

Russell Squire
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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Budget Committee**
Tuesday, March 8, 2022 - 6:30PM
Via Zoom

Minutes

Members Present: Gayle Barron, Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, Alida Camp, Rebecca Dangoor, Felice Farber, Ed Hartzog, Peter Patch, Barbara Rudder, Russell Squire

Public Members Present: Judy Schneider

Excused: Billy Freeland, Elaine Walsh

Meeting called to order at 6:30pm by Felice Farber

1. Presentation by Ana Champeny, Deputy Research Director, Citizens Budget Commission on the Mayor's Preliminary Budget Proposal

Any Champeny provided an overview of the Preliminary Budget, explaining the source of revenue supporting the budget, where the money is spent and the Mayor's proposed PEG (program to eliminate the GAP). She noted that 47% of the City's revenues come from property taxes (with property tax collections down as a result of COVID), 23% from personal income tax, 12% from sales tax, 10% from business tax, with the remaining 8% from all other taxes. Property taxes fund about \$1 out of every \$3 dollars she noted. Wages and benefits (pensions, health insurance, and other fringe) accounts for 52.3 percent of all City expenditures.

Ms. Champeny explained that the Mayor called for 3% PEG proposals across the board. Most of the savings she noted came from re-estimates of costs and vacancy reductions rather than efficiencies. She noted that the headcount reduction was in authorized headcount not in actual headcount, and that the City's overall headcount was down to 2016 levels.

She also provided an overview of the billions of dollars in COVID-related federal aid received by New York. New York City is getting \$7 billion in COVID-related aid spending in 2022-2025. CBC is concerned about the lack of transparency in how the education stabilization fund and state and local fiscal recovery funds are being spent and that funds are being spent on recurring costs.

Ms. Champeny discussed the financial risks facing New York, including whether commuters return to in-person work and how that impacts jobs and commercial rents, the extent to which tourism and business travel returns, whether there are future COVID variants or surges, and fiscal cliffs that the city may face when the federal covid aid funds run out.

Ms. Champeny provided a deeper dive on three areas of interest: funding for the police department, homeless services and sanitation. The Police Department she noted is using COVID aid to replace some city funds. Based on Shelter trends the city will need more money for homeless services. In addition, there were some significant reductions in the Sanitation budget, including the cancelling of the organics program and specific programs for street basket collection that were only funded in FY 2022 and don't have funding for FY23 yet.

2. Review Mayor's Preliminary 2021 Budget and Response to District Needs Statement

The meeting was called to respond to Mayor Adams Preliminary 2023 Budget released on February 16, 2022. The committee discussed the Mayor's response to Community Board 8's Capital and Expense Priorities in the District Needs Statement. A response from the Community Board was due on March 21, 2022. A letter was drafted and submitted to the Mayor. A copy of the letter is attached.

- The committee discussed the importance of additional school seats, especially for 3K and noted that the Youth Education and Libraries committee recently sent a letter to the Department of Education on the acute need for seats especially at the lower levels.
- Judy Schneider provided additional information on the condition of the 19th Police Precinct Building and the need for building repairs.
- The committee discussed the condition of the Esplanade and the need for comprehensive repairs, rather than addressing sinkholes as they appear.
- Russell noted that the City did not understand the request in priority # 12 for rat proof containers. The CB made a specific request for rat proof containers which is a budget request.
- The committee noted that the City did not fully understand the request in item #10 to incorporate a comfort station in the construction of Ruppert Park.
- The committee discussed the need for a comprehensive study on John Jay park.
- Safety was raised as an important issue to include in the response to the budget, especially safety in our neighborhood parks, and noted the correlation between safety and economic recovery.
- Increased funding to hire additional community board staff for all community boards was noted as a need.
- The City's response to the request for affordable housing was not satisfactory. The city's response asked for more information from the community board before making a funding decision, treating the need to address affordable housing similar to asking for specific information about streetlights. The city's response is a question without an answer.

3. Old Business

Alida Camp requested funding for Arts Committee Events. Russell noted that he asked for \$5,000 from our Council Members. He noted that we likely won't hear a response on the budget request until the City budget is finalized in June.

Rebecca Dangoor requested increased funding for Community Boards to be explicitly stated in the letter. Gayle Barron requested at least \$500 from the current budget for the Art Show.

4. New Business.

There was no new business.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:12

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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan**

March 21, 2022

Hon. Eric Adams
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

RE: CB8M Letter of Comment on the FY 2023 Preliminary Budget

Dear Mayor Adams:

We write on behalf of Community Board 8 Manhattan ("CB8"). We continue to be disappointed by the responses to our Preliminary Budget and Community Needs Request. We hope that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Department of City Planning and your office understand that our request reflects the ongoing needs of our community. We understand funds are limited but more consideration should be given to priorities and needs of the Community Board when developing the budget.

The Department of Education

Our district has become a hotspot for new development over the past decade which has led to an influx of new families and specifically, families with young children. This influx has stretched our childcare infrastructure to its breaking point for families with children 0-4. While we applaud then-Mayor de Blasio's Universal 3-K initiative, families in our community are still unable to secure a 3-K seat as the few 3-k seats we do have fill up quickly and the private childcare and 3-K options are extensively oversubscribed. Families have reported to our Board office that the DOE has assigned seats miles away from our district, creating an accessibility issue for working families in CB8 that do not have the time to traverse across Manhattan for childcare. This issue is also very prevalent on Roosevelt Island. We also ask that the School Construction Authority identify the location and timing for the additional 865 elementary and middle school seats that have been allocated for our community and deliver those seats as soon as possible (Item #1).

New York City Housing Authority

NYCHA provides critically needed affordable housing for upper east side residents. NYCHA residents deserve housing that is in good condition and free from rodent and bug infestations. We continue to request the frequency of extermination services in apartments be increased and more rat traps and rat extermination be provided on the grounds of NYCHA housing. In addition, there is a need for timely repairs to apartments, heat and hot water systems and elevators (Expense Item#2, and Capital Item #2).

The Police Department

The officers in the 19th Precinct play an essential role in protecting the residents, visitors, and businesses on the Upper East Side. To do their jobs effectively the police officers deserve a building in good condition, free from leaks and air-conditioned. The 19th Precinct Station Building located at 157 East 67th Street is in need of repairs: the roof leaks; there is no working air conditioning in the building; and the door to the garage and keypad does not operate properly, resulting in a security risk and an inefficient use of police resources as officers must be stationed by the garage entrance. These are just a few of the issues with the Station Building, all of which can be corroborated by the precinct and/or your office, if necessary. We urge the City to allocate funding to repair the building and support the police officers who protect our community (Item #4).

The Department of Parks and Recreation

Capital Budget

We are pleased that the City is moving forward with the reconstruction of Ruppert Park on Second Avenue between 90th and 91st Streets. Unfortunately, the total funding envelope of \$8.894 million is insufficient to include the construction of a Park House/Comfort Station in the Park. We understand that the Parks Department is including the installation of the Park House/Comfort Station in the park design but is unable to plan for the construction at the current funding level. We strongly recommend funds be added to the capital budget for Ruppert Park (Item #10) to allow for the inclusion of such an essential amenity in the park construction. It will cost the City more in the long run to install the Park House/Comfort Station after the Park is reconstructed or to include it as a change order once construction is underway.

The East River Esplanade (Item #5) is another critical structure in need of comprehensive repairs and reconstruction. Portions of the Esplanade have been reconstructed to address unsafe areas and sinkholes. Other portions are currently in construction. This work has been essential for protecting this critical community resource. Unfortunately, sink holes are still developing along the Esplanade and we recommend the City undertake a comprehensive engineering evaluation of the seawall and develop a long-term systematic plan to reconstruct the entire length of the Esplanade rather than what appears to be an ad-hoc approach to fixing problems as they occur.

Expense Budget

Residents of Community Board 8 were surveyed in September 2021 about their capital and expense budget priorities. The overarching priority for the community related to public safety, including safety in community parks. This request comes at a time when there has been a significant increase in crime in and around neighborhood parks with neighborhood pre-teens being threatened and robbed. An increase in police presence and PEP officers to deter crime is necessary at this time (Expense Item #16).

The New York Public Library

The libraries are a vital part of our community and continue to be used by all residents. We are pleased to see that the NYPL supported a number of our capital requests (Item #7) and our expense request (Item #12). More than 14% of CB8's residents are senior citizens and many in our neighborhood have physical disabilities. Libraries provide essential access to books and information, as well as events and community support resources. Libraries should be accessible to all, and it is appalling that the Yorkville Branch of the New York public library fails to meet ADA standards. We are pleased to see that funding

for a ramp or other means of accessibility for the Yorkville Branch Library is in the front-end planning with the Department of Design and Construction and strongly encourage this project be prioritized and quickly advanced to full design and construction.

We continue to stress the importance of restoring Sunday service to one library on a rotating basis so that our working parents will be able to spend time with their children at a library and our residents who need access to a computer will receive it, even on Sundays. We encourage your office to allocate the necessary funds to ensure this much needed agency can effectively continue to address the needs of the community.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development

The Upper East Side has barely added new housing units since 2010, according to a February 2021 report from the Department of City Planning. Despite what seems like extensive new housing construction on the Upper East Side, as a net total the Upper East Side added less new housing over the past decade than 57 of the City's other 58 community districts. At the same time, costs for existing and new housing are rising faster than income. Just over 13% of the rental units on the Upper East Side in 2019 were considered affordable for a household earning 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Indeed, 14,000 units of affordable housing were lost in the district over a 12-year period.

The construction of new permanent support housing in the neighborhood is needed to support the most vulnerable residents and the construction of additional affordable housing to replace the 14,000 units lost is essential (Items 6 and 8).

The Department of Sanitation

Capital Budget

The number of rats in the community is on the rise, exacerbated by food debris from outdoor dining. The community requests the installation of "rat-proof" garbage containers, preferably solar powered compactor baskets. This is not a service issue, as stated in the budget response (Item #12), but rather a capital budget request for new, heavy-duty, rat-proof garbage receptacles in the community.

Expense Budget

Increased funding for composting and organics collection is an essential sanitation service and should be increased, rather than decreased, in the budget. Organic waste makes up one-third of the City's waste stream. The consequences of not expanding the organics program are more rats ripping open trash bags and more litter on our streets (Item #5).

The Department of Youth and Community Development

We are pleased to see that the city has substantially increased funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program. This is a critical program to provide opportunities for students to gain occupational and vocational experience. We hope that funding for this program will provide summer employment opportunities for youth in the district, especially for youth in neighborhood NYCHA housing (Item #3).

Community Boards

Expense Budget

In FY2019 and FY2020, recognizing the stagnant Community Board base budgets, the City Council established an initiative to increase Community Board budgets. This small \$2.5 million initiative funded each Community Board a total of \$42,500 – equivalent to the starting salary of a staff member at the Community Associate level. Unfortunately, this initiative was never baselined in the City’s Expenses budget, meaning that these funds could never be applied to the agency’s Personal Services budget, and, as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Council was unable to renew the initiative in the FY21 or FY22 budgets.

An additional \$2.5 million should be baselined in the expense budget to support an additional \$42,500 increase in each Community Board’s budget. The additional funding will allow the Community Board to hire one additional staff person who can help support the work of the Community Board and provide assistance to members of the community (Item #10).

Sincerely,

Russell Squire

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Felice Farber and Billy Freeland

Felice Farber and Billy Freeland
Co-Chairs, Budget Committee

cc: Honorable Eric Adams, Mayor of the City of New York
Honorable Carolyn Maloney, 12th Congressional District Representative
Honorable Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Honorable Liz Krueger, NYS Senator, 28th Senatorial District
Honorable José M. Serrano, NYS Senator, 29th Senatorial District
Honorable Dan Quart, NYS Assembly Member, 73rd Assembly District
Honorable Rebecca Seawright, NYS Assembly Member 76th Assembly District
Honorable Julie Menin, NYC Council Member, 5th Council District
Honorable Keith Powers, NYC Council Member, 4th Council District