

Alida Camp
Chair

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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Parks and Waterfront Committee Meeting
Thursday October 8, 2020 - 6:30PM
This meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom

Minutes

Present: Lowell Barton, Alida Camp, Felice Farber, Billy Freeland, Takako Kono, Craig Lader, Rita Popper, Barbara Rudder, Tricia Shimamura, Barry Schneider, Russell Squire, Marco Tamayo

Community Board Members Excused: Sharon Pope-Marshall

Community Board Public Members (Present): Judy Schneider, Irma Torres

**Answer received after the following meeting.*

1. Joint Item with Parks & Waterfront and the 197a Committees on the Economic Development Corps' Update on the Resumption of Construction of the East Midtown Greenway and Andrew Haswell Green Park Phase 2B by Wil Fisher and Yvi McEvily of EDC

- The Governor had halted all non-essential projects. A number of projects have resumed that were already started before the Covid crises and approval was given to restart this one. The completion date is now Fall 2023.
- The cost of the entire project is \$160 Million dollars.
- The East Midtown Greenway Starts at Clara Coffey Park 53rd Street and Sutton Place South and extends into the East River and returns to land at 59th Street which is the beginning of Andrew Haswell Green Park (AHG). The work for waterfront level of AHG park, Phase 2B, is also part of this construction project. AHG consists of: new signage on the Tram structure—silver finish letters 1 foot high to be completed by Spring 2021; redoing and reinforcement of ramp starting at 60th street down to the waterfront; building of the park with a large green lawn and staircase as well as many new plantings of trees and shrubs.
- The contractor will be working on multiple locations along the entire length of the project at one time.
- To be kept up to date on any closures as a result of this project, register at the website: EastMidtownWaterfront@edc.nyc
- This presentation is on the CB8 website.
- Many questions arose around the foot/bike paths under the Pavilion building: how it will be marked for bikes/pedestrians; lighting; seating in the openings, etc. We asked EDC to come back to us with a short presentation on this section of the project.
- AHG Phase 3 for the balance of the interior of the building was brought up. We should follow up on the last presentation by Stantec with the Parks Dept. This should be on a future agenda.

2. Discussion of Social Equity and Justice Issues in CB8 Parks

- Following the demonstrations across the country calling for racial justice, CB8's Chair encouraged all committees to consider issues of justice and social equity as it relates to their committee. In the Committee's discussion, board members and members of the public raised various issues that occurred in our parks related to bullying/abuse of power/discrimination/hate. Several individuals brought up Central Park re. Amy Cooper and the Carl Schurz Park vigil. Chairs will identify a time to further discuss these concerns with the community.
- Our parks/pools should be open and safe to all people regardless of sex, gender, race, religion, or residency.
- Several individuals brought up a desire to include a broader diversity of voices in our discussions.
- Suggestion of collaborating with CB11. Chairs will look into future collaboration (their meetings are at the same time as CB8)
- Policing in our parks was brought up and the need for more PEP officers, particularly as it relates to dogs off leash.
- CB8 should talk about signage and artwork that might be more welcoming in our parks. The possibility of art displayed in the parks by students stressing social justice—maybe a particular part of the park could be set aside for display.
- Suggestions of pairing up volunteers from better established parks with those that have little or no support.

3. Updates by Wes Hamilton, District Park Manager, NYC DP&R

- Esplanade repair at 76/77 Streets had to make a revision to the work and the project is back on track. The pedestrian pathway part of the project will be open by the end of the year. The balance involving the seawall is part of Phase 2 & 3 of Esplanade repairs. The design phase should be completed by the end of the year.
- Construction is moving forward on 24 Sycamores Park and Cat Bird-John Jay Park.
- Honey Locust Park is waiting for procurement.
- St. Catherine's Park is in the design phase.
- Wes said there are definitely more people in the parks.
- Parks is currently issuing permits only for: youth sports, 1st Amendment Activities and small birthday parties.
- It's My Park Day (IMPD) will have projects in October in the following parks: Ruppert, Seabury, Andrew Haswell Green.
- The Muslim Volunteers of NY said their IMPD will be on October 24th in Ruppert Park. They will plant 1,000 bulbs, do cleaning, pruning all while social distancing and wearing masks. Total of volunteers allowed are 25. Please contact them if you want to volunteer for the project.
- Question about having a poetry reading memorial in Carl Schurz park. Wes said approval would be needed from the NYPD and permit from Parks Dept for amplified sound. But since they are not giving out permits at this time, the event could not be held on November 1, as proposed, due to Covid restrictions.
- **Items to follow up:**
 - A new playground given by the subway for the Marx Brothers Playground?
 - What is happening with the sanitation ramp at E 92 Street, as it affects DeKovats Playground?
 - Electric Scooters zooming around—are they allowed in parks and is there any enforcement?
 - Where long ramp from 81st Street meets Esplanade a hole to be looked at and at the barricade at 94th Street, too close to the hole.

- Wes said they are looking into chain link fencing instead of the barricades at repair site.
- A request was made that the Community Board receive copies of prior and current reports for the assessments of the seawall work for the CB to review.
- Closed bathrooms in Central Park and people using the woods near the Conservatory and Loeb boathouse? Very unpleasant smells, etc.**

**The following information was received from Central Park Conservancy after the meeting:

All public restrooms maintained by the Conservancy are open. South of the Reservoir, this includes the restrooms at East 85 St/Ancient Playground, the Ramble mid-park @ 79 St, Bethesda Terrace, the restrooms near the Delacorte Theater/W.81st Street, Heckscher Playground mid-park at 62 St, and the Merchants Gate restrooms near Columbus Circle*

The public restrooms at the Boathouse are maintained by the concessionaire, as are those at Tavern on the Green and the Le Pain Quotidien locations at Conservatory Water (the model boat pond @ E.72 St) and Mineral Springs/Sheep Meadow. I checked with my colleagues in operations, and while none of the concessions have reopened yet (and LPQ has gone out of business), we got permission from the Parks Dept and have been operating the Mineral Springs restroom on weekends to deal with crowds.

We will also be keeping that women's room open for weekdays as well for now, due to the plumbing issues in Bethesda Terrace women's room).

4. Updates

- **Tramway Park**

All their current activities have long time frames, so not much has changes since my last update a month ago. They are currently working on welding clips for the glass enclosure and working on the electric runs. The next large move will be wrapping the structure for fire barrier paint. They will begin installing the first elevator later in the fall. The project is expected to complete in Spring 2021.

- **East River Esplanade – Repair at E. 76th Street**

There might be some night work on the bulkhead in the coming weeks. The work can only be done at low tide and some low tides will occur in the overnight hours.

- **Central Park is the 11th Most Relaxing Place in the World**

The Unify Cosmos, a meditation website dedicated to focusing on the positive aspects of everyday life, released a “Most Relaxing Sounds in the World Study”. So, if you just want to relax, go to Central Park. And while you are there be sure to stop and see the beautiful new Woman Rights Pioneers statue of: Sojourner Truth, Susan B Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

There being no other Old or New business, the meeting was adjourned and wishing everyone a relaxing weekend.

Tricia Shimamura and Barry Schneider
Co-Chairs, Parks and Waterfront Committee
Barry Schneider, Chair 197-a Committee

Judith Schneider, Scribe