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ARTS & INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

The Arts & Institutions Committee of Community Board #2, Manhattan held a meeting on Monday, May 23 at 6:30 P.M. via Zoom.

Arts & Institutions Committee:

Board Members Present: Robin Rothstein, Chair; Chris Dignes; Susan Gammie; Ivy Kwan-Arce; Dan Miller; Rocio Sanz

Public Members Present: Jonathan Slaff

Public Members Absent with Notification: Kristin Marting

Public Members Absent without Notification: Stacey Goergen

Other Board Members Present: Michael Metzger

There was one item on the agenda.

Meeting Commenced: 6:36pm

1. A representative from the Jackie Robinson Museum presented an update on the museum's launch and planned programs.

La 'Tonya Johnson, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the Jackie Robinson Museum has been with the Jackie Robinson Foundation for 25 years. She has been serving as the project manager for the development of the Jackie Robinson Museum since the organization placed roots in the CB2 neighborhood in 2007.

Johnson's presentation largely focused on pre-opening plans; however, she also provided information on what to expect once the museum opens to the public and various initiatives that are in the works.

The pre-opening plan will commence on July Tuesday, July 26 when the museum will host a ribbon-cutting. The City has agreed to close Varick Street between Grand Street and Canal Street so guests can sit in front of the museum during the ceremony. The ceremony will run an hour and a half to two hours. The museum will be using the lot on Varick Street between Grand and Canal for a lot of their festivities, which will run through Wednesday evening.

They anticipate about 400 people for the ribbon cutting on the morning of July 26, which the museum hopes will include Mrs. Rachel Robinson – Jackie Robinson's wife – who will have turned 100 the week before.

ESPN's "First Take" will broadcast live from the opening, and then, following that ceremony, visitors will be permitted to enter the museum for the first time.

That evening, in a large tent across the street, the museum will have a festive party that will end at 10pm.

The following day, Wednesday, July 27, the museum will host a block party from 10am to 3pm.

Johnson said she expected roughly 3,000 guests total throughout the day. They will be reaching out to students at New York City schools and camps as well as people in the neighborhood to be guests that day and who will get the opportunity to walk through the museum and then go across the street to enjoy refreshments and play games, and fellowship together. Johnson stressed that it was important to the museum to connect with the community and young people who may not otherwise have this opportunity to come and spend part of their day at the museum.

That evening, they will do their official first program, which will be a screening of a documentary-esque film called "After Jackie." The film highlights some of the players who came after Jackie Robinson and how they have carried the torch in Major League Baseball for a more diverse, equitable society. A panel will follow the documentary. The evening will end at 10:30pm.

The museum will open to the public the following day, Thursday, July 28. They plan to use a timed-ticket process for the foreseeable future to give the museum the opportunity to work out final bugs and to maintain health and safety by controlling crowds. The current plan is to open the museum Thursdays through Sundays, and then open more fully in September. Johnson said that the museum can be enjoyed in as little as 70 minutes or up to three hours depending on how deep one wants to go into all of the content the museum has to offer.

Johnson added that the museum promises to be fun, but also a place that encourages dialogue. She described the museum as having elements of a sports museum and presidential library, but that it is also neither of those and more than those types of institutions. The Jackie Robinson Museum's goal is to be a "center for dialogue." She noted how much has happened in our world since they started the project, certainly related to the pandemic and the current economy, but also surrounding George Floyd. America also elected a black president after they began the project. Johnson said the museum was excited to talk about those issues using Jackie Robinson as a backdrop to the subjects. They plan to have evening activities to connect with the community and to help reshape the neighborhood in a way that encourages people to focus on the things that make New York unique, diverse, and a leader in so many of the world's discussions on these issues.

The museum will also be a place that will support "get out the vote." Johnson pointed out that Jackie Robinson was a prolific campaigner. He campaigned for Nelson Rockefeller and worked on Rockefeller's staff. Robinson was also a supporter of President Nixon early on because he was thinking about politics as a way to galvanize people and he felt like Nixon was where he wanted him to be on the issues.

The museum is also mindful of what happened in Buffalo, the damage done to the George Floyd statue, and other hate crimes. As a result, Johnson said the museum has become conscious about potentially being a place that people might want to use to garner negative attention. So the museum will be putting security at the forefront to make sure that the museum can be a safe space for free expression.

Regarding the planned studio theatre space at the museum that CB2 learned about in 2015 when the museum first presented to the committee, Johnson said that they hope to launch the space during the next phase. They also hope to provide education to young and disenfranchised people on topics surrounding finance and

technology. In addition, they are looking to partner with companies and serve as a backdrop for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Johnson said that the museum will release a full program schedule in the fall and that once the museum begins to function at a manageable pace and the team is juggling a little less, they look forward to reaching out to other museums in the community and local small businesses to find ways to partner together. Disney and Google are also new since they began working on the museum, so Johnson said they hope to find ways to create programming for all these workers and other foot traffic that these large companies will bring to the neighborhood.

Members of the committee and the public were all excited about having the museum in the neighborhood. Several people indicated they would stay in touch with Johnson to provide her with information and contacts to help support the museum's efforts and initiatives.

For more information on the Jackie Robinson Museum's programming and events, please visit <https://jackierobinson.org/museum/>

Executive

The next meeting is scheduled for June 27. We expect to hear from artists Andrew Ginzel and Kristin Jones who will discuss the background and current status of their work "Metronome / Climate Clock" located at One Union Square South and their proposal for the revision of the work for which they are seeking CB2's support.

This is Robin Rothstein's final meeting as Chair of CB2's Arts & Institutions committee. She has chaired the committee since May 2015. The committee welcomed Ivy Kwan Arce who will become the new Chair beginning June 1, 2022.

No new business.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:23pm

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Rothstein
Chair, Arts & Institutions Committee
Community Board 2, Manhattan