



CITY OF NEW YORK  
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**JESSICA CHAIT**

Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**

District Manager

January 24, 2025

Sue Donohue  
Commissioner  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation  
830 5th Avenue  
New York, NY 10065

Edwin Falcon  
Deputy Inspector, Parks Enforcement  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation  
830 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
New York, NY 10065

**Re: Parks Enforcement Patrol**

Dear Commissioner Donohue & Mr. Falcon,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee would like to thank NYC Parks, especially Edwin Falcon, the Director of Parks Enforcement Patrol, for attending the November 14<sup>th</sup> meeting to provide an update on Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) staffing and services.

By a Full Board vote of 40 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions and 1 present not eligible, MCB4 approves the following comments:

Our district is home to 16 NYC parks, playgrounds and open spaces, some of the fewest (per area ratio) in the city. This highlights how important and essential our open spaces are to the residents and visitors in the neighborhood. Unfortunately, heightened in the last few years, we have seen our parks utilized in many ways outside of their intended use including drug use and sales, fencing goods, syringe disposal, food vending and open use of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis products. (See photos attached.)

Our members were surprised to hear that the Manhattan South Parks district, spanning from Battery Park to 59<sup>th</sup> Street, only employs five PEP staff (three officers, one captain and one sergeant). For 181 NYC run parks, gardens & open spaces in the Midtown South district, including the sixteen in MCB4 territory, it is shocking there are only five PEP officers expected to cover this broad catchment area. Furthermore, these five officers are only employed for one daily tour, the 9:30am - 6:00pm shift, outside

of hours where enforcement officers are arguably needed most, at dusk, park closing and park opening hours.

The need for more PEP staff has been highlighted by MCB4 before, most recently as a priority ask in our current Statement of District Needs, but the current deterioration of our parks' conditions require more urgent attention. Parks maintenance staff is not expected to engage with those groups or individuals participating in illicit activity and many times require the assistance of PEP officers to accomplish routine upkeep services. For example, Parks maintenance staff is tasked with locking up the parks at closing. Park gates cannot be locked if individuals are still in the park and maintenance staff is not equipped nor trained to usher people out of the park, which has the potential to escalate into a combative situation. This results in unfettered, overnight park access inviting proscribed activity. The assistance from PEP officers in these instances would be significant but with a shift end-time of 6:30, PEPs support is not even an option. Therefore, MCB4 requests the following:

- Considerably more PEP staff hired to adequately cover the vast amount of NYC Park areas in the Manhattan South district
- PEP officers' daily assignment include determined "hot spots" in the MCB4 area
- PEP officer shifts include parks morning opening times and more essential closing times

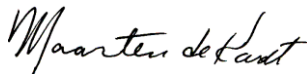
The current amount of PEPs personnel is woefully inadequate supported by Director Falcon's assessments that Parks is "seeing more calls for PEPs" and "Hell's Kitchen (parks) has been an issue...seeing more drug use in parks." In discussing conditions with Parks' staff when visiting parks in our district, they almost always identify more PEPs support as a priority desire.

Our request comes with the understanding of PEPs responsibilities. Their ability to write summons and arrest authority will help keep order in our parks. MCB4 also understands Parks recently created a Chief Enforcement Officer position who is a Deputy Inspector with the New York Police Department and will work closely with the NYPD regarding any more serious concerns. We look forward to seeing the results of this new connection and how it impacts safety in the parks.

Sincerely,



Jessica Chait  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4



Maarten de Kadt  
Co-Chair  
Waterfront, Parks & Environment  
Committee



Leslie Boghosian Murphy  
Co-Chair  
Waterfront, Parks & Environment  
Committee

Enclosure

CC: Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member  
Tricia Shimamura, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC Parks & Recreation



*A makeshift tattoo parlor at Mathews Palmer Playground*



*Drug activity midday at McCaffrey Playground*