our East Harlem site in terms of oversaturation of services in the community, and "fair share;" this is less of an issue in WH.
- Jennifer stated that she appreciates the work of WHCP, which helps our parks.
- Barbara: how many clients are from CD12? Jason: primarily local; many are homeless.
- Steve, who chairs CB Health Committee, stated that WHCP also presented at their Jan. meeting.

#### 5. New Business <8:15pm>

- The "Lighthouse Link," a proposed 7-block path to connect the 3/4-mile path along the Hudson River south from Dyckman St. to the River-adjacent southbound path from the Little Red Lighthouse at ~W. 186<sup>th</sup> St., has been a CB12M Capital Expense priority for years, but has never been funded due to its expense. The project would require an easement from Amtrak as the path would traverse their right-of-way. There have been various cost estimates over the years, all in the tens of millions of dollars. A member of the public contacted Liz several days ago to ask if it made sense to pass a resolution calling on federal funding for this project given the recent passage of the "Build Back Better" federal infrastructure bill. Edda says yes, since circumstances have changed; Sally seconded. The resolution passed unanimously with 7 votes. (Alexis, Barbara, Danny, Edda, Liz, Nobles, & Sally in favor; Jumirna did not respond to the roll call.) Barbara asked about NYS Greenway funding; Jennifer replied that federal funding is generally administered through State DOT but given the scale of this project NYS doesn't have access to the required level of funding. She also noted that NYC cannot begin a project until it is fully funded. Liz to share a draft of the resolution (and minutes) w/Committee before sending to CB12 staff for circulation to full Board. Steve will try to get a more precise cost estimate prior to Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> General meeting.
- Sally suggested that we add other priorities in a subsequent resolution. Also recommended that we reach out to our new Councilmember, Carmen De La Rosa to identify priorities for parks and have a more comprehensive discussion; Liz to follow up to invite the CM to our Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. *[Update: Liz confirmed 1/16 w/the CM for Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>.]*
- Sally asked for clarification regarding naming streets and park sites for deceased people. Jennifer confirmed that Parks has not made any changes to the three-year requirement.
- Sally asked about Participatory Budgeting, as she has seen this happening for the current FY in other Districts. Steve said it doesn't look like CD 10 is included this year.
- Question from a member of the public regarding enforcement of dogs that are not on leashes early in the morning at Bennett Park. Jennifer stated that an increase in Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers will allow for more shifts and coverage in CD12 parks.

There being no further business, **the meeting was adjourned at 8:35pm:** motion by Nobles Crawford; seconded by Barbara Frazier; no objection.

Respectfully submitted: Edda Santiago & Liz Ritter