



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)
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OANA Minutes April 14th, 2015

The meeting was initiated by Nichole Henderson-Roy, Partnership for Parks; part of the parks department that works solely with community groups. She talked about Community Parks Initiative (CPI); which came about Major Bill De'Blasio's efforts to address parks equities, or the lack of, in some of our areas. Not every park in NYC has a Central Park conservancy or prospect park alliance. There was a big announcement about the Community Parks Initiative and that over 130 parks in NYC haven't received any capital funding in over 20 years, many of which are in Astoria. This led to the creation of CPI zones or CPI neighborhoods, Astoria being part of this; because of the lack of funding for some of the park's properties and looking for the exponential amount of growth that will be happening in the next 15-20 years. With CPI came three parts, Capital improvement, programming improvements, Partnerships.

Capital improvements - there are two parks in this zone that are going to be receiving money - one is Astoria Heights playground and the other Van Alst playground. Both of these properties they did a community sculpt meeting and are now moving forward to the designs, hoping to get constructing within a year. Second part of that capital process is making the entire process of capital improvement a lot more transparent. The 'Capitol Project Tracker' online (<http://www.nycgovparks.org/planning-and-building/capital-project-tracker#Queens>) keeps track of all the projects taking place through the five boroughs and what stage they are currently at for the public's knowledge. For Programming - Astoria Park and Astoria Heights are going to be receiving playground associates, which are structural play. Adults who are trained to do structural play from Tuesday through Saturday. They are going to start in May through October. More info is yet to be disclosed. In addition, CPI parks equity money will be used for gardeners and park staff throughout Queens. Also have more movies and events in these properties and Play Mobiles for parks. Play Mobiles is a van filled with craft and activities young children

Partnerships - where they come together making sure that once these changes happen that they have groups who are able to sustain these relationships and continue to advocate for a lot of these parks. Astoria Heights - has a 'Friends of' group that is set up. Astoria Park has many groups. But there other playgrounds, Van Alst playground



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doesn't have that commitment - looking to engage community members who are interested in starting a "Friend of" group in that area, continuing the work already seen in Astoria. In terms of partnership itself, different resources offered are grants program. Grant are structured for smaller groups interested in building there capacity and great starter grant. There are three deadlines a year - February, June, and October; varying from as little as \$150 up to 3,000, possibly more. Fellowship academy goes from February to October, which is good networking opportunity and training. There to help with resource with the entire process. Never have to pay for their trainings.

Richard Khuzami, Chair of Parks & Recreation/Cultural Affairs Committee, Why the playground near the PS 171 School wasn't designated a stronger relationship with the School? Ms. Henderson responded that they don't take much advantage during the school day but they do have the rights to close it off, hoping the changes being instituted will allow for a change. CIP is making education campaign; there are 35 parks in NYC receiving this money, but there are many parks that still need these changes. Nicole works with JOP Settlement, which has an afterschool program, about 100 kids enrolled doing several activities in April and May needing much more than that. Mr. Khuzami also wanted to know what are the specific responsibilities that an organization such as themselves would be required to be a sponsor? Ms. Henderson responded that it goes back to the three pillars discussed earlier, in terms of what partnership is about; volunteerism, the programming, and the advocacy and what you are all willing to bring into this. Even if the start of "It's my park" program, where they paint benches and wear t shirts supporting the park or whether it's a play mobile and do a kids fair. In the advocacy part, they are not there yet - just the first two. Ms. Henderson provided her number to get in contact: for office - 718-520-5913; cell phone 917-272-8414

Claudia Cogar asked in the CPI plan, is it centered just around for children or is there any plans centered towards seniors? As for programs for seniors. Ms. Henderson replied that if they wanted seniors programs then they could certainly provide, all coming back to the input she receives and is something they can work on doing in the future.



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Mr. Khuzami mentioned that Partnership for Parks is part of the city parks foundation, very good chance that one of the biggest things on Long Island is Astoria Parks, will eventually be the performing space and at that point there may be a stronger relation with city parks foundation.

Mr. Norman, manager for the district, stated that there are at least 81 (big and small) park properties in this district. Here to give an overview as to what the agency is doing in regards to community board one, what type of properties we have here and what is going on in the near future. 5 of the 81 parks are defined as large parks, anything above 5 acres, which is Astoria Park being the largest park, Queens Bridge Park, Rainy Park, Ralph Demarco Park, and St. Michaels Playground. All those parks are in total 145 acres of parkland. A lot of the Green streets were originally DOT properties that they have greened in the last 5-10 years, added trees, benches and other improvements to it and now it's more of an asset to the community. Within district one; there are 3 park supervisors who are in charge of supervising all the personnel, 5 associate park service workers who operate the heavy equipments, such as garbage trucks. Also have 8 city parks workers who are all full time employees, but with less training than an associate park service workers, who clean the parks/ playgrounds; 3 gardeners - one of the gardeners is the CPI gardeners that was just received, which the main responsibility is working in Astoria Park to improve our gardens, worker volunteer group.

Mr. Khuzami questioned if these were the only staff for all 145 acres of parkland. To which Mr. Norman said that in addition to that they had seasonal job training participates and on average they have 30-35 during the summer, and this winter was somewhere under 5. Mr. Khuzami added maintenance is the biggest issue that is constantly heard about in regards to the parks, what is needed to get the job that is expected? Mr. Norman responded their job is to work with they have, their headcounts are slowly growing and are in the process of hiring more gardeners and more city park workers within the next year. Within community board 1, one of the biggest issues is the amount of liters and illegal dumping at the parks; another is irresponsible pet owners not picking up after their dogs.

Four projects in community board one are currently in the works. First is Triborough A, which the property on western end of court Ave. next to the tennis court, plans to install adult fitness, outdoor pin pong tables and renovating the perimeter sidewalks



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at Triborough A and B, which is the existing playground across the street. Renovations are coming up for Hoyt playground in late summer 2015. In addition to that Paul Raimondo playground designs were finalized and is another project in Astoria. It asked when the adult fitness, ping-pong tables will be ready? To which Mr. Norman replied that construction is expected late this summer, and completed by early 2016. Currently have numbers project that are in designs and have all been funded, expect to unveil. Astoria Park erosion control project which will be on the south end of Astoria Park that has been funded and in designs, which received a lot of public feedback on.

Claudia Cogar mentioned that none of our parks have a football or soccer field. To which Mr. Khuzami responded that it is something that has been discussed with the community board and thought of. Mr. Norman also said that he isn't aware of any new constructions of fields any time soon. Diane Kotsoglou said we don't have anything for winter, any community events. Mr. Norman said we do have fewer events in winter activities and from time to time city events will hold random snowboarding events, snowboarding performances, varies sledding sights throughout the five boroughs under supervision. In regards to ice skating rinks, they tend to lose more money than gain. Jean Marie D'Alleva questioned what was the plan for the sprinkle/baby pool? Mr. Khuzami responded they were expanding the playground into that area, and still have the sprinkles to be used for the children and not make any major changes. Last thing is funding on the abandon red building on the south side, over on Queens Park going south. Plans have yet to be finalized on the redesigns.

Mr. Khuzami pointed out that the biggest issue that they are constantly hearing is a lot of people that invested a lot in the community see the parks as a huge asset, constantly having issue with garbage all over the place which really needs to be dealt with. With all the development that is going on in this neighborhood and people coming in, this shouldn't be an issue.

It was recommended that if one sees an issue with garbage to take a picture and let 311 know for the city and also let the local councilman office know so they can track it. It was asked what happens if people dump bags of garbage at city parks and when will we more enforcement in the park? Mr. Norman responded that if someone is caught doing this that it is a summons for illegal improper use of a park trash receptacles and that if sanitation catches them doing this, it could be more of a



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costly fine for illegal dumping and is a big enforcement issue. In the past two years, the borough has seen a larger amount of park enforcement officers, still not enough - but is a much larger amount out there. A lot of it is still educational and that some people are unaware that you can't do this.

Mr. Khuzami mentioned the bicycles, if you're under 12 you're allowed to ride within the park, otherwise adults are required to ride only in designated bike zones. Why are there no signs to indicate this, because there are even people riding inside the running tracks, what can be done about this? Martha Lopez-Gilpin added in that on May 3 they will be partnering at the 5 boroughs, about how they can do some outreach for education and what an opportunity of thousands of bike riders coming to that park, for us to say these are pedestrian paths not to be used. There are signs at other parks

Jean Marie D'Alleva asked what do you do when you see people barbecuing on Astoria Park property? Mr. Norman answered that they educate people that barbecuing in Astoria Park is not allowed and that only Queen Bridge Park is currently allowed to BBQ in community board one, and most cases people comply.

Mr. Khuzami then brought up the press release of the Participatory Budget Process, coming in favor of the dog run, and strongly opposed to the redesign on 21st street on Astoria Blvd; suggesting to allow right turn on red instead because of long waiting time. Furthermore, suggesting that on 27th Ave should not have any trucks, even if it's illegal already, DOT doesn't allow a "No Trucks allowed" sign, instead having an "All trucks this way" on Astoria Blvd directing them to a truck route; and wanting to create a truck route.

Next was the ferry that is in the plans over on 9th street; which is having two proposed locations either on the south or north side of the peninsula. A package which was distributed about the ferry plan, containing several questions; one of which was 'can a ferry operate safely in the same place where there is kayaking, fishing, canoeing, etc'? Another is transportation connection, can these connections be improved, and will parking be taken into consideration. Another is erosion, ferries create a lot of waves - could be an issue on the north part because there is already a lot of erosion damage under shore towers. Is there going to be any concessions stand and where will it be located? Will there be shelters for the commuters? How does the ferry fit in



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emergency evacuation plans? Will it be handicapped assessable? These and more were in questioned that will be hopefully addressed and answered soon.

Mr. Khuzami thanked everyone for coming.