

CB9 Landmarks Preservation & Parks Committee

Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2020

Called to Order: 6:45PM

Moment of Silence observed for Barnard student, Tessa Majors, who was murdered in Morningside Park exactly one month from the date of this meeting

Presentation on Renovation of PS 125 Playground - NYC Parks & School Construction Authority

- A \$3.5 million project - funded by Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and Councilman Mark Levine - that involves the reconstruction of this multipurpose play area
- Public engagement design workshop was conducted back in December 2018 and the design was informed by this meeting. Some of the features requested:
 - A clear soccer field
 - Retain the tennis court
 - Addition of fitness equipment for all ages
 - New benches and trees to activate the space for both the community and the school after hours
- Ideas for the design came primarily from the students of P.S. 125 and Columbia Secondary School
- The site, which is located on the corner of 123rd Street and Morningside Avenue, is a joint operation property - jointly operated by Parks and P.S. 125 which operates the playground during the day
- Colorful surface areas keep the playground cooler during the summer months
- Play mounds incorporated between the tennis court and soccer field are play features
- Replacement of existing water fountain with a new model that also acts as a water bottle filling station
- Hopefully there will be some money left over to renovate other areas of the playground
- School Construction Authority (SCA) through approvals can expedite this project
- Principal of P.S. 125 feels the design is very responsive to their needs/concerns and says the new playground is appreciated
- There is a new playground across the street in Morningside Park that caters to young children so the P.S. 125 Playground should cater to older teens
- No lighting upgrades, no new lights but starting this year the Department of Transportation (DOT) - which is responsible for the lights in parks throughout the city - is installing LED lights in parks throughout the district
- Types of fitness equipment to be included in play area is still being finalized but there is agreement that priority should be given to disabled children and older teenage kids
 - Elements from Bloomingdale Playground, which was designed with handicapped children in mind, should be incorporated - it should serve as a model for what can be done
- Graphics on the play surfaces (which are not paint) are maintained by Parks and should last at least 10 years
- To address drainage issues catch basins are included in the scope of work as well as a regrading of the surface

- Turf field should last 10 years
- Letter of Support: Passes unanimously by the Landmarks Preservation & Parks Committee

Old Business

- 142nd Street Dog Run in Riverside Park will receive \$350,000 from the Mayor to create a permanent installation
- Sakura Park staircase reconstruction to begin March 9, 2020

New Business

- Commissioner Silver has made Morningside Park a priority for the new DOT LED lighting upgrades - the 135th Street corridor in St. Nicholas Park is a priority as well
- Other areas in parks in Community Board 9 that need attention to lighting:
 - Montefiore Park and Plaza
 - St. Nicholas Terrace Pathway
 - Ramp pathway and the 136th Street Staircase in Riverside Park that lead to 12th Avenue
- Jenny Benitez, the recently deceased founder of Jenny's Garden on 138th Street and 12th Avenue, will be honored with a plaque to commemorate her contributions to our community. Other local figures who should be honored by Community Board 9 include:
 - Michael Palma's Mother
 - Ann Rucker

Public Announcements / Open Discussion

- Community Forum for Morningside Park (UPDATE: Meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 29th from 7:00 - 9:00PM at the Harlem Police Athletic League, most likely)
 - Security booth now manned 24/7
 - Topics for discussion:
 - What is happening with the floodlights?
 - Huge police presence will not last. What is the plan for the future? What can be done with youth engagement?
 - Huge police presence will not last
- NYPD has 5 different patrol teams of two - additional officers and other resources are coming from outside the 26th precinct where the murder of Tessa Majors occurred
 - Floodlights on the perimeter of the park belong to the NYPD
 - Parks plans to add additional floodlights in the park interior
 - Parks is looking to provide 6 PEP (Park Enforcement Patrol) Officers at Morningside Park in 3 different shifts and give them operational space which will be located at a substation on 123rd Street, currently a field house
- The area of Morningside Park where the murder occurred is said to be a major drug trafficking area - students are aware of this and are told at orientation not to go there
 - There is also an uptick in drug use - needles and dime bags are commonly found
 - There is also prostitution occurring