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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Environment and Sanitation Committee Meeting
Monday October 5, 2020 - 6:30PM
This meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom

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

CB8 Members Present: Alida Camp, Billy Freeland, Valerie Mason, Elizabeth Rose, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Cos Spagnoletti, Russell Squire, Marco Tamayo

Resolutions for Approval:

Item 2: Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment (CORE) Act (unanimous)

1. Discussion of proposals to improve street sanitation and address the rat problem, featuring Luke Wolf from the Office of New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer.

In August, U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat and New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer had sent a joint letter to the New York City Departments of Sanitation and Health and Mental Hygiene raising a number of sanitation-related issues and expressing particular concern regarding the increased number of rats on the streets. Luke Wolf from the Comptroller's Office provided a report on the response by DSNY to the joint letter:

- Businesses and BIDs had requested permission to put their own trash cans outside of their stores without being fined. DSNY has said that businesses can put out their own baskets outside their storefront as long as it does not impede pedestrian traffic and can arrange for private trash carting. There are also Adopt-a-Basket and trash basket sponsorship programs that allow businesses to work with DSNY to improve the trash cans nearest to them.
- The Clean Curbs Program was a pilot announced in March through which BIDs could apply to have sealed on-street containers for trash and recycling to avoid the need for having trash on the sidewalk. This pilot was postponed due to Covid, but DSNY will begin taking applications later this month, and the Comptroller's office will continue to push this.
- The city has some "Big Belly" cans in parks; these cans can hold five times more trash than normal garbage cans, alert DSNY when they are full, and can be opened by foot. In response to the request that these cans be deployed in commercial corridors, DSNY has said that they require higher levels of maintenance that prevents them from being deployed generally throughout the city, but that they can be used in BIDS or parks, where more maintenance is possible.

- Unfortunately, with regard to the rat problem, DSNY asserted that according to the data, rat sightings are not up compared to last year, and they did not have specific solutions related to that, although they plan to continue to work with DOHMH to address the issue.

There were then comments and questions from the community and board members, which overwhelmingly confirmed that the rat problem has indeed gotten worse both on the streets and in the parks, regardless of what the statistics may say, and it was noted that most rat sightings do not result in a report to DSNY. There was additional discussion regarding the rat problem and sanitation issues more generally.

2. Discussion of Intro 1942, the Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment (CORE) Act, featuring Council Member Keith Powers

Councilmember Keith Powers provided a report on Intro 1942, the CORE Act, legislation he is co-sponsoring in the City Council to make composting easier for New York City residents. Previously, the city has provided composting and recycling pick-up services for participating buildings as well as “community composting” in the form of drop-off sites throughout the city. This year, the building pick-up program was suspended so that it can be re-worked, and community composting was also facing cuts, although it has been preserved.

The CORE Act mandates that there be three compost drop-off sites per community district. It also provides for education related to composting and collection of data regarding use of compost drop-off sites. The reasons for the legislation are:

- In the face of the elimination of building compost pick-up, the bill sponsors wanted to ensure that some basic ability for members of the community to compost waste would be preserved.
- Compost drop-off sites do not need to be staffed and provide the ability to compost at little cost.
- The CORE Act makes the provision of composting sites a part of city law rather than a mere budget item that must be fought for every year.
- Many people are not familiar with composting, and education can be provided for city residents at little cost through methods like online information and pamphlets.

There has been a hearing on the bill, and it is supported by a number of environmental organizations. Councilmember Powers took questions and comments from the public and board members, whereupon the committee adopted the following resolution:

WHEREAS Intro 1942, the Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment (CORE) Act, mandates that there be three compost drop-off sites per New York City community district, provides for education related to composting, and requires collection of data related to use of compost drop-off sites;

WHEREAS New York City residents who wish to compost organic waste should have a means by which to do so, and New York City should enact measures to facilitate their ability to do so;

WHEREAS community input is essential to ensure that drop-off sites are located in a manner that maximizes their usefulness and convenience;

WHEREAS residents of Manhattan Island and Roosevelt Island should have access to compost drop-off locations on their respective islands; and

WHEREAS community districts should not be limited to three compost drop-off sites.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 supports Intro 1942, the CORE Act, and calls upon the City Council to pass it;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Board 8 urges New York City and the City Council to locate more than three compost drop-off sites in each community district;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Sanitation should consult with community boards regarding the placement of compost drop-off sites in their respective community districts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Roosevelt Island should have at least one compost drop-off site and that the portion of Community District 8 on Manhattan Island should have at least three compost drop-off sites separate and apart from any compost drop-off sites located on Roosevelt Island.

Yes: 8 Alida Camp, Billy Freeland, Elizabeth Rose, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Cos Spagnoletti, Russell Squire, Marco Tamayo

No: 0

Excused: Valerie Mason

Councilmember Powers also announced that new clean-up services would begin in Community District 8 through funding allocated by him and Councilmember Kallos, and that his office would be working with local community groups to implement those new services.

3. Old and New Business

Several other issues were raised, which will be addressed at future meetings and/or through follow-up by board members and staff.

Whereupon the meeting was adjourned.

Russell Squire and Cos Spagnoletti, Co-Chairs