



## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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Greenwich Village ♦ Little Italy ♦ SoHo ♦ NoHo ♦ Hudson Square ♦ Chinatown ♦ Gansevoort Market

### PARKS & WATERFRONT COMMITTEE MEETING

June 4, 2025

The Parks & Waterfront Committee of Community Board #2, Manhattan held its monthly meeting on Wednesday, June 4, 2025, at 6:30 in person at the CB2 office and via Zoom.

The meeting covered two topics:

1. Update from Robert Atterbury, Executive Vice President – Parks Relationships and Programs for the Hudson River Park on their summer programming schedule and event.
2. Update from Will Morrison, Washington Square Park Administrator and the Executive Director of the Washington Square Park Conservancy, on management of Washington Square Park.

**Board Members Present:** Susanna Aaron (Vice Chair); Chris Dignes; Shirley Secunda; Edward Siegel; Benjamin Listman

**Board Members Remote:** Rich Caccappolo (Chair); Ritu Chattree; Frederica Sigel

**Board Members Absent with Notice:**

**Board Members Absent without Notice:**

**Public Members Remote:** Elizabeth Gilmore; Sharon Woolums; Coral Dawson

**Public Members Absent with or without Notice:**

In total, 40 people attended the meeting in person (including guests) with approximately 25 on zoom.

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

#### **1. Update from Robert Atterbury, Executive Vice President – Parks Relationships and Programs for the Hudson River Park on their summer programming schedule and event.**

*Mr. Atterbury first shared Summer Events & Public Programming Highlights scheduled in the park – details can be found here <https://hudsonriverpark.org/visit/events/>*

#### **Educational & Science Events:**

- Submerge Marine Science Festival (Pier 84) is a 2-day annual event (held in May); 1,000+ school kids (mostly Title I schools), 4,500+ public attendees. Includes touch tanks, science exhibits, and wildlife engagement.

- Wet Lab Look-Ins (Pier 40): Research aquarium with live local aquatic life (e.g., horseshoe crabs, seahorses, oysters). Citizen science programs (e.g., oyster monitoring). Held June 4<sup>th</sup>.

- Big City Fishing (Pier 51): Free catch-and-release fishing program with educational support. (Note: a New York State fishing license is not required for fishing at the site discussed.)
- Guided Tours including Nature Walks in the Village and Shoreline Strolls on Gansevoort Peninsula.
- Science After Dark: Adult-targeted education events included “Ask a Scientist”, “Science Stories” (fun fieldwork tales), “Back to School” lecture series – these include beer with admission.

### **Health & Wellness:**

- Healthy on the Hudson: free workout classes (HIIT, yoga, etc.) across multiple piers (25 to 97).
- Dance Is Life (Pier 76): Latin hustle dance nights; ~1,500 attendees weekly.
- Sunset Salsa (Pier 76): popular dance series, growing from ~500 to 2,500 attendees by season’s end.

### **Music & Performing Arts:**

- Jazz at Pier 84 (in partnership with Jazz Foundation)
- Boardwalk Blues (Pier 97)
- Broadway by the Boardwalk (Clinton Cove): 6-week series of intimate performances by current/former Broadway stars.
- Blues & BBQ Festival: In its 23rd year; continues to grow with sponsor support.

### **Special Cultural Events:**

- Juneteenth Celebration (Pier 45): Featuring the “Ladies of Hip Hop” with a retrospective on Black dance.
- Pride Celebration (Pier 45): Dance party featuring DJs and special guest hosts.

### **Family & Kids Engagement:**

- Pop-Up Nature Stations (Playgrounds at Piers 51, 97, Chelsea Waterside): Hands-on, kid-focused learning with educational materials and anatomically correct animal models.
- Gallery at Pier 57: Monthly rotating exhibits (e.g., next topic is crabs). Digital microscopes and interactive science games.
- Note: the anatomically correct sturgeon models at Pier 25’s science playground are educational and display internal organs, including painted eggs, for both shortnose and longnose Atlantic sturgeon.

### **Environmental Engagement:**

- Blue Team Cleanups: Volunteer cleanup efforts on Gansevoort Peninsula. Focus on plastic debris collection and waste monitoring
- Citizen Science: Oyster shell bag reef monitoring, shoreline ecology studies.

*Mr. Atterbury provided an Operations Update. He started by noting the park is now in high season, with heavy use of the esplanade and piers.*

### **Park construction & improvements:**

- Pier 46 turf was replaced (after 10+ years), funded in part by Councilmember Erik Bottcher. Additional improvements: water fountain, bottle filler, concrete, and benches. Was closed for ~4 weeks, now reopened.
- Pier 25 turf will be replaced at the *end of fall season*
- Pier 45 (Christopher Street): New canopies installed, replacing originals from 2002. Steel supports repaired; all lighting upgraded to LED. Last year’s wood decking project was part of this phased refurbishment project. These efforts emphasize need for long-term capital maintenance funding due to aging infrastructure.

**Art restoration:** LGBT memorial cleaned; Pier 40 mural restored; two large tables at 29th Street refurbished.

**New concession at Gansevoort Peninsula:**

- Will be operated by Hudson Plate (Malik Enterprises), a family-owned business from Tribeca.
- Opening fall 2025, offering Mediterranean light fare and grab-and-go items.
- It is a temporary arrangement while market demand is assessed.
- Possibility left open for beer and wine sales in a designated area for adults during games—this will require return review by CB2 SLA.

**Security Incident:** In May, a vehicle entered the park through a Port Authority access point at the Canal Street entrance (Pier 34). Driver was mentally unstable; he struck a person (non-fatal injuries). Vehicle was stopped by bollards; PEP and emergency services responded effectively. Park is working with Port Authority and State DOT to better secure this necessary emergency access point.

**Pride Preparations:**

- Pride Day is one of the busiest and most challenging days for the park. ~8,000–10,000 attendees gather between Piers 45 and 46. Focus is on safety: crush zones, festival EMS, extra lighting, water stations, portalets. It is an unprogrammed public gathering—it is not affiliated with NYC Pride or Empire Pride. No private event permits allowed due to density.
- Park staff perform overnight cleanup.
- Coordination with NYPD and PEP; staff often sleep on site to manage event.
- In the past: Narcan administered to save lives on a few occasions. Team has responded to incidents, e.g., bear spray attacks. Many attendees transported to hospitals for over-intoxication or fights.

**Pier 25 – Fish Research Collaboration:** Installation of a fish receiver ("fish song") just south of CB2 at Pier 25. Part of a NOAA-supported project with national researchers to track tagged fish in the Atlantic using acoustic pings.

**An issue the Park is dealing with now: Running Clubs as a safety concern**

- Hudson River Park is launching a specific permit system to address crowding and safety issues caused by large running groups.
- At peak evening hours (e.g., 6–7:30 PM), as many as 1,000 runners from multiple clubs have used the Village esplanade between Pier 45 and Gansevoort, causing safety hazards and crowding.
- Runners in clubs often run 3–4 abreast, creating obstructions and making it difficult for others (e.g., pedestrians, those with mobility impairments) to use the park safely.
- Permit enforcement challenges: Difficult to stop runners once in motion. Organizers sometimes avoid rules by informally organizing via platforms like Instagram. Some run clubs hold corporate-sponsored events with giveaways (e.g., Nike), raising concerns about unauthorized marketing / park privatization.
- Though there are issues, the park is lowering barriers (e.g., fees) to encourage clubs to register and work cooperatively, with goals to launch runs in waves; prevent monopolization of space; and maintain user safety and enjoyment for all.

*Mr. Atterbury closed by reminding us that Community Engagement with the park staff is encouraged: Community members are encouraged to report issues or observations (email: [info@hrpt.ny.gov](mailto:info@hrpt.ny.gov) or via their 24/7 operations line). Park staff and seasonal teams are actively monitoring incoming reports.*

In response to a question, Mr. Atterbury discussed the Route 9A (West Side Highway) Redesign Study being conducted by the NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) for the Battery to West 59th St. Note: the bikeway alongside the highway is under state, jurisdiction and is not part of Hudson River Park. The park is a key stakeholder, however, and has provided stakeholder input and promoted engagement sessions and has posted signage throughout the park to alert the public to engagement opportunities. The study is still in the early conceptual phase, seeking community input on goals and concerns before moving to design solutions.

In response to a question following up on a topic our committee discussed in February about Pier 40, Mr. Atterbury addressed the RFP (Request for Proposals) for the indoor space at Pier 40, which for 25 years has been operated by the P3 baseball organization. Atterbury said that the RFP submission period closed mid-April, and that HRPT is now in the selection process. A conditional award may be made in June.

## **2. Update from Will Morrison, Washington Square Park Administrator and the Executive Director of the Washington Square Park Conservancy, on management of Washington Square Park.**

*Will Morrison, Washington Square Park Administrator and Executive Director of the Washington Square Park Conservancy, provided an update on park activities and announced a licensing deal with NYC Department of Parks and Recreation:*

**He started by discussing the Village Interagency Task Force** which is a mayoral and district attorney-led initiative addressing quality-of-life issues in and around the park, especially the troubled northwest corner.

- It is co-chaired by community members Vanessa Warren, Brian Maloney, and Scott Hobbs.
- It includes 16 government agencies and four subgroups: Legislative, Enforcement, Infrastructure, and Programming.
- Since January: 2,800+ needles removed. 15,000+ bags of debris cleaned up. 139 social service engagements by Parks Enforcement.
- Also, the Conservancy has expanded programming in the NW corner area: Artist residency now 3 days/week. New events: Scrabble tournaments, knitting and crocheting classes. Potential future programming includes a vegan night market.

Mr. Morrisey then discussed **Artist Policy Advocacy**: acknowledging community member / artist Konami for organizing artists and submitting a formal policy proposal to the Parks Department. The proposal is under internal review, and updates will be shared once available (more details below).

**Mr. Morrison announced a new License Agreement Between NYC Parks & the Washington Square Park Conservancy**: After 13 years of informal collaboration, a formal 5-year license agreement has been signed. He stated that this brings Washington Square Park in line with other NYC conservancy-managed parks like Central Park and Prospect Park.

- Key points of the agreement:

- \$1.1M+ will be contributed annually from the Conservancy to fund staff positions (employees of NYC DPR, not private employees).
- Supports maintenance, horticulture, enforcement, and programming.

- Enables larger capital planning, e.g., renovating two long-neglected playgrounds.
- Conservancy can now fundraise in the park (up to 4 designated events per year, limited in scope and not park-wide).
- Funds raised from bench adoptions and other efforts will go directly to Washington Square Park, not citywide.
- Formalizes Conservancy's role in hosting free public programming and volunteer events.

- Governance & Transparency:

- Mr. Morrison clarified that private fundraising events will never close the entire park, only limited areas.
- He committed to providing public access to the license agreement once cleared by legal.
- To summarize, Mr. Morrison stated that this move reflects a strengthened public-private partnership aimed at improving park operations, programming, and long-term capital investment.  
Some community board members at the meeting praised the Conservancy for its work and fundraising and for maintaining transparency and protecting the public character of the park.

**Mr. Morrison responded to a question about the relationship with NYU:**

- No formal agreement between NYU and the Parks Dept. regarding student gatherings.
- NYU does donate to the Conservancy already; hope is it will donate more now, i.e., the license agreement is expected to strengthen this relationship and possibly encourage larger contributions.
- If NYU donates to the Parks Department, the funds are not necessarily earmarked for WSP. However, if it donates to the Conservancy, those funds go directly to WSP.

**He shared information on city funding and budget transparency:**

- Parks Department funding to the park should remain the same post-license agreement. The city will not reduce its funding portion to rely on the Conservancy. Of course, there are no guarantees the city won't cut Parks Dept. budgets.
- Conservancy can hold the city accountable for maintaining budget levels.
- A formal budget for park operations will now be developed, separating city and Conservancy funds.
- Goal: Allow the public to understand how much it costs to operate the park and ensure funding.

**Mr. Morrison also explained other revenue streams and programs that help fund the park:**

- Adopt-a-Tree Guard Program: Not well known—only one currently in the park. A potential fundraising and stewardship opportunity.
- Film Shoot Fees: Now directly benefit Washington Square Park, a known film destination.
- Concessions: Thiru ("Dosa Man") and another cart in the fountain plaza operate under DPR agreements. Plus, an RFP (Request for Proposals) has been issued for a concession at the northwest corner to promote positive space use.

**Mr. Morrison discussed park maintenance & improvements:**

- Children's Park (NE corner): Previously a mosquito-prone area. Cobblestones added to raise ground

level—issue significantly improved.

- Volunteer support was used for the fix; future improvements are prepped if needed.

**Mr. Morrison discussed staffing and growth, noting that the Conservancy is expanding its team and the resources for the park:**

- Hired a deputy director, development associate.
- Hired two seasonal coordinators (volunteering & programming).
- Intern program continues.
- Future staffing increases anticipated to meet growing needs.

**The meeting was opened to questions from attendees. Core Themes:**

- Transparency & Process: community member Catherine Swan expressed feelings of being blindsided by lack of a public hearing or clear meeting agenda language.
- Privatization Concerns: they expressed concern over whether the agreement signals privatization.
- Governance & Trust: Tension emerged in a debate between a few attendees over differing visions for the park's management and evolving roles of private entities in public spaces.
- Fiscal Stability: Some board members saw value in securing non-city funding through Conservancy involvement.

**More details on opinions expressed by Catherine Swan, who raised** objections to the Washington Square Park Conservancy receiving a license agreement from the city without prior public hearing or Community Board input. Her key points included these:

- Violation of process and lack of transparency, which she said contradicts established procedure and past resolutions.
- Assertions that this concern was raised 12 years ago (2013) when the Conservancy was created, and that a resolution was passed by the Community Board at that time rejecting such formal licensing. She criticized current members, especially those who were also present in 2013, for acting as though the history is irrelevant or forgotten. She accuses board members of “pretending none of that happened” and not holding the Conservancy accountable to the board’s earlier stance. A copy of CB2’s June 2013 resolution can be found on page 12 [here](#). (Note that the stipulation made at that time that the park would never have a license agreement with the city was made by then Commissioner William Castro of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and is noted in the Whereas section of the resolution; it is not in the “Therefore be it resolved” section of the resolution. Hence, we cannot assume that it was a matter of importance to our committee’s approval of the Washington Square Park Conservancy. The claim that this stipulation was a requirement demanded by the community is not clear. In the resolution, the point is made in reference to the role the Conservancy would play; DPR would maintain its authority and operational jurisdiction over the park.)
- Privatization and Community Access. Ms. Swan is deeply concerned about the "privatization" of Washington Square Park, stating that it was always valued for being distinct from more corporatized parks. Though admitting that privatization has not happened as she and others feared when started 12 years ago, she suggested that public input and discussions have diminished since the Conservancy was formed, leading to less transparency and oversight.
- She also criticized the agenda for labeling the issue as “management of the park,” which she believes minimized the gravity of what is actually a formal licensing agreement with wide-reaching implications.

**In response, some committee members defended an evolving perspective:**

- Noting the Conservancy was new and unproven in 2013. Over 12 years, "things change" and the

board and community may choose to adapt. Past positions may not necessarily dictate current policy.

- Some expressed opinion that the Conservancy has truly followed through on its pledges and has delivered funding and assistance. The speakers expressed appreciation for the work the Conservancy has done.
- Some long-serving committee members acknowledged the 2013 resolution and suggested financial prudence should be a motivating factor now, as city budgets are uncertain and community-based support (via partnerships) may help sustain park operations in difficult times, as the benefits of the Conservancy have been shown.
- More specifically, a potential cut in federal support to the city could lead to reallocation of city funds — possibly away from parks. Community-based funding will help mitigate this risk.

**Mr. Morrison emphasized the significant financial contributions made by the Conservancy to Washington Square Park - \$11.5 million raised to date - and explained that funds raised by the Conservancy go directly to programming and staff, including city-employed park workers who maintain cleanliness, safety, and horticulture.**

- The Conservancy’s model of funding actual NYC Parks Department employees, allowing those workers to receive full city benefits, such as pensions and health insurance — a significant distinction from other nonprofits that hire their own staff without such benefits.
- Without a license agreement, donations like “adopt-a-bench” often benefit the city’s general fund, not the specific park. With a license agreement in place, every donated dollar will go directly to Washington Square Park, aligning donor intent with impact.
- He noted the social impact of having consistent, well-funded programming in the park, especially given ongoing challenges like drug activity in the northwest corner. Community-funded programming helps provide a positive presence even when broader governmental solutions are lacking.
- He also noted the support that WSPC has given to small local parks that don’t have the private support of a conservancy, such as Golden Swan.

**NYC Parks and Recreation Department Manhattan Commissioner Tricia Shimamura** joined the conversation to state her support for the licensing agreement and she clarified that

- The park remains city property.
- License agreements do not privatize public parks but formalize partnerships.

**Mr. Morrison then went back to the topic of artist policy in the park.**

A representative of the artists, Konami, conveyed concern over delayed action on requests for clarification of performance rules, including frustration over lack of progress on a proposal submitted months ago related to rule change for performances in Washington Square Park (e.g., sound levels, speaker use). She expressed urgency due to the upcoming summer season, which typically sees increased park activity and enforcement.

- Mr. Morrissey and Commissioner Shimamura acknowledged the delays and explained they are due to organizational transitions (e.g., new leadership, staff turnover), i.e., no ill intent but slow internal processes.
- They also noted the requests in the submitted proposal implied citywide rule changes not just limited to Washington Square Park. Konami offered to meet directly with Parks Department officials to explain the intent behind the proposal.
- Regarding current enforcement guidance
  - No changes in current enforcement policy toward performers.
  - Performers may remain under the arch unless a permitted event displaces them. They may seek the help of officers if they are being displaced by people who do not have a permitted event.

- Performers are encouraged to check the event calendar or speak directly to park staff or officers for clarity.
- Konami reiterated the importance of consistent and clear rules and standards—distinguishing performers from vendors, setting decibel/time limits, etc. with the goal being clarity and fairness, not eliminating enforcement.
- Our committee supports these efforts, reiterating that there is currently no formal update from Parks and hopes the issues can be clarified in time for summer season.
- Attendees inquired if the proposal document can be shared; it will be made available through the district manager.

Respectfully submitted,

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