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COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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Hon. Tricia Shimamura
Commissioner
NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
The Arsenal
830 Fifth Avenue
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Steve Simon
Manhattan Chief of Staff
NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
The Arsenal West
24 West 61st Street
New York, NY 10023

William Morrison
Administrator, Washington Square Park
NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
200 Washington Square
New York, NY 10012

Honorable Commissioner Shimamura and Messrs. Simon and Morrison:

At its Full Board meeting on Thursday, May 21, 2026, Community Board 2 Manhattan adopted the following resolution.

Resolution Requesting the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to produce and present to alternatives to the French barricade system currently employed to enforce closure of Washington Square Park

WHEREAS:

1. The policy of New York City's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is to close Washington Square Park (WSP) each night, as is done with all NYC parks.
2. DPR's policy is to close WSP nightly from midnight to 6am (which is posted on signs throughout the park) to enhance public safety, protect park infrastructure and manage resources.
3. Trespassers are subject to a police summons and fine, though patrols typically just notify those found in the park after hours that the park is closed and ask them to leave.
4. DPR currently communicates and enforces closure at WSP by means of temporary French barricades, typically locking them together and to the fences. At the Arch entrance on the north

side of the park where Fifth Avenue terminates, the opening in the fence, which is 100' feet wide, is secured by placing a long, interlocked chain of French barricades.

5. The French barricades are not in keeping with the architectural design of WSP, which lies within a historic district. The French barricades are often haphazardly stored when the park is open. They are leaned against the fences next to the entrances during the day, they require personnel to install and remove them each evening and morning and, when the park is closed, they are easily dislodged and toppled when placed in the entrances, providing deniability to after-hours users who claim to be unaware that the park is not open.
6. Gates were an original element of the city-approved renovation design of WSP in 2005, but the renovation project itself was seen as controversial by some members of the community and DPR removed the gates from the final project as a means of compromise.
7. The temporary French barriers have been used to close the park for decades, despite recognition during the redesign of the park, presented and approved in 2005, that there should be landmarks approved design features incorporated into the park design. Therefore, the temporary nature of the French barricades allows landmark's regulations to be circumvented.
8. The question of installing a more permanent method for closure of WSP has been discussed at CB2 meetings several times since the park was renovated and new fences were installed, in or around 2005.
9. This committee has discussed the need to enforce park rules, including nightly park closure and means of doing so, in resolutions passed by the full CB2 board in July 2014 and April 2016.
10. In the wake of the Covid era, WSP has experienced waves of disruptive behavior after hours that have generated complaints to various City agencies, including the NYPD 6th precinct's Community Council and the Village Interagency Task Force. This behavior includes after-hours parties, music, fireworks, sleeping overnight, and drug use, including drug overdoses, all of which have led to renewed interest in the question of whether the existing chained temporary French barricade closures are effective both at safeguarding the public's enjoyment of the park and in communicating that the park is closed.
11. At the same time, Washington Square Park is renowned for its open atmosphere, lively groups of people, music and artistic expression, and there is concern that gates would interfere with this "vibe" that is so much a part of the character of the Park and the culture of Greenwich Village.
12. The redesign of WSP in 2005 was meant to further integrate the park into the neighborhood, and hence the fence around the park's perimeter was intentionally kept of low height. That open feeling should be reflected in the design of any park closure, with the goal of clearly conveying when the park is closed and hindering entry without preventing it.
13. Some members of our community believe that closing the park more efficiently, more effectively, and in a way that is aesthetically more in keeping with the design will not address the broader issues and underlying causes that lead to drug use and homelessness.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT COMMUNITY BOARD 2, MANHATTAN REQUESTS THAT:

1. DPR undertake the effort and expense to produce and present to the community alternatives to the temporary French barricade system that is currently employed to enforce closure of the park that align with the needs of DPR to operate and maintain Washington Square Park.
2. These alternatives be sensitive to community concerns, which include safety, inclusivity, efficacy, budget, and aesthetics in a historic district.
3. These alternatives run the gamut from simple chains with a "park closed" sign to more substantial and ornate gates that align with the historic design of the existing fence.

4. In support of the need for more effective means of closing the park in the overnight hours, both DPR and NYPD provide information and data that confirm the need for any form of blockade or obstruction at all to enforce closing hours as well as the manpower used to install and remove the French barricades each day and patrol the park each night because they are so easily and frequently dislodged.
5. DPR provide cost estimates and potential funding sources for each of the proposed designs it presents.

Vote: Passed, with 23 in favor, 6 opposed (K. Berger, A. Brenna, C. Dignes, M. Fitzgerald, S. Gammie, P. Laraia), and no abstentions or recusals.

CB2M respectfully requests that the Department take action consistent with the positions expressed above.

Respectfully submitted –



Valerie De La Rosa
Chair, Community Board 2 Manhattan



Rich Caccappolo
Chair, CB2M Parks & Recreation Committee

Copy: Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Harvey Epstein, NYC Council, District 2
Hon. Brian Kavanagh, NYS Senate, District 27
Hon. Deborah Glick, NYS Assembly, District 66