

ESCR CAG Meeting -- December 18, 2023
(via Zoom)

CAG members present

Wendy Brawer Dina Elkin Richard Heitler Trevor Holland Eric Goldberg Dianne Lake Robin Schatell Shaheeda Smith Susan Steinberg Bob Tonozzi (in place of Michael Marino)

DDC Presentation of Updates

Desiree Gazzo, HNTB-LiRo

[Link to slide deck for this presentation](#)

The AQM data isn't ready since this meeting is (atypically) occurring earlier this month. We will share that information by the end of the year but won't speak to it tonight.

1. Hiring compliance
 - a. Henry Street Settlement's "Work, Learn, & Grow" program for youth interns. Reach out to them for more information.
 - b. Queens construction career and training resource fair on 2/1/2024; it's similar to the one they had in Brooklyn a few months ago.
 - i. They're trying to hit all the boroughs; anyone can attend, it's not just Queens-focused. It's in person.
2. Overview of contracts
 - a. Project Area 1 (PA1)
(VISIT PA1 GALLERY: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/escr/project-updates/pa1-gallery.page>)
 - i. Partial Closures:
 1. East River Park south of E. Houston St.
 2. Greenway closure to E. 10th St.
 3. Corlears Hook Park & passive lawn
 - ii. Bridges: Delancey St. & Corlears Hook
 - iii. pedestrian bridges under construction. Use Corlears Hook temp. ped bridge
 - iv. Ongoing work:
 1. Ongoing ConEd utility work
 2. Floodwall & esplanade construction activities ongoing as well as fill operation via barge
 3. E. Houston St. retaining wall work
 - v. Amenities:
 1. Work begins at ballfields 3, 4 & 5
 2. Fields 1 & 2 construction in progress

- b. Project Area 2 (PA2)
(VISIT PA2 GALLERY: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/escr/project-updates/pa2-gallery.page>)
 - i. Asser Levy Playground Open
 - 1. Gate 18 installed
 - ii. Stuyvesant Cove Park
 - 1. North of E. 20th St. open Greenway open
 - 2. Site restoration work in progress south of E 20th St. –Greenway closed
 - 3. Gates 9-17 installed
 - iii. Murphy Brothers under construction
 - iv. Over 2,400 ft. of floodwall installed
 - c. Parallel Conveyance (PC)
(VISIT PC GALLERY: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/escr/project-updates/pc-gallery.page>)
 - i. Houston to Montgomery St. locations
 - 1. Subsurface investigations in progress
 - 2. Water main replacement in progress
 - 3. Utility relocations
 - ii. Avenue C (E. 18 - E. 23) locations
 - 1. Subsurface investigations in progress
3. PA1 – 2023 Construction activities
- a. Esplanade removal and **reconstruction** activities along the waterfront. Deep sewer activities/pile install and park drainage work. Floodwall (Combi-wall) pre-drilling and installation. Fill material delivery by barge and placement onsite. **Ballfields 1 and 2 construction.**
 - b. Delancey Street – pile install and pier construction.
 - c. Construction for new Corlears Hook bridge.
 - d. Passive lawn partial closure for **esplanade work. February 2024 full closure for Delancey St. bridge staging.**
 - e. Utility work around Montgomery Street & South Street. Begin floodwall construction in 2024.
 - f. Montgomery St. – Cherry St. Greenway floodwall activities.
 - g. E. Houston Street pile install. Pedestrian Detour Shift.
 - h. Slip Ramps in use
 - i. E. 10th Street utility work and deep sewer work
 - j. Ongoing partial FDR lane closures continue at various locations
4. PA1 – Fields 1 and 2 rendering (*see slide 9*)
5. PA1 – Fields 1 and 2 construction photo (*see slide 10*)
6. PA1 – Esplanade Reconstruction photos (*see slides 11 and 12*)
7. PA1 – What we've heard
- a. South Street / Montgomery Street Intersection: site visit with NYC DOT and DDC was held 12/12/2023. Additional 'pictorial' signage to be added by ESCR project teams. Meetings to follow up on other items will occur end of 2023 / beginning of 2024.
 - b. Archaeology: Final archaeological report expected by the end of 2024/early 2025. Signage designs will be presented to Manhattan CB3 in 2025 and subject to Public Design Commission review. Public commentary will occur during that time.

- c. Compost Yard: Parks and DDC are meeting with LESEC this week to provide updates on the compost yard. There should be updates next month.
 - d. Ballfields 1 & 2: undetermined what other amenities (paths, etc.) will open with ballfields. Access is still under review. Hope to have more information in January or February.
 - e. Passive lawn esplanade closure: under review
 - f. Materials being used in the park reconstruction (*see slide 14*)
8. PA2 – Construction progress
- a. Stuyvesant Cove Park – majority of the planting has been completed
 - i. Area #1 –OPEN!
 - 1. North entrance at E. 23rd St. closed for EDC Solar One construction work.
 - 2. Greenway remains open.
 - ii. Area #2 –Ferry Access via E. 20th St.
 - 1. Greenway and Park south of E. 20th St. scheduled to reopen late 2023.
 - iii. Greenway connecting to East River Park is expected to open late 2023 once sink holes are fixed.
9. PC - Construction Progress
- a. Location 1 – Jackson St. & Water St.
 - i. Utility relocation
 - b. Location 2 – Lewis St. & Delancey St.
 - i. Utility relocation
 - ii. Water main upgrades
 - c. Location 3 – Baruch Dr. & Delancey St.
 - i. Utility relocation
 - ii. Water main upgrades
 - d. Location 4 – Houston & Avenue D
 - i. Utility relocation
 - e. Location 5 – Avenue C and E. 18th
 - i. Test pits
 - f. Location 6 – Avenue C, E. 23rd to E. 25th
 - i. Test pits
10. PC - Construction for interceptor gate chamber & building¹
- a. Mid-January 2024
 - i. Partial closure of Corlears Hook Park ballfield
 - 1. Youth-sized league field will remain.
 - 2. Parks coordinating alternative locations for adult leagues.
 - 3. New synthetic turf will be installed in the open portion of the athletic field this Winter 2023/24 (Parks)
 - ii. Full closure of Corlears Hook Park playground.
 - iii. Access to temporary bridge will remain.
 - b. Spring 2025
 - i. Contractor will return ballfield to NYC Parks when work concludes.
 - ii. Playground area will be restored.

¹ Interceptor gate chamber construction is a critical piece of the flood protection system which connects to the interceptor sewer.

11. PC – What we've heard

- a. Additional tree removals for new Corlears Hook Park work: no additional tree removals anticipated
- b. PC progress chart by location: under development.
- c. Avenue C final design tree plantings: review at next meeting
- d. Movement of large equipment in/out of site: review at next meeting

Closing remark: In January we hope to have more information about what we will expect to be open with respect to the ballfields. In the meantime, have a happy holiday season, and thank you for participating in these calls every month. Your feedback is appreciated, and we look forward to the next couple years of working with you as well.

Q & A

Trever: Which division of DEP is responsible for the rainfall?

Humberto Galarza (DEP): I assume you're talking about our new Deputy Commissioner for Coastal Resiliency. DEP, the Mayor's office, and other city agencies are working together to consolidate and make good planning decisions in terms of coastal resiliency. So, we created a new division within DEP. It's still the early stages; we just got our Deputy Commissioner last month, and we're building the staff. Since we're going to be working with sister agencies, we're going to coordinate with them on future capital projects for resiliency. We can provide more info. as this new unit continues to grow.

Trever: Thank you, and maybe we can see you at CB 3 in March or April.

Humberto: Also, it's a good idea to separate rainfall from coastal issues. Overall, DEP is tasked with the city infrastructure in terms of water and sewer. If there are issues with catch basins or city sewers inland, it should be directed to 311 and DEP or myself. I can provide my email address. For extreme rainfall it's not an easy answer and is something that has to be discussed and is unique for every borough and every location.

Eric (via chat): When will ballfields 1 and 2 open?

Desiree: Late spring

Martin: You mentioned the southern end of Stuy Cove Park, so regarding the sinkholes: I know they've been working on them. Do you think they'll finish them in the next couple of weeks?

Desiree: Yes, that's what they're aiming for.

Martin: Will the southern end connect to anything at this point? Is the pinch point closed off?

Desiree: The pinch point will reopen, and the connection to PA 1 will be open again.

Martin: Is there a timeline on that?

Desiree: By the end of the year, that's the goal.

Wendy: I was surprised about the turf was added to ballfields 1 and 2 before winter. Was there really enough time to let it settle?

Desiree: Yes, it was determined that it could be installed. The Parks Department had to approve the area as well.

Wendy: If it's damaged by winter and becomes rumpiled who's responsible for that, the contractor or Parks?

Desiree: The contractor is responsible for anything under construction. Only after the areas are finalized are they handed back over to Parks.

Wendy: I'm also concerned about all the plastic, and you're going to do the same thing with the ballfields at Corlears, putting it on before winter and before this dust and construction stuff happens. I request that you be judicious with this wasteful and toxic material.

Shaheeda: Maybe this has been answered before I was on the CAG, but was there not an alternative to the astro turf, something biodegradable?

Desiree: Referring to slide 14, there are fields that are not synthetic—depicted in light/pale green—and ones that are synthetic—depicted in bright/lime green. There are maintenance, durability, and other reasons for using synthetic turf. Also, there is actually more natural turf in the redesigned park than there was previously.

Eric (via chat): I will add that the natural turf fields are not maintained and usually unplayable by the youth leagues.

Dianne: The concrete unit pavers for the esplanade: are those the hexagonal pavers we have now, or is that different?

Desiree: We think it is, but we need to double check before I confirm that. It's in the [PDC presentation](#).

Desiree: For those of you who are new, it's worth taking a look at the PDC presentation as the rebuilding of the park moves forward. We'll hopefully come back in January and/or February with more information on the opening of other amenities.

CAG-only portion

Dianne: There are two things on my mind. They should update the full CAG on the compost yard situation as soon as possible. I think it's great that they're meeting with the LES Ecology Center. I'm a little anxious about that since the community compost program funding has been cut, and I'm not sure what they're going to say about the compost yard. The other thing is that we've gotten feedback from the community that they're pretty disappointed that closures in the north began before anything in the south end reopens. I understand their commitment to keeping 42% of the park open, and according to their calculations they'll do that, but there will be a lot of pressure to get the south end opening up as quickly as possible with good amenities not just a foot path to a couple of fields. That's the feedback we're hearing: what can be done to encourage them or hold them accountable for opening up that space as quickly as possible. And what can the CAG do about that?

Eric (via chat): And the north end -- ballfields 6, 7, and 8 -- needs significant maintenance to even be usable.

Trever: I want to add to what Eric was referring to, something to think about a little into the future. From our experience of the park opening up a little further south (at Pier 42 and 35), I think we're going to have a real maintenance problem going forward once this park opens. This true for all NYC parks, but to build this nice, new beautiful park and then have issues the first two years is going to be challenging. I don't know if there's a better mechanism to figure out how the park can be properly maintained, but I do think it's something we should put on the radar.

Robin: I was really surprised to hear that they're closing those fields earlier than they had said. I was confused because they said that they didn't anticipate finishing the project earlier but that they'd be on time. Does that mean they're behind schedule? They're claiming they're still within the 42%, but we're losing three ballfields in the last season that someone could use those fields. That's a big worry, and I don't know how that got approved. And I agree with Trever that we probably need to think about a Friends of East River Park group, which would require some funding.

Dianne: My recollection of what Desiree said at the last CAG and at CB 3 was that they're actually doing this closure ahead of schedule, that they had meant to do it over the summer but they decided to go ahead with it now for two reasons. One was because it would keep the project moving, and the other was because as they complete work in the northern part of the south end that they need to find something for those construction workers to do. So their point to the Parks Department was that they wanted to keep the momentum going and keep the construction workers working and to get that sewer work done under there. I think she also said they're trying to relocate youth league games that were scheduled for this summer to locations as nearby as possible. Adults would probably have to go further afield. Some questions about the conditions of the field at Corlears Hook Park came up that weren't fully answered, including whether it will be suitable for youth leagues. I don't know enough about how that park is used to fully understand that.

Robin: If they're going to be doing construction during the day, that field (at Corlears) may not be usable at all.

Wendy: I'm concerned that they're going to come back with a report on how the equipment is going to move into Corlears. It should also include how the materials will be getting there because that will also potentially have an impact on the ballfields, etc.

Trever: To help DDC with the "What We've Heard," you could post these questions to the public inquiry tool so they can get answers back quick as opposed to the "we'll have to get back to you at the next meeting." I've found the tool to be very effective so that when they come to the meeting they have at least somewhat of an answer prepared. 41:33

Wendy: I wrote to the new head of the greening task force (the group that's working with the street trees and bioswales) to ask if there's any concern that the park is only getting a foot or two of topsoil. They wrote back that there'll be some biochar in that, but to me we're losing such an opportunity if we don't have the compost center there to provide soil like they did when the park was rebuilt post-Sandy. So many native plants took hold when the compost was added to the park. I'm worried that it's going to be too sterile for things to thrive there.

Paula: If no one else has questions, we can adjourn. In January we'll start revisiting the commitments and try to get status updates on them.

Tara: Our offices will be closed from the 22nd to the 1st, so we might be slow to respond to emails during that time, but we'll get these items over to DDC before then. We can also reach out to Christine to see how the compost yard meeting went and if there's anything that needs to be flagged that we can send out to the CAG.