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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
January 13, 2021

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: Felice Farber, Billy Freedland, May Malik, Sharon Pope-Marshall, Rita Popper, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider

Community Board Public Members Present: Judy Schneider, Irma Torres

Community Board Member Excused: Lowell Barton, Craig Lader

Resolutions for Approval:

Item 1 – Ruppert Park

Before the presentation, Co-Chair Barry Schneider had some announcement to make:

Chair Schneider introduced his new co-chair Felice Farber and welcomed her to the committee. He then wished a fond farewell to his former co-chair Tricia Shimamura. Her new position is with the office of the Manhattan Borough President, Mark Levine, where she is the Director of Community Affairs. All our best wishes Tricia.

Next, he introduced a member of the public, former Council Member Ben Kallos who said a few words. Next, he introduced our new Council Member Julie Menin who told us how glad she was to be here and would have an exciting announcement about a Community Garden in a few weeks.

1. Public Hearing: NYC Parks Department will present two plans for the reconstruction of Ruppert Park.

Presenter: Alex Zervos; Other Parks Personnel Present: Steve Simon, Leslie People & Stephen Hamson

- Steve Simon started the presentation by reviewing the funds that were given to make this new park possible at approximately \$8.894 million dollars. He made a point of announcing that Assembly Member Dan Quart had pledged an additional \$250,000 to the park reconstruction and that Parks was in the process of completing the paperwork in order to obtain the funds.
- Alex then proceeded with the presentation by stating there would be two Options: Plan A, which was basically the plan shown at the December meeting and Plan B, which has a dog run.
- The three Goals for the project are: 1) Provide enhanced play spaces for neighborhood children; 2) Improve access throughout the park taking into account the slope; and 3) Create passive seating and gathering areas.
- There are 88 trees currently in the park and the plans calls for 2 crabapple trees to be removed.
- Last month's presentation with some changes:
 - Ruppert Park area is about 1 acre.
 - Making the park more ADA accessible by having 2 entrances on 2nd Avenue instead of 1.

- Make the play areas fenced off and separate from the rest of the park. Two Play Areas: 2-to-5-year-olds and the slide would be wider and 5-to-12-year-olds would have 3 slides & would be ADA accessible. Slides would be stainless steel and the area would be shady.
- Relocate the water feature to a sunny area. There would be ground and overhead sprays that will be directional so it will not wet anyone walking through the area.
- Create a seating area and a passive lawn area, as the slope will be made more gradual.
- Maximize the number of swings, five, without having to remove any trees in the area and would have a 3-foot fence all around, as per OSHA rules.
- There would be benches, checker tables, bottle filled drinking fountain and solar power trash receptacle that would be foot operated.
- Pavement would be aggregate or concrete hex block. And there would be low maintenance shade plants.
- Placeholder for a future comfort station in the NW corner of park. However, the funding is not in place for the comfort station currently.
- Plan B with dog run would place a dog run in the NW corner of the park, and move the comfort station to the SE corner of the park. The dog run would be completely fenced in with a gate about 4 feet high. The area is about 1750 square feet and would be for big and small dogs. Parks is thinking of a paved area or even a soft surface with synthetic turf. No decision has been made yet.
- Q & A followed:
 - Existing vermin mitigation in the park is a major problem NOW. Steve Simon said that they will look into that problem and work on getting it corrected.
 - Option B with the dog run, the following came up:
 1. 19 people spoke in favor of the plan and 8 against.
 2. People against the dog run were concerned about the noise as this is a residential area and it will bounce off the buildings; also, not cleaning up after pets which would bring more vermin and would be a problem for the children.
 3. People in favor of the dog run said: it was good for socialization and being able to meet people/community building; families being able to be together, people spoke about their service dogs and this being the only place near where they live and being able to go to; and those who live near the current area used for a dog run said there were no noise issues.
 4. Steve Simon spoke about dog owners forming an organized group to look after the run and monitor the activities of their fellow dog owners in order to make this work. There is always the possibility if there are many complaints from the residents that the dog run could be removed.
 - Request for plumbing, electrical and any utilities for park house be installed with the reconstruction of the park.
 - Former Council Member Ben Kallos brought up a number of questions that Alex said he would review with his team and try to accommodate.
 - Climbing nets be added to play equipment.
 - What will be done about vermin control once the new park reopens?
 - Signage is needed No Pets & People in Flower beds/Pets must stay in dog run. Parks has standardized signs but will see if they can incorporate something to protect the plants.
 - Most comments were against lowering the exterior fence to 4-foot, due to the homeless and safety being issues.
 - Concrete block and run off is very acidic and there are green choices out there—please reconsider.
- Resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED Community Board 8M approves the presentation of Option B, a new design for Ruppert Park by the Department of Parks & Recreation, as long as the Parks Department considers the following recommendations:

1. The exterior fence height be higher than 4 feet.
2. Plumbing, electrical and any utilities need for the park house be install with the construction of the park.
3. Special signage for the planted area and signage for “no pets except in dog run”. Signage must be part of the restoration and be installed when the park reopens.
4. Reconsider “Greener” choices for the paved area.
5. Come back to the Community Board with the final presentation.

Approved Board Members: 4-2-0 (Yes: Farber, Malik, Propper, Rudder. No: Pope-Marshall, B. Schneider)

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

OPTION B BELOW



3. Update from the NYC Parks Department by Shena Kaufman, District Manager

- The basketball rims and nets were replaced in John Jay Park, as requested last month.
- John Jay Park construction is 20% complete and is expected to finish in September. Shena said she would get the exterminator to visit the park as there were complaints about rodents.
- Honey Locust Park on 59th Street between 1st & 2nd Avenue will start construction on January 18 and will be complete in 1 year.
- Tramway Plaza - the elevators are scheduled to be completed this month and the park should be opened some time in February.
- 68th to 70th Streets on the esplanade is 80 % complete and the work is should be complete in May.

The meeting was adjourned.

Felice Farber and Barry Schneider,
Co-Chairs, Parks and Waterfront Committee