

Community Board 12, Manhattan
Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee – 11/10/2022 (on Zoom)

Present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter (Chair); Daniel Bonilla; Mansita Diawara; Barbara Frazier, Alexis Marnel (public member); Nayma Silver (public member). **Excused:** Jumirna Alcober-Ramirez; Nobles Crawford (Assistant Chair); Maria Del Valle; Sally Fisher. **Other Board Members:** Melissa Delaney-Del Valle; Steve Simon. **Institutions & Organizations represented:** Jennifer Hoppa, Ricardo Hinkle, Leslie Peoples, Chris Ameigh, Laura Drawbaugh, Nate Grove, Joe Conforti, & Arthur Cortes, NYC Parks; Martin Collins, NoMAA; Stephanie Caban, Riverside Parks Conservancy; Frances Hall, Steve Harris, Maureen Ward, Julie McCoy, Antonio Burr, Kay McKeon, Luis Lopez, Jesse Chrismer, Alejandro Arevalo, & Diana Zavala, Inwood Canoe Club; Laird Kelly, Uptown Paddling; Christina Alphonso, Met/Cloisters; Cassandre Collazo, RING & Inwood Girl Scout Troop 3205; Bob Barnett, Harlem River Community Rowing; Nancy Preston, Moving Forward/Unidos; Rosa Yolanda Pineda & Omar Gonzalez, Conectémonos; Robert Burke, Hudson River Community Sailing; Pat Courtney, Volunteers for Isham Park; Catherine Hughes, Morris-Jumel Mansion; Melissa Cohen, NYS DEC (Fisheries Manager); Chauncy Young, Harlem River Working Group. **Other Attendees:** Dave Thom; Allegra LaGrande; Nelson Andino; Ira Gershennhorn; Kaila Paulino; Ilya Bernstein; Marisol Alcaide; Loretta Henke; Camilla Conde; Craig Sachs; Carrie Spinney; Luis Melendez; H. Martinez; Jim Marcinek; Felipe Vasconcelos; Nicola Lagonigro; Megan Jackson; Nicole Ogrossol; Timothy Brown; Louis Kleinman; Jesse <no last name given>; Daniel Rannells, Leslie Henry, Jan van Cort.

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 pm without a quorum. A quorum was called a little after 8 pm.

1) Updates & announcements from the Chair:

- Ann Loftus Playground re-opened with a ribbon-cutting on 10/13 and it's great! Parks is looking to do a re-opening event in the spring on a weekend when school children can attend.
- In-person meetings are expected to resume in December if the Mayor does not extend the current Executive Order. The meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held at the United Palace.
[Note: The Mayor extended his EO on 11/21 for another month, through 12/20/22, so our December Committee meeting will be on Zoom.]
- No update from CB12M District Manager on Haven Avenue ramp and clean-up issues.
- No update from Parks on Ft. Washington Park pathways & benches project timeline.
- Update on Ft. Washington Park/Hudson River Greenway, per Jennifer Hoppa: bike path work started Nov. 7th; the bridge remains open. The project is expected to take about four months.
- CB12M completed it's Capital & Expense Budget Priority Rankings but we do not yet have the aggregated results; these will be announced at the next Committee meeting.

2) Brief Programming Updates/Cultural Institutions and Friends of Parks < 6:44 pm>

- **Stephanie Caban — Riverside Park conservancy:** The tennis courts near the Little Red Lighthouse have cracks and need repair. We are trying to create a volunteer-led user group. Jenner suggested following up with John Herrold, who is the Administrator for that Park (which is south of Jennifer's Northern Manhattan Parks District.)
- **Julie McCoy — Inwood Canoe Club:** As always, thank you for the opportunity to present our monthly update. A number of our members have tuned in tonight to hear the latest on the Dyckman waterfront reconstruction project. We're looking forward to hearing what NYC Parks and Stantec Engineering have planned.
 - Even though the Hudson is too cold to host on-the-water programs right now, the Club is excited to support on-land activities for the public and prospective members until spring.
 - Email inwoodcanoe@gmail.com to get in touch with suggestions for partnerships or programs. Visit www.inwoodcanoenyc.org for more info about ICC and to sign up for email alerts about our year-round programs.
 - On October 29, we hosted a shoreline cleanup with Word Up Community Book Shop and Uptown Movement. We're so excited about making a connection with these groups and are looking forward to another cleanup in early December.

- We'd congratulate our friends at Hudson River Community Sailing on a successful season. We were happy to share the boathouse deck for their end-of-season party and thank our members who helped out with their regatta a couple of weeks ago. ICC has had a great time sharing the river with them and partnering on events like Heroes on the Hudson in August.
- In addition to ICC's programs, our non-profit affiliate, Uptown Paddling, seeks community partners for single-session youth paddling events in 2023: uptownpaddling@gmail.com
- We're grateful to the office of Councilmember Carmen De La Rosa for providing discretionary grant funding for Uptown Paddling's community outreach.
- **Rosa Yolanda Pineda — Conectémonos** We have planted many bulbs between 188th & 193rd Streets; thanks to Parks for their support. Parks Commissioner Perez gave an award to the families of NYPD Officers Perez & Mora who were murdered in the line of duty. We used the event as a healing tool for the community. We also are looking forward to the Parks presentation on the W. 186th St. Basketball Courts project later this evening.
- **Barbara Frazier — Riverside/Inwood Neighborhood Garden (RING)** Announced holiday event and tree lighting on December 3rd. Mr. & Mrs. Claus will be in attendance, and there will be hot chocolate and other treats.
- **Cassandra Collazo — Inwood Girl Scout Troop 3205** is working w/ Sen. Robert Jackson on a coat drive for migrants. Coats may be dropped off at the Good Shepherd rectory (Cooper & Isham Streets) through November 16th, from 10 am to 4 pm.
- **Leslie Henry — Participatory Budget Delegate in Council District 7** which includes about 10 blocks at the southern end of Community District 12. Gave an extensive overview of the process, which is similar throughout all of the Council Districts which are engaging in Participatory Budgeting. Among the projects in CD7 which relate to this Committee are improving lighting on Riverside Drive at W. 160th St. and adding lighting and signage in Fort Washington Park.
- **Martin Collins — Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance** (read by Liz Ritter)
 - See #TheGramUptown, a social media photo exhibition with 60 artists at NoMAA's gallery co-produced with the Uptown Collective. Gallery hours are Tuesdays & Saturdays, 1 pm-5 pm, or by appointment through Saturday, 1/14, at 4140 Broadway. Info: www.nomaanyc.org.
 - Meet Ibtisam Tasnim Zaman, a multidisciplinary feminist & self-taught artist, on Thursdays with NoMAA after tonight's meeting. The hybrid program airs at 7:30 pm today and will be archived on NoMAA's website. The artist's work draws inspiration from Persian Islamic geometric art, Indian classical art, surrealism, & magical realism.
 - We invite you to read NoMAA's weekly newsletter, see our 4 onsite studios for artists & arts organizations to use, calendar your events & more at www.nomaanyc.org.

- 3) **Jennifer Hoppa/Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator Report** < 7:03 pm> In consideration of the full agenda there were only brief programming announcements. The usual Parks report with Q&A was deferred to the next meeting. For questions regarding project updates refer to Parks' online Capital Tracker: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/planning-and-building/capital-project-tracker>.
- We will be honoring CB12M's own Sally Fisher, co-founder of Friends of Inwood Hill Park and activist in many other community organizations, on Sunday (11/13) at noon. We will have a drum circle, tree planting, and light refreshments. The event will be followed by a Rangers geology tour at 2 pm and a Dance project at 3 pm.
 - Announced additional upcoming events including a street tree stewardship event on 11/11, Fall Foliage hike on 11/12, "Meet a Tarantula" on 11/12, Night Hike in Ft. Tryon Park on 11/13, Highbridge Park Forest Walk on 11/13, Botanical Embroidery art class w/Jessica Maria on 11/19, Highbridge Water Tower tour on 11/19, a post-Thanksgiving Day hike on 11/25 at 11 am, a Harlem to Highbridge Super Hike on 11/26 at 11 am (meet at Jackie Robinson Rec. Center), and a Native American Heritage Month event honoring the Lenape of Manhattan on 11/27 at 1 pm.

- We're still seeing isolated cases of rabies so please be careful with dogs and keep them on leashes.

4) **Presentation by NYC Parks on W. 186th St. Basketball project (Laura Drawbaugh, Landscape Architect, Capital Division)** < 7:08 pm>

The basketball courts are built on the former site of a residential building on W. 186th St. between Audubon & St. Nicholas Avenues, which burned down in the 1970s. The Community Association of Progressive Dominicans/ACDP received permission to establish courts on the vacant lot and in 1997 the City installed fencing and lighting, and hoops. Eventually, the property was transferred from HPD to Parks. It is the only park within a 5-minute radius, so it's an especially important facility for the community. Currently, the asphalt paving is cracked and pitted with settling due to unstable foundation materials, poor drainage, and lights and a water fountain that do not work; the retaining walls at the perimeter also are severely compromised and in need of repair. The site has strong and distinct shadows cast by the buildings on three sides which make the site act like a giant sundial. There also are two murals on the adjacent building which are fading and damaged but which are outside of the scope of this project as they are on the exterior walls of privately-owned buildings, not Parks/City property.

There was a public scoping meeting on March 7th, 2022, with participation from a broad range of community members at multiple venues connected through Zoom. The community prioritized basketball at the site but also wanted the new design to incorporate activities for younger children and girls, seating for all ages, green/plantings and trees for shade, multipurpose uses (e.g., farmers' and/or crafts markets, kids activities, movies, performances) as well as preservation of the beloved memorial murals.

The proposed plan will:

- Reconstruct the retaining wall, which is about 5' below grade, 12' chain link fencing. The cost will be funded through the City's retaining wall fund and is additional to the financial scope of this project. There will also be 12' chain link fencing at the northern end of the basketball court to prevent errant basketballs. The sidewalk and curb outside of the site will also be reconstructed, with expanded plant beds for better aesthetics and runoff recapture.
- Add a 46'x65'-8" court: a slightly narrowed regulation junior court, modified to fit the width of the site. The unstable foundation materials will be removed and the site repaved with asphalt so it's flat. The court will include detention/retention tanks. The court design is unique to the site, with thermoplastic graphics based on the movement of the light through it, marking the equinox and solstice shadows.
- Repair and repave (with asphalt) the front third (as you enter the courts, at the northern end) adding a thermoplastic coating with a ladybug/bumblebee hopscotch feature to make the area more inviting to children. There will also be a bucket hoop, a seating area, expanded tree pits for existing trees and five new trees, a plant bed, a hi-low drinking fountain with a bottle filler, and new lighting with electrical service. The seating will be standard "World's Fair" style benches, with dividers to discourage sleeping. Several members of the public spoke with compassion about not treating homeless people like a pariah, and that they are members of the community as well.
- Remove the current 8' entry fencing which is unwelcoming and carceral in appearance and replace it with a 4' high fence, consistent with Parks' new design guidelines on open playgrounds. This will provide a more accommodating and welcoming appearance. There was considerable discussion on this point, with the majority agreeing that the benefit of the welcoming appearance outweighed the potential detriment of easy access to the site when it is locked. While everyone agreed with the value of improved aesthetics, several members

of the public who live near the site believe that the other Parks' standard alternative, a taller (7') fence with pickets, would be preferable, and while members of the Committee were sympathetic to this point, in the end, it approved the lower fence. The entryway will be wider: two 10' long gates.

- The project will NOT repair or alter the murals in any way, but Parks is open to working with the landlord to secure access to the murals if the community identifies an appropriate artist or team to do this work. The cost of any such work is outside of the scope of this project. Because Parks will need access to the buildings for doing the retaining wall work, they will already be in touch with the landlords and committed to enquiring about the murals, as well as ensuring the contractor will protect the murals during construction. Parks will also reach out to the Councilmember to contact the original artist who is known to the community.

The timeline for this project is another 6 months for design, 9-12 months for procurement, and not more than 12 months for construction, with an anticipation opening in the spring/summer of 2025. The project is budgeted at \$1.1 million and is funded by Councilmember Carmen De La Rosa.

A member of the public asked if the surface could be made permeable. A: The site is on bedrock; there is no drainage. However, with the addition of plantings and larger tree pits, the site has a more permeable surface area (11%) than before (negligible). The site will also reduce stormwater runoff with bioswales. Barbara Frazier asked how the plantings will be maintained. A: there will be a couple with a hose and Parks will provide maintenance & operations but we would welcome community help.

A resolution in support of the proposal as presented passed unanimously (6 votes in favor).

5) **Presentation by NYC Parks on Hudson River Waterfront Reconstruction at Dyckman St. (Christopher Ameigh, Deputy Director, Marina Infrastructure & Nate Grove, Waterfront & Marine Operations Chief)** < 8:19 pm>

Nate Grove gave a brief recap of the history of concessions at the Dyckman Marina, which now is self-managed by the Parks Department, resulting in better use and public engagement. Chris Ameigh noted that a comprehensive package of waterfront improvements is one of the provisions of the Inwood Rezoning Points of Agreement (Item #30: Repair waterfront structures near Dyckman Pier, improve public access to Dyckman Pier, and build a new dock) and that this area has a long history of waterfront usage and docks. This project seeks to restore some of that. He also stated that there are permitting issues requiring a lot of interagency coordination; improvements below the water are the most restrictive, but since the Inwood Canoe Club can be repaired – as opposed to needing to be replaced – there will be fewer permitting issues.

This is the list of agencies and their respective purview:

- NYC Small Business Services – Construction Permitting
- NYC Department of Buildings – despite SBS being the permitting agency, DOB reviews some items, including electrical work. (The project may include electrical utility runs and lighting work here, budget allowing.)
- NYC Department of Environmental Protection – Relating to the combined sewer overflow (CSO) and an easement on site, as well as any water service work
- FDNY Fire Department weighs in on egress issues for SBS
- NYC Public Design Commission – this project has been submitted for conceptual review and is anticipated to be reviewed at its December meeting
- NYC Department of Transportation – Relating to coordination with roadway or greenways

- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation – Environmental permitting via the Joint Permit Application
- NYS Department of State – Coastal Consistency permitting via the Joint Permit Application
- United States Army Corps of Engineers – Federal permitting via the Joint Permit Application

The current fishing pier, which is located north of the restaurant concession, is falling apart and is poorly sited near a combined sewer overflow. It also obscures views from the beach, which itself is made smaller by the outdated infrastructure anchoring the current pier. This existing pier would be removed and replaced with a new pier which would be sited to the south, near where the current docks are located. Because it would be within the existing marina and tended by the marina operations staff, it would be open earlier and closed later, would be available to deeper draft vessels, and would provide a place for an “eco-dock.”

The current floating dock is insufficient to accommodate certain watercraft, and the existing gangway has limited loading capacity. Additionally, there is an inadequate launching facility for the small personal craft. All of these conditions would be addressed with new gangways (4’x30’ & 4’x80’), a new 20’x60’ concrete “eco-dock” with steel piles, new concrete floating dock with concrete finger piers with guide piles, a concrete boat ramp, and boarding pier with gangway and piles, to accommodate side-loading cultural, educational, and excursion vessels and to provide increased visitation, economic development, and enhanced leisure activities in the neighborhood.

As for the upland area where the beach is (north of the restaurant concession, “The Hudson”), the POA only speaks to making the area “more inviting” and providing better signage. “I think we can do more than that:” the proposed plan, having relocated the fishing pier to the south, would remove the old pier and abandoned piles; expand the beach and provide pedestrian access to same, with a sloped walk and tiered seating. In addition, the Dyckman Street turnaround west of the greenway would be reconfigured to preserve required parking for the restaurant concession (7 spaces) as well as add a shared pedestrian plaza with plantings and additional trees. (Note: several damaged or diseased trees would be removed, and replaced.)

The design phase of this project began in June, including the community input meeting on 6/23/22, and will run through December of 2023. If the preliminary concept is approved by the Public Design Commission, a finalized plan will be made and presented to CB12M for approval in the spring, with the exact scope subject to budget availability. Procurement generally takes 12 months; construction is anticipated to begin in 2025 and take about 18 months. The logistics of construction will be part of the final design; the Marina is likely to be closed during construction but this is not yet determined.

There was a robust Q&A, with much input from members of the waterfront community, including the Inwood Canoe Club, Uptown Paddling, and Hudson River Community Sailing. Several members of the public asked about ADA access, noting Heroes on the Hudson and another adaptive programming with Wounded Warriors, Bronx VA, Mt. Sinai Spine Care, et al.; Parks design team to follow up. There was also interest expressed in supervised group swims, as well as oyster beds/castles and the Billion Oyster Project.

A resolution in support of the proposal as presented passed unanimously (6 votes in favor).

As there was no new business, **the meeting was adjourned at 9:49 pm** with a motion by Barbara Frazier and a second by Mansita Diawara.

Respectfully submitted: Elizabeth Lorrin Ritter