

ESCR CAG Meeting Summary -- June 3, 2021
via Zoom

CAG members present (in bold)

Anthony (Tony) Rivera Ayo Harrington Camille Napoleon Charles Krezell Chris Collins Christine Bookin Christine Datz-Romero Damaris Reyes Daphne Williams Dereese Huff	Dianne Lake Ditashiah Kohn Michael Marino Dov Goldman Felicia Cruickshank Frank Avila-Goldman Freddina Fulton Wendy Brawer Robin Schatell Martin Barrett Mercedes Harvell	Mike Arnon Kyle Athayde Nancy Ortiz Paul Burke Peter Davis Richard Heitler Sam Moskowitz Seth Coren Susan Steinberg Trever Holland
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DDC presentation

(Link to presentation slides: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/escr/downloads/pdf/escr-cag-meeting-10-20210603.pdf>)

1) *Overview of Contracts*

Jeffrey: Procurement continues to move forward with PA1 (Project Area 1); its contract was awarded. Permits will be extended, and the park will stay open until the end of August 2021.

a. Q&A

Ayo: Has there been progress on communication with the Parks Department regarding priority for permits for leagues and teams that are currently in the area now that the closing has been pushed forward to a later date?

Jeffrey: Noted that concerns were shared with Parks and they do prioritize the local leagues for those fields. I can't speak beyond that in terms on how they process the permits.

Ayo: I'm not sure the leagues are aware that the time for permits have been extended. Ayo noted that she will follow-up with the Parks Borough Commissioner.

Dianne: What is the status of the lawsuit with the contractors? Was it resolved?

Jeffrey: The lawsuit is still ongoing and has not been resolved, however procurement is allowed to move forward.

Wendy: Back in December, while we were meeting there was a soil report by AKRF, and we've now had time to look through it. In the recommendations, it says, "access to public recreational facilities and areas undergoing construction for the proposed ESCR Project should be restricted to the public to ensure all necessary safety protocols are adequately met." There are only three to four recommendations in this document. Given that the soil report includes lots of information on exceedances... How much of the material is being removed from the park?

Desiree: My understanding is that it's different throughout PA1. If we want to have a conversation around that report, it would be best if we come in with more information on that topic at the next meeting.

Wendy: Tell us more about how the outgoing and incoming fill will be handled

Tara: Send us (Pratt Center) an email and we can work through this.

Wendy: 42% of the park is expected to be open (during construction). Is this adjacent to areas under construction?

Ophelia: The team on right now is not equipped to answer your questions but we will consult with our soil consultant and get back to you. We will have all this information to you—it may take some time to get this data. We're doing our best to get this information to you.

Wendy: I would like this information by the July meeting.

Christine: Following up on the contract, what does that really mean that it's been awarded?

Jeffrey: The award of the contract is the last step before it goes to the comptroller for registration. Now we have to get the contract ready for registration, then the comptroller has 30 days to come back with questions or to register it, and then the process proceeds with notice to start construction.

Damaris: I feel that most of us are here in good faith to be able to get answers and provide some level of community oversight when it comes to this project which we all know has a controversial history. Many of us have a lot of obligations, so when we set aside an hour and a half of our time to come here so that we can get answers we don't want our time wasted. I

understand that people need time to prepare. I'm going to ask of the City to work with us that, when you make a commitment to the CAG, you circle back to us.

Wendy: Wondering if Pier 42 construction is stalled out. Are there any updates on this?

Tara: The barrier will need to remain in place as they are beginning construction on the broader area soon.

Wendy: Runners are reporting that it is very dusty at Pier 42. Is there a plan for that?

Tara: We can reach out to EDC about this.

Wendy: When does the parallel conveyance start?

Jeffrey: 6-9 months for conveyance. I don't know the exact start date.

2) *Construction Progress: Sequencing of Work for PA2*

Desiree: There was a concern that perhaps the sequence of construction wasn't exactly illustrated very well, so we wanted to take a few minutes to go through what that looks like for PA2. For the construction sequence, once they start getting out to the site, the first thing is the test pits to locate the utilities and make sure that, before they start, they know where everything is. The second step is utility work. She then discussed the next steps as illustrated in the slides.

3) *Construction Progress: PA2 Updates*

4) *Community Engagement*

Desiree: We hope everyone got an opportunity to read the newsletter. We've been working on the translation of our materials and now it's been translated in Chinese and Spanish. We're very excited about that and will share a link with Pratt to then share it.

Desiree: We are very happy to announce that we are going to begin the call for art for the decorative construction fencing. We have some signs up on the fencing already. There's information on the website. We'll distribute our draft plan for this project. Submissions are due July 16. The art will appear in PA1 and PA2.

5) *What We've Heard*

Desiree: There's no update this month on composting, and the relevant City representatives on that issue aren't currently here. We had several funding questions that we received, and they are currently under City review: we're hoping for those answers very soon.

Ophelia: A piece of good news: we got approval from the City for our response to the CAG's letter about local hiring/workforce concerns. I'll send it to Pratt. In terms of additional funding for other items, we're hoping to get answers soon. We're also tying up some items to get ready to respond to the CAG's letter re: environmental monitoring. We appreciate your patience and continuing to work with us.

Desiree: We have calls with Pratt every other week and they're our conduits between our CAG meetings. We encourage CAG members to reach out to submit your questions and thoughts so we can better address them in our meetings

6) Q&A

Martin: It was decided that we would be able to have our annual concert series that will be starting in a couple of weeks. The schedule is currently being made. Can you post the schedule in the newsletter and wherever?

Desiree: We're certainly happy to talk to you about that offline.

Charles: Who is reviewing the environmental letter? What complaints have you received regarding phase two construction?

Ophelia: DDC and HNTB-LiRo are reviewing and drafting responses, and then they need to be fully vetted by City agencies and City Hall before we can send the final response to the CAG. We've received one noise complaint; the contractor is very cognizant of the community and trying to be mindful of noise mitigation and traffic impacts.

Wendy: [Questions about submitting things to be added the newsletter]

Desiree: If we are completing an activity in conjunction with Solar One, then potentially. The newsletter is quarterly, so it may not be part of the same timeframe, but I think we can have ongoing conversations with Solar One to see how the project and the community can work together.

Wendy: What is the squirrel and wildlife plan? This question was asked last meeting.

Desiree: We'll have to circle back with Tara and Paula because we did get answers to these questions. Maybe we'll have to circle back and make sure

everyone has all the responses. (*Update: This occurred shortly after the meeting.*)

Wendy: LES Breathe, a group under East River Park Action, had acquired five air monitors to place in the community and that they would have a website showing live readings. She asked if the newsletter could include a link to that website.

Desiree: Requested the question be submitted in an official inquiry so it could be discussed further.

CAG-only portion

1) *Recording and posting of CAG meetings moving forward*

Paula: The CAG vote was in favor to post these meetings online after the fact, so we will be adopting this practice this month and moving forward.

2) *Draft letter re: Lower East Side Ecology Center concerns*

Christine: I drafted a letter that I would like the CAG to submit to the City, outstanding questions that we don't get straight answers to from the City has, and try to give a little bit of background / back story. We outlined the items, asked questions, and then made our requests.

The first one is the compost yard: the request is to return it to its original location, and that operations should be allowed to continue for as long as possible. The City is looking to secure a temporary relocation, but the site identified in Canarsie, Brooklyn is half the size of the current location and inadequate for our needs. We need to continue to offer this program, which is dear and near to many people in this community.

The second issue is the Fire Boat House. Again, there is a rich history of us working with the Parks Department and DDC to think about how we can adapt this asset to make it a functioning location for East River Park once opened after construction. I want to emphasize that this is the building that has location and space to run stewardship and environmental education programs. We need to understand how this building will be fixed up to meet those needs. We aren't seeing the City making much effort to communicate with us about the plans, and very concerned that this building will not be finished when construction is done because of the little movement in fixing up this facility. The letter has a set of requests related to that.

The third main issue concerns our license agreement. We understand we need to move out of this park but, we ask that the City guarantee our return and the best way to guarantee this is to extend our license agreement.

Martin: It's a great letter, very important. I think that Steve Simon (Chief of Staff to the Manhattan Borough Commissioner of Parks) may be able to get some answers.

Tara: When we send the letter, we'll cc the local elected officials and sister City agencies.

Martin: The community should be very much involved. You should try to have your Community Board's parks committee talk about this too.

Christine: We had a Community Board meeting last month and people from the Mayor's Office and Department of Sanitation were there, but there often seems to be one department missing. At CAG meetings it seems to be the Parks Department that's missing.

Martin: Go to the Public Advocate if you can't get answers.

Wendy: I think the letter is great. Why didn't you include the final design of the compost yard?

Ayo: I haven't had a chance to look over this earlier, but the only thing I would do is put less background in it. I would make it simple; they know the history.

Borough President Brewer: What about the solo site in Community Board 6 for the compost location?

Christine: We are working on inviting people to see our current operations. Someone brought up the idea of police towing area at Pier 76 that was closed—it's a six-acre site.

Gale: The solo site is vacant, and they have no plan for it whatsoever.

Christine: We're working on that but haven't made much headway.

Paula: CAG Members will have until June 9th to make comments and/or edits to letter and/or to vote on sending it to the City.

3) *CAG newsletter idea*

Paula: At last month's meeting we brought up the idea of a CAG newsletter to better engage with the community. I followed up in an email and reminded y'all about the idea, and only one of you – Damaris -- expressed interest. Pratt Center could lend a lot of support to this, so I'd like to put out another call to see if there's interest in this.

Martin: Unless you have information and people to write it, it would be problematic to put out one edition and not to see it again.

Tara: We need more CAG participation on that content end of things, but in terms of design and putting a template together Pratt can help on that. But yes, we need to make sure there is adequate content and frequency.

Tara: In the interim, we asked DDC to provide a separate page to access CAG-specific information. Here is the link: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/escr/project-updates/community-advisory-group.page>.

Damaris: I'm in general support of a newsletter and can lend support to structure and content. There is general information and education that people will need. I guess some of us will share it with our participants or members. People need to get a sense of what's really happening. We constantly get questions from our members. At GOLES, we internally circulate information about frequently asked questions. If you see that, don't think that we went ahead and did it on our own. Whatever we share, we try as much as possible to be even about any of the facts and state that our opinion is ours.

Wendy: It's really about the webpage you just pointed us to. I'm still looking for meeting minutes or notes, other than the presentation that the City agencies have made.

Tara: We're going to have the meeting summaries posted. We're working on it.

Wendy: How can we get more of us to show up to these meetings?

Tara: We're going to circle back on the time of this meeting, but we do understand that some people have been coming regularly and just aren't here today. We'll remind everyone that you can send alternatives if you can't make it.

Ayo: We should have a say about all the issues that have been brought up. I would like to say that on the time of the meeting, I've had five meetings today and it's a heavy lift for me on Thursdays. There's a lot that we are covering and absorbing; it would be much better for me if it wasn't at the end of the day. I recommend we change the time to earlier in the day at the very least if we change it.

Damaris: We're not going to find a perfect time. Everyone's schedule is crazy. I'd like to weigh in and say not to change it from Thursday. I'm okay with what we have. Not everyone is going to be present every time.

Martin: Make it any earlier and I won't be able to attend.

Christine: Please not on Friday. And, I would say the same thing: I hear what you're saying Ayo, but some people really step away from work to participate here and putting it in the middle of the day may just prevent more people from attending. I'd also like to talk about our July meeting. What are we doing in July and if anyone has a strong preference one way or another?

Tara: Second Thursdays are usually the Community Board parks committee meetings and NYCHA TA meetings. We did want to get everyone's consensus on a July 1st meeting.

Dov: Friday wouldn't work for me for religious reasons.

Martin: We could have a Doodle to poll people about other days of the week that could work.

4) *Creation of CAG by-laws*

Paula: We want to start the process of formalizing the CAG's by-laws.

Tara: Not only formalizing them but expanding out to address other concerns.

Wendy: If you're looking at those guidelines, it should really include people missing meetings repeatedly. Right now, there is no mechanism to encourage people to come or to replace them. That should be considered.

5) *Summer CAG meetings*

Damaris: I think if we have business to conduct, we should continue our meeting in July. I don't think we should have a CAG-only meeting, but I do think we need to reiterate to them what their (the City) role is. They need to honor their commitment to us or communicate with us that they aren't ready. I don't want to spend my time arguing with the City about why they aren't ready. I don't think we should change the meeting date.

Dianne: I agree. I think whoever can make it in July should be here. I think we should have a DDC-section of the meeting.

Tara: From what it sounds, we are going to plan to have a July 1st meeting.