



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND**  
Chair

**ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.**  
District Manager

October 10, 2007

Commissioner Adrian Benepe  
NYC Department of Parks & Recreation  
The Arsenal  
Central Park  
830 5th Avenue  
New York, NY 10021

**Re: Renaming of May Matthews Playground**

Dear Commissioner Benepe,

Recently, NYC Department of Parks & Recreation renamed May Matthews Playground to Matthews-Palmer Playground. Both the timing of this move, as well as the process, were unfortunate in that notice of the proposed renaming was not brought to the attention of Manhattan Community Board No 4 in sufficient time for it to be reviewed by the Board or the community.

The Waterfront & Parks committee had reviewed a request about two years prior from some residents (fans of Alex Palmer) to rename the park the May Matthews / Alex Palmer Playground, and we had not voted to approve this name at that time for several reasons, including its length as well as the precedent of adding to or renaming parks every time a dedicated park volunteer passed away.

Upon hearing about the shorter proposed name ("Mathews-Palmer Playground") some Board members might have had fewer objections, but, again, there was never an opportunity for this to be placed on a public agenda for discussion. As we discovered, there were more than a handful who were opposed to the renaming, including residents of long standing in the neighborhood. The issue was subsequently placed on our September 13<sup>th</sup> agenda, but too late for any meaningful discussion, as we were told that the renaming would take place in any case on the day following (September 14<sup>th</sup>).

At this time we will never know what position the Board would have taken. However, the Board feels that, whatever the outcome, the process was flawed. As much as we and the neighborhood we represent have strong opinions about a variety of neighborhood issues, the Board feels that a

better process should be devised regarding proposed renaming of public parks to ensure that everyone concerned, local residents in particular, have a chance to make their opinions known before such a decision is made. Apparently there is no current requirement on the part of DPR to consult with the Board regarding the naming or renaming of parks, as these is with regard to secondary street signs, sidewalk cafes and many other matters of concern to the community. However, a bit more foresight on the part of DPR in bringing this to our attention would have made this action much smoother, and would have avoided the occasion for us to write this letter.

We ask that if, in the future, a proposal such as the renaming of a public park within Community District 4 is considered, whatever the reason, that DPR formally advise the CB4 in a timely manner, which, based on our normal rotation of committee meetings and subsequent full Board meetings, should be 45 days at a minimum. We thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland  
Chair



John Doswell  
Chair, Waterfronts and Parks

C.c.

Elke Fears, West 46/47<sup>th</sup> Streets Block Associations  
Darrick Sampson, West 46<sup>th</sup> Street Block Association  
Borough Commissioner Castro, Department of Parks and Recreation  
Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer  
Senator Thomas Duane  
Assembly member Richard Gottfried  
Councilmember Christine Quinn  
Member of Congress Jerrold Nadler  
Councilmember Gale Brewer