

Hudson River Park Advisory Meeting

November 10th Via Zoom

Start time: 6:06p

Jeffrey LeFrancois, Chair of the Hudson River Park Advisory Council (HRP AC) requested all Zoom participants to sign into attendance. Attendance is recorded on the Hudson River Park website.

Motion to approve the agenda was seconded and approved.

Motion to approve October 2020 Minutes was seconded and approved.

The first speaker was Noreen Doyle, representing the Hudson River Park Trust (HRPT). Noreen and Carrie Roble provided progress reports on environmental initiatives. The benthic and epibenthic study involves the area from Pier 34 to 26, geared towards increasing baseline information and habitat enhancement goals.

Aside the Pier 34 piles, researchers are investigating the rubble field of the lower surface of the piers. Divers with Go Pro cameras capture footage and it is analyzed. With the use of sonar technology, we learn more about pile fields, and any substance just above the river floor, an area earmarked for a future oyster habitat. Other research is occurring at the Pier 26 Tide Deck, measuring temperatures and community composition of tide pools.

The Estuarine Sanctuary Management Plan is under way; HRPT got initial feedback from DEC and is working on revisions before public review and a public hearing .

Noreen continued with an update that included a grant that was secured by HRPF for live streaming wildlife cameras.

The Pumpkin Smash event was a big success. There was hope for more socially distanced events to be held again in months ahead.

HRPT presented Chelsea Waterside Park design progress to CB4 including making the bathroom building more green. Other new construction structures will be more green.

There will be an important CB4 Waterfront Committee meeting on Thursday speaking about short and long term Pier 76 planning. James Corner Field Ops will lead the conversation with the public about interim uses. Whether the city meets New York State's date for a new location for the tow pound is questionable.

Deb Kustka reviewed new SDOT initiatives to provide signage on the Greenway to alert the public that motorized vehicles, electric bikes and scooters are not permitted. Given this subject was included in the Safety Committee draft letter, it was decided to suspend the delivery of the Safety Letter so it can include the new bike safety measure. Different considerations included what kind of sign to create so that it is universally understood,

underscore notification that a fine would be assessed if there is a violation, and the sign's design would need to fit within standards of SDOT guidelines.

Pier 26 update provided by Noreen. The sports court was created originally assuming permitted time, but there is a great interest for free play, so HRPT is creating a balance between permitting and free play because it is so popular. There will be a QRQC code by the area so you can scan for information regarding available permit times and a link to check online.

PEP is dealing with social distancing violations that are a result of outdoor group class exercising. Some violations include park space being used for rowing machines, commercial dance classes, yoga, etc. The park needs to be safe and usable by the public and these groups are not supposed to be holding classes in a public park without a permit. It was noted that more than 20 people assembling as a group in the park requires a permit.

A comment was made that the floating dock at Pier 26 that was installed at Pier 26 is unsightly based on the rest of Pier 26 construction. It was noted that the purpose of dock is for collecting samples for water testing programs, an important factor for research being done by Carrie's team, and that the dock was recycled.

Tony Simone gave a quick update that summarized his report which is included in the agenda link and is on the HRPT website. Please refer to the report for details. Highlights included corporate park volunteers (Pfizer and Related), working with the Trust for Public Land to raise park funds in lieu of securing funding with diminished city coffers.

More than \$3m+ was provided in grant donations for HRPF and the park. Tom Fox asked, do you list where the money is going? Tony responded, "Horticultural programs, educational programs, capital campaigns, free programs that serve students from all boroughs, all funds are listed on website."

Safety report was provided by Mary Habstritt who also asked members to refer to the draft report in the agenda minutes. A question arose, what are the most heavily trafficked areas where electric bikes enter the Greenway? Trust is looking for suggestions. The ongoing challenge is the park never has enough PEP officers to enforce violations.

Mary raised the issue that tenants should have protections to calm traffic. Noreen responded that high traffic areas due to tenants drawing the traffic is something the Trust negotiates directly with the tenant.

Dan Kurtz provided a report summarizing the financial status and projections of HRPT as of August 31. Additional updates will be available soon. Adjustments were made to HRPT's current fiscal year budget when Covid was on the horizon, thus reducing expected revenue and costs. Highlights as of August 31 included revenue running

about 26% under budget due to tenants not paying rent, most of which was deferred. No impact on Pier 57 revenue because Google occupies it. Their occupancy is delayed but Google is paying in full to its landlord which then pays the Trust. Event venues netted zero revenue, and permit fees were very low as team sports and outdoor events were mostly prohibited during the summer months. Parking revenue initially plummeted, because of canceled accounts from March through June and no event parking. But the revenue has picked up recently. Workers from 550 Washington are parking there, some office workers, and residents returning after leaving the city. The latest month of parking is on budget.

Revenue is down 26% off reduced budget. But the park has not spent as much as originally budgeted. Virtual events cost less to produce, maintenance down because some projects were postponed, and no additional PEP spend for events.

So even though the operating surplus fell 45% from budget, the Trust was able to break even due to reducing capital maintenance costs that did not have a source of reimbursement revenue. That together with the sale of the air rights from Chelsea Piers, other funds which are held for capital repairs, and funds not spent yet, provide a buffer.

Most capital maintenance work was put on pause due to Covid, with larger projects being pushed back, thus spending less. In this spending area, HRPT was 46% under budget. Since mid-summer, some projects have been reignited. For Pier 40 capital maintenance, \$38.4 was budgeted yet only \$10m was spent by the end of August. The southern shed of Pier 40 has a \$12m contract which should be completed by May 2021. Repair to the facade will be starting soon and there will scaffolding going up along the front of Pier 40. Façade work includes repairs to the metal panels.

Even with this this resumed capital maintenance work, the Trust may have a small surplus this year. Anticipated bulkhead work at 30th street fortuitously turned out to be a failure of a DEP outfall, and a DEP waterline overflow failure, and so DEP is addressing these bulkhead issues. Good news is this expense was diverted and will not be a Trust expense saving up to \$2m.

At the end of the year, HRPT should have a small surplus. Also, new construction capital projects are proceeding such as Gansevoort Peninsula, Pier 55, and 97.

Tom Fox provided a summary on his letter and wake zone request of 100 yards to protect the piers, bulkheads, human powered boaters, etc. The Hudson is a 1200 yard river, so there is plenty of room. Trust organized a meeting with EDC to discuss awareness of human powered boating areas. There are 5 boat launchers and operators and all should be aware of these safety concerns. NYC Water Trail participated in the meeting. Trust spoke with NY Water Way and they agreed to maintain 100 yd distance.

Small party boats are motoring almost side by side with Pier 45. Once such NJ based operator, City to Sea is a party boat that is enforcing no social distancing, with heavy drinking, and loud music. Noreen said the best method is to call the HRP 24/7 number to lodge a complaint.

Tom Fox declared the ferry services are illegally parking their buses on park land at Pier 79. HRP will be finishing the park in areas between Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen and NY Waterway, a private company, has their buses parked in the park and there is visual pollution in the park. Pickups and drop-offs are permissible. However, parking the buses with NJ plates should happen in a private garage, not a park that belongs to the public.

It was clarified that the Trust has no lease with NY Waterway. Pier 79 has a lease with the city. They do have a right to pick up passengers with buses. Where do the buses sit during the day when they are waiting for the next trip? Definitely a planning decision that does impact the park and its users. Long term solution is needed to address the vehicles in the area.

CB4 recommended using M42 rather than shuttle buses to engage public transportation. The hope is to eliminate the need for shuttles.

December 10th is set for next meeting.

Meeting adjourned 7:43pm.