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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
Thursday, May 13, 2021 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

Resolutions for Approval:

Item 1 – St. Catherine’s Park and the proposed New York Blood Center

Community Board Members Present:, Felice Farber, Rita Popper, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Tricia Shimamura, Marco Tamayo Takako Kono, Elaine Walsh, Gayle Barron, Billy Freeland, Judy Schneider (Public Member)

Excused Community Board Members: Lowell Barton; Craig Lader, Irma Torres (Public Member)

1. Discussion of St. Catherine's Park and the proposed New York Blood Center project

Elizabeth Dew, President of Friends of St. Catherine’s Park (Friends), read the attached full statement regarding the proposed NY Blood Center development. Ms. Dew highlighted the following concerns with the project:

- *Increased Park Usage*, due to over 2,000 additional workers anticipated to occupy the new building.
- *Shadows cast* onto the park from March through September. Friends reported receiving feedback from parents in the community who were concerned that shadows would detract from the park experience.
- *Light Pollution* from the interior and exterior lights of the building will cast artificial light on the park and the surrounding community.
- *On the role of the Friends in the project, Ms. Dew added –*

“The question has been raised ‘What has ‘Friends of St. Catherine's Park been promised for their support of the New York Blood Center project?’ It has been said that Friends had acknowledged that the Blood Center promised a donation to the organization for plants and maintenance if their proposal is supported. I want to make clear that the Friends group has never asked, nor have we received any consideration or donation - or the promise of either - from the New York Blood Center or Longfellow.”

Ms. Dew was not available for questions. Following Ms. Dew, several members of the public and Board Members identified the following concerns about the proposed development:

- Frustration with lack of transparency, availability, and dialogue with Friends of St. Catherine’s Park.
- Concern regarding lack of community representation with Friends of St. Catherine’s Park
- Recognition that this is the second most heavily utilized park space in the City and our neighborhood’s lack of open park space per population size
- There are no mitigation measures possible for loss of sunlight
- Although the new Blood Center building would cast 70% of the park in shadow for peak afternoon hours for the majority of the year, the presenters tried to minimize the amount of shadows on the park
- St. Catherine’s Park experiencing significantly higher visitation when park is in sunlight

- St. Catherine’s also serves hospital patient at surrounding medical institutions, seniors, children and families, with a wide range of amenities
- Reference to George Janes’ Memo, which states the “combination of time of day, time of year, and use make the loss of sunlight an even more significant impact than what is disclosed”.
- Also, recognition of the project’s impact on Julia Richman Education Complex, which would be cast in persistent shadows as well.
- Speakers asked that the Committee give close consideration to the testimony of various children who came out in opposition to the Blood Center and asking to keep their sunlight
- Request that Longfellow do direct outreach in the park

Wes Hamilton, District Manager of the NYC Parks Department also provided a statement on this project:

- NYC Parks, as the City Draft Environmental Impact Statement quality review expert agency for the open space’s resources, was asked to review the open space and shadows chapter of the DEIS. NYC Parks has expressed concerns to the Dept of City Planning regarding the shadows cast by the project. The shadows would negatively affect planning and activities in the park. Thus, we agree with the conclusion of the DEIS Shadows chapter that it would lead to significant adverse impact on St. Catherine’s Park.

Resolution:

WHEREAS the proposed New York Blood Center project, located at 310 E 67th Street, would develop a 334 foot tower across the street from Julia Richman Education Complex and diagonally across from St. Catherine’s Park, and

WHEREAS St. Catherine’s Park is the second most visited park per square foot in New York City, and

WHEREAS St. Catherine’s Park serves as an essential open space for children, families, seniors, and hospital patients from the surrounding medical institutions, and features several amenities like tables, benches, multipurpose courts, chess tables, and water features that service these populations of visitors, and

WHEREAS the Upper East Side has some of the least amount of open space per population size in the entire City, and

WHEREAS the proposed project would cast 70% of St. Catherine’s Park in shadows during peak afternoon hours during the spring, summer, and fall months, and

WHEREAS the proposed project would bring an additional 2000 + workers to this midblock site, undoubtedly increasing the usage of this vital park space, and

WHEREAS the proposed project would significantly increase the amount of light pollution on this park, casting artificial light on the playground that will considerably detract from visitors’ experiences, and

WHEREAS the developer partner, Longfellow Real Estate Partners, has failed to engage in direct community outreach with park users, and

WHEREAS the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) states that the applicant is in consultation with the Department of City Planning, NYC Parks, and Friends of St. Catherine’s Park on mitigation measures that may include replacing “vegetation and additional maintenance of the Park features,” but there are no mitigation measures that can replace the loss of light on St. Catherine’s Park, and

WHEREAS Friends of St. Catherine’s Park has failed to establish a transparent or responsive dialogue with other park users or surrounding residents regarding the impact of this project on the park, and

WHEREAS the New York Parks Department has stated that it agrees with the DEIS with the impact of the development, and

WHEREAS George M. Janes & Associates, hired by Manhattan Community Board 8 to consult on this development, has advised that “combination of time of day, time of year, and use make the loss of sunlight an even more significant impact than what is disclosed,” therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 opposes the proposed NY Blood Center development at 310 East 67th Street due to the significant adverse and unmitigable impacts on St. Catherine’s Park.

In Favor: Board Members: 9: Shimamura, Rudder, Freeland, Walsh, Farber, Barron, Tamayo, Popper, Kono

Opposed: 1: Barry Schneider

Not Voting for Cause: 1: Judy Schneider (Public Member)

Discussion of Summer 2021 Public Pool Usage

Following the loss of swim season in 2020, the committee expressed significant interest in making sure our pools in CB8 are open on time. Parks is expecting to open up all of its pools unless they are under capital repairs. All of the pools in CB8 (with the exception of Lasker Pool) are expected to be open this season. The Parks operation budget has been approved. Shimamura requested that the John Jay pool be reviewed ASAP to assess what resurfacing/painting/prep work needs to be done ahead of the swim season. Parks assured us that a punch-list has been created and are on track for opening. Parks agreed to come back to our committee re. the possible use of outdoor showers instead of forcing visitors to use an indoor facility, as well as the decision to allow entry based on height instead of age. NYS and NYSDOH are the two primary agencies that regulate pool usage.

Discussion of Private Use of Public Parks

The Committee raised concerns about the private use of public parks in our district, including Ruppert Park. Recently this park had signs posted prohibiting access to the park 2 days of the week for the use of a private school. The board is in strong support of our schools but wants to ensure that signage is consistent and the Parks Department is conducting robust community outreach regarding park use. Questions were raised about the process of determining usage, communication to the broader public, and balancing the needs of various stakeholders.

Update from the NYC Parks Department by Wes Hamilton, District Manager

- Pools will be opening on time – summer staff is in the process of being trained, including pool staff
- Permit usage and park usage is at least doubled from previous years
- Increase in garbage coming out the parks
- Thursday, May 20th at 6PM, Parks will have a reimagining Ruppert Park meeting with CM Kallos
- The East River Esplanade upgrades at 68th to 70th street will start on Monday, May 17th
 - o This area will be closed off for a year for structural improvements
- John Jay sitting area will be closed off at the end of the pool season (end of the summer 2021) for updates
- On the 81st Street pedestrian bridge on the esplanade: the handrailing is up but the duct tape is still there covering sharp metal edges. The original design of the railing did not provide enough support for the handrail and it's still breaking. Parks is looking into this further.
- On the 79th Street sinkhole: DEP is looking into this location to assess repairs needed.

The Co-Chairs agreed to reach out to the Brearley School for updates on the esplanade repairs at John Finley walk. The Co-Chairs also agreed to get the CB8 Chair to send a letter to DEP/Parks regarding the increasingly dangerous sinkhole on 79th street.

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

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