



Economic Development and West Harlem Piers Minutes

8 November 2023 at 6:30pm

Attendees

Committee members present: Hon. Joyce Adewumi (co-chair), Hon. Chris Berry, Hon. Clayton Sanford, Hon. John-Martin Green

Committee members absent: Hon. Michael Iglesias, Hon. Maritta Dunn (co-chair), Hon. Clotilde Monguya

Other attendees: Madison Ayala (community associate)

1 Call to Order

Joyce Adewumi (JA) called the meeting to order at 6:48pm, noting a quorum of 4 out of 7 committee members.

2 Adoption of Agenda

John-Martin Green (JMG) moved that a discussion be added to the agenda about the expenditures of [Community Benefits Agreement \(CBA\)](#) funds by Parks. Clayton Sanford (CS) seconded the motion.

JMG moved that the agenda be adopted, and Chris Berry (CB) seconded.

3 Adoption of Minutes

CB moved to adopt the [October 2023 Economic Development minutes](#), JMG seconded.

4 Introductions, Presentations, Announcements

4.1 Lois Penny, NYC for Youth on Apprenticeship Program

Lois Penny was not present at the meeting.

5 Subcommittee Reports

There were no reports from note-taking and events planning subcommittees.

6 Old Business

6.1 Community Needs Assessment

JA noted the importance of having committee support in drafting the FY2025 District Needs Statement. The committee is expected to help to rank capital and operating expense budget requests, but most of the work fell on the chairs. For the FY2026 cycle, JA hopes to start the planning process sooner and draw on more committee input.

6.2 2024 Business Development Conference

Following up on the discussion at the October committee meeting about a small business fair, we discussed event planning on a high level and produced an outline for the aims of the conference.

- **Date Planned:** While initially planned for January, the committee decided to instead target April in order to be sure that there is sufficient time for adequate planning.
- **Goals:**
 - *Education* about best practices and resources available to small business.
 - *Inspiration* for attendees.
 - *Connection and networking* opportunities for attendees to learn about resources and business providers in the community.
- **Target Audience:** Home-based businesses, aspiring entrepreneurs, brick-and-mortar businesses, and nonprofits. (The latter was included due to the overlap in competencies and to increase the number of participants.)
- **Conference Theme:** “Empowering Grassroots Entrepreneurs.”
- **Format:** Keynote addresses, panel discussions, workshops, Q&A sessions, and networking opportunities.
- **Resources and Organizations to Involve:** [NYC Small Business Services \(SBS\)](#), [Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone \(UMEZ\)](#), [Darrell Downing](#) from [I-AM-HARLEM](#), [Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement \(HCCI\)](#), [NYC Consumer and Worker Protection \(CWP\)](#) (issues licenses), [NY Women’s Chamber of Commerce \(NYWCC\)](#), [Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce \(GHCC\)](#), representatives from banks that issue loans to small businesses, perhaps franchise owners.
- **Topics:**
 - Marketing strategies including social media, street fairs, community newspapers, with insights from the SBS and experienced business owners.
 - Digital payment systems.
 - Financing and loan opportunities.
 - Relevant legal and licensing requirements.
- **Marketing for the Event:** Utilizing multi-lingual flyers, social media, non-profits and BIDs, elected officials’ communication channels, and LinkNYC kiosks.
- **Space Considerations:** Dependent on chosen format and expected number of attendees, possibilities include open spaces or locations with breakout rooms like the Columbia Forum or similar spaces at CCNY.
- **Refreshments:** Catering services to be arranged.
- **Language Options:** Determination of whether the conference will be in English only or include other languages including (but not limited to) Spanish.
- **Funding:** The committee expects between \$1500 and \$3000 in funding, subject to CB9 allocations.
- **Event Evaluation:** Plan to conduct workshop-by-workshop evaluations and post-event surveys.

During the discussion, Trish Lewis and Arlene Benavidez from [Ladies of Hope Ministries \(LOHM\)](#) introduced themselves. They’ve been working on planning on similar events and are interested in collaboration with the committee. They are conducting on demographics and logistics for an event next year. (They were attending the meeting pursuant to a requirement for agencies funded by the [West Harlem Development Corporation \(WHDC\)](#) to participate in committee meetings.)

6.3 Columbia Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) Accounting Documentation

The context of the discussion centered around the accounting of spending by [NYC Department of Parks and Recreation \(Parks\)](#) of the funding allocated for improvements to the West Harlem Piers (WHP) by the CBA. (See the [September 2023 Economic Development minutes](#) for a more in-depth discussion of the funding.) In spring 2023, CB9 requested a detailed accounting of WHP expenditures from Sue Donoghue, the NYC Parks Commissioner. In response, Steve Simon, an operations officer, provided an estimated budget for review (Appendix A). Further insights were gained from a report by John Herrold of [Riverside Park Conservancy \(RPC\)](#), which included a more detailed documentation of personnel and events (Appendix B). This report showed a fairly close correspondence with the provided accounts.

An additional document, authored by former committee member Jonathan Sinagub, highlighted discrepancies and raised concerns regarding requests for public facilities (Appendix C). Sinagub proposed organizing a mini-workshop with Parks and the [NYC Economic Development Corporation \(EDC\)](#) to address these issues on-site.

The committee acknowledged the need for complete records to better understand and address the discrepancies. JA disclosed her need to recuse herself from certain discussions. Meanwhile, CS expressed willingness to review the discrepancies, search for public data, and assist in drafting a letter with JMG's help. Additionally, there was a suggestion to obtain information from the Comptroller to further aid in resolving these issues.

7 New Business

No new business.

8 Adjourn

CS moved that the meeting adjourn, and CB seconded.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Clayton Sanford.

Appendix A: Parks Estimated Operating Expenditures

DEPARTMENTAL ESTIMATES - FY24
 OPERATING BUDGET
 AGENCY: 846 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
 UNIT OF APPROPRIATION: 002 MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

OBJECT CLASS	IC REF	OBJ DESCRIPTION	MODIFIED FY23-01/05/23		DEPARTMENTAL ESTIMATES FY24			
			# POS	AMOUNT	# POS	AMOUNT	INC/DEC # POS	AMOUNT
BUDGET CODE: 5802 Columbia University W Harlem Piers Park								
01 F/T SALARIED		001 FULL YEAR POSITIONS	9	430,260			9-	430,260-
		SUBTOTAL FOR F/T SALARIED	9	430,260			9-	430,260-
02 OTH SALARIED		022 SEASONAL POSITIONS		23,025				23,025-
		SUBTOTAL FOR OTH SALARIED		23,025				23,025-
04 ADD GRS PAY		041 ASSIGNMENT DIFFERENTIAL		500				500-
		042 LONGEVITY DIFFERENTIAL		14,000				14,000-
		045 HOLIDAY PAY		5,000				5,000-
		061 SUPPER MONEY		500				500-
		SUBTOTAL FOR ADD GRS PAY		20,000				20,000-
06 FRINGE BENES		064 ALLOWANCE FOR UNIFORMS		5,000				5,000-
		089 FRINGE BENEFITS-OTHER		255,954				255,954-
		SUBTOTAL FOR FRINGE BENES		260,954				260,954-
SUBTOTAL FOR BUDGET CODE 5802			9	734,239			9-	734,239-
BUDGET CODE: 5820 East River Waterfront Esplanade								
01 F/T SALARIED		001 FULL YEAR POSITIONS	15	686,264	15	686,264		
		SUBTOTAL FOR F/T SALARIED	15	686,264	15	686,264		
02 OTH SALARIED		022 SEASONAL POSITIONS		161,683		161,683		
		SUBTOTAL FOR OTH SALARIED		161,683		161,683		
06 FRINGE BENES		089 FRINGE BENEFITS-OTHER		414,276		414,276		
		SUBTOTAL FOR FRINGE BENES		414,276		414,276		
SUBTOTAL FOR BUDGET CODE 5820			15	1,262,223	15	1,262,223		
BUDGET CODE: 5909 Stapleton Waterfront Open Space								
01 F/T SALARIED		001 FULL YEAR POSITIONS	1	96,951	1	96,951		
		SUBTOTAL FOR F/T SALARIED	1	96,951	1	96,951		
06 FRINGE BENES		064 ALLOWANCE FOR UNIFORMS		705		705		
		089 FRINGE BENEFITS-OTHER		45,325		45,325		

Appendix B: Riverside Conservancy Report

REPORT TO COMMUNITY BOARD 9 – MANHATTAN

Columbia University Funding for West Harlem Piers Park

John Herrold, Riverside Park Administrator

March 1, 2023

Since West Harlem Piers Park opened in the fall of 2008, the annual supplemental funding from Columbia University has been used to enhance the care and programming of the park. The annual use of these funds has held consistent from year to year, as follows.

Use of Columbia funding for personnel assigned to West Harlem Piers Park

- Columbia-funded maintenance and operations personnel assigned fixed-post to West Harlem Piers Park include four year-round City Park Worker lines, one year-round Gardener line and one seasonal City Seasonal Aide line to assist with summertime cleanup.
- Columbia-funded personnel also include one seasonal Programming Associate line.
- Columbia funding includes four year-round Parks Enforcement Patrol Officer lines assigned fixed-post to West Harlem Piers Park.

Each year's budget forecast assumes all personnel lines will be filled for the entire year and includes the full cost-out. As happens at most places of employment, periodic vacancies mean that during any given year we may not always be at full staffing either in maintenance & operations, programming or enforcement. The past two years have been a particularly difficult period for hiring across all industries and government agencies. Such vacancies are reflected in the final budget results calculated at the end of each fiscal year, with the reported personnel costs reflecting actual staffing as lines were filled. The Columbia funding is never charged for vacant personnel lines. Such vacancies are the primary reason actual spending is typically less than what is budgeted. **For FY 22 we did not spend \$269,000 due primarily to these vacancies.**

Use of Columbia funding for non-personnel expenses for West Harlem Piers Park

In addition to the personnel listed above, the Columbia funding is used for non-personnel (OTPS) expenses to enhance the daily care and upkeep of the park. These expenses include such items as maintenance supplies and equipment that might not otherwise be available for the park. Examples include plants and horticulture materials to preserve the natural elements of the park; de-icing materials safe for the Hudson River; small utility vehicles, and tools, cleaning supplies and trash bags over and above what are supplied by the Parks Department.

The Columbia funding also allows us to hire contractors for such work as maintaining the park's specialty lighting and repairing and maintaining the children's spray shower. This allows us to make these repairs faster than might be possible relying solely on the Parks Department's technical services, thus shortening the downtime for the park's elements and keeping the park in a state of good repair.

Use of Columbia funding to provide free public programs at West Harlem Piers Park

The Columbia funding also supports free public programs at West Harlem Piers Park. In 2022, there were **more than 75 events** from May to September. These included children's game days, health and fitness programs, dance, concerts, educational workshops and clinics, bingo nights, etc. The program series also includes the annual holiday tree lighting. More than 2,500 people attended last year's programs. Some

of the highlights are listed in the attachment. Except for the first two events, all the others took place in West Harlem Piers Park. (Note, in 2022, programming was also supported by the Riverside Park Conservancy, resulting in a lower-than-budgeted charge to the Columbia supplemental funding.)

Unspent Funds and Extending the Benefits of the Columbia Funding

When funds available in a given year go unspent, whether due to vacant personnel lines or late deliveries, up to 10% of the unspent amount may be rolled over to the following year. This helps address the unpredictable timing of equipment deliveries, for example, or unanticipated needs. The remainder of the unspent amount, if any, is placed in a reserve account, earning interest, to be drawn down after the initial term of the funding agreement between the Parks Department and Columbia University runs out. Thanks to this provision, the Columbia funding will enhance the care of West Harlem Piers Park for more than the 25 years originally provided for. (We are currently in year 15 of the agreement.)

The following table shows the actual spending during FY 2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022) next to the budget for FY 22 and the planned use of the Columbia funding during the current fiscal year, FY 2023.

Use of Columbia supplemental funding at West Harlem Piers Park

	FY 2022		FY 2023
AVAILABLE ANNUAL FUNDING			
Annual Allocation (escalated from Year 1)	\$734,267		\$756,295
Funds Applied from Prior Year	\$71,288		\$73,427
Total Available Funding	\$805,555		\$829,722
EXPENSES			
	Budget	Final	Budget
	<i>(Budgeted staffing)</i>	<i>(Actual staffing)</i>	<i>(Budgeted staffing)</i>
Personnel			
Maintenance & Programing Staff	\$384,009	\$240,654	\$381,714
Parks Enforcement Staff	\$305,552	\$231,995	\$316,328
Personnel Total	\$689,561	\$472,649	\$698,042
Non-Personnel Expenses			
Materials - General	\$35,000	\$37,074	\$5,000
Maintenance Supplies	\$12,000	\$926	\$10,000
Contract Services (Incl. 2022 Programming)	\$15,000	\$3,480	\$5,000
Programming (Separated out as of 2023)			\$17,000
Equipment	\$18,000		\$18,000
Total OTPS	\$80,000	\$41,480	\$55,000
Allocation for Administrative Costs	\$22,028	\$22,028	\$22,689
TOTAL SPENDING	\$791,589	\$536,158	\$753,042
Unspent Amount	\$13,966	\$269,397	\$76,679

Appendix C: Comments by Jonathan Sinagub

To: Economic Development WHPP Committee Members, Hon. 1st Chair Victor Edwards
From: Hon. Jonathan Sinagub
Date: March 12, 2023
RE: West Harlem Piers Park funding

I have reviewed the information submitted by Steve Simon. Unfortunately, it does not answer some fundamental questions and it does raise some serious questions regarding the administration of the West Harlem Piers Park and DPR's role in funding critical needs for the park.

In John Harold's Report to Community Board 9, dated March 1, 2023, in the first section **Use of Columbia funding for personnel assigned to West Harlem Piers Park** the number of personnel (9) concurs with the departmental estimates for FY24. However, if indeed the Columbia funds are applied to the nine personnel for the park, then why for departmental estimates FY24 are the nine positions removed from the budget for a net decrease in funding of \$734,239.

In the second section, **Use of Columbia funding for non-personnel expenses for West Harlem Piers Park**, the Columbia funding is used for non-personnel (OTPS) expenses to "enhance the daily care and upkeep of the park." These expenses include maintenance supplies, equipment, materials to preserve and enhance natural elements, tools, and other supplies. The Columbia funding also pays for contractors to maintain the park. However, from the DPR FY2021 Annual Report cites spending for all four quarters to be \$3,435. According to Steve Simon's email, dated March 10, 2023, to Victor Edwards, OTPS costs for supplies and maintenance of vehicles is an "estimated" \$50,000. There appears to be a sizeable gap in what is accounted for in the DPR Annual Report, and the estimated figure provided by Steve Simon.

In the third section, **Use of Columbia funding to provide free public programs at West Harlem Piers Park**, "the Columbia funding also supports free public programs at West Harlem Piers Park. In 2022, there were more than 75 events from May to September..... (Note, in 2022, programming was also supported by the Riverside Park Conservancy, resulting in a lower-than-budgeted charge to the Columbia supplemental funding.)" As clearly stated not all events are funded by the Columbia supplemental funding.

Clearly, as stated excess Columbia funds are carried over from year to year. It is not clear, however, the amount of these funds. I am not sure from Steve Simon's email that he even knows. In addition, supplies, tools, and vehicles purchased with Columbia funds are used in other parks. NYC DPR should present an actual ledger of accounts for revenue and expenses along with cash on hand, for the past ten years.

The Community Board has identified several critical needs that DPR has not responded to:

1. The need for safety for pedestrians and bicyclists given the traffic from the entrance and exit of the Westside Highway.
2. Public toilets- if the park is used so heavily then where are the public toilets? We have been requesting porta-potties for years – no response. Recently an article appeared in the Gothamist, “Relief on the way for 5 NYC Parks getting public toilets in 2024”. Why is WHPP not one of those parks, perhaps it could be number 6?
 - a. Future uses from the restoration of the kayak launch to the reuse of the Marine Transfer Station will attract more park users, requiring DPR to address multiple issues.
 - b. A major issue to any kind of public toilet is access to infrastructure. There is none within the park. However, there is a park house for maintenance workers at the north end of the park. My understanding it is a former police precinct, which undoubtedly has the necessary infrastructure to accommodate restrooms for the staff. I do not think it is a big leap to consider public restrooms near this park facility. This should be studied.
3. Public access to the water – This issue has been cited in the CB 197a Plan, the CBA and the Declaration of Covenants. CB 9 is a cosignatory to the Waterfront Alliance. Vision 2020 NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan in REACH 4 and REACH 5 particular issues are addressed to improve West Harlem Piers Park:
 - a. REACH 4 – West 125th Street -
 - i. Explore provision of boat storage near existing launch site, consistent with criteria described in the Citywide Strategy.
 - ii. Activate West Harlem Piers Park’s excursion boat pier and ferry barge.
 - b. REACH 5 – West 125th Street to West 145th Street –
 - i. Find appropriate use for the dormant marine transfer station at W. 135th St., including public access.
 - ii. Explore mapping as parkland West Harlem Piers Park and the North River Sewage Treatment Plant access road areas.

In conclusion, I do not think meeting with Steve Simon around a table would address any of our issues. I think the committee, CB 9 leadership and local elected officials should convene a mini workshop at the site, West Harlem Piers Park. The agenda would be outline as above, hopefully the DPR, EDC and others would come prepared to address the community’s repeated requests.

Attach.

DPR FY24 Operating Budget

DPR FY21 DPR Park Maintenance

Gothamist article dated 2/27/23