

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
September 14, 2021 (via Zoom)

Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Nobles Crawford, Assistant Chair; Sally Fisher; Edda Santiago; Ayisha Ogilvie; Daniel Bonilla; Public Members Alexis Marnel & Nayma Silver Matos. **Excused:** Barbara Frazier. **Absent:** Danielle Jettoo. **Other Board Members Present:** Steve Simon, Wayne Benjamin, Daryl Cochrane, Francisco Lopez. **Staff:** Paola Garcia. **Elected Officials, Agencies, & Institutions Represented:** Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator; Natalie Espino, Manhattan Borough President's Office; John Krawchuck, Executive Director, NYC Historic House Trust; Meredith Horsford & Don Rice, Dyckman Farmhouse Museum; Rachel Cytron, RowNY; Alexander Campos Hispanic Society; Shiloh Holley, Morris Jumel Mansion; Martin Collins, NoMAA; Robert Barnett, Harlem River Community Rowing; **Also Attending:** Antonio Burr, Cassandra Collazo, Afua Preston, Hoagy B. Carmichael, Warren Whitlock, Sky Pape, Maggie Velez, Cheramie Mondasire, Bernard Grobman, Ruth Fishbach, Karen Compton, Christina Alphonso, Judy Freeman, Trish Anderton, Tiffany Braby, Adrian Allen, Rajeev C., Jennifer Vanasco, Megan Lynch, Megan Byrnes

The meeting was called to order at 6:33pm by the Chair, Elizabeth Lorris Ritter.

1. Welcome, Opening Remarks, Updates, & Announcements (Liz Ritter, Chair) <6:33pm>

- Changes in Committee: Daryl Cochrane is now Chair of the Health & Human Services Committee and Francisco Lopez is Chair of the Business Development Committee; they are no longer on this Committee. We welcome Nobles Crawford as our new Assistant Chair, and newly appointed member Danny Bonilla.
- Attended a 9/11 volunteer cleanup day in Fort Tryon Park and a commemorative ceremony; noted temporary public art installation by Marta Blair.
- The Mayor's Office of Media & Entertainment is sponsoring "Off Broadway in the Boroughs," free outdoor performances of Winnie the Pooh, Stomp, music and other activities. The Manhattan location is on Dyckman St. on Friday October 1st, 3pm-5pm. (It is unclear if it will be in the Plaza or further west.)
- No news yet on New Leaf Café; the concession RFP process is still in process.
- No updates on Parks renamings. There is a public petition to rename Isham Alley for beloved gardener Maria Lall who died over the summer from cancer. This is not at all controversial but Parks, like DoT, doesn't do renamings for persons who are deceased for less than 3 years. In the interim, Parks is working with Maria's family and the Volunteers for Isham Park on a tree planting and commemorative event.
- Ann Loftus Playground construction has begun, and should take about a year. Unfortunately the contractor placed the fencing outside of the bench area along Broadway which prohibits their use. Parks is working on solution to provide seating while maintaining safety of the construction envelope.
- Liz will testify at the Public Design Commission on Sept. 20 in favor of RowNY's Boathouse which CB12M unanimously approved in 2019 and on which we heard an updated presentation in July.
- Harlem River Community Rowing Presentation has been deferred to November at their request.

2. Brief Programming Updates <6:50pm>

- **Hispanic Society/Alexander Campos:** "Gilded Figures: Wood and Clay Made Flesh," featuring 30 Baroque sculptures from the Iberian Peninsula & Latin America Opening 10/15/21, runs through 1/3/22; free, Th-Sun, Noon–6pm. "Treasures of the Hispanic Society Library" featuring 100 rare books and manuscripts opens 9/29 at the Grolier Club on East 60th St.; free; M-F, 10am to 5pm.
- **RowNYork/Rachel Cytron:** enrolling new students. Interested 9th-12th graders should visit <https://rownyork.org/program/hsrowing> to sign up. No rowing experience or swimming skills required.
- **Morris Jumel Mansion/Megan Byrnes:** 9/23, and 9/30 at 5:30 PM: Free Bachata Dance Classes with Osaliki Sepulveda; 10/9 Heritage Rose Volunteer Gardening Day from 11 am - 3 pm; Paranormal programs will also be resuming in October.
- **Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance/Martin Collins:** Please see the NoMAA newsletter at www.nomaany.org for exhibitions, events, open studios, funding opportunities & more. Submit your arts & cultural events at www.nomaany.org/submit-event/ for publication in our online calendar and newsletter. Thursdays with NoMAA resumes November 4th with Lyndell Brookhouse-Gil <https://lbgpaintings.com/>. See website or email info@nomaany.org for info.

- **Every Voice Choirs/Alexis Marnel:** Fall afterschool singing programs starting the week of 9/20/21. Need-based scholarships available. Go to www.everyvoicechoirs.org for info.
- **Classical Theatre of Harlem/Alexis Marnel:** Just presented excerpts of 2 new works: Langston in Harlem & Harlem Dream at Bryant Park. View: <https://www.cthnyc.org/bryant-park/>
- **NYC Parks/Jennifer Hoppa:** Go to NorthernManhattanParks.org and click on events. There are 16 different standing volunteer days each month in the parks uptown, including one group working regularly to help sustain Maria Lall's legacy and gardener Walter Markham who had to take a brief pause from work. Highbridge Film Festival on the Highbridge pool deck begins September 24th with *Dora the Explorer*. 10/1: *Selena*; 10/8 *Coco*; 10/15: *In the Heights*, where the pool scene was filmed! The 10/15 event also includes a block party prior to the film.

3. New York City Parks Report: Jennifer Hoppa <7:07pm>

- Public Safety Inwood: Sexual Assaults have occurred in Inwood Park, perpetrator was arrested. Park enforcement substation with 1 Sgt. & 5 Officers is being created on Dyckman for Inwood Hill & Fort Tryon Parks. Parks is also expanding the way-finding signage program so there will be additional maps as well as 16 sites in the park that are GPS located.
- \$8K allocated to fix the IHP pathway retaining wall but much more is needed to ensure its safety.
- Fort Washington Greenway temporary closure has been a big concern of this committee. Parks has received funding to fix the sinkholes and repair the retaining wall. The work will be done in sections to minimize the length and duration of required detours. Construction will start in early October at the north end of the greenway (181 to Dyckman) and will take ~3 months, during which people can continue to use 181st St. pedestrian bridge as the downtown access point. The Segment between 158-181st Streets will be closed for ~1 month beginning around January. (Note: all time estimates are weather-dependent.)
- Highbridge & J. Hood Wright Rec Centers have re-opened; membership is free before 12/31/21.
- Spotted Lantern Infestation: Invasive plant hopper is increasingly prevalent. Squish 'em if ya see 'em! Please report sightings to 311 or foresthealth@parks.nyc.gov so the invasion can be tracked.
- Audubon Playground is mostly complete, but still needs electrical work. Comfort station is ongoing; anticipate Nov. 1st opening.
- Nature Center renovations will begin in early October and will take approximately 18 months.

Questions/Comments:

- **Sally Fisher:** Have Park Rangers been displaced from Payson because of the damage? My question is, we know we've lost our Urban Park Rangers because of flood damage at Payson. A: We did not lose Urban Park Rangers; they relocated to Payson from IHP. Payson did have some temporary damage from the last two storms and Rangers are temporarily relocated to Harlem but they are still doing programming in CD12. Also: addition of PEP detail will not change the number of Urban Park Rangers that are assigned.
- **Alexis Marnel:** What can be done on motorcycles on Highbridge trail and off leash dogs? Can we at least have increased signage about putting dogs on leash? Saw two incidents of men training pit bulls to fight. A: Motorcycles, etc. can only be confiscated, etc. if they are stopped/parked. Not much can be done, and signage unlikely to help as people who don't care about rules also don't care about signs. Signage for dogs to be on leash can be increased. Jennifer will ask for more park enforcement to issue summons for dogs that are off leash.
- **Darryl Cochrane:** Update on Gorman Park? A: Retaining wall repair is part of a contract and will happen after the Fort Washington Greenway is fixed. 2nd Q: Invasive planting on the bike path canopy at Inspiration Point is very overgrown. A: Most has been removed but will double check.
- **Danny Bonilla:** Repaving of the running paths and lighting along Haven Avenue? A: This involves multiple jurisdictions (NYC & NYS DoT, Parks, & the Port Authority) and we are working on inter-agency response at the District Services Cabinet. Lighting should also be discussed as part of a Capital Project, though funding would be through DoT and go through the T&T Committee.

- **Nobles Crawford:** The task force of police officers that are going to be helping out with more patrolling of the parks – is it a task force that's between the precincts, how does it actually break down? A: they're two different things. Park Rangers are more education, monitoring conditions, public programs; PEP are peace officers. They do not have weapons but can issue summons. Also noted NJ has a toll-free number for reporting Spotted Lantern Flies: 1-833-4BADBUG.
 - **Steve Simon:** Work on the Gorman Park Project will be ~3-4 months. Asked Jennifer to comment on Highbridge Re-Opening Phase 1: She stated it will re-open on 9/20/21 – Laurel Hill Terrace Area from 180th street up to Wallenberg Playground at W. 190th, with a fully lit walking path.
4. **Presentation from Historic House Trust, John Krawchuck, Executive Director. Capital Campaign Renovations for Dyckman Farmhouse and Morris Jumel Mansion <7:35pm>**

Dyckman Farmhouse

- \$6,462,000 from C/M Rodriguez, MBP Brewer, (former) NYCC Speaker Viverito, & the Mayor.
- John G. Waite Associates retained for the full restoration of the exterior, interior and landscape.
- This is the beginning of the design process, which will include a subsequent presentation to the community once a schematic design is created.
- The project would create ADA-compliant entries at street level and within the House/Museum.
- Dyckman Farmhouse was landmarked in 1967. The oldest part of the house is believed to have been constructed circa ~1720's but HHT/DFH is working to confirm the actual date. An extension was added in 1835 but demolished in the 1920's, after becoming a museum, as it was thought to be not original to the house. The main section of the House dates to the 1780's.
- Currently the restrooms, offices, and caretaker's residence are in the oldest section of the house. Restoring the additional building would free up this section for programming and interpretation.
- Anticipated time frame: ~12 months. Design work anticipated to be completed in Fall of 2022

Questions:

- **Daryl Cochrane (Board):** If the design will be completed in a year when will the restoration be completed? A: It goes out for bid, then registered, which takes for our 4 or 5 months, then 2 or 3 years for construction. Likely to be completed in 2025.
- **Liz Ritter:** We'll need a scoping meeting in May or June of 2022 since CBs don't meet in summer. Also kudos to DFH on their excellent historical research and public engagement around issues of race and slavery as part of Northern Manhattan history.
- **Sally Fisher:** Will the grounds be restored to be historically accurate? A: It is still unclear as there is a great deal of research to be done. The team includes a landscape architect. There also are concerns regarding the slope's grade for accessibility.

Morris-Jumel Mansion

- \$2.7 million allocated from the Mayor, C/M Rodriguez, & MBP Brewer for the exterior façade painting and restoration, ADA access, an ADA-compliant 1st bathroom, and restoration of the roof which was last replaced at least 20 years ago.
- Retained Page Ayres Cowley Architecture, LLC as consultants.
- 1st floor toilet facilities will be single non gendered ADA bathrooms; 2nd floor toilet facilities will be non-gendered, and non-accessible
- Time Frame: Fall of 2022 is the anticipated completion for the design work. The bids will go out and 4-5 months will secure a contractor, and then a 1-year construction completion.

Questions:

- **Wayne Benjamin:** CB12M Member and also VP of the MJM Board offered additional history.

- **Liz Ritter:** Since DOT has painting of bridges as part of their capital maintenance program, why can't HHT make a similar argument that painting of historic houses (and other landmarked structures) should be capitally eligible? A: We are bound by the rules of preservation, and OMB doesn't recognize this. Liz suggested reaching out to DOT/Port Authority regarding the concept of painting as capital improvement project to get OMB to recognize that there is precedent for this and these two are analogous.
- **Natalie Espino (MBPO):** Asked that design scope consider the spirit of accessibility to expand space for both projects as generously as they allow to make room for caretakers.

5. Discussion of FY '23 Capital Expense and Budget Priorities <8:19pm>

- We will do our Committee rankings for Capital & Expense Budget items in October in anticipation of the full Board's public hearing and ranking later in the month. Prior to the October Committee meeting, Liz will send out last year's rankings and the OMB response, as well as a list of items that have been raised over the last year in Committee discussions and public comment. At the October meeting, Jennifer Hoppa will give an update of what projects are in processes or completed and can be removed from the numbered rankings.
- Parks is the only NYC agency that doesn't have its own capital budget. The only way Parks capital projects happen is to get funding directly from elected officials, primarily the local City Council Member, but sometimes the Borough President, Council's Speaker or Borough delegation, and/or Mayor's Office will help fund a project. Shout-out to our local C/M's, Levine & Rodriguez, for their continued support.
- CD12M has more parkland and therefore greater capital need than literally any other CB in the City. Last year CB12M had 73 Capital requests, more than a third of which were in Parks.
- Jennifer Hoppa Updates:
 - Fort Washington Park Comfort Station pre-fab bathroom unit is fully funded by C/M Levine;
 - 186th Street Basketball courts fully funded by C/M Rodriguez (total \$1.1 million). Community scoping meeting will be coming up soon.
 - 660 acres of WPA-era pathways need monies as they haven't gotten funding over the past several years. MBPO just allocated \$250k to be bundled with \$1.2 million for Fort Tryon. Past few storms have negatively impacted our parks. More funding is needed.
 - \$88 million allocated for Harlem River Walkway/Esplanade.
 - \$50 million allocated for Sherman Creek area.
 - \$22 million for Dyckman water park project will be advancing and a public scoping meeting will be happening in the future.
- Sally Fisher gave her wish list for projects to be funded: waterfront restoration; oyster castles; preserving shorelines; emergency call boxes; restoration of salt marshes; increased allocation of Park Rangers; eliminate the use of pesticides and consider using goats as an alternative; separate programming for stewardship/environment/community gardens in northern Manhattan. As we see, climate change is wreaking havoc in our community and our budget priorities must reflect this need.
- Liz Ritter commented that we must whittle down our list of projects which are capped by OMB at 25 Expense Programs & 40 Capital projects. The reality is we need to lump things together so we can get them on the docket.

Jennifer Hoppa responded to a public enquiry regarding broken glass on FTP paths and near the Citibike docking station in Margaret Corbin Circle.

The **meeting adjourned** at 8:50pm. (Motion by Nobles Crawford; second by Nayma Silver Matos.)