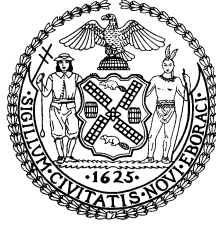


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The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 8

Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting

Brick Presbyterian Church
62 East 92nd Street (Park-Madison)
Living Room
Thursday, September 8, 2016, 6:30 PM

CB8M Members present: James Clynes, Daniel Dornbaum, Scott Falk, Sophia James, Sharon Pope, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Judy Schneider, Tricia Shimamura

Excused: Susan Evans

1. Naming John Jay Park's Swimming Pool After Henry J. Stern

Members of the community and some elected officials described their reasons for backing a proposal to name the swimming pool at John Jay Park the Henry J. Stern pool.

Among his contributions, Upper East Side resident Henry Stern served as Parks Commissioner for 15 years, from 1983 to 1990 and from 1994 to 2002. In the past, he had also been a New York City Council Member and a top official with the City's Consumer Affairs department. He also was a founder of NY Civic, a good government organization, and was at one time, a member of Community Board 8-Manhattan.

As members of the public described, Mr. Stern "has made a difference in every community in New York City."

As Parks Commissioner, Mr. Stern coined the term "arbocide," and pushed the City Council to pass a law criminalizing the destruction of trees. He was a leader in the movement to create park conservancies. He helped invent the concept of Greenstreets to promote green space in the city and invented the "Forever Wild" concept.

As described by members of the public, Mr. Stern had a strong affinity for city swimming pools and was dedicated to restoring those in disrepair. His interest in pools led him to create early morning and late evening lap swimming in pools and, at John Jay Park, he devised a program in which, annually on July 7 (while he was Parks Commissioner), he would invite people to swim 7 laps, starting at 7 am.

Members of the public maintained that Mr. Stern, who is in poor health, deserves recognition during his lifetime. Naming the pool at John Jay Park after him would be fitting, they said, since Mr. Stern lives on the Upper East Side and had frequently used John Jay Park's swimming pool.

This plan to name John Jay Park's pool after Henry Stern originated with former Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe, in conjunction with former Parks Dept. employees and friends of Henry Stern.

RESOLUTION:

WHEREAS the City at large, including Manhattan’s Upper East Side, has long benefitted from the many civic contributions of Henry J. Stern; and

WHEREAS Mr. Stern’s 40 years of high-level public service included 15 years as Parks Commissioner, as well as two terms as a City Council Member and service as a first deputy commissioner of Consumer Affairs; and

WHEREAS Mr. Stern’s many contributions as Parks Commissioner entailed serving as a leader in the movement to create park conservancies, helping invent the concept of Greenstreets to promote green space, successfully pressing the City Council to pass a law criminalizing the destruction of trees, and encouraging the restoration of swimming pools in disrepair; and

WHEREAS Henry Stern, an Upper East Side resident and a former member of Community Board 8-Manhattan, had frequently used the swimming pool at John Jay Park; and

WHEREAS naming John Jay Park’s pool after Henry J. Stern involves only the swimming pool and would not include changing the name of that park; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8-Manhattan approves of the request to name the swimming pool at John Jay Park the Henry J. Stern pool and asks the City’s Parks Dept. to adopt that name for the pool as soon as possible.

VOTE: 11-0-0

In favor: James Clynes, Daniel Dornbaum, Scott Falk, Sophia James, Sharon Pope, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Judy Schneider, Tricia Shimamura.

2. The City’s Proposal to Continue Privatizing the Queensboro Oval, starting in 2017 and its Plan to Issue an RFP for a Concessionaire.

Several members of the Parks Dept.’s revenue unit presented the department’s plans to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the development, operation and maintenance of the Queensboro Oval Park, starting in 2017. That’s when the City’s current contract with licensee, Sutton East Tennis, expires.

The chosen concessionaire would be awarded a contract to operate a sports and recreational facility at the Oval for up to 9 months each year for 10 years.

According to Parks Dept. officials, the chosen concessionaire could provide a variety of activities at the park and several park improvements, such as better seating and/or removable turf. But exactly what these activities and amenities would consist of will depend on the offerings of the chosen concessionaire.

As planned, during the period that the park is privately operated, park users would be charged a fee for service. But during the summer months, when the park is not privately operated, park usage would be free.

Parks Dept. officials acknowledged to meeting attendees that this plan “isn’t precisely what you wanted.” But they said they were attending the Parks Committee’s meeting to get input for the RFP. They said the RFP hasn’t yet been written but is due to be issued by mid-October.

In response, elected officials, members of the public and Community Board members resoundingly voiced opposed the plan for an RFP.

One elected official labeled the intent—for continued privatization of a public park— “a failure of vision by the City,” especially given the lack of park space on the Upper East Side. He and others called for the park to be open to the public all-year.

In response to another elected official’s questions, attendees learned that no one had asked the City to save the tennis bubble (which currently covers the Oval Park). And Parks Dept. officials at the meeting knew of no other City park that has been licensed to a private concessionaire.

Meeting attendees aired such other objections as: the large and growing population on the Upper East Side, including in the area surround the Queensboro Oval, which urgently needs more open space; the fact that many people can’t afford expensive, privately run activities in public parks; the fact that some elected officials have promised funds to support the Oval; that taxpayers already pay to support public parks, including the Oval; and that the public—including the elected officials-- has been clamoring to have the Oval returned to the public.

Attendees agreed that the Community Board should seek an urgent meeting with Parks Commissioner Silver about the need to make the Oval a year-round public park. It was decided that CB8 Chair James Clynes would write a letter, co-signed by the Parks Committee co-chairs, to Commissioner Silver, requesting his presence at the October 6 meeting of CB8’s Parks and Recreation Committee.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the Upper East Side of Manhattan has among the least public parkland of any district in New York City, despite its very large and growing population; and

WHEREAS the Queensboro Oval, a public park located on York Avenue at 59th Street, has long been privatized for more than 9 months a year, preventing the public from accessing this park most of the year; and

WHEREAS the City’s license with the current concessionaire at this park expires in August 2017; and

WHEREAS Community Board 8-Manhattan, with the strong support of elected officials, Community Board 6-Manhattan and hundreds of members of the public, have been pressing the Parks Dept. to deprivatize the Queensboro Oval and return it to the public year-round when the City’s current license expires; and

WHEREAS Parks Dept. officials told Community Board 8 they are unaware of any other New York City public parks that are similarly licensed to a private concessionaire; and

WHEREAS the Parks Dept. soon plans to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an outside organization to operate the Oval after the license with the current concessionaire expires next year—thereby continuing to privatize the Queensboro Oval park; and

WHEREAS Community Board 8-Manhattan, and many elected officials and members of the public, adamantly oppose the City’s intent to continue privatizing the Queensboro Oval Park beyond 2017 and its plan to soon issue an RFP for the operation of the Oval, starting next year; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8-Manhattan strongly urges the Parks Dept. to return the Queensboro Oval Park to the public year-round, starting in 2017 and to abandon its near-term plans to issue a Request for Proposals for a concessionaire to develop, operate and maintain facilities at the Queensboro Oval Park, starting in 2017.

VOTE: 10-0-0

In favor: James Clynes, Daniel Dornbaum, Scott Falk, Sophia James, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Judy Schneider, Tricia Shimamura.

**Susan Evans and Margaret Price
Co-Chairs, Parks Committee**