



**CB9M LANDMARKS PRESERVATION AND PARKS COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

**Wednesday, November 6, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Co-Chair Heather Jason called the regular meeting of the CB9M Landmarks Preservation and Parks Committee to Order at 6:37 PM EST, on Wednesday, November 6, 2024. The meeting was held in-person and via Zoom conferencing.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT AND IN-PERSON**

Co-Chair Hon. Heather Jason, Co-Chair Hon. Christopher Johnson, Hon. Patricia Caldwell, Hon. Joshua Christopher, Hon. Annette Robinson, and Hon. Veronica Savage

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT AND EXCUSED**

Hon. April Adams and Hon. Liz Waytkus

**GUESTS PRESENT IN-PERSON**

John T. Reddick (Central Park Conservancy), Somali Green, Yaotunde Obiora (The Kota Alliance, Inc.), and Jaana Rehnstrom (Kota Nest LLC and The Kota Alliance, Inc.)

**COMMUNITY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Board Chair Hon. Victor Edwards (virtual)

**GUESTS PRESENT VIRTUAL**

Leslie Wright (NYC Regional Director, New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park (DFRSP)); Mallory Craig (Education Center Manager, The Horticultural Society of New York, (DFRSP); Callie Tominsky, (Supervisory Park Ranger, North District Manhattan Sites, National Park Service), Wes Hamilton (NYC Parks, Riverside Park); Stephanie Caban (North Park Outreach Coordinator, Riverside Park Conservancy); Shannon Richards (142nd Street Dog Run); Tapashi Narine (NYC Parks, Historic Harlem Parks Administrator); Matt Genrich (NYC Parks); Yuien Chin (Executive Director, Harlem One Stop); Claudette Brady (Executive Director, Save Harlem Now); Valerie Bradley (Save Harlem Now); Margarita McGrath and Scott Oliver (norooft architects); Ann Kim (Harlem School of the Arts); and Randi Plevy (The Kota Alliance, Inc.).

**QUORUM**

A quorum was established with six committee members present and in person.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND MINUTES**

The agenda and October 2, 2024 minutes were adopted.

**PARKS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES:**

**Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park (DFRBSP): Leslie Wright**

- Figure skating of Harlem is in session as well as our own figure skating program .
- Ladies open gym basketball occurs every Thursday and Sunday from 8 PM to 10 PM. Free adult pickleball is in the gymnasium every Saturday, from 6 PM to 8 PM.
- Basketball skills and drills with focus on youth, girls, youth, boys occur 4PM to 6 PM every Saturday.

- Special programming for Veterans Day including ice skating, special arts and crafts to honor Veterans in the cultural theater. All regular scheduled classes will be canceled for the day, so that we can open up the facility to everybody. Everything is free, and all materials will be provided.
- Our next senior social is on November 14th. We're welcoming Bosco & The Storm.
- The Live on the Hudson program is alive and well on Saturdays. The next date is November 16th from 6pm to 9pm in the theater. It's basically a talent show and includes spoken word, song, and dance.
- During Hispanic Heritage month, we hosted a raucous 800 young people's strong school day performance by a song and dance troupe.
- Thursday, November 21st at 10:30 AM. We're hosting the Arm of the Sea Theater. This is an incredibly creative group based in the Hudson Valley that makes super-sized lifestyle puppets and performs full-scale puppet shows on different environmental themes. The theme is estuary tales.
- The Community Garden Lottery that occurs every two years is Saturday, February 15th. 65 beds are available. One sign up per household and the doors to the theater will open at 10 AM. Anyone who wishes to enter the lottery must bring ID and proof of address that day. No exceptions. The doors to the theater close at 10:59am and the lottery commences at 11 AM.
- 3 big current capital projects at the Park are proceeding nicely. The stair tower and elevator that goes from the parking lot below the park up to the park. That renovation is going well, we've demolished much of the old stair tower. Our shuttle service is going really well. Secondly, our aquatics complex filter room and bulkhead renovation project is also on track. The pool will open up early in the winter of 2025. The last big project is our cultural theater HVAC complete replacement. That project is going well and on track to getting our classrooms back by December, due to the internal electrical work inside the offices and classrooms.
- Full season of classes and programming underway. All events are **FREE!**
- Tomorrow's Artist Workshops for little kids 6 and under (11/21, 12/19).
- Art in the Park for kids ages 4-12 on (11/24, 12/15), 1PM – 3PM.
- Saturday, November 9th from 10:30 AM to noon is the monthly **Friends of Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park** which meets every second Saturday of the month in the Robert F. Smith Theater Rehearsal Room with Ms. Ann Rocker. (Main building cultural center on the second floor.) Please join us.
- Discussion regarding question: The mural that is located right next to the running track was commissioned by the park probably about a dozen years ago. The park worked with a community arts based organization and local community members to come up with the theme, the design and the execution. Harlem School of the Arts provides arts education for k-12 students with a very strong media and design arts program. Part of that program is a mural class that is very popular among the kids. DFRBS would consider finishing the wall with a mural by these students after offline discussions.
- The painting and monitoring of the ventilation stacks is the responsibility of the NYC Department of Environmental Protection. Refer this issue to the CB9M Health and Environment committee.
- Please refer to our Facebook and Instagram pages for additional information as well as flyers posted by the community board.
- [Riverbank State Park \(Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park\)](#)

#### **Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park - Greenhouse & Education Center: Mallory Craig**

- Thanks for celebrating the harvest together as we put the learning garden to bed.
- Preparing our learning garden for winter.
- We are still having our free intergenerational weekly classes that happen about 5 to 6 days a week. For example, we have botanical chocolate making with cacao, pressed flower art from some of the flowers that we preserved in the garden, and cyanotype workshops coming up.
- We'll plant more garlic bulbs and invite you to come and learn how to plant bulbs with us.
- Learn about soil health. We will connect with other neighborhood garden groups and share ways to test for soil health including lead. We partner with Bronx River Alliance and Cornell who provide free lead testing in soil. We would like to connect and inform you when we provide a soil health workshop.

- We have more seasonal recipes for staying warm.
- There are a few more Gardens & Greenhouse Tours field trips available. November is filling up, but we still have maybe one or 2 more spots available, and certainly for December.  
<https://www.explorableplaces.com/places/the-horticultural-society-of-new-york> [FEES WAIVED for schools in CB9 & CB10.] Otherwise, \$125.
- The internship has been going well for our high school, Harlem based young people. They meet every Friday from 4 PM – 6 PM. They will host a market bag giveaway. They curate this event and give away free farm fresh produce. Save the date; December 14th from 11 AM to 1 PM.  
[https://www.canva.com/design/DAGSbeUDprQ/HKMJ4i9eFqIE8\\_IDMrudQ/view?utm\\_content=DAGSbeUDprQ&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=editor](https://www.canva.com/design/DAGSbeUDprQ/HKMJ4i9eFqIE8_IDMrudQ/view?utm_content=DAGSbeUDprQ&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor)
- Free public programs listings can be viewed at [www.thehort.org/events](http://www.thehort.org/events).
- [mcraig@thehort.org](mailto:mcraig@thehort.org)
- Email [programs@thehort.org](mailto:programs@thehort.org) or [mcraig@thehort.org](mailto:mcraig@thehort.org)

**Central Park Conservancy: John Reddick**

- We're having a new facility built in the northern end.
- We're trying to get school kids there.
- Maybe we can figure out how to do field trips.

**National Park Service (Grant's Tomb and Hamilton Grange): Callie Tominsky**

- We are continuing our year round programming for visitors of all ages, from all walks of life and from all over the world.
- We are continuing to recruit volunteers who are passionate about education, spreading the message and interested in giving tours of both Hamilton Grange and the Grant's Tomb site.
- Learning that high school and college students are finding benefits working with us. We are starting a new internship program in partnership with CCNY which is adjacent to us at Hamilton Grange.
- We logged over 2,500 hours of volunteer service at Hamilton Grange and plan to continue the momentum.

**Riverside Park and West Harlem Piers: Wes Hamilton**

- We understand the concerns with the capital project at the 142nd dog run, but that there hasn't been a lot of work going on at the site.
- There are issues where some utilities were not on the blueprints that are very old from the 1930s and Robert Moses era. The project had to be paused in order to gain approval from DOT.
- After approval by DOT, or whatever changes they require, then we'll have to make a change order with our contractor, who must be in agreement.
- Our capital team is very confident that they're still on track, and will meet their deadline.
- Our focus this fall will be removing the leaves to keep the park clean, and snow removal.

**Riverside Park Conservancy: Stephanie Caban, [stephanie@riversideparknyc.org](mailto:stephanie@riversideparknyc.org)**

- Our annual leaf lift is Saturday, November 16th at 10 AM at West 148th Street and Riverside Drive.
- Organic matter is obviously really good for the garden beds. Some of that may go to Jenny's Garden for compost, or to our compost compound on 96th Street, and will be mulched and put into garden beds.
- On account of the drought, there have been one or two scary incidents with fires in the park.
- Every Wednesday from 9 AM to 12 PM we have volunteer opportunities at Sekura Park with our gardener, Winston Johnson.
- We have a monthly birding club that meets on the last Saturday of every month and this month it's 8 AM on November 30th at West 116th Street and Riverside Drive. We provide loaner binoculars.
- Please email any special events to be included in the monthly newsletter from your organizations.
- [Events | Riverside Park Conservancy \(riversideparknyc.org\)](#)
- [North Park Initiative | Riverside Park Conservancy \(riversideparknyc.org\)](#)

**NYC Parks and Historic Harlem Parks: Tapashi Narine, [tapashi.narine@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:tapashi.narine@parks.nyc.gov)**

- The Harlem Sculpture Garden has started deinstallation in Morningside, St. Nicholas and Jackie Robinson Parks.
- **Morningside Park:**
- The winter celebration and tree lighting is on December 7th from 4 PM to 6 PM at West 121st Street.
- We'll gather around the campfire with the Urban Park Rangers for activities at West 110th Street and Manhattan Avenue on December 28th from 1PM to 2 PM.

**NYC Parks, Matt Genrich**

- **St. Nicholas Park:** The final volunteer project for the season is on Saturday, November 9th from 11 AM to 1 PM. Meet at the 135th Plaza to help spruce up the park.
- **Morningside Park:** The 113th staircase and handrail project is scheduled to be wrapped up by this spring before the end of April or hopefully earlier.
- The Sheltering Arms restroom that's been under construction for quite a while is getting very close to being completed and should be open within the next several weeks.
- The Alexander Hamilton Playground Basketball Court is under renovation. The Comfort Station is still on the docket to be renovated, but it has not yet been funded.
- "Participating Budgeting" like the safety surface at Playground 125 and at Annunciation Playground might be good renovation avenues for small projects, but with significant funding requirements requiring community support.
- "It's My Park Day" events are occurring November 16th and 17th.
- Montefiore Square had a project last weekend and the 137th Street group had a project the weekend prior.
- The Halloween dog run 142 event in collaboration with the St. Nicholas Dog Run Group and the Polo Grounds Dog Run Group at 145 was a huge success.
- Request for holiday lights for Donnellan Square. It was explained that these lights are normally funded by Friends Groups or organizations that would install the lights. The official announcement for holiday light displays for different parks and information about the process will be sent to CB9M. A NYC Parks permit is required and possibly a Forestry permit.

**NEW BUSINESS, PRESENTATIONS, AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Announcement was made regarding the appointment of Christopher Johson as the new Co-Chair of the CB9M Landmarks Preservation and Parks Committee and many thanks to Annette Robinson for her service as Co-Chair.**

**The Claremont Theater, 3320-3338 Broadway NY, NY 10031, TUCK-IT-AWAY AT 135TH STREET INC., (owner), Gerald Sprayregen, letter of concern presented by Hon. Veronica Savage**

- Claremont is a very special individual landmark on 135th and Broadway designated as such on June 6, 2006. It's actually one of New York City's oldest structures dedicated to motion pictures.
- As stewards of this area's landmarks, we are trying to do due diligence by paying attention to how they're being cared for. It's currently occupied as a storage facility.
- This letter of concern is regarding unauthorized exterior work at Claremont, specifically modifications and repairs that have been noted on the building's exterior that were carried out without the necessary permits, and also concerns about poor maintenance.
- The building shows visible signs of neglect, structural wear, and damage to decorative elements.
- In part, this letter is meant to be proactive. We are urging the owner to correct these conditions without incurring penalties and specifically to address all the maintenance issues with care and sensitivity to the building's historic features, and also submit an application to the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) to correct unauthorized exterior work.
- The letter of concern passed unanimously with six members present and voting.

**Kota Nest LLC, 43 St. Nicholas Place, NY, NY 10031:** Jaana Rehnstrom MD MPH, member and The Kota Alliance, Inc. Founder and President. **Certificate of Appropriateness LPC-24-07671** application for egress bulkhead, windows and doors. Presentation by Margarita McGrath, noroof architects

- Kota Nest LLC is the property owner. The Kota Alliance, Inc. is an affiliate non-profit.
- Jaana Rehnstrom is the single member and managing member of Kota Nest LLC.
- The Kota Alliance, Inc. is a women's empowerment organization established in 2015, but has only been in Harlem since January 2022.
- Applicant believes the row house was built in 1865 and there has been a lot of wear and tear, but has undergone some renovations in the past.
- Applicant claims the use of the property for The Kota Alliance, Inc. requires structural changes.
- There are 3 reasons for the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) application. One is for better sustainability of the operations by making it more energy efficient. The doors and the windows are second to make it accessible for disabled people and seniors so they can get into the building and take part in programming. Finally, the third reason, which is probably the most important, is fire safety because the building is not up to code currently for commercial use.
- It is necessary to reactivate the historic central opening, for people with mobility issues.
- Eventually, a personal elevator will be installed to make the entire building accessible. Current plans are for personal elevator access to the second floor, where community activities happen.
- Second, a stair up to the roof will be required in the future, but is not necessarily required today.
- After renovations start, the NYC DOB will require the stairs, given the height of the building.
- This is a fantastic block. It's just so beautiful. LPC is really interested in how our entry fits in with the base of the block. LPC is also really interested in what those door openings look like.
- Landmarks wants to know about the trim details and the openings.
- The low wrought iron fences will be cut back in the front to accommodate the new center entry.
- The interesting tiny little old building creates an open edge that can be closed with the bulkhead.
- The amazing U-shaped historic flavor of the interior stair weaves all the way up which causes the bulkhead to get big at the top. Rather than wrapping around the last portion of the stair, it will be a straight run stair, which allows the bulkhead to be narrower, and pushed back slightly.
- The bulkhead is currently at 7 feet tall, but could be reduced to 6 foot 8, with tolerances. The applicant wants to close the block, in order for the same angles of the beautiful crown shaped roofs on the front of St. Nicholas is repeating.
- There will be a small amount of a railing on the roof that won't be seen from the street.
- Kota Nest LLC is requesting a letter of support (LOS) from this committee to take to LPC, and for The Kota Alliance, Inc. to receive grant money to complete the renovations.
- Community is definitely a form of the applicant's focus and the building is not big enough to hold masses. For example, the applicant received a grant from West Harlem Development Corporation to run a youth program with the youth organization called Forward Inclusion.
- Last year the applicant received a grant for an art exhibit which is being repeated with less money. It's starting tomorrow, and everyone is welcome to attend the opening.
- After renovations are complete, then it is the applicant's understanding that there can be a change in the certificate of occupancy (CofO) to either a single family, or there's some category called nonprofit, with sleeping accommodations.

- It is important to determine the use of the building before undertaking renovations in order to meet certain requirements. It doesn't make sense to undo the renovations after applying for this change of classification of the building.
- Kota claims it will figure out the best configuration of the building during the renovations and that this is just step one in probably a decade-long project to develop the interior.
- The project sounds like it's heading towards a community facility.
- The mockup is not constructed correctly with orange construction netting, painted with a bright color, or wrapped with bright yellow caution tape. Therefore, it is difficult to truly evaluate the proposed bulkhead. The mockup does not look different from what was previously presented.
- This is a residential block of owner-occupied homes. The applicant LLC member does not reside in the row house. The prior owner received the Certificate of Non Harassment.
- This property is classified as a Restricted SRO with the Department of Buildings (DOB) and has a CofO for one Class A apartment and eight Class B rooms.
- The property was bought with the intention to change the CofO. However, the applicant is unable or unwilling to explain to the community the future use of the row house right now.
- Kota Nest LLC intends to file an ALT 1 application with DOB. The applicant believes this LPC process is a chicken and egg situation until renovations start. Without knowing the proposed use of the row house, then it's difficult to determine if an exception should be approved.
- Developers purchase small residential property because it's cheaper to buy than a commercial space. It's becoming more difficult for small row house owners to maintain the nature and character of this community, and continue to preserve existing and future historic districts.
- Kota questions whether we would rather have a single family home, than a row house as the home of the community? However, a commercial entity owns the property, is occupying it contrary to its CofO, and using its affiliate nonprofit to raise money for the property renovations.
- It is important that this community preserve permanent residential and affordable housing in Harlem. Converting SROs into commercial use, nonprofits, and developments potentially increases housing costs.
- It was suggested that this matter be referred to the Housing, Land Use and Zoning Committee.
- The LPP committee voted unanimously with six members present to disapprove the LPC Certificate of Appropriateness application.

#### **OLD BUSINESS UPDATES/ Landmarks Preservation Property Improvement Concerns**

- **The LPC MCB9 monthly permit and Violation list for October 2024 did not include any current concerns.**
- There are no updates regarding calendaring the **West Harlem and Morningside Heights Historic Districts.**
- **St. Luke's Church** community meeting is scheduled for November 11, 2024 to discuss adaptive reuse ideas, the financial situation and plans to address the maintenance concerns.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** The next meeting will be held on Wednesday December 4, 2024 at 6:30PM EST.

**ADJOURNMENT** The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 PM EST.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Heather Jason