



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

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Andrew M. Cuomo

Governor

Rose Harvey

Commissioner

Karen Phillips

Regional Director

Path Through History

First NYC Work Group meeting minutes

June 12, 2012 at 1:30PM

List of attendees at end of minutes

Commencement

On June 12, 2012 at 1:30 PM, the first NYC Path through History meeting commenced with opening remarks by the New York State Parks Regional Director, Karen Phillips. Attendees were asked to introduce themselves. Ms. Phillips offered thanks to Joe Tazwell, New York City Regional Director of Empire State Development Corp (ESDC) for his role in working towards the promotion of cultural tourism in New York State.

Overview by Joe Tazwell, Executive Director, NYC Regional Economic Development Council (REDC)

Via a power point presentation Joe provided the background and role of the 10 Regional Councils across the State, explaining that through these Councils, the state is looking at an innovative approach to job creation that takes into account each region's strengths and opportunities for growth. Part of this new initiative is creating a single portal called the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA), that assembles all Agency grant funds into a "one stop shop" for municipal, not-for-profit and private applicants, in addition to special funding available from the Empire State Development Corporation, that the 10 councils compete for. This is the second year of this innovative program. In last year's CFA cycle 700+ projects were funded across the state. In November of 2011, the NYC REDC released a strategic plan and vision statement to guide growth in the 5 boroughs. The Plan has endorsed a comprehensive economic development strategy based on four key objectives: improve quality of life, create a pro-growth, pro-jobs environment, invest in the future and foster innovation and Inter-regional cooperation. The plan did not include much on heritage tourism.

Overview of Path Through History Initiative by Cordell Reeves and Austin O'Brien, OPRHP, Division for Historic Preservation, Waterford, NY

The Path through History (PTH) program is a special initiative of the Governor that was identified by a press release in March of 2012. The Governor wants to find ways to maximize the cultural and historical resources, venues and attractions that make New York State special and provide a large untapped economic engine for the State. The First Executive Order removed some of the barriers outside the State Capital so that the public would have better access to artifacts and exhibition space. The PTH program is an opportunity to identify and market these resources and get people to the resources. A work group was formed in each of the 10 REDC regions and the initiative is being led by staff from OPRHP. Each work group has the opportunity to help shape this program; identify the criteria and themes specific to

each region and to NYS history in general and to help select resources; come up with a list specific to each region, assist in marketing and accessibility, and act as ambassadors for our communities and present ideas to the public. Ideas promoted by each work group will be presented in the upcoming mid-July PTH summit to be held in Albany.

NYC Work Group discussion led by Merrill Hesch, OPRHP, NYC Region

Every participant received a NYC PTH packet, including an agenda and preliminary selection criteria. A lively discussion ensued regarding the unique visitor experience in NYC and the large number of attractions, some heavily promoted, and some completely unknown to tourists or even local residents; some with visitor amenities and some without. We all agreed that we needed to reach a broad audience and reach out to school children and youth. Although upstate the first stage of PTH will be a signage program on the Thruway, this is not applicable to NYC, but Lloyd Ultan suggested signage on the subways as an indicator of attractions nearby. Markly Wilson, Director of International Tourism at ESDC then led a discussion on choosing regional themes for NYC, that would then help the group in choosing the venues and attractions. The proposed themes identified were: Maritime History, Immigration, Ethnic Diversity, Art/Culture, Music/Literature, Revolutionary War, Slavery and Abolition, Radicalism/ Protest, Science and Technology, Capitalism/Finance, Family Life, Architecture/Public Spaces i.e., Central Park, Sports, Design/Fashion, Television/Film, Open Space/Landscapes, Food, Religions/Beliefs/Identities, Cultural Communities and Sustainability. More themes would be added later.

However many in the group felt that it made more sense to pick the venues and attractions first and then the themes would be more obvious. Much discussion took place on the “layers and layering” of themes and significance which can cross sites and boroughs. Due to a lack of time the work group was unable to begin preparing a list of venues. Three co-chairs stepped forward to facilitate the gathering of sites: Holly Kaye, Jeffrey Kroessler and Richard Lieberman.

To assist the co-chairs and members a matrix will be sent out shortly to guide in venue selection. In addition the list from New York City & Company (NYC’s main tourist marketing company) will be made available to all participants as well as specific web sites that contain lists of sites in each borough as well as a list of all National Register sites in the City. The work group agreed that only sites that are “visitor ready” should be on the NYC list.

Other topics of conversation at the end of the meeting included finding out what sources of funding are available to carry out this initiative and any information on the dates/time/speakers/breakout sessions for the July summit. The only information available is that the work groups will be given further tasks after the summit.

The next meeting was set in approximately two weeks, again at ESD, to be determined by the availability of the conference room. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30PM.

List of attendees:

Karen Phillips, Merrill Hesch, Austin O’Brien, Cordell Reaves, OPRHP

Joe Tazewell, Andrew Fletcher, Markly Wilson, ESD

Lloyd Ultan, Bronx Borough Historian

Pamela Green, Weeksville Heritage Center

Gene Norman, Bronx historian and former NYC LPC Chair

Barnett Shepherd, Staten Island historian

John Reddick, Harlem One-Stop and Harlem historian

Peg Breen and Anne Friedman, New York Landmarks Conservancy

John Moye, NYS Dept of Labor

Richard Lieberman, Chair of LaGuardia and Wagner Archives

Kevin Kong, Asian Americans for Equality

Jeffrey Kroessler, Queens historian and librarian at John Jay College

Holly Kaye, Development and Heritage Tourism consultant

Francis Morrone, tour guide

Mencia Figueroa, The Hispanic Society of America

Lynn Kelly, Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden

Frank Sanchis, World Monuments Fund

Simeon Bankoff, Historic Districts Council

Marcia Keisz, York College

Marta Vega, Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute

Gail Morse, Big Apple Greeter NYC

Not in attendance:

Doug Steiner, Steiner Studios

Michael Devonshire, Jan Hird Pokorny Associates

Michael Untank, consultant to Harlem Arts Alliance

Magarita Aguilar, El Museo del Barrio

Anthony Robins, historian

Anne Van Ingen, former Chair of Architecture, Planning and Design Program at NYSCA

Frank Vangnone, Historic House Trust