

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
January 5, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Committee members: Elizabeth Lorris-Ritter, Chair; Osi Kaminer, Asst. Chair; Mitch Glenn; Barbara Frazier; Richard Lewis.
Board Member: Mary Anderson. **Public Member:** Natalie Espino. **Guests:** Shakare Pettaway, New York Restoration Project; Sally Fisher, Friends of Inwood Hill Park; Arelis De La O, Constanca Fenntuas, & Lucia Rodriguez, Union Communal; Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Parks; Sarah Deutsch, Washington Heights CORNER Project; Melanie Breault & Diogenes Abreu, Northern Manhattan Improvement Coalition; Obed Fulcar, Friends of Sherman Creek; Patricia Padilla, CastleBridge; Shellie Price, Office of Councilmember Mark Levine; Betsy Haggerty; Joel Yoffie; Ric Irizarry; Nancy Bruning; and others.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by the Chair, with brief introductory remarks and announcements of upcoming events.

A. Sarah Deutsch, WH CORNER Project; Topic: Collaborative Syringe Disposal pilot program: The WH CORNER Project is a harm reduction and needle exchange program W. 181st Street offering comprehensive health, education and peer outreach services for IV drug users, as well as providing outreach to IV drug users in the areas where they are known to use drugs. CORNER Project also has been instrumental in assisting the Parks Department and local parks groups in helping with removal and disposal of sharps from public places. NYC currently does not have a public sharps disposal program. This leads to sharps used by IV drug users being left on the street.

The CORNER Project proposes a single public disposal point as a pilot, at Haven Avenue and W. 178th Street, near the entrance to the “foot path” leading to Ft. Washington Park. Location chosen because many syringes found in and around GWB Bus Station. This type program exists successfully in Buffalo area, Los Angeles and San Francisco. The dropbox will be clearly marked in English and Spanish as to its purpose. Pilot program will be judged on degree of use and how well the drop box is left alone (not vandalized or used as a garbage can). Peer outreach to needle users, the most important element in getting the dropbox used, is already a strong part of CORNER Projects existing program offerings.

There was unanimous agreement amongst those in attendance that this pilot program is a good idea. There were no objections or issues raised. The Chair will check with the Executive Committee as to whether a resolution is required, or if a Letter covering the minutes of the meeting is sufficient to show support.

B. Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Parks; Topic: Monthly Parks Update

- More than 8000 volunteer hours in uptown Parks uptown, in many forms: invasive species removal, mapping poison ivy, public program participation tracking, photography, events, clean-ups, more.
- NYC Parks and its partners have put on more than 586 free public programs and activities.
- Inwood NYC - Please take time to participate in the process for planning for Inwood parks both for current and future/expanding population of community residents. If you can't attend meetings at least contribute to the public input through the Inwood NYC survey. Survey can be taken on line or by hard copy available from CB12 office.
- Capital Projects Updates
 - Morris Jumel Mansion. When will Edgecombe Avenue side be completed? MJM work slightly behind. Should have been completed in December.
 - Updated project schedule for the Eco Dock project? \$700k allocation by C/M Rodriguez. Project moving forward slowly. Delays caused by architects concerns with sustainability.
- Parks without Borders: reminder to submit your ideas for park sites that could be greened and extended beyond their current fence lines.
- It was asked if the Inwood Hill Nature Center could be made bigger. Ms. Hoppa suggested we let current projects get completed and not reopen them for redesign, which would delay reopening. There will be a public scoping meeting in early February. *[Note: this date subsequently was set for Thursday, February 4th at 6:30pm, in the Payson Playground building.]*
- A member of the public asked why trees were allowed to have been cut down on Overlook Terrace. A: We have no say because they were on private land.

C. Discussion of community priorities (reso item) This item was a continuation from prior months. As the Chair was called away to attend another Committee meeting briefly, most of this portion of the meeting was chaired by the Assistant Chair.

Resolution review:

- Each “Resolved” clause should speak to a specific agency and we should be clear and concise of what’s wanted from that agency.
- The laundry list should be shortened to cover only our highest priorities.
- It was suggested to include expense funding as well as capital in the resolution.
- The language should be tightened up and redundancies removed.
- There should be explicit inclusion of camping and nature-based programming for youth.
- Suggested to add ‘year round activities’ to the language, as well as funding for outdoor rec centers. Outdoor recreation facility should be directed to older teens/young adults.
- Barbara sailing instructor wants to see more docks and sailing opportunities.
- Resolution was voted on and passed: Committee 6-0-0 (includes Public Member); Other Board Members 1-0-0; Public 16-0-0
- Final edits will be faithful to our discussion, and will be completed for the General Meeting.

D. Participatory Budgeting review; Speaker: Sally Fisher

- Last year four projects in CD12 were approved and budgeted by the Councilman.
- This year three are moving forward. (Many of the proposed projects are capitally ineligible.)
- Looking for more voting sites this year; last year the number of participants voting was very low.
- Voting is in beginning of April.

E. Audubon Playground: Report by Committee Chair on recent walk-through

- Full discussion took place at May Parks meeting.
- Subsequent walk-through occurred 12/21/15 with CB12 representatives (DM and Chairs of Parks and Youth/Ed Committees), Elected Officials, DoE, Parks Department, and community members, and was coordinated by the Borough President’s Office.
- All agree that the building’s situation in the playground is disruptive to the playground’s use.
- The building currently is used as an Alternative Learning Center (ALC) for middle school students who have been placed on 10- to 90-day suspensions. Many of these children have chaotic family lives and difficult school experiences. The ALC tries to provide a consistent, decent learning experience and as good an environment for learning as possible, so kids can go back to their home schools and adjust without being suspended again. The ALC is successful inasmuch as attendance has grown dramatically over the last 8 years. Tearing the building down does not appear to be a good option until an alternate space is found for the ALC.
- There are ALCs in all boroughs, serving students from throughout the City. Some are short-term (10- to 90-days); others are long-term (up to a full school year of 180 days). Some are for middle school; some for HS. There are 7 operational sites in Manhattan, including 3 in District 6. There are none located between 10th and 110th Streets.
- It was suggested to bring other CB12 committees into this discussion.
- A member of the public suggested turning the building into a multi-purpose building.
- The sense of the committee is to continue to work toward restoring full use of the playground, but not before there is a viable long term solution for the ALC.

As there was no Old Business or New Business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25pm