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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Parks and Waterfront Committee
Thursday, July 10, 2025 - 6:30PM
Conducted remotely on Zoom.

MINUTES

Present: Felice Farber, Bradley Hershenson, Sahar Husain, Valerie Mason, Barry Schneider*, Judy Schneider, Irma Torres*

**Public Member*

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 14

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

Item 1: Quick update on DOT 72nd Street Cul-de-sac by Harry Gale, of Council Member Julie Menin's Office

Harry Gale described the condition of the cul-de-sac at the end of East 72nd Street, and explained efforts to repair and upgrade the area. He explained that the cul-de-sac is owned by the NYC Department of Transportation. Council Member Julie Menin secured \$250,000 to repair the cul-de-sac through the community benefits agreement she negotiated as part of the Memorial Sloan Kettering development. The work will include improved street masonry, benches, tree maintenance, and other repairs. Harry will come back later in the year or early next year with a further update on the matter.

Item 2: Parks Budget Priorities for Community Board 8 – Steve Simon of NYC DP&R

Steve Simon, Manhattan Chief of Staff at the Parks Department, discussed the capital needs of each park in Community District 8 and then answered questions about the expense needs.

- **East River Esplanade:**

- **Sinkhole Repairs,** Steve provided an update on efforts to investigate and repair sinkholes along the East River esplanade. He reported that the Parks Department hired an engineering consultant to investigate the sinkhole at East 70th Street to determine the cause. The engineering report on the East 70th Street sinkhole is expected next week. The sinkhole at East 74th Street is being repaired by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The sinkhole at East 76th Street will be addressed in the upcoming capital project, with bids being reviewed. This item should be listed as **continuing support**.
- **Andrew Haswell Green Park** funding is needed to construct Phase 3 of the park renovations, which would include much-needed public restrooms and other facilities along the esplanade under the old heliport. This project should be a **top priority** for CB8M in the FY 27 budget request.

- **24 Sycamores Park:**
 - Reconstruction of the 24 Sycamores Park is fully funded. The Parks Department will be coming to the Parks and Waterfront Committee meeting in September to present the proposed design for the renovation. This item should be listed as **continuing support**.
 - The public restrooms in the park are not working because of a break in the sewer line. The Parks Department will be using a probe to identify the location of the break and determine the necessary repairs. This will likely be a complex and expensive repair. It was noted that the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) recently completed an extensive utility and street reconstruction project on York Avenue along East 61st to East 64th Street. **This item is still under discussion.**
- **Carl Schurz Park:**
 - Additional funding (in the range of \$4 to \$5 million additional, based on current estimates) is required to reconstruct the public restroom building at East 87th Street, with Council Member Julie Menin previously allocating \$1.5 million to the project. This project should be one of **CB8M's FY 27 budget requests**.
 - Work on the Multi-Purpose Play Area (MPPA) is funded and will be scheduled, but this item should be listed as **continuing support**.
- **St. Catherine's Park:**
 - The renovation of the St. Catherine's Park, including the playground and multi-purpose field, is **continuing support**.
 - The Parks Department has some money set aside for the renovation of the public restroom building (PRB). Funding to construct a new PRB is needed and should be identified as a **top priority** for the community board to ensure that the construction of a new PRB is coordinated with the reconstruction of the park.
- **Ruppert Park:**
 - This should be listed as **continuing support** in the District Needs Statement. Both the park and the PRB are fully funded. According to Steve, there is no need to request additional funding for this project. Parks hopes to solicit bids by the winter for the park reconstruction.
- **Samuel Seabury Playground:**
 - Reconstruction of the playground, including the MPPA, needs funding. Felicia Park-Rogers, District Director for Congressman Jerold Nadler's office, informed the committee that Congressman Jerold Nadler put in a request for a federal grant of \$2.7 million to fund the MPPA work. She noted that Congressman Adriano Espaillat is on the relevant committee (Transportation, Housing and Urban Development) that has to approve this appropriation by September 30th.
 - The renovation of the PRB in the park also requires funding, as there is no heat in the building. This will require the PRB to be closed during the winter of this year. The building is also dated and not ADA-compliant. This matter involving the PRB at the Samuel Seabury Playground will require **priority support** by CB8M.
 - Felicia explained that Federal funding is limited to \$1-\$3 million and must fully fund the project.
- **Stanley Isaacs Playground:**
 - Upgrades to the playground are required, including a scoreboard to go with the new hockey rink, improved lighting, benches, and upgrades to the play equipment.

- **John Jay Park:**

- Reconstruction of the historic pool house is necessary and needs funding, with the Parks Department requesting that CB8M list this for **priority support**.
- The sitting area in the plaza near Cherokee Place also needs a refresh.
- There has been discussion about modifying the handball courts by adding a pickleball court between the two handball walls. (Two of the four handball courts would remain.) Because the area has a concrete surface, it would have to be converted to an asphalt surface, but the Parks Department does not have funding for this project.
- Park Manager Shena Kaufman added that there is a need for a dog run in the area of John Jay Park. Many people use the central walkway as a dog run in the morning and evening with many dogs off-leash. This creates a conflict between the various users of the park, and there are insufficient numbers of Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officers to summon the people letting their dogs off leash in the park. This will be discussed by the Parks Department.
 - *Note:* A member of the public raised a concern about prioritizing funding to convert two of the handball courts to a pickleball court when there are many capital and expense needs and priorities in the park.

After discussing the capital needs for the parks in Community District 8, a short discussion was held about the expense needs. Additional funding for PEP officers is always needed, as are park maintenance workers. The availability of a sufficient number of lifeguards is due to recruitment challenges and not funding or pay. (City lifeguards earn \$22 per hour plus a \$1000 bonus in August).

A question was raised about the installation of call boxes on the East River Esplanade, as well as signage indicating your location in the park. There is also a similar issue at the Central Park Drives. A discussion ensued about the need for call boxes, which are not the Parks Department's jurisdiction, given the prevalence of cell phones. The need for signage identifying locations is an issue in many parks and is an item requiring further discussion.

Item 3: Report by Robert McLean, NYC Parks, Regional Manager

- On Tuesday, July 15th, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm, Weill Cornell Medicine will be hosting a pop-up Cooling Station with information, giveaways, and water at St. Catherine's Park in the multi-purpose field. Faculty and staff will be present to speak about heat-related illnesses and ways the community can protect itself this summer.
- The Parks Department is interviewing new gardeners.
- The Parks Department is also working with high school interns to do extensive weeding along the East River Esplanade. These are summer interns, but options are available to continue working with Parks through the fall.
- The fence around the lawn under the sculpture at Andrew Haswell Green Park was taken down, and park goers are enjoying the lawn area.

Item 4: Report by Shena Kaufman, NYC Parks, Parks Manager, Districts 6, 8 & 15

- The playground in **St. Catherine's Park** will be closed July 16th to July 18th from 6:30 AM to 11:30 AM while the park drains are cleared out and the condition of the park drainage is assessed prior to the start of the capital project. The MPPA and the bathrooms will remain open during this period.

- The Parks Department is in the process of hiring exterminators, with holding an exterminator license as a pre-qualification for the job title. In addition, the Parks Department is hiring gardeners, with applicants needing to have a year of full-time experience in gardening work or a certificate from a horticulture or botany program, including programs offered by the New York Botanical Garden and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.
- On Monday, July 14th, the temporary pedestrian ramp at East 71st Street, constructed by Hospital for Special Surgery, will be closed so that it can be dismantled, and the permanent ramp will be constructed over the next four months, along with the beautification of the area under and near the ramp.

Items 5 & 6: Old and New Business

No items of Old Business or New Business were discussed.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.

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