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PARKS & WATERFRONT COMMITTEE MEETING

May 4, 2022

The Parks & Waterfront Committee of Community Board #2, Manhattan, held its monthly meeting on Wednesday, May 4, 2022 at 6:30 via Zoom.

The meeting covered one topic: Representative from the Washington Square Park Conservancy on recent and upcoming activities.

Board Members Present: Rich Caccappolo (Chair); Susanna Aaron (Vice Chair); Coral Dawson; Chris Dignes; Matthew Metzger; Shirley Secunda; Kristin Shea; Frederica Sigel

Board Members Absent With Notice: Georgia Silvera Seamans

Board Members Absent Without Notice:

Public Members Present: Elizabeth Gilmore; Sharon Woolums

Public Members Absent:

Other Board Members Present: Jeannine Kiely (CB2 Chair); Carter Booth; Donna Raftery, Brian Pape, Valerie de la Rosa and Bob Gormley.

In total, approximately 40 people attended the meeting.

There were no resolutions created from this meeting.

MINUTES

Representative from the Washington Square Park Conservancy discussing status of the organization and recent and upcoming activities:

In June, 2013, our committee held a meeting discussing the proposed creation of the Washington Square Park Conservancy. We wrote and passed a resolution in support of the initiative, which the full CB2 Board passed (by a vote of 35-13) later that month. In our resolution we requested that “WSPC appear periodically (or at the request of either WSPC or CB2) before the Community Board to apprise the community of its plans and activities”, which they have done, though we had not invited them in over a year. So, we asked them to appear at this meeting.

Sheryl Woodruff, Deputy Director, of the Washington Square Park Conservancy (WSPC)

<https://washingtonsqpark.org/> “a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization working with NYC Parks and neighborhood groups to ensure that Washington Square Park continues as a diverse and historical urban

green space through engaging volunteers and raising funds to help keep the park clean, safe and beautiful.” presented accomplishments, upcoming events, program areas, staffing and interactions with the Department of Parks & Recreation.

She started by reminding everyone that the park is 9.75 acres and hosts 12 million visitors per year then noted that the Conservancy is approaching 10 years in existence and have contributed nearly \$2.6 million since founding.

She announced / explained:

- Events and classes are held <https://washingtontsqpark.org/events/> plus she mentioned a concert that they are working on with the Blue Note. (Subsequent to our meeting the concert was announced: a free performance to kick off the 11th Annual Jazz Festival in the Arch Plaza featuring Grammy-award-winning jazz pianist Robert Glasper and others on June 1 from 7-9 PM)
- Staffing of the Park funded by the Conservancy: two gardeners, two full-time and two seasonal maintenance crew members and one year-round playground associate.
- The Conservancy is procuring two-way radios for all WSP staff (not just the staff that they fund) so that staff members can communicate with their colleagues in the park to request supplies or assistance.
- WSPC focuses on three program areas
 - o Landscapes: gardening staff works with the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) on planting, pruning and upkeep, horticulture planning and overseeing volunteer gardeners as well as managing rodents through a pesticide-free program.
 - o Maintenance: staff helps with removal of garbage, litter pick-up, washing of paved areas, and graffiti remediation. WSPC donated a pressure washer with a water reservoir and
 - o Community: recreation programs and activities, playground activities, and an Arts Grant program.
- Important to note that WSPC does not have a program dealing with enforcement of park rules such as smoking or skateboards – that is left to the parks department personnel and the police.
- An AmeriCorp member is working on the Parks team; the Conservancy pays them a stipend. This team member helps to manage volunteers.
- WSPC are hiring a new staff person - the first new position in years – to be program manager.
- Also in our June 2013 resolution, we encouraged the WSPC, once it established itself, to support other smaller parks in the neighborhood that were not expected to have equally dynamic fundraising abilities. To this end, WSPC are bringing some of the services that they deliver to WSP to the parks along 6th Avenue. Golden Swan Park is their first pilot. Gardeners working with the district gardener are now helping to improve it, including plantings, putting in new fencing for storage and new / repaired irrigation services. Bob Gormley noted how great the space now looks. Our committee was pleased to hear of this activity and asked if new benches could be installed. If all goes well, WSPC will look to extend to other parks.

A question was asked about a purchase the WSPC did to provide chains and locks for securing the french barricades used to close the park entrances. Ms. Woodruff noted that WSPC did not provide the funding to the New York Police Department, it was to the Parks Department, and the purchase was not seen as a capital request because it was just a few hundred dollars.

An attendee of the meeting suggested that our committee review the original resolution from June 2013 to check if what we had been told at the time, namely that “WSPC will not have a role in policy, planning or event creation, and all policies concerning the park will continue to be set by Parks with input from CB2”, was being followed. The main concern was event creation. We discussed this question in our business session. Ms. Woodruff explained that the Conservancy is required to submit permit request to the DPR for all events and, generally, all events are developed in conjunction with the DPR, i.e., the Conservancy does not create or run events without approval of the DPR. Our committee decided that it did not feel it

necessary to re-visit the resolution from June, 2013; instead, there was a request to plan a community discussion to debate an ongoing question: the installation of real gates to truly close (and clearly communicate closure of) the Park each night.

One additional point: the Parks Department and the Police Department decided to close off the northwest corner of the park for a month, as was done last year, in an attempt to disrupt the drug trade that takes place in that area. Ms. Woodruff noted that WSPC did not agree with this action.

Our committee thanked Ms. Woodruff for attending on behalf of WSPC and though we do not have the history of having written resolutions at their founding, we decided we should invite "friends" groups attached to other parks in CB2 to attend and report on a regular basis.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Caccappolo,
Chair, Parks & Waterfront Committee
Community Board 2, Manhattan