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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Parks and Waterfront Committee
Thursday, March 14, 2024 - 6:30PM
Conducted remotely on Zoom.

MINUTES

Community Board Members Present: Felice Farber, Bradley Hershenson, Rita Popper, Barbara Rudder, and Judy Schneider.

Community Board Public Board Member Present: Barry Schneider.

Community Board Public Member Excused: Irma Torres.

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 20

Item 1: Announcement about our meeting dates for the balance of the year.

Judy Schneider announced that the Parks and Waterfront Committee would not meet in May, August, and December unless there is an issue that requires an immediate resolution by the Committee and the Board. Then, a meeting date will be scheduled that is not the second Thursday.

Item 2: Update on HSS Kellen Tower & Esplanade by Michael Rawlings and Melissa Keifer

Melissa Kiefer provided an overview of the project and an update on the construction status. She noted that the steel for the Kellen Tower has been topped out and the installation of the curtain wall has started. HSS expects the building to be fully enclosed by mid-summer. At that point they will be able to start work on the Esplanade.

HSS is soliciting a contractor to do the work on the Esplanade. They expect to start construction over the summer with the goal of delivering the full esplanade back to the community by the Summer of 2025.

Michael Bradley from the Parks Department provided an update on efforts to repair the sinkholes on the Esplanade between 76th and 80th Streets, as well as at 71st and 74th Streets. The initial work performed to repair the sinkhole at 76th to 80th Street was intended to be an interim repair. The new work is intended to fix the underlying problems. The Parks Department will coordinate the work with HSS. Hopefully, it will start in the fall of 2024 and will take about 8 months.

Item 3: Presentation on Artwork for Park Avenue at 81st and 83rd Streets by Betsabeé Romero

Felice Farber presented on behalf of the Parks Department the proposed sculpture installation by the artist Betsabeé Romero on Park Avenue between East 81st and East 83rd Streets. The sculptures will be displayed between late March 2024 and October 2024.

Betsabeé Romero is a renowned Mexican artist whose artistic practice has centered around carved tires, refashioned cars, painted hoods, incised mirrors, and papier mâché. The sculptures to be displayed on Park Avenue are made from tires, each of which is incised with design patterns from Pre-Columbian objects, such as textiles and carved stone monuments. Each tire is hand-painted with gold or silver leaf, or both. The intricate designs on the tires are based on iconographical motifs from diverse sources in Pre-Columbian art. The tires have

multiple entry points, including materiality, handcraft, industrial production (cars, trucks, rubber), modern technology, labor, movement (mobility), indigenous symbols, anthropology, and gender.

Each artwork will be attached to a base that will sit on the ground and counterweighted with sandbags for additional stability. As required, the artist will submit signed and sealed engineering drawings for review by the MTA Metro-North engineering team to avoid negative impact on the train shed below.

Item 4: Update by Shena Kaufman, Parks District Manager, NYC Dept. P&R

- St. Catherines Park design is 90% complete. Parks Dept. hopes to present the design to the Board in April.
- No update on Ruppert Park. Parks Dept is still waiting for clearance from legal. Terese Flores, Parks regional manager, suggested looking at the City's capital tracker for an update on the project's status.
- Construction of the John Jay Park pool deck is still in progress. Parks expects to start the MPPA area in the spring.
- Stanley Isaacs Park skating rink opened on February 1st with a ribbon cutting. Parks is now able to keep the park restrooms open all year round with the use of heaters.
- Public Comments:
 - o Concerns raised about the status of Ruppert Park Reconstruction and wants to know what can be done to accelerate delivery of the project – the project is a priority for nearby residents.
 - o A request was made for permanent netting to be installed at the pickleball courts at Carl Schurz Park and to install pickleball courts at the 96th and 1st Avenue park – Shena stated that no permanent nets will be installed at this time. It will be considered when the full MPPA area is redone.
 - o A request was made to delay the work at John Jay on the MPPA until after June, and school is out. This is not a practical solution, as the contractor is already on the site working on the pool deck area and will go on to the MPPA as soon as the pool area is completed. Sheena will let the community know when work will start and will post signs.
 - o Will a 4th Pickleball court be added at Carl Schurz? Shena responded that Parks is trying to accommodate multiple interests.
 - o At John Jay Park the drainage problem will be corrected as part of the MPPA work. They will look at adding Pickleball to the handball court area.
 - o A request was made for the lines for the tennis court to be reinstalled at the MPPA area at John Jay. (Note: After the meeting, Sheena stated that the tennis lines will be reinstalled.)
 - o Ruppert Park inside the dog run people are adding odd pieces of seating. If the community would like an additional bench, then they should request it. (Note: In response to community comments, the random chairs were removed and signs were posted indicating that outside furniture is prohibited.)

Item 5: Update by Robert McLean, Parks District 15 Manager (Esplanade), NYC Dept. P&R

- EDC will install up-lighting to illuminate the sculpture on the upper level of Andrew Haswell Green Pavilion. Work will start on March 25th for one month. One half of the pavilion will be closed for two weeks and then the other half will be closed for two weeks to complete the work.

Items 6: Old and New Business

Terese Flores, Regional Manager of District 8, announced the Parks Department effort to address loneliness. The program, Let's Green New York City, Volunteer with NYC Parks (nycgovparks.org), will match people interested in volunteering with groups to give back to the community and meet other people.

Next Meeting: April 11, 2024

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:51 PM.

*By Felice Farber and Judy Schneider,
Co-Chairs, Parks and Waterfront Committee*