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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD SIX
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**Manhattan Community Board Six
Parks, Landmarks and Cultural Affairs Committee
February 5, 2019
433 1st Avenue (NYU School of Dentistry), Room 210**

Meeting Minutes

Present: Pamela Vassil (Chair), Mark Thompson (Vice Chair), Martin Barrett, Matt Bondy, Adam Hartke, Aaron Humphrey, Rajesh Nayar, Gary Papush, Kathy Thompson, Ronnie White, Samuel Albert, Dean Stefanides

Absent: Amelia Acosta, Reshma Patel

Guests: Lou Sepersky, Manhattan Community Board Six (CB6) Member; Jack Collins, East End Hockey Association; Wesley Hamilton, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR); Katie Loeb, Council Member Carlina Rivera's office; Jackson Fischer-Ward, Assembly Member Harvey Epstein's office; Leslie Peoples, DPR; Katherine Bridges, DPR; David Kruger, State Senator Brad Hoylman's office; Maria Rocha-Buschel, *Town & Village* newspaper; Chris Crowley, DPR; Joshua Shapiro, Community District 6 (CD6) Resident; Brian Lafferty, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's office; Steve Simon, DPR; Courtenay Bird, CD6 Resident; Karen Lee, CD6 Resident; Rod Jacobs, CD6 Resident; Airrion Jacobs, CD6 Resident

Call to Order and Adoption of the Agenda/Previous Meeting's Minutes

Pamela Vassil called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

A motion to adopt the agenda was made, seconded and passed.

A motion to adopt the prior month's minutes was made, seconded and passed.

Committee Business

Agenda Item # 1: Discussion of schematic drawings for Bellevue Park South

At the January meeting of the Parks, Landmarks, and Cultural Affairs Committee, a plan was presented by the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) for Bellevue South

Park (the "Park"). At that meeting, members of the community voiced their discontent that the concerns they had raised were not incorporated into the plan.

Aaron Humphrey spoke and described how the Friends of Bellevue South, KBK9 Dog Run, and Kips Bay Neighborhood Association (KBNA) got together to discuss the park and the \$4,500,000 to be spent on its renovation.

Karen Lee, Executive Director of Kips Bay Neighborhood Association, also spoke and presented an alternate plan on behalf of several community groups. The alternate plan is based off of the one presented at the last meeting by DPR, but with reordered priorities. The handout of this community plan will be included as an addendum to these minutes.

The objective was to determine how the Park can be restructured to accommodate the needs of the community and DPR.

We heard how the Park is unappealing to families, underutilized, and unsafe because of long standing drug dealing, drug use, drinking, and loitering. The Community approached the Park renovation from a public safety perspective and believes that a larger, new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible dog run that was proposed years ago to supplement the current dog run can serve as a safety measure to bring more people dedicated to the park into it; that a separate kid zone from that used by adults can also serve as a safety measure; and that if the park doesn't look different, the problems will not change.

It was proposed that the Park be divided into four zones and that the following be considered for each zone:

1. An adult recreation zone, with several modifications:
 - a. That the card tables be moved/placed under the tree canopy next to the basketball court as a means of confining/hopefully limiting any objectionable conduct, such as drinking, loitering, drug use and public urination to this area;
 - b. That the exercise equipment be moved next to the basketball courts or outside of the park and onto the wide street as a means of keeping adults separate from children;
 - c. That in doing (a) and (b) above, these areas would be under the watchful eye of those playing basketball or using the courts;
 - d. That the colors of the basketball court be changed and that there be clear plexiglass backboards;
2. Maintaining the current dog run and creating a new ADA accessible dog run with:
 - a. A separation area;
 - b. A non-asphalt surface; and
 - c. A water feature;

3. A transition zone, with several modifications:
 - a. That the playhouses be removed;
 - b. That the benches be removed;
 - c. That the planted areas be enlarged; and
 - d. That a community garden be created; and
4. A Children's zone.

DPR representatives, who included Chris Crowley, Leslie Peoples, Katherine Bridges, and Steve Simon, made numerous comments.

Mr. Crowley stated that:

- The Community had interesting ideas for the DPR to digest;
- Nothing the Community presented or suggested is a radical departure from the original design;
- There are certain things that can be incorporated into the plan and others that are not feasible;
- Card/game tables are a commissioner's prerogative and moving them to the adult zone may be complicated by the root structure of trees present in that area (Aaron Humphrey pointed out that there are enough level areas to accomplish this objective);
- The plan currently calls for no card tables;
- The move of exercise equipment outside of the park onto the street is an interesting idea but not likely to happen because it would require DOT approval and new fencing;
- DPR will work with the community on the color of the basketball court and the use of clear backboards.

As for the dog run, Mr. Crowley:

- Suggested concrete as an alternative to an asphalt surface, noting that the dog run is shaded and concrete can be washed;
- Talked about his conversation with a dog psychologist, who agreed that separating small and large dogs was a good idea; and
- Stated that he thinks the water feature is a good idea but that maintaining the current dog run could present ADA issues.

As to the transition area, Mr. Crowley noted the following:

- The larger planted areas in the transition zone are not a problem;
- DPR is not averse to the notion of a community garden in the transition area but that "Parks doesn't do community gardens, communities do," and that it will require a dedicated group to take care of it. He said in sum and substance to "tell Parks what to designate as a community garden and Parks will do it;" and

- A Little Free Library would not be objectionable to DPR, provided there is a group that would sponsor and take care of it, which he was informed there is.

Also in relation to the transition area:

- There was talk of removing the play houses in the transition zone as a public safety measure;
- DPR recommended that there be a small play apparatus (jungle gym) in place of the playhouses to better define this as a children's area;
- There are currently benches in this area that invite loitering, sleeping, drug use and drinking. As noted, it was suggested that these benches be removed. This, however, was met with several objections, and a comment that to remove benches from the transition area runs counter to the intention that the Park be more ADA-accessible and inviting to families;
- DPR noted that if the benches are not in the plan now, they may not be added later;
- CB6 member Lou Sepersky suggested that any benches be "World's Fair" type benches (those whose design impedes the ability to lie down on them); and
- A small fence and path that is in the plan will also better differentiate this area as leading into and being a children's zone.

DPR personnel said they are open to working with community groups.

The Committee Chair noted that if additional money is necessary to make it happen, the elected representatives should step up.

DPR suggested that the best course of action would be a resolution in support of the changes being requested that they could take back to the commissioner. It was suggested that DPR come back next month with revisions to the plan, incorporating the various comments being made so that a resolution in support could be discussed. DPR agreed to do so.

Agenda Item # 2: Report from the Department of Parks and Recreation

The Department of Parks and Recreation was represented by Wesley Hamilton. His report was as follows:

- It's been slow going in the winter months with permitting and events.
- There have been changes in the DPR requiring an increase in the support and equipment Parks' is required to send to the Department of Sanitation in winter weather mobilization. Delays caused in snow removal have increased this year because of it.
- There have also been changes to the forestry aspects of DPR with respect to their response to 311 calls, with hazard complaints taking priority, rather than in order received. This may also cause some delays in response to 311 calls.
- Committee Member Aaron Humphrey questioned whether trees lost at Bellevue South Park and on 28th Street during the storm last November will be replaced.

Per Mr. Hamilton, they need to get the exact address and the trees will be included on the list.

- As to recent reports on the breakdown in the 311 system, this does not hold true for DPR.

In response to a question regarding the status of Sutton Park between 56th and 57th Streets, there is no new update but they are shooting for an opening in June.

In response to a question posed by the Committee Chair regarding whether the lights in Stuyvesant Park have been repaired, Mr. Hamilton responded that the lights are installed and maintained by the Department of Transportation (“DOT”). DOT has a 30 day response time. As of last week, the lights have been fixed and all lights are currently working.

In response to whether the cobblestone path will be replaced in Augustus St. Gaudens, Mr. Hamilton responded that he hopes this will occur the week of February 10th but cautioned, however, that this work is weather-dependent.

Chair’s Report

The Chair’s Report was waived.

Old/New Business

CB6 member Lou Sepersky cited the inventory of privately owned public space (“POPS”) conducted last year and suggested that the Board office go through the report and follow up on whether POPS are living up to their obligations.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded and approved at 8:30 PM.

Minutes submitted by: Matthew Bondy.