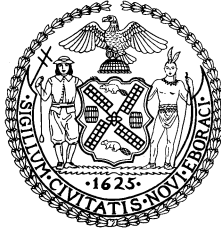


Alida Camp
Chair

Will Brightbill
District Manager



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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Parks and Waterfront Committee**
Via Zoom with Will Brightbill, District Manager Hosting
July 9, 2020 at 6:30 PM

Please note: The resolutions contained in the committee minutes are recommendations submitted by the committee chair to the Community Board. At the monthly full board meeting, the resolutions are discussed and voted upon by all members of Community Board 8 Manhattan.

Minutes:

Community Board Members (Present): Elizabeth Ashby, Gayle Barron, Lowell Barton, Alida Camp, Billy Freeland, Takako Kono, Craig Lader, Rita Popper, Barbara Rudder, Tricia Shimamura, Barry Schneider, Marco Tamayo, Jack Zimmerman

Community Board Public Members (Present): Judy Schneider

Community Board Public Members (Excused): Irma Torres

Resolutions for Approval: Item 3 Unanimous Approval

- 1. Council Member Ben Kallos** was able to join us. He gave a review of the many parks - and the Esplanade - that he has supported and funded in our community district and of the work yet to be done. He then participated in the Ruppert Park discussion next on the agenda.
- 2. Discussion of the current state of Ruppert Park and a view to the Future. Joining us for this discussion was: Manhattan Borough Commissioner William Castro and Regional Director Mark Vaccaro of NYC Parks Department and Council Member Kallos continued to be with us until 7 pm.**
 - Council Member Kallos had initially allocated \$100,000 for irrigation and that turned out not to be enough and is allocating an additional \$500,000 in this budget.
 - Some of the Council Member's other thoughts on how the park should be re-done concern:
 - ✓ Dog Run—is it appropriate for this area due to the loud noise of dogs barking in a residential area, or how do you deal with smells from feces left in park, and the fact dogs rip up much of the planting?
 - ✓ Fencing should it be changed and how do you deal with the people sleeping in the park?
 - ✓ More or less greenery and seating?
 - ✓ Maybe there should be an upper level with active play space and at the bottom more passive space?
 - Next steps would require 6 to 8 million dollars for funding the overall project.
 - Small committee to put together the best thoughts for the vision of the park, maybe do a charette. Rita would like to be on committee with representatives from the Muslim Volunteers of NY.
 - Parameters of what is possible such as a dog run—or is there another location so Ruppert is more workable without one?
 - Survey & September Meetings
 - ✓ Do a Survey by email in August and September for all the neighbors for what would they like to see in Ruppert park.
 - ✓ Create small sub-group. September have a meeting of the small sub-group to review the survey and discuss suggestions and also have a parks meeting.

- ✓ See if dog run is a feasible option before the survey is out there.
- ✓ Tricia and Barry work on survey and priorities in various categories. The CB has a Google Doc from the Small Business Committee to follow for format.

3. Questions & Answers to Commissioner Castro & Council Member Kallos:

- Watch out for vandalism at the southern part of the Esplanade.
- Discussion about exercise equipment in John Jay. Some said it should go immediately and some said that it should stay as the gyms are all closed now. It seems to be in frequent use, including by trainers who are getting paid. Friends of the East River Esplanade have offered to work with Parks as to where it could be relocated on the esplanade.
- Help in Parks Department is down now because of budget cuts and some of the local parks are affected by litter or worn grass etc.
- Mubeen & Sahar, from Muslim Volunteers of NY, thanked Council Member Kallos and Commissioner Castro for their support of Ruppert Park. The Commissioner also thanked them for all their hard work.
- Comments on why Ruppert should not have a dog run—it is not healthy and smells the way it is set up now. And Commissioner hopes to clean and plant this area in the fall.
- The slope causes erosion in Ruppert.
- Design of a park can take 4/5 years. We should take advantage of Design Built, which is faster, cheaper, and should be inclusive of minorities. The Commissioner said he would look into it, as it is not used on a regular basis. Parks is now doing more inhouse work, which is faster than bidding out. We will talk more about it in September.
- Will parks have PPE for Ruppert for the October event by the Muslim Volunteers? The Commissioner will get back to them when they reach out next week.
- There is a lack of PEP Officers due to the cut in the current budget. Therefore, the following resolution was passed.

RESOLUTION:

BE IT RESOLVED Community Board 8 urges the NYC Council to make more funding available in the budget for PEP officers in our community District 8.

Approved Board Members: 12-0-0 (Yes: Ashby, Barren, Barton, Camp, Freeland, Kono, Lader, Popper, B. Schneider, Shimamura, Tamayo, Zimmerman)

Approved Public Members: 1-0-0 (Yes: J. Schneider)

4. Updates from Mark Vaccaro, Regional Director of the NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation.

- They are opening all the playgrounds as fast as they can. They only have 6 men in Manhattan putting up all the basketball hoops. The work should be finished soon.
- They have had to close off another section of the Esplanade between 76 and 77 Streets near John Jay Park due to a cave-in of the substructure. The repair work for this area is not in any current funding. Mr. Vaccaro doesn't know if there is emergency funding for this work.
- Parks has engineers and divers in boats going out to constantly check the esplanade.

5. Discussion of Rules in Central Park

- Community 8 Board Member Elizabeth Ashby has brought up two items regarding Central Park – traffic signals not ADA accessible and returning to the old system where traffic stopped at regular intervals. Also enforcing the bicycle rules.
- We referred first two items to Parks and DOT and traffic enforcement to Parks and NYPD Central Park Precinct. Ed Pincar, Manhattan DOT Borough Commissioner replied that, although he is still on paternity leave, DOT is speaking with Parks and the Central Park Conservancy about operation of loop roads, including the potential for a larger study of the overall signal's infrastructure. COVID-19 has interrupted those conversations, but he expects they will resume later this summer.

- Captain William Gallagher, Commanding Officer of the Central Park Precinct, reported that with the current increase in violent crimes and the recent shooting in Central Park, he has his resources stretched thin. He will address our issues of bicyclists in the Park when things are more under control. He is looking forward to attending our next person-in-person Parks meeting so he can bring us up to date

6. New Business

- **Opening of John Jay Pool**

Kate Corkery, a local resident, has a petition with 522 signatures and she spoke to the issue. After much discussion it was decided to ask Chair Alida Camp to send a letter tomorrow to Commissioner Silver asking that the Pool be opened. This is not a question of public health, as other city pools are open; we would like the same equity for our Community District. The letter should also contain language that all safety precautions are in place, such as required social distancing and wearing of masks etc.

- We should adhere to the rules of Central Park, particularly the incident in the Ramble with Amy Cooper, where signage is prominently posted - No Dogs Off Leash.
- Barry and Tricia talk in August about equity. Reminder that the Esplanade connects 3 different diverse communities.

There being no Old or New business, the meeting was adjourned.

Tricia Shimamura and Barry Schneider
Co-Chairs, Parks and Waterfront Committee