

Hudson River Park Advisory Council Minutes

March 8, 2022

Jeffrey LeFrancois, Chair of HRP AC, initiated the meeting at 6:05p.

Minutes submitted for February 2022 were held over for some factual corrections related to the HRP Heliport. (Amended with revised version posted on HRPT website).

Housekeeping: Nancy Brous died on February 18th, a vocal public advocate for providing safe conditions for human powered boating and cycling on the Greenway. Nancy was remembered fondly by council members.

Membership Committee discussion reviewed the new process as prescribed in the recently updated HRP AC By Laws. 2022 provided the first time opportunity through the process.

One of the existing rules of the By Laws requires that all member organizations have letterhead. All member organizations must have a board as well as officers. The outreach attracted three new applicants. The By Laws state that only 20% of AC member orgs be tenants of the park.

The first organization to present to the AC for membership was Borough of Manhattan Community College, represented by Doug Israel, the college's government and community relations officer. BMCC opened in 1983, and membership offers HRP AC to learn more about BMCC educational programming, as well as strengthen ties between the college and the HRP. Water quality is one area where faculty of BMCC are already working in the HRP watershed. Membership provides a union of exciting opportunities for new initiatives and ideas. The college is focused on providing women and minorities an education in STEM fields. BMCC is made up of 20,000 degree seeking students representing a diverse cross section of city students. 7 of 10 students attend for free. Many are the first in their families to attend college.

Transportation Alternatives was the next to present. Anna Melendez, Manhattan Organizer, provided an overview of the non-profit with 50 years of history with a goal of creating better walking and transit for all New Yorkers. TA is made up of 4,000 active members, 1,000 volunteers. One of TA's projects in the HRP area involves addressing the failures of Canal Street, with the intent of widening sidewalks for safer passage. Canal street needs a safe bike lane to connect East to West. These are the types of projects TA works on. TA mission includes

providing safe alternative transport as well as removing cars from streets, with an emphasis on removing car parking spaces, to give more open space back to the public. Safety is a priority working with families for safe streets, as part of the Vision Zero initiative.

Members of the AC questioned TA's previous poor HRP AC attendance record when it previously held a seat on the council. Several members on the council questioned whether TA supports motor powered bikes and scooters on the Greenway, which is currently illegal. Anna did not provide a definitive response and is expected to provide TA's position in the future.

Ice Theater, the third applicant for AC Membership, did not attend the meeting though their application was distributed to Council members.

Complaints were voiced that the Membership Committee fell short on meeting deadlines. Request was made to replace a chair if the individual is too busy to perform their AC duties.

The next item on the agenda was the Chelsea Piers Lease renewal. A public hearing will be held on March 22nd, from 4:30p to 6:30p. Comments will be posted on website. We are all tracking Gov Hochul's open meeting law. Go to HRPT website for more information.

The CP lease renewal provides 8.8 Million a year in rent. CP is tasked with the maintenance of its piles supporting its area's piers and all on site repairs. CP uses require a large space. Increasing revenue, securing more protections of controls of uses, public access improvements, were all important considerations when drawing up the new lease.

Discussion followed focusing on public access improvements.

Dan Kurtz: reviewed his "cliff notes". There are 25 years left on the existing lease. The new lease realizes a 7.5% increase in base rent, an increase of \$4.4 m vs \$4.1 mm. There are CPI increases and rent bumps throughout the term of the lease. Revenue for the Trust is increased as CP's revenue increases. That includes rent payment increases for sub leases, which will rise to \$142m vs \$122m in existing lease.

AC members posed the question: what if lease clauses, including casualty insurance changed for the benefit of the Trust. Will there be an expansion of existing uses, expanding into additional retail, or will the lease stipulate more

recreation space? The current lease includes a minimum footprint for recreation use, with limits on party boats using pier. AC Members were hopeful for a new pedestrian and traffic plan given the active Greenway and pedestrian use of the park that flows through the CP footprint.

David Tewksbury, one of the principals of CP, promoted the new improvements that will be provided with a new lease. There is a need for a longer term lease to justify the investment which will be a resource for present and future New Yorkers. The Trust has been tasked to restore piles, which accounts for 25% of HRPT budget. CP provides a waterfront path along river, one of the busiest in NYC. The elimination of a lane would render the headland of CP dysfunctional. Instead of focusing on the area outside CP, the owners are providing what they believe is a significant expansion of walkway within CP via a service road sidewalk.

How do cyclists enter CP without joining paths meant for pedestrians? Belgian Blocks are tough to cycle so many use the thin sidewalk. David was not aware of any issues cyclists were facing entering CP but stated he would pose the question to his team.

David stressed that improvements were being made for pedestrians by the water, including way finding signage. The path start at 22nd crosswalk and finishes at Pier 57 plaza. The area is a 35' pedestrian way, north and south. Members questioned why pedestrians did not have a safe passage outside the commercial enterprise. It is to CP's benefit to draw pedestrians into its facility given the retail and commercial options available.

Members complained that a Transportation Study was ignored such as providing charging stations, one of many things ignored in the CB4 letter.

A public 2.5 hour discussion at CB4's Parks and Waterfront Committee explored numerous flaws or oversights in the current and revised design being considered in the new lease. A public hearing on the draft letter, via the CB4 TT committee, will take up the issue as well. The main issue is public space, safety, and right of way.

A request was made for CP to provide HRP AC with its debt service ratio. Reponse was that CP is a private company and does not report revenues or its financing. What can be communicated is that CP was healthy prior to Covid. Durin g the height of Covid lockdowns, film tv productions continued to pay rent

but the debt load was increased by 50%. Debt currently at \$26m will be triple with new loan.

Safety Committee reviewed its report. Key focus is entry points to park, because the bike path intersects the park at every entrance point.

Regarding CP, the bike lane is a pinch point where cycles, cars, and pedestrians intermix. Question to CP, did you consider queuing areas for the pedestrians? Response was that bike lane is not part of the CP lease and is managed by NYS DOT.

It was discussed that the first CP proposal had an internal road called Hollywood Blvd limited to 95 interior parking spots. That area is now used for transportation and not parking of the 95 spots. .

NYS DOT controls the Greenway. Bike path was narrowed at CP borders because of the lease. Doors will be 9 feet wider, providing more convenient pedestrian access.

Members felt bike path was too narrow and the new lease should address this issue. Park advocates were not in favor of forcing everyone to go to a commercial recreational facility when safer options should be made available in a public park space.

Response was that joggers like jogging by water. Current design will improve the jogging experience.

The plans currently incorporate planting of new trees, vines, and native plantings. It will be a more attractive walkway lending itself as more parklike. Design of landscaping has not yet been presented but the mission is to make the walkway more appealing.

Also, it would take a use change to widen the bike lane. Not CP's responsibility.

Question posed was, "will CP continue to park vehicles on the service road endangering cyclists and pedestrians wishing to cross at access points within the CP footprint? Yes, was the response. It's crucial to their film production set up and is required to support all businesses on the pier. CP spends a lot of resources managing the diverse uses like traffic and pedestrian uses.

The length of the lease would be preferred at 25 or 30 years, not 44 years. Walkway needs to be expanded. The tenants of CP in need of truck access space should use the 350 parking spots instead of using the service road. Signage is lacking in that area and is an accident waiting to happen. Green sustainability should also be a condition of the new lease.

A significant action hearing, with written comments and letters are not due until April 26th at 4p. There is time for more discussion.

Request to get a copy of the transportation report that reviews the activity at the front of the pier.

Pedestrian walkway, experts, service roads, usage of the service roads,

27 AC members voted in favor of creating a group to deep dive into the lease specifics. Motion passed.

The Safety Committee was held on Feb 23rd. Idea is to bring in RXR as they are getting ready to open to review safety protocols such as how to handle cyclists abusive to flag people, and providing a comfort station.

The safety committee reported on an incident involving a coach and a peeping tom. There are homeless issues apparent at Pier 40 which has resulted in pulled fire alarms, vandalism, per Chris McGann. These violations have been discussed with the NYPD at district service cabinet meetings.

Does park have relationship with Outreach Programs to mitigate homeless use of Pier 40, to take them to safe shelter? Yes, but it is difficult to convince homeless to seek alternative city provided shelter.

DEI Committee invited Tina Walsh, Carey Roble and Robert Atterbury to join them at their 5th meeting as guests. A toolkit developed by the committee will provide a design for inclusive outreach, ultimately lending advice to the trust to increase diversity in park activities.

Park belongs to everyone. It's an asset for entire State of NY. There shouldn't be a sense of alienation that a black gay man must confront daily. The concept is to make sure we think about everyone. AC membership is able to have a conversation. Just having a committee is a lot.

Intrepid has a DEI committee which has proved successful in diversifying its visitorship. Intrepid Museum is continuously looking to provide diverse perspectives. Hiring practices, training practices, DEI is apparent at all levels and is represented at every level.

DEI resources

<https://www.hudsonriver.org/article/safe-spaces>

Historic resource committee provided a brief report on its March 2nd meeting, which was its 2nd meeting. HRPT's Tina and Carrie are participating. Breaking down 5 story lines. Signage implementation, audio/video, google drive document on historical resources. Municipal uses of Gansevoort. Role in firefighting. 13th Avenue, how it came about and disappeared. Impact of landfill. Transportation issues. Westway fell by 12th Street. Segue into how park was created. Contemporary history. LGBTQ community and the importance of the area. Next meeting 23rd of March.

History of passenger ships? Focused initially on Gansevoort.

Not everyone was satisfied. Can you have a community garden on top of the pipeline.

Lawsuit Mariah Lopez - Article 78 stop construction on Gansevoort
Boaters wished for a beach, got a ramp.
Youth League voiced need for a field.
Block/park associations requested passive walkways
A number of meetings were held between March 2019.

Not everyone was satisfied, but everyone was heard. No one asked for a community garden. ABSTAIN. Approved unanimous with one abstentions.

BMCC and TA are new members. Meeting adjourned 8:25.

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