

**Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee**  
**June 13, 2023 (Hybrid at the CB12M Offices (530 W. 166<sup>th</sup> St., 6<sup>th</sup> fl. + virtually via Zoom)**

**Committee Members Present:** Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair (on Zoom, w/Disability Waiver); Alexis Marnel, Ass't Chair; Daniel Bonilla; Luana Ferreira; Barbara Frazier (on Zoom, w/Disability Waiver); Tracy McNeil; Nayma Silver-Matos, Public Member. **Absent:** Jonathan Nuñez-Frometa. **Other Board Members:** Jay Baez, Daryl Cochrane, Steve Simon. **Staff:** Paola Garcia. **Elected Officials/Staff:** Bienvenido Toribio, NYS Assemblymember Manny De Los Santos; **Agencies/Organizations:** Bob Barnett, Harlem River Community Rowing; Natalie Espino, Hispanic Society Museum & Library; Julie McCoy, Inwood Canoe Club; Catherine Hughes, Morris-Jumel Mansion; Anthony Rojas, Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMAA); Tara Das, NYC EDC; Kimberley Butta, Ollie DeMeio; Steve Forte, Juana Garcia, Nate Grove, Christopher Heitmann, Jana LaSorte, Luis Melendez, Elizabeth Masella, Leslie Peoples, John Paul Rivera, Cory Shaw, & Adrian Smith, NYC Parks; Nate Harris, QRP Landscape Architects; Stephanie Caban, Riverside Park Conservancy; Rachel Cytron, RowNY; Pat Courtney, Volunteers for Isham Park; Eligio Reynoso, Washington Heights Tennis Assn. **Also Attending (members of the Public in attendance, in-person or on Zoom):** Andrea Arroyo, artist & community resident; RC ([rc2063@columbia.edu](mailto:rc2063@columbia.edu)); "Topper Headon" ([jankdalock@gmail.com](mailto:jankdalock@gmail.com)); Loretta Henke; MJ Levy Dickson, artist; Adrian Sas, artist; Ramon Toribio. **Media:** Liz Lozano & Cris Sea Chabrier, CUNY Graduate School of Journalism.

**1. The meeting was called to order** unofficially in the absence of a quorum at about **6:34pm** by the Chair, with welcome, opening remarks, updates & announcements:

- Gave a short explanation of hybrid attendance rules, noting that per the NYS Open Meetings Law one must be present in person to count towards quorum unless there is a Disability Waiver on file; that members with excused absences may attend virtually and can vote but do not count towards quorum.
- Observed a moment of silence for former Board Member Bea Hall who passed away on 8/6/23.
- Welcome to new Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator, Jana LaSorte. Ms. LaSorte was previously the Administrator for Historic Parks in Harlem and is a long-time resident of Inwood.
- NYC Cultural Affairs 1% for Art Commission at Ft. Washington NYPL presentation moved to October due to scheduling conflict.
- The Bonnefont (restaurant in Fort Tryon Park) opening has been announced for October 12<sup>th</sup>. Opening was delayed due to utility and other construction issues.
- NYC Economic Development Corp (EDC) presentation on new parks to be constructed at Academy Street and North Cove moved to January 2024 pending additional consideration by the design consultants, QRP, of resiliency factors. Jana LaSorte will be giving monthly updates on the issue.
- The Duchess of Alba is back at the Hispanic Society Museum & Library, along with many of the works which were visiting other museums while the HSM&L was closed for renovations.
- Liz Ritter announced that Alexis Marnel, a long-time public member, has been appointed to the Board and is now this Committee's Assistant Chair. Tracy McNeil is a new appointed member to the Board and the Committee. Jonathan Nuñez-Frometa, a CB12M member for several years, has been appointed to the Committee, but was unavailable to attend tonight. Daryl Cochrane, Mansita Diawara, and Domingo Estevez have been appointed to other Committees. Maria DelValle was not reappointed to the Board.
- Liz Ritter announced that after many years of service, she is stepping down as Committee Chair and Luana Ferreira will be the new chair. Those in attendance wished Liz a wonderful next chapter in her and thanked her for her years of service. Liz's expertise and enthusiasm will be missed. Luana is a lifelong resident of Inwood and well versed in the community's parks. She and Liz went on an extensive tour of the District last week to acquaint her with some of the projects and "hot spots" in the District.

**2. Brief programming updates from cultural & friends-of-parks orgs** <6:53pm>

- **Natalie Espino, Hispanic Society Museum & Library:** Opening Fall Exhibitions on Friday, Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>. Temporary Exhibition: Anatomy of a Fresco which are preparatory drawings by Jose Clemente Oroscó. Collection Without Borders: selection of decorative objects and paintings from the Museum's Permanent Collection. Upcoming programming: Celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month with a film series in conjunction with Inwood Artworks Alfresco which includes Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown on 9/21 and Coco on 9/28 at 6pm.
- **Tara Das, NYC Economic Development Corp. (EDC):** Gave a quick update on the new parks' construction projects at Academy Street and the North Cove. As has been reported extensively at past Committee

meeting, EDC is working in partnership with NYC Parks and landscape architecture consultants QRP. The design team is conducting a study that focuses in improving resiliency related to coastal flooding as well as the future Greenway Link along the waterfront between W. 200<sup>th</sup> & W. 207<sup>th</sup> Streets.

- **Catherine Hughes, Morris-Jumel Mansion:** The restoration of the Mansion is underway behind the scenes, paperwork is in moving around and scaffolding will be up in Spring 2024. As was reported at a previous meeting, the Central Park Conservancy is working on the grounds to enhance the beauty of the park. Opening exhibition on 9/23 by Inwood resident photographer entitled Bruce Katz “Past Present” which is a comparison work of historic images. Paranormal Investigations are returning in October
- **Anthony Rojas, Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMAA):** “Hispanic Heritage in the Heights” exhibit in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month with artists from West Harlem, Washington Heights and Inwood. The opening and artists talk is Wednesday, 9/27 from 6-8pm at NoMAA Gallery, 4140 Broadway and West 176<sup>th</sup> Street. Exhibit is on view through January 9<sup>th</sup> with gallery hours on Saturday and Tuesday from 1-5pm and by appointment. Reading by NoMAA grantee Paola Soto about sisterhood, grief and family secrets on Friday, 9/15 5:30-7:30 p.m. onsite at 4140 Broadway. At the Hispanic Society Museum and Library, there is an outdoor exhibit through October 31<sup>st</sup> by Marta Chilindron the 2023 winner of the NoMAA and Hispanic Society Museum and Library’s open call for artists. Artists and arts organizations may rent studio space at NoMAA and submit their events to our online calendar anytime. Please see website for more information [www.nomaanyc.org](http://www.nomaanyc.org).
- **Julie McCoy, Inwood Canoe Club:** End of public paddling season. 15 open house events were held and 786 individuals participated. Summer programming included Heroes on the Hudson event for disabled veterans, worked with El Barrio Bikes where people rode bikes to the club and then participated in paddling. The Youth Program “Uptown Paddling” served 100 participants.
- **Rachel Cytron, RowNY:** Tryouts for youth rowing program (8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, & 10<sup>th</sup> graders) to be held on 9/16, 9/23, & 9/30. No rowing experience required.
- **Jason Smith, New York Restoration Project (NYRP):** Focus on Harlem River Greenway, Northern Highbridge Park and Sherman Creek Park. Day in the Life of the Hudson River to be held on 10/5/23 where the group Dos Quente will be doing environmental science on the waterfront. Educators from the DEC will be conducting waterfront science experiments. Drop in/Volunteer Program: 9/23/23 and 10/7/23 Sherman Creek Shoreline Clean up; 10/15 Tree planting in High Bridge Park 1:30-3:30; 9/23/23 and 10/7 Volunteer days. Planning study: Sherman Creek Inlet on resilience and Westland Restoration
- **Barbara Frazier, Riverside/Inwood Neighborhood Garden (RING):** The Inwood Jazz Festival in August, Ring Garden hosted a Childrens Jazz Workshop/Take the A train. Kids learned about jazz and jazz themes. Childrens’ story hour continues on Thursday morning in conjunction with NYPL. October 7<sup>th</sup> Fall Flea Market. Need garden volunteers. Planning for the holiday party: Santa Clause will be there and the Good Shepherd Girl Scouts will be singing carols.

### 3. NYC Parks report (Jana LaSorte, Northern Manhattan Administrator) <7:15pm>

**Jana LaSorte** introduced herself. Noted that she has met with many partners who presented this evening. Introduced staff: Chris Heitman, Deputy Administrator; Ollie DiMeo, Program Coordinator; Corey Shaw, Parks Supervisor; Sgt, John Paul Rivera, Parks Enforcement. She gave general updates of project around the District:

- Highbridge Park Pool is now closed for the season.
- Monsignor Kett Playground ribbon cutting was in August. Next step is the new comfort station, currently under construction. Daryl asked about the accessible/gender neutral/family bathrooms; Liz replied that this is the case, the first in the City, at CB12M’s urging.
- Bennet Park bathrooms are open and plumbing issues have been addressed.
- Working with Central Park Conservancy on an agreement for Highbridge, Roger Morris, and Audubon playground to supplement what NYC Parks does. Update and photos will be presented in October.
- Did a walk through in Roger Morris Park with Central Park Conservancy and Catherine Hughes to create better sight lines, manicure the park for usefulness and beauty, and also assist with maintenance.

- Contrary to rumors that had been circulating, the handball courts in Inwood Hill Park will NOT be closing! The shops units will do the appropriate upgrades and anticipate completion by early October.
- Inwood Nature Center will open in October. <This update was greeted with enthusiasm and applause.>
- Lily Brown Playground project has moved to the design phase.
- It's My Park days are scheduled for October 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>. Working on streamlining the volunteer process

**Christopher Heitman** (Deputy Administrator) gave additional updates:

- Hudson River Greenway capstone repair is being worked on and will be completed the week of 9/17. No Greenway closures necessary. Sink holes on Greenway are being investigated and they are being cordoned off as they appear. Tests are being conducted over the next 2 weeks to find the root cause.
- Highbridge bathroom and Park House is estimated to be completed in October.
- Monsignor Kett Parkhouse and bathroom construction will begin late September with an estimated completion slated for March 2025
- Dyckman Rest project, which includes a new playground, dog park and sitting area at the NW corner of Highbridge Park (at the SE corner of Dyckman St., Nagle Ave., & Ft. George Hill) will begin construction later this month, with completion estimated in December 2024.
- Inwood Hill Park path paving: contractor is in place and detours are in place. Paving of upper trails to be completed April 2024.
- Highbridge mountain bike trail work done on the trails along Amsterdam Ave. in partnership with the NYC Mountain Bike Club, NYC Parks Natural Areas Conservancy, and the Student Conservation Assn.

**Corey Shaw**, Parks Supervisor, explained the "Blitz Concept", a new approach to operations: 10-20 Parks employee go into a park or an area of a park and do anything from cleaning up garbage to painting pipe rails to cutting back overgrown weeds (or all of these!) so that a noticeable difference can be seen within one day. Liz asked what is the mechanism for prioritizing, noting that people who are in a particular pocket have unique insights into the specific needs of those areas and commended the Blitz Concept for its give-and-take with community input. Jana responded: key priorities are identified and items that need immediate attention are addressed. A volunteer contingent will be put in place to help sustain the work after the blitz.

**Ollie DiMeo**, Park Events Highlights:

- Bollywood dance workshop from Lotus Music and Dance, 9/14 6-7:30
- Bilingual Nature Photography 9/17 1-3 p.m.
- Water Color Workshop 9/23/23
- Visit <https://www.nycgovparks.org/park-facilities/northern-manhattan-parks> for more information

**Stephen Forte** gave a brief update on Forest Restoration at Fort Washington Park:

- 3 year long capital Forest restoration begins Oct. '23 with an estimated completion in Sept. '26.
- The project includes restoring the forest canopy along the edges and bike path.
- Increasing biodiversity to beautify the park while decreasing intrusive species and weeds.

Daryl also asked for an update on Amelia Gorman Park? Jana: a proposal has been submitted; we are waiting for feedback. High Priority on our capital agenda.

**4. J. Hood Wright Park Retaining Wall and Pedestrian Ramp Reconstruction (Kimberly Butta)** <7:34pm>

Project update from presentation given in Nov. '21. Budget is updated to 2.15M with the addition of the adjacent pedestrian ramp. Goals remain the same: to maintain the stability of the supported public street in the sidewalks above the wall and to reconstruct the wall and the pedestrian ramp structures to improve pedestrian accessibility into the park and to maintain the adjacent park amenities. Ramp and wall are located at the north end of the park at W. 176<sup>th</sup> St. The existing ramp is not currently ADA compliant; it is one long run, with only a handrail on one side of the ramp. The proposal will maintain all existing trees within the vicinity of this work. What triggered the addition of the ramp to the project was during the site

investigation phase it was determined that the existing concrete of the ramp and the wall needed to be replaced as it was not strong enough. It was also determined that when replacing reconstructing the wall, it couldn't be done without undermining the stability of the adjacent ramp, so that was also added into the project. The new ramp will have a landing and handrails on both sides

Questions from the Committee:

- Liz Ritter: What is the extent to which this will or won't affect the soccer field that was installed several years ago? What is the timeline of this and do you need a reso since its mayoral funding? A: We will just be repairing the section that will be affected by the construction; the project doesn't otherwise affect the soccer field. This project has to go to the Public Design Commission because of the ramp modification so we do have to do a resolution.
- Daniel Bonilla: Are you keeping the sidewalk that is adjacent to the park? A: that currently is only a 2-1/2' strip of pavement; it will become a 5-foot-wide strip of pavement which can serve as a sidewalk once the work is finished.
- Jay Baez: What is the expected start date? A: Design completion end of Nov. '23 with construction commencing Nov. '24 and project completion in the 4<sup>th</sup> Q '25. Jay: Will you be doing anything with the handball court as it has been in bad shape for over a decade? There are too many coats of paint so it is hard to use for handball. A: Only the pavement will be restored. Handball court is not currently part of the project. Mayoral funding is only to secure walls/structures.
- Liz: what will the cost be to maintain the handball court as part of this design? Can we have an add-on to fix the handball court? A (Steve Simon): We will ask the in-house crew to fix the handball court and remove the layers of paint. It can be done outside of the scope of the project. Liz noted that this should be included in the reso, to restore the handball court to proper working order.
- Jay voiced additional concerns about the courts; Jana encouraged him to reach out to her directly.
- Barbara Frazier: can we get a list of handball and tennis courts for next month? A (Jana): Yes

Eligio Reynoso (member of the public) asked if a design be initiated where tennis and handball share the walls as is done in Central Park? Can we see a design that is accommodating to tennis/handball/pickleball? Liz: Resolution will have some "whereas" regarding what the project will address, and will speak to the issue of the handball court, noting that Parks will use internal resources to repair the handball wall and could also include language to repaint handball court to accommodate tennis and pickleball if that is desirable? Jay noted it does not make sense for pickleball. Luana Ferreira: When making an "all for one" type court it diminishes the impact of each sport and it becomes an equity issue along socio-economic lines. In consideration of this feedback Liz responded that we will should not advocate for repainting the lines to accommodate various sports so as not to conflict with the handball courts, the number of which in the community is decreasing.

A resolution in support of the project as presented, with language to reflect the importance of Parks doing maintenance work on the handball courts outside of the scope of the project was approved unanimously: 7-0-0-0 (Liz, Alexis, Danny, Luana, Barbara, Tracy, & Nayma in favor).

##### **5. Presentation on Dyckman Street Marina Operations (Nate Grove & Luis Melendez) <8:12pm>**

Gave an update on public programming at the Marina. Appreciated the connections that Parks was able to make through this committee, where they learned about community groups for programming outreach. Among other local groups, they connected with Fresh Youth Initiatives to get their kids out onto the water. In addition there are monthly community sailing days; next date is Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>. *<Note: as of 9/24 the advance registration is full but there is limited walk-up space available.>*

- Billion Oyster Project, which normally operates out of Governors Island, also does educational programming in Dyckman Marina.
- Hudson River Sloop Clearwater hosts on-water classrooms through NYC DOE. Clearwater also offers deck tours and open sails to the public

- Works with Urban Assembly New York Harbor School – a public high school focused on preparing students for maritime careers.
- City Parks Foundation/Coastal Classroom – Dyckman Marina gives middle school students the opportunity to learn issues effecting the eco-system
- The Impossible Dream, the world’s only catamaran designed from the keel up to be universally accessible is docked at Dyckman Marina each summer to provide sailing and deck tours.
- Inwood Canoe Club which provides free community paddling/adaptive padding uses Dyckman Marina space for navigation, first aid classes, etc.
- Urban Park Rangers Conservation Corp runs public education classes at the Marina.

Barbara asked about Hudson River Community Sailing and their commitment to community programming. Nate stated that this is part of what HRCS committed to when they were awarded the concession, and if they are not meeting that commitment the community should let Parks know. *<Note: in an email exchange with HRCS subsequent to this meeting, HRCS’ Executive Director gave a detailed list of their outreach efforts, and accepted feedback on additional social media outreach venues.>*

6. **Presentation on Temporary Pubic Art Presentation (Elizabeth Masella)** <8:34pm>

All projects are self-funded by the artists. Artists are responsible for all costs, including liability insurance and materials. The program makes sure the installations are safe. Everything is intended to be temporary, i.e., <1 year, so as not to encumber a space in perpetuity. Murals are different: there is a year permit and the artists are required to maintain it for a year; after that the artist is not responsible for maintenance, but the murals generally will stay in place if they remain in good condition.

- This summer a mural was created in the Sunken Playground on Edgecombe Ave. near W. 167<sup>th</sup> St. in partnership with NYC Parks, Community League of the Heights and SYEP youth.
- The current project is a Green Arts Festival that will have seven temporary sculptures installed in Fort Tryon Park. These will be up for just under a year. The goal is to bring awareness to the majesty and fragility of our environment. Various sculptures will be set around the park by different artists, including one by MJ Levy Dickson who gave a short overview of her work. Exact locations in the Park TBD.
- There will also be a photo lenticular installation at Ilka Tanya Payan Park at Broadway & W. 157<sup>th</sup> St.

7. **Preliminary discussion of Capital & Expense Priorities for FY ‘25** <8:55pm>

Liz Ritter explained the process: we start with last year’s list; delete items which have been completed, or are funded and in process; add new projects based on discussions and testimony from the past year of meetings following a review of the prior year’s minutes. The major points of this discussion will occur in October. There was also a short discussion of Participatory Budgeting and how it can be used to help projects not normally considered for the Capital or Expense Priorities. Jana stated she will work closely with “Friends of” groups and this Committee on items for both capital/expense priorities and for Participatory Budgeting consideration.

There being no further business, **the meeting was adjourned at 9:12pm** by acclamation (motion by Alexis Marnel, second by Danny Bonilla, no objection).