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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Parks and Waterfront Committee
Thursday, June 12, 2025 - 6:30PM
Conducted remotely on Zoom.

MINUTES

Present: Felice Farber, Bradley Hershenson, Barry Schneider*, Judy Schneider, Irma Torres*

**Public Member*

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 28

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM.

Item 1: Update on Hospital for Special Surgery and the Esplanade by Melissa Kiefer

The Vice President for Facilities Development and Regulatory Affairs, Melissa Kiefer, provided an update on the status of construction of the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) Kellen Tower.

- Scaffolding on the east side of Kellen Tower will be fully removed by the end of June 2025.
- A new skybridge installation will occur overnight this Saturday (midnight to 8:00 AM), requiring closure of the southbound lanes on the Franklin D. Roosevelt East River Drive (FDR Drive).
- The pedestrian ramp is expected to be completed by August 2025, at which time the restoration of the 2018 beautification HSS performed on the esplanade will begin.
- Construction aims to finish this fall, with the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) review planned for November 2025 or December 2025.
- The Kellen Tower is targeted to be open by March 2026.

After providing an update on the Kellen Tower, VP for Facilities Development and Regulatory Affairs Melissa Kiefer provided an update on the improvements to the East River Esplanade. HSS will be making improvements to the East River Esplanade from East 72nd Street to East 78th Street.

Improvement work on the esplanade will begin in August 2025, starting with the fitness equipment area just north of East 75th Street. This will be done after the restoration of the 2018 beautification of the area, which will be performed by HSS between East 70th Street and East 72nd Street.

The work on the esplanade project is divided into 4 phases:

- Phase 1 (East 70th Street - East 73rd Street): August 2025 to January 2026
- Phase 2 (East 75th Street - East 76th Street): September 2025 to March 2026
- Phase 3 (East 73rd Street - East 75th Street): mid-September 2025 to February 2026:
- Phase 4 (East 76th Street - East 78th Street): Timing TBD

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks Department) bids for the esplanade from the segment of East 76th Street to East 81st Street are due in July 2025 and are estimated to be completed in October 2025.

VP for Facilities Development and Regulatory Affairs Melissa Kiefer explained that several sinkholes have been identified near the esplanade project:

- The East 74th Street sinkhole was addressed by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).
- The East 72nd Street sinkhole will be infilled by HSS as part of the esplanade restoration.
- The East 70th Street sinkhole was investigated by NYC Parks with dive inspectors, but no clear cause of the sinkhole has been found. A temporary fix is planned, according to Parks personnel, until a cause and a permanent fix can be identified. HSS has committed to infilling the East 70th Street sinkhole but will not do structural repairs. Parks is investigating whether the cause of the sinkhole is from an outflow pipe, and if so, will follow up with DEP to fix the problem.

Public Comment: Several members of the public, including Jennifer Ratner from Friends of East River Esplanade, raised significant concerns about the length of time (4 years) the esplanade has been closed at East 72nd Street and wants to know when the esplanade will be reopened or wants a plan in place to provide a continuous detour for esplanade users.

The Co-Chairs spoke with a Parks Department spokesman the day after the meeting and found out the following:

- It is not pontoons that are used to bridge the closure gap in the esplanade, but barges.
- To construct the barges, you must get approval from the following agencies: United States Coast Guard, United States Army Corps of Engineers, and the most difficult agency, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).
- An engineer would have to be hired to design this project.
- The construction of barges would be extremely costly and take a very long period of time, making it impractical to construct.

Next Steps: The Parks and Waterfront Committee asked HSS and the Parks Department to return in October 2025 to provide an update on the esplanade work, particularly on the East 70th Street sinkhole. HSS was also asked to coordinate with the Police Department on cameras and lights for the esplanade and to report back in October.

The committee was also informed that Project Administrator Michael Bradley from the Parks Department will be retiring, and we welcome Mary Eveleigh, who will be replacing him. We want to thank Michael for all his work on behalf of Community Board 8, always being available and thoroughly professional.

[HSS Kellen Tower and Esplanade Improvement Presentation](#)

Item 2: Report by Robert Mclean, NYC Parks, Regional Manager

Robert Mclean provided an update from the parks.

- On the East River from East 77th Street to East 81st Street between the East River and FDR Drive, the lights are out. Robert Mclean spoke to the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT), and they are sending a lighting contractor.

- Bids have been solicited for Esplanade Phase 3 (East 62nd Street to East 63rd Street, East 76th Street to East 80th Street, and East 90th Street to East 94th Street) & bids are due July 1.

Item 3: Report by Shena Kaufman, NYC Parks, District Manager 8 & 15

Sheena Kaufman provided an update on recent developments. She noted the following:

- Iris Rodriguez- Rosa has been appointed the new commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.
- The Gottesman pool (the old Lasker pool) will open to the public on June 26th, with all city pools being opened the next day.
- The spray showers have been recently turned on at 24 Sycamores Park.
- The renovation of the large dog run at Carl Schurz Park started on June 9th, with the project expected to include new turf, better drainage, and new benches.
- Family Fun Day will take place at Carl Schurz Park on Saturday, June 14th.
- The scaffolding came down on Samuel Seabury Park. Thanks to funding from City Council Member Julie Menin, a mural will be added to Samuel Seabury Park in the Multi-Purpose Play Area (MPPA).
- A green market on the sidewalk by Ruppert Park is expected to start this Sunday.
- The Parks Department also submitted a grant for \$2.7 million in federal funding to replace the school yard at Samuel Seabury Park.
- The St. Catherine Park beautification day took place last weekend. The work involved weeding, planting, mulching, and painting the Park House, plus a puppet show.
- Rupert Park: The Parks Department is still waiting for DEP to approve the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Given the delays in starting construction of the park, the installation of new restrooms in the park may be impacted. The restroom project is part of a New York City Department of Design and Construction (DDC) design-build project that must be completed in 18 months.

Public Comment: There is a homeless person living on the promenade between East 82nd Street and East 83rd Street under the scaffolding in Carl Schurz Park. Ms. Kaufman responded that the Parks Department makes every effort to provide services to homeless individuals and to remove them from the park, but they will inevitably return to the park.

Co-Chair Judy Schneider announced that Steve Simon will be attending the July Parks and Waterfront Committee meeting to discuss our budget priorities. She also noted that in September, Steve will present on the renovation of 24 Sycamores Park.

For budget items, the need for upgrades to the dog run at Andrew Haswell Green Park will be on the Parks and Waterfront Agenda for discussion on budget items in the July meeting.

Items 4 & 5: Old and New Business

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 PM.

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