

Hudson River Park Advisory Council Meeting Minutes from February 9, 2022

Jeffrey LeFrancois, Chair of HRP AC, began the meeting promptly at 6p. The first order of business was a quick review of the new attendance form.

The January 2022 HRP AC meeting minutes were approved with the following amendment: Chelsea Piers/HRPT negotiated lease increased revenue from 3.2 million to 8.8 million dollars, with 12,000 piles in need of inspection and maintenance. The January 2022 were revised accordingly.

Minutes pass as amended.

Housekeeping: JL reviewed the calendar for the next 2 months of meetings.

JL announced a plan for a new executive committee election, with nominations to be submitted at March 2022 meeting.

Heliport

The first item on the agenda is a CB4 issue. Letters in opposition date back to 2002 on the topic. The heliport was established in 1956 with 2 pads and now there are 11 pads. The heliport is a major quality of life hazard due to dirty and loud operation of helicopters and ruins the HRP experience.

“I once saw a child who was riding down the bike path get swept off her bicycle by the blow from a helicopter”, one AC member testified.

A representative from “Stop the Chop” presented avenues they are exploring to end the Heliport/HRP lease agreement. They are working with traffic agencies, and have endorsed a Senate bill that was introduced, a bill that has state wide implications.

Federal law has control over helicopters whereby the state has little or no control over flights above and in Manhattan.

A particular nuisance is tourist helicopters coming over from NJ. NY AG can bring a nuisance suit because of the copters negative impact on public property and parks, land that is in public trust.

Plan is to prohibit non-essential Helicopter use in park (yes for emergency use, no to non-emergency use). Bill also introduced by Congressman Nadler as a public health and safety concern. Limit use to news reporting organizations, but prohibit helicopter use for any type of travel purpose that doesn't fall under a code defining emergency use. Assembly member Dick Gottfried is a co-sponsor and AM Deborah Glick is signed on as well.

The public can sue the entity but the high roller commuter customers are not liable unless they operate the chopper directly.

One of the key issues is that HRPT relies on the Heliport income. A question was asked, "What is the Trust's position and how will this affect your bottom line?" Is there support for the Heliport in the HRP Act?

Trust responded: the heliport's revenue took a hit because of Covid. Prior to Covid there were 1.7mm users. Only a percentage of that now. The Trust is continuing a month to month permit with the Heliport, issued by the State Dept of Transportation.

Ultimately, the Trust has taken no official position on the Heliport but understands that the Heliport is not conducive to park quality of life but there is no doubt that HRP currently relies on the income. HRPT is not opposed to the legislation, but is also not ready to support it either until other means of income are realized to replace it.

One example of a commuter helicopter ban exists on Pier 11, which is a city owned Wall Street Pier and prohibits non-essential trips. Intent is to restrict all helipads from non-essential flights.

Question was asked, "How do you define helicopter? Technological advances will replace the dirty loud copters with quiet non-polluting electric helicopters".

Other questions and concerns requested a wide buffer well into the Hudson, a no-fly barrier to maintain a reasonable low level of sustained noise, imperceptible to park goers if proper distance is maintained.

The HRP AC Safety Committee issued a short report on the Heliport. Interactions between cars ferrying passengers to Heliport interfere with cycle and pedestrian traffic.

However, the NYS bill still needs to be introduced. Doubts surfaced whether Governor Hochul would sign the bill because removing the Heliport would take away access points to the city. However, the Governor should understand that landing a state helicopter in HRP is wrong for so many reasons.

If the Heliport's lease is revoked, should the land remain as a revenue generator? Or is it possible to turn the park space the Heliport currently occupies into passive or recreational use?

There are 2 other Heliports in Manhattan, one at Wall Street, and the other on the east side. Request was made from an AC member to protect poor neighborhoods from enduring noise from helicopters, neighborhoods not as likely to fight the construction of a new Heliport.

The guest, Andy Rosenthal from Stop the Chop, testified that helicopters are a plague across the entire city impacting all communities, plaguing the entire NYC community. Copters are a danger to the park and the HP should never have remained once the park was founded. Correct the oversight. Get rid of the HRP HP. If HRP can survive COVID, it can survive without the HP.

There were 28 million trips to the airports via the HP. Blade is trying to operate like UBER, with plans to lower the price using Uber like math to provide over 1000 flights per day. Resolutions supporting the dissolution of the HP are established positions by CB4 and HRP AC.

Noreen to provide financial details of recent HP revenue.

Recommendation was approved for HRP AC to write letter of support of HP opposition legislation.

A counter recommendation was heard to wait until we have a bill and a bill number. What park use should be in the bill to replace the HP? Need to find solutions that work.

Comment to refer to GPP to figure out legal uses that could supplant what is now the HP. Final determination: letter will be written once legislation has a number.

Tammy Meltzer reviewed the status of new member applications and the Membership process.

Every organization must fill out the reapplication form. There are currently 2 open slots because 2 members will not be reapplying.

Safety Committee has not met since last meeting. PEP contract is coming up for renewal.

DEI committee is waiting for Executive Committee for direct next steps. DEI formally invited HRPT to participate in their meetings. Robert Atterbury and Noreen Doyle to join the discussion; next meeting to be held evening of March 2, 2022.

Historic Resources Heritage Committee. The minutes will be posted. Design guidelines will be published as a starting point focusing on the history of Gansevoort Market, with contributions made by Andrew Berman, the Whitney, Historical Preservation, and the selection of historical pictures.

HRPT is aware and excited about the progress of the committee.

There is a pending lawsuit that may impact all park goers. Mariah Lopez, the plaintiff, is opposed to a beach and wants garden in memory of an LGBTQ advocate who passed years ago. In order for Ms. Lopez to show cause, she is using a political injunction, Article 78, and her suit defines the area between Gansevoort Peninsula and Pier 45, claiming it should be recognized as a historic resource. The Trust has yet to review the suit but understands the lawsuit was filed, and is waiting to be served.

Question: given all the meetings hosted by CB2, designed to provide the community with an impactful voice in determining best uses for GP, did Ms Lopez provide any testimony at the half dozen meetings held prior to the approval of the GP design? It appears she never attended any of the CB2 Charettes or discussions.

Ms. Lopez claims she is representing STARR but some do not believe she speaks for the entire organization. The impact of the lawsuit could be very costly. It is too early to determine the estimated cost but it will be substantial if

construction is delayed. HRP AC to discuss at Executive Committee and draft a letter in support of the process.

9 contractors are on hold now. And this is likely the most costly aspect of the suit.

HRP AC was provided an update on the Chelsea Piers lease. The lease has not been posted yet but it will be posted soon. All info is on the website, and the HRP AC will know once the process starts. CB4 will introduce its opposition to the lease during March's Full Board meeting.

Don't be surprised if you see press at the public market space at Pier 57. The James Beard Foundation is a non profit, and it is planning a food market on the ground floor. This is terrific news for the Trust, and is likely to attract the other 16 vendors. Jamestown will be managing and curating the space, with a completion date late Fall 2022.

RFP out for the Estuarium at Pier 26, and many responses to the RFP has been submitted. May 2022 is the deadline.

Rob Rodriguez of HRPT reported that 2 major snow storms, weekend storms, were addressed with full hands on deck to clear the snow. The bollards situated for Greenway access security are a challenge to maneuver through park. It takes more time navigating through the bollards, and the park was required to make a sizeable investment in equipment so that these vehicles could maneuver through park to keep paths safe and clear.

Question was asked, "when bollards went in, did they consider the negative HRPT economic effect on providing vehicles to access the paths in the park for snow removal?" Trust was forced to liquidate the entire fleet of pre-bollard vehicles and has had to adapt around spacing between bollards. For instance, golf carts can barely fit. The new slim vehicles called Motrecks are top heavy, and not easily maneuverable.

Question was asked, "Why were facilities locked up during the storm?" Tennis, basketball courts and other areas had unsafe buildup of ice. The lawn bowl, popular amongst sledders, is closed for the entire winter yet some manage to skirt the fences designed to keep folks out.

NYS DOT is expected to bring in more bollards. A different design should be considered such as the removable bollard installed in New Orleans instead of

permanent ones. There is a need to put in more bollard gates at edges of park. The width is determined by the narrowest car that could have a terrorist impact.

Chris McGann reported that many outside agencies (PA, Path, DEP) require access. Hydraulic bollards require expensive maintenance.

The current PEP contract is a 3 yr. contract, and is imminently due to expire. HRPT does not anticipate any major changes. PEP services come with officers with the authority to enforce the law but they are peace officers. Private security cannot make arrests. PEP officers are well trained, have Narcan, and HRPT values PEP much more than private security, because they are available 24/7, and are especially valuable to police special events when more officers are needed. In the event the park requires additional officers, PEP is able to provide the staffing, and they can make arrests but do not carry guns.

Tom Linden provided updates on programming. In-house programming, beginning in May through October, provided an overview that can be reviewed on the HRPT website. Tom commented that we were pretty lucky with snow and the fields were closed for only a short time. As soon as there was a sliver of green at Pier 40, the fields were opened and immediately used. The issuing of spring permits begins this week.

Chelsea Waterside field closure was reviewed. Trust is reaching out to permittees now that fields will close from June onwards. This places even more pressure on constructing Gansevoort.

Tina Walsh reviewed the success of the compost dashboard which can be found on the website, refreshed with data easier to digest; 10 sites in park, and tremendous growth at the sites. 2020 to 2021 exhibited over 50% growth, 140,000 pounds of compost, great nutrient soil for park, revamping signage and bins. The implementation of the new bins reduce the need for bags; you slide it and take it out. No bags necessary. See link for details:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/2b371fa9932b49f79176ed4b1333b01f> The method arose from passionate staff members who are taking the program to heart and growing it in new and positive directions, a tremendous morale booster.

Membership question: who needs to reapply? All member organizations with exception of CBs and representatives of elected officials.

Meeting adjourned 7:33p