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**PARKS & WATERFRONT COMMITTEE MEETING**

January 5, 2022

The Parks & Waterfront Committee of Community Board #2, Manhattan, held its monthly meeting on Wednesday, January 5, 2022 at 6:30 via Zoom**.**

The meeting covered one topic: Representative(s) from the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation will give updates on various in-process projects such as Little Red Square, Petrosino Square, Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, Passannante Ballfield, the DEP water tunnel sites, the Grand and Canal Courts, and Duarte Square.

**Board Members Present**: Rich Caccappolo (Chair); Susanna Aaron (Vice Chair); Chris Dignes; Matthew Metzger; Shirley Secunda; Kristin Shea; Georgia Silvera Seamans; Frederica Sigel
**Board Members Absent Without Notice**: Coral Dawson

**Board Members Absent with Notice:**

**Public Members Present:** Elizabeth Gilmore

**Public Members Absent with Notice:** Nancy Brous; Sharon Woolums

**Other Board Members Present:** Jeannine Kiely (CB2 Chair); Carter Booth; Amy Brenna; Valerie De La Rosa; Patricia Laraia, Michael Levine; Brian Pape; and CB2 District Manager, Bob Gormley

In total, approximately 36 people attended the meeting.

**There were no resolutions created from this meeting.**

**MINUTES**

Presentation by representatives from the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) on various in-process and planned projects in our district:

DPR representatives Steve Simon, Chief of Staff to the Manhattan Commissioner, and Terese Flores, Regional Manager, presented status of and fielded comments and answered questions, providing updates as follow:

**Mercer Playground:** The interim renovation project, which has been funded by NYU, is nearly completed with a few tasks to be completed in the Spring including the application of the color surface sealer, some painting, including the back wall, and plantings on the sides. Power washing of the back wall may reveal that leaving the brick unpainted may prove more attractive. This is yet to be determined.

**Little Red Square:** The project has been completed but for final landscaping, which will be done in the Spring. Some plantings may be installed in the interim as weather allows.

**William F. Passannante Ballfield:** The project, which will be executed by a DPR sub-department called Citywide Services but the planning of which has required involvement of MTA because of the subway station underneath, involves re-surfacing, re-paving and painting lines for sports activities including baseball field, soccer field and two pickleball courts. Plan is for the work to start in April and continue for three to four months. It was suggested that the schedule be discussed with LREI School, which uses the space for recreation programs during the school year, as it will make the park unusable for some periods.

**Grand Canal Court:** The MTA must build a new substation below the popular basketball court located at Thompson St., Canal St., and Avenue of the Americas. It expects to start working this summer and estimates that the project will take four years. The MTA will convey a 90 day notice before the start of the project. In addition, it has committed to rebuild the court when the project is completed and has offered to consult with the community and the DPR a year or more before completion to discuss possible changes to design. DPR representatives pledged to communicate this plan to the community that uses this court, including nearby schools Broome Street Academy, NYC iSchool, and Chelsea Career and Technical High School

**Juan Pablo Duarte Square:** DPR discussed the renovation project of the triangular plot bounded by Sullivan St., Grand St., and Avenue of the Americas at the intersection with Canal St., which is being funded by Trinity Real Estate, the real estate arm of Trinity Church. Design was nearly complete, but the project has been put on hold because the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is considering installing a new pump station under the de-mapped Sullivan Street section of this lot. Our committee will be notified when a decision is made. In response to a question raised during the discussion, DPR explained that this space was initially developed and maintained by the DOT and was transferred to the DPR in May, 1977. Questions were raised about the impact the pump station project might have on services such as water and sewer that feed the adjacent Duarte Square, which currently houses a restaurant that has drawn neighbor complaints.

**Tony Dapolito Recreation Center:** A planned repair and renovation project was started but exposed greater structural issues than anticipated, requiring DPR to close the entire facility, including both the indoor and outdoor pools. Basic repairs have since been made that will allow the facility to reopen shortly. The remaining renovations and repairs will continue. During this closure, work progressed on the central staircase and the discovered structural issues, but planned repairs to the roof and façade still need to be done. Consequently, the scope of the project now includes the original scope of work plus the discovered issues through that resulted in the closing of the facility. DPR has allocated additional funding to allow this larger scope to be completed.

**Water Tunnel sites:** Development of open spaces on two of the water tunnel sites have started construction and will be completed this year:

* DEP Shaft Site 30B at Grand and Lafayette Streets <https://www.nycgovparks.org/planning-and-building/capital-project-tracker/project/7014> and
* DEP Shaft Site 31B on East 4th Street (next to the Merchant’s House Museum) <https://www.nycgovparks.org/planning-and-building/capital-project-tracker/project/8869>)

Both expected to be opened to the public in October, 2022.

**Petrosino Square:** Temporary public art exhibitions presented by the DPR in this park, named for heroic police officer Lt. Joseph Petrosino, located at Kenmare St., Lafayette St., and Cleveland Place, were stopped after the installation of a Citibike station in Spring of 2013. Mr. Simon said they are due to to start again, though questions remain about constraints presented by the location of the Citibike station..

**Vesuvio Playground:** The wall of the building that abuts the park near the entrance on Thompson St. had to be repaired. That work is almost done, so it is expected that the scaffolding will come down in a few weeks. Note: not discussed in the meeting, but interesting fact: this space, formerly known as Thompson Playground, was named for the popular Italian bakery on nearby Prince St. - more details here: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/vesuvio-playground>

**DeSalvio Playground:** The renovation project has been nearly completed since 2019, but the rock climbing wall is still not accessible because the owner of the adjacent building, 75 Kenmare Street, has still not installed the promised awning barrier. More details here: <https://boweryboogie.com/2022/01/rock-climbing-at-desalvio-playground-hits-bureaucratic-wall/>

Also discussed:

- **LaGuardia Corner Gardens** sidewalk: soon after completion of the garden fence reconstruction project (December 2018) there were reports of large pools of accumulating water on the sidewalk after precipitation. In response, the DPR drilled “weep holes” in the foundation of the fence to encourage water to flow back into the garden. At present, this solution does not appear to be working. Ms. Flores suggested that the holes may have become filled or blocked and pledged to have them checked.

- **Jefferson Market Garden**: A request was made by a committee that DPR consider playing a bigger, more active role in the maintenance, funding, and governance of this park, which is currently operated by a private group that provides high-quality maintenance of this beautiful garden, but with limited public access, self-raised funds, full reliance on volunteers, and a governance model that is less transparent than that of other neighborhood parks and conservancies. Comments included potentially opening additional entrances (there is currently just one), creating more paths through the park and increasing the seating capacity, along with longer and more predictable hours.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Caccappolo,

Chair, Parks & Waterfront Committee

Community Board 2, Manhattan