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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Parks and Waterfront Committee
Thursday, November 14, 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 1: **Approval of a pilot program for pickleball in Carl Schurz Park by the Parks Department.**

Item 2: **Calling on Mayor Adams to fully restore funding of the Parks Department Budget.**

MINUTES

Present: Bradley Hershenson, Sahar Husain, Craig Lader, Rita Popper, Barbara Rudder, Judy Schneider, Barry Schneider*, Irma Torres*

Excused: Felice Farber (on a business trip out of the country)

**Public Member*

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 48

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM.

Item 1: Presentation on programs available through the NYC Park Department by Manhattan Borough Commissioner Tricia Shimamura

The Commissioner covered three items that members of the community might not be aware of:

A. Recreational (Rec) Centers

There are none currently in our Community Board. However, the closest are the Constance Baker Motley on 348 East 54th Street and the Thomas Jefferson on 2180 First Avenue (112th Street).

Cost: \$150 year access to all centers/\$100 year for access to a pool/\$25 year for seniors and free for those under 24 years of age. Some offered items are: Fitness, Zumba, Yoga, Kickboxing, etc.

B. Urban Park Rangers (UPR)

Program for young people which consists of a natural classroom where the rangers in big Smoky the Bear hats visit K through 8 schools or go to a park, and the educational programs are based around plants, urban wildlife, ecosystems, history, and geology.

C. Historic Structures

Historic House Trust cares for 6 historic structures in Manhattan: (trivia question: how many can you name?) They are Gracie Mansion; Swedish Cottage in Central Park; Morris Jamel Mansion; Little Red Light House; Dykman Farmhouse in Northern Manhattan and Merchant's House in downtown Manhattan. We will invite the Trust to come to speak to us in the coming year.

The Commissioner then spoke to us about a pilot program for pickleball in Carl Schurz Park in the spring. There has been constant bad behavior on this issue in the park. Therefore, the Parks Department has decided to put up 3 removable nets to be taken down at the end of the season. There will be a small gate at the end of the third court

net pole to protect the children from riding into the pole and court. There will be some signage covering general guidelines for play and safety and to alleviate tensions.

A question was asked about getting cameras for this area. The Commissioner will get back to us on this.



BE IT RESOLVED Community Board 8 Manhattan approves the Parks Department pilot program for pickle ball in Carl Schurz Park this upcoming spring consisting of 3 courts with temporary nets, a gate to protect the children, and general signage, which will be removed at the end of the season.

Board Members Vote: 8-0-0 Hershenson, Husain, Lader, Popper, Rudder, J. Schneider, B. Schneider*, Irma Torres *

Item 2: Update presentation on Hospital for Special Surgery and the Esplanade work by Melissa Kiefer

Ms. Kiefer reported on the Kellen Tower, which will be 12 floors; 94,000 square feet; and modernized patient care. It will connect to the ambulatory building on various floors. There is a monthly newsletter: www.hss.edu/hss-kellen-tower.asp to keep you up to date on the Tower and soon will start giving updates on the Esplanade.

Esplanade: The hospital has previously beautified 70th to 72nd Street and will redo any necessary work needed once construction is completed. The pathway is closed here as there is too much construction for passersby. The temporary bridge at 71st Street will be replaced with a new bridge to match the former one once construction is complete. The piece from 72nd to 78th Streets will be done by Quennell Rothschild Architects, and they are adding a lot of landscaping, including 48 new trees and irrigation. There will be bike and pedestrian lanes marked with the pavers as well as an exercise area. The hospital is in discussion with Con Edison about the property surrounding their building.

Both the Hospital and the Parks Department have hired surveyors to look underwater to access the sinkholes, in particular from 70th to 74th. This work will be done in November, and by the end of the year/beginning of January, there should be some decision on the cost and the construction needed. Hopefully, there will be enough money in the budget to cover this additional work. This Phase 3 work may not be completed in 2025.

A question was asked of the hospital if they could assume additional cost if money was not available to Parks.

Item 3: Discussion of a potential resolution to advocate for restoration of Parks funding in the City's November budget modification

Judy received the following note from the League of Conservation Voters and thought it worthwhile to discuss at tonight's meeting, with the hope that it would pass the Full Board, and our chair, Valerie Mason, would bring it up at the Borough Board Meeting the following morning:

"NYC Parks was the only agency that didn't have its funding restored in July. The budget has been cut, a hiring freeze is still in place, and the agency has nearly 800 fewer workers than last year, which is unacceptable."

After discussion, the following resolution was passed:

WHEREAS this year, despite repeated commitments to invest in parks, Mayor Adams slashed funding for the NYC Parks Department, resulting in the loss of nearly 800 staffing lines and critical programs, and

WHEREAS NYC Parks was the only city agency to receive cuts in this budget, compounding decades of chronic underfunding. As a result, NYC Parks are at a breaking point. The agency lacks the staff necessary to maintain lawns, remove trash, clean bathrooms (as noted in a recent City Council report), care for trees and natural areas, run the programs that families depend on, and enforce park rules, and

WHEREAS this continued disinvestment impacts the lives of every New Yorker and exacerbates the inequities in our parks system. Our parks are the lungs of the city, our places for recreation and respite, and our best defense against a changing climate. When parks are dirty and understaffed, the city feels unwelcoming and unsafe.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED Community Board 8 stands with all New Yorkers in every corner of the city in calling on the Adams administration to **fully restore funding for NYC Parks**.

Board Members Vote: 7-0-0 Hershenson, Husain, Lader, Popper, Rudder, J. Schneider, B. Schneider*

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

- Shena was happy to report the Stormwater Pollution Prevention plan for Ruppert Park was sent to NYC DEP on November 1st. It usually takes 45 days for a reply. Then the next step is to move to procurement early next year.
- It's My Park Day is this weekend at the following parks: Samuel Seabury, Stanley Isaacs, and Ruppert.
- Today a meeting on pedestrian safety was held with AARP and NYC DOT at Honey Locust Park.

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

- The biggest problem is with the bathrooms at 24 Sycamores Park, which are closed. The plumbers have said the problem seems to have come from under York Avenue. Judy suggested Robert get in touch with the crew working on the water mains and sewers on York Avenue from 60th to 64th Street. She will pass on the contact information.
- NYC DOT finally fixed the 14 lights that were out, and they will be burning day and night for 2 weeks, as they have to fix a panel across the FDR, which will mean the roadway must be closed.
- Robert is working closely with Eddie Falcone, the head of the Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers. They are on the Esplanade regularly and have stopped much of the vandalism and graffiti, as well as reduced homelessness.
- Tomorrow the gardener and about 6 people will weed all the brand-new planting in Andrew Haswell Green going north. This week Robert had 6 people for three days doing planting. This summer he brought in NY Cares volunteers. They spent \$2,500/\$500 on 24 Sycamores and the balance in Alice Aycock Pavilion. He hopes to bring in NY Cares back this summer to do more weeding.

Item 6 & 7: Old and New Business

Mubeen Siddiqui of Muslim Volunteers of NY talked about its My Park Day this Saturday in Ruppert Park, where they have been stewards of the park since 2017. Everyone is invited and there will be planting, music, and food—all free. They especially want to thank Council Member Julie Menin for her generous funding.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 PM.

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