INTRODUCTION

Chrysalis Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (Chrysalis), has been retained by the WSP-Parsons Brinckerhoff (WSP-PB) on behalf of the City of New York - Department of Design and Construction (DDC) to conduct all necessary Cultural Resource Management (Archaeological) tasks associated with the Water Mains Replacement and Connections Project (MED608) at Washington Square Park, located at W. 4th Street between Broadway and LaGuardia Place, Washington Square East, and Washington Square North between Fifth Avenue and University Place in Manhattan, New York (Map 01).

An Archaeological Monitoring Plan, Unanticipated Discoverers and Human Remain Protocol Plan previously submitted to, and approved by, the City of New York – Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), describes the procedures and tasks to be performed as part of the Phase IB Archaeological Project.

This In-Progress Field Memorandum for the Record #01 describes the discovery of the Burial Vault as part of monitoring for the Consolidated Edison gas line excavation (Map 01).
Map 01: Approximate location of Consolidated Edison’s Gas Line Trench.
On Tuesday, November 3, 2015 archaeological monitoring identified a burial vault just south of Waverly Place, along Washington Square East.

The arched brick roof of the vault was exposed at approximately 3.5’ below surface. The rear wall of the vault, constructed of stone, was also exposed. A concrete duct bank runs along the top of the vault.

Two stones were removed to view inside the vault. At the far end of the vault a set of steps and a door were observed. The roof of the vault exhibits a patch where it had been previously opened – beneath this patch are a depression and a scatter of bricks (Image 01).

On the left side of the vault there appears to be an articulated skeleton present, surrounded by broken wood (presumably remnants of the coffin) (Image 02).

What appears to be a small pile of disarticulated bone was observed in the northeast corner of the vault.

The southeast corner of the vault contains a large pile of disarticulated bone. From the small view available and digital photographs that were taken there appears to be between 9 and 12 skulls present (Image 03).

The floor of the vault exhibits several wooden fragments of various sizes and what appears to be at least one coffin plate.

Based on conversations with the contractor – a portion of the vault roof needs to be removed for installation of a water line; and approximately 3’ – 4’ of the rear wall of the vault needs to be removed for installation of the gas line. Excavation for the gas line will extend to approximately 8’ below surface.

Presently the contractor is removing the concrete duct that lies along the roof of the vault and clearing the area surrounding the vault structure so that it can be documented.

Chrysalis will coordinate with LPC tomorrow, Wednesday November 4, 2015. Chrysalis will also notify the Office of the Medical Examiner and begin enacting all approved protocols. Following consultation with LPC, we will know the level of documentation required and a determination will be made if the skeletal remains will be documented in place, or documented and removed. If the remains are to be removed, Chrysalis will coordinate with the Funeral Director to obtain the necessary Department of Health permits as required by New York City law.

Once all parties agree to the path forward Chrysalis will gather the resources to continue to the documentation and potentially removal of the skeletal remains. If skeleton remains are removed from the site they will be transported to Chrysalis’ laboratory and arrangements will be made for re-interment following the conclusion of the project.
Image 01: Burial vault interior looking east.
Image 02: Possible articulated skeleton and pile of disarticulated human skeletal remains.
Image 03: Large pile of disarticulated human skeletal remains.
REFERENCES
Chrysalis Archaeological Consultants, Inc.