

Valerie S. Mason
Chair

Will Brightbill
District Manager



505 Park Avenue, Suite 620
New York, N.Y. 10022-1106
(212) 758-4340
(212) 758-4616 (Fax)
www.cb8m.com – Website
info@cb8m.com – E-Mail

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

*Parks and Waterfront Committee Jointly with the 197-a Committee
Thursday, June 13, 2024 - 6:30PM
Conducted remotely on Zoom.*

Please note: The resolution contained in the committee minutes is a recommendation submitted by the committee co-chairs to the Community Board. At the monthly full board meeting, the resolution is discussed and voted upon by all members of Community Board 8 Manhattan.

Resolution for Approval:

Item 2: Approval of the Proposed Design for St. Catherine's Park and Ballfield

MINUTES

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

Community Board Public Board Member Present: Barry Schneider

Community Board Public Member Excused: Irma Torres

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 31

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

Item 1: 197-a Committee: Update by EDC on the Pile Encapsulation under the former sanitation facility at Andrew Haswell Green/Phase 2B by Ankita Nalavade and Sakiru Okeowo

Ankita Nalavade provided an update on the pile repair work at Andrew Haswell Green Park Phase 2B. She explained that the work addresses timber piles and steel piles that have deteriorated and explained the repair process. The work is projected to start October 2024 and be completed by February 2026. There will also be a barge in the river at the location. Some of the pedestrian pathways will be narrowed for a portion of the construction, but at no point will there be a full closure of the pedestrian pathway.

Item 2: Presentation by Christopher Crowley of the Parks Department to review the new layout for St. Catherine's Park, since it was referred back to Committee by the Full Board for further action:

Christopher Crowley provided an overview of the design of the project, reviewing the existing conditions, the design inspiration for the park, and the source of funding for the project. He then discussed specific issues raised by the community about the plans for St. Catherine's Park and ballfield.

- **Sculpture** – Crowley noted that the sculpture/armillary sphere works as a sundial. He provided three location options: 1) Parks can remove it from St. Catherine's and put it another park; 2) Parks can install a low fence around it to discourage kids from climbing on it; 3) Meet with the gardener and see if there is a location in the garden beds where it can be located.
- **Ball Field:** Parks proposes to remove two basketball hoops in the center of the field, leaving four courts in the corners instead of six and install three pickleball courts instead of four in the middle of the field.

- Fence – He proposes to keep the chain link fence the same height as the handball court, which is 12 feet instead of the current chain link fence height of 15 feet.
- Interior little gates (demi gates) – Parks proposes removing the interior gate at 68th Street and keeping the low interior gate at 67th Street. He stated that the agency was not willing to install another gate at 68th Street or keep the existing gate.
- Benches – Most of the benches with plaques will stay where they are, except for one bench with a plaque that will need to be relocated. It will be situated nearby.

Public and Board Member Comments:

Police Officer Brian Larkin (19th Precinct) – Raised safety concerns about eliminating the 68th Street interior fence and lowering the height of the chain link fence around the ballfield. Police Officer Larkin recommends maintaining the interior fences in the playground to protect small children and keep them from running into the street. He further recommends maintaining the existing higher chain link fence in the ballfield area to keep balls in the ballfield. This protects pedestrians from getting hit by errant balls and the people in the park and protects the city from liability from potential accidents caused by balls going over the fence and into traffic or the park.

Several members of the community spoke and raised concerns about eliminating the interior 68th Street (demi) gate. They felt that the interior gate is a safety issue for small children and must be maintained at both 67th and 68th Streets.

Community concerns were also raised about the height of the chain link fence around the ball field, noting that it was a safety issue to maintain the higher fence to keep balls within the ballfield.

Other concerns were raised about eliminating two basketball courts and reducing pickleball from four to three courts, but folks also recognized the need to make room for a multitude of uses and to share the space for all children.

Finally, pickleball players express an interest in having a storage bin for the pickleball players. Chris Crowley committed to placing a storage bin in the ballfield.

When asked about whether a SWPPP (stormwater pollution prevention plan) would be required, Chris thought one would be but did not have information on the timeline or the potential impact on the construction schedule. Judy Schneider noted that delays in obtaining the SWPPP for Ruppert Park have had a significant impact on the start of construction for that park.

Schedule: Chris stated that the design drawings would be complete by this time next year – with the best-case scenario construction projected to start late spring 2026.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the Department of Parks and Recreation has proposed to reconstruct and refurbish St. Catherine's Park and ballfield located on First Avenue between 67th and 68th Streets, and

WHEREAS concern was expressed about the height of the fence surrounding the park and requested the fence height be at least six feet high on all sides of the park, and

WHEREAS concern was expressed about the safety of children who climb on the sculpture in the park, and

WHEREAS concern was express about eliminating the interior gates and the lowering of the height of the chain link fence around the ballfield:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED Community Board 8 Manhattan Parks & Waterfront Committee approves the proposed design of St. Catherine's Park and Ballfield contingent upon the acceptance of the following issues proposed very strongly by the community and police:

- i. Placing a low fence around the sculpture or moving it to another location in the park where it cannot be used for climbing or moving it to another park.
- ii. Keeping interior gates in the park at both 67th & 68th Streets to protect small children who use the park and keep them from running out.
- iii. Coordinating with the replacement of the bench plaques as necessary.
- iv. Keeping the height of the chain link fence around the ballfield area at 15 feet.
- v. Reducing the number of basketball courts from six to four and reducing the number of planned pickleball courts from four to three to ensure sufficient room for all players and children who use the ballfield.
- vi. Installing a storage bin for use by the pickleball players in the ballfield.

Board Member Vote: 6-0-0 (Farber, B. Schneider – Public Member, J. Schneider, Hershenson, Popper, Rudder)

Item 3: Update by Shena Kaufman, Parks District Manager, NYC Dept. P&R

Shena provided the following update on park activities.

The pickleball courts at Carl Schurz Park have been refurbished. Some community members asked for the installation of an additional storage bin for pickleball items at the park. There were some questions about how many bins were currently in the park and who uses them. Shena will investigate and report back. A member of the public also requested shade/awnings be installed by the pickleball courts in Carl Schurz Park.

There will be **NO** Parks summer pickleball program for children at 24 Sycamores Park and St. Catherine's Park this summer due to a lack of staff.

Pickleball courts have been installed at Stanley Isaacs Park at 96th Street and are being used.

There are no updates on a start date for construction at Ruppert Park. Members of the public expressed their frustration that the park reconstruction was announced several years ago, and the start date keeps getting delayed, with no real news from the Parks Dept. as to the reasons for the delay. It will be followed up by the Parks Committee Chairs.

Item 4: Update by Robert Mclean, Parks District 15 Manager (Esplanade) NYC Dept. P&R

Robert Mclean informed the committee that bids for Phases 2 and 3 are being reviewed by the contract's unit, as they came in a high volume. He hopes to have more information for the next meeting.

Item 5: Old and New Business

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:23 PM.

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