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Daniel Miller, *First Vice Chair*
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Antony Wong, *Treasurer*
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COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

3 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE

NEW YORK, NY 10012-1899

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February 24, 2020

William T. Castro
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
Arsenal West 24 West 61st Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10023

Dear Manhattan Borough Commissioner Castro:

At its Full Board meeting on February 20, 2020, Community Board #2, adopted the following resolution:

A Resolution Regarding the Proposed Design of the Interim Renovation of Mercer Playground

Whereas:

1. A proposed design for the interim renovation of Mercer Playground, which is located on Mercer St. between Bleecker and West 3rd Streets, was presented to our committee by Ricardo Hinkle, Senior Landscape Architect for the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR), on behalf of DPR and NYU; and
2. NYU pledged funding the NYC park as part of its Core Plan which was agreed upon as part of NYU's development projects in the area; and
3. The current budget for the Mercer Playground renovation is \$385,000; \$350,000 for construction costs and \$35,000 to design, some or all of which has already been spent; and
4. The proposed design was based on comments and discussion captured during a March 27, 2019, scoping session that was run by DPR and attended by 70+ local residents who provided input on their desires for the redesigned space; and
5. The designs presented focus on re-structuring the central play area and do not include redesign of the sections on the north or south ends of that central area; and
6. The stated goals of the design are to make the park more inviting by using color to bring it to life; protecting the existing trees and canopy; implementing new, more welcoming, 4 ft wide gates within the (rarely opened) 17 ft gates required by the NYFD fire code for truck access; resurfacing the play space; re-grading the play space to eliminate puddling; and including colorful geometric shapes painted on the ground which would be used to delineate areas for street games and a bike / scooter path; and new fences and gates; and
7. Though appreciative of Mr. Hinkle's efforts, most of the committee and the local residents were disappointed by the proposed design; and
8. Issues raised included:
 - a. concerns with the proximity of the bike path to the proposed game areas, and

- b. the design of the benches, proposed and existing (with no dividers) which could allow people to sleep on them, increasing the risk of homeless encampments developing, and
 - c. specific colors chosen for re-painting the wall (“red is not calming”), and
9. The overriding disappointment was the limited scope of the renovation, specifically the lack of inclusion of the sections on both ends of the central space – the passive area to the south and the sprinkler area to the north - spaces that have been cited as locations that have driven quality-of-life complaints; there was concern that piecemeal renovation would undermine the opportunity for improving the playground overall; and
 10. DPR explained that the limited budget for the renovation project limits the scope of the redesign to include to just the central play area section, and limits what can be done within that section; and
 11. Community members asked about obtaining additional funding from elected officials, and if private donations were secured, whether they could be accepted in order to expand the budget and the scope; and
 12. A request was made for a breakdown of how the existing budget is being allocated in the design; and
 13. The opinions of our committee and other attendees conveyed hope that the central play space renovation design could be improved and implemented while, in parallel, efforts to find additional budget to expand the scope are undertaken.

Therefore, Be it Resolved that CB 2, Manhattan:

1. Appreciates the funding provided by NYU and the efforts of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to renovate the central play area of Mercer Playground; and
2. Requests that the proposed and presented design be updated to reflect the recommendations and concerns expressed at this meeting; and
3. Requests details on how the existing \$350K construction budget is planned to be allocated; and
4. Requests implementation of an updated design, notwithstanding the concern that the scope is more limited than desired; and
5. Requests that, in parallel to the forward progress of implementing this plan, the NYC Parks Department in conjunction with NYU develop a master plan be designed for the entire playground - including the adjoining passive area to the south and sprinkler area to the north and keyed access to the adjacent Key Park – while efforts to secure additional funding to expand the budget are undertaken.

VOTE: Unanimous, with 41 Board Members in favor.

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Carter Booth, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Richard Caccappolo, Chair
Parks & Waterfront Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

CB/JT

c:

Hon. Jerrold Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Brad Hoylman, NYS Senator
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, NYS Assembly Member
Hon. Gale Brewer, Man. Borough President
Hon. Margaret Chin, NYC Councilmember

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William T. Castro
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
Arsenal West 24 West 61st Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10023

Dear Manhattan Borough Commissioner Castro:

At its Full Board meeting on February 20, 2020, Community Board #2, adopted the following resolution:

Resolution In Support of the Proposal to Honor Raymond “Ray” Pagan at James J. Walker Park

Whereas:

1. Raymond “Ray” Pagan, a legendarily influential coach and mentor in lower Manhattan and beyond, worked as a director for more than 39 years (1976 to 2015) at Tony Dapolito Recreation Center at Clarkson St. and Seventh Ave. South, next to James J Walker Park; and
2. Mr. Pagan coached a great many boys’ and girls’ teams in several different sports, both in the Rec Center and on the ballfield; and
3. Mr. Pagan passed away September 26, 2017; and
4. Some members of the community who played for, worked with, and organized alongside Mr. Pagan have made a proposal to honor him and his legacy; and
5. Their request to the Department of Parks and Recreation is to name the field within James J Walker Park in Mr. Pagan’s honor and mark it with a sign or plaque; and
6. Some members of our community have expressed concern that the park itself not be renamed; and
7. The name of the park would remain James J. Walker Park, and this proposal would name only the ballfield, with the title “Ray Pagan Field at James J Walker Park”; and
8. Several attendees at our meeting passionately conveyed their support for the proposal and explained Mr. Pagan’s impact on their lives and on our community; and
9. Council Member Carlina Rivera has submitted a letter in support for the application to honor Mr. Pagan; and
10. DPR informed us that the Parks Department Commissioner will would weigh this proposal and would consider community support in the decision process.

Therefore, Be it Resolved that CB 2, Manhattan:

1. Thanks the community members who have brought this proposal to our attention; and

2. Appreciates the stories, memories, and recollections that conveyed Mr. Pagan's impact and influence; and
3. Supports this effort to honor the legacy of Ray Pagan; and
4. Appreciates consideration of this proposal by the Commissioner of the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation.

VOTE: Passed, with 40 Board Members in favor and 1 in opposition (R. Sanz).

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Carter Booth, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Richard Caccappolo, Chair
Parks & Waterfront Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

CB/JT

c: Hon. Jerrold Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Brad Hoylman, NYS Senator
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, NYS Assembly Member
Hon. Gale Brewer, Man. Borough President
Hon. Corey Johnson, NYC Council Speaker