



The City of New York

Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

Michael Budabin **Chairperson** / Joseph Marziliano **District Manager**

To: All Board Members

From: Paul DiBenedetto, Parks Committee Chair
Henry Euler, Environmental Committee Chair

Date: February 17, 2022

Re: CB11 Forestry Update and Little Neck Pumping Station Presentation

On Wednesday, February 16, 2022, a joint CB11 Parks and Environmental Committee meeting was held via Zoom regarding an update from Queens Forestry regarding trees in CB11 and to review plans for a new Little Neck Pump Station by the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Present

Committee Members

Michael Budabin, Chair, ex. off.

Henry Euler, 3rd Vice Chair, ex. off.

Jessica Burke

Paul DiBenedetto

Joan Garippa

Laura James

Rob Liatto

Eileen Miller

Christina Scherer

Lourdes December

CB11 Staff

Joseph Marziliano, District Manager

Jane Bentivenga, Community Coordinator

Christina Coutinho, Community Associate

Guests

Matt Symons, Northeast Queens Administrator, NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation (DPR)

Kyle Walsh, Deputy Director, NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation, Queens Forestry (DPR)

Karen Ellis, NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Tommy Lin, NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Alicia West, Director, Public Design Outreach, NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Tania Quesada, P.E., Brown and Caldwell Associates

Elizabeth Claassen, AIA, Goshow Architects

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Mr. Euler and Mr. DiBenedetto introduced themselves. Mr. Euler thanked Mr. Walsh for attending the meeting. He expressed his concern regarding street trees in the area. Mr. Euler stated that some seemingly healthy trees were possibly removed in error. Mr. Walsh stated that, unfortunately, an error like this can occur although it is quite uncommon. If, at all possible, there is a chance that a street tree can survive, Queens Forestry will do whatever is necessary to mitigate the situation. Trees go through a called retrenchment as they age, essentially conserving their energy. Pruning aids in this process. Mr. Euler asked if there was any information regarding a new “Million Trees” program. Mr. Walsh stated that they have not yet been given any official guidance or information about this program. More details will be shared as they become available.

Mr. DiBenedetto questioned the best process to report tree problems such as a dying tree or an illegal removal. Mr. Walsh stated people should go through 311; a person can also email qf.correspondence@parks.nyc.gov if they think a tree is being damaged. Emergency condition should be reported to FDNY through 911. Mr. Marziliano added that problems can be given to the CB11 office staff as well. Mrs. Garippa spoke about a problem she has with a sidewalk lifted by tree roots. She reported it in October of 2020, but it has not been inspected yet. Mr. Walsh said that would be done under the Trees & Sidewalks Program which lost most of their funding during the pandemic. They are working on an extremely limited budget and they have a significant backlog. Their direct email is treessandsidewalks@parks.nyc.gov. Ms. Burke spoke about trees issues in Crocheron Park and the need for soil on the ballfields to be aerated. She also spoke of damage done to trees during capital projects. The last big storm caused a lot of damage in this park. Ms. Burke also lauded the tags with QR codes that are put on new trees. However, a standard plan needs to be put in place to remove them. She has found she has to make a request to 311 around four times before an issue is addressed. Mr. Symons stated that the same person calling 311 several times is not the best avenue to get something done. He also said they take every precaution during capital projects. Mr. Euler said he and others are concerned about bioswales/rain gardens near street trees. Mrs. Miller asked if homeowners can remove the tags that are on newly planted trees. Mr. Walsh said new trees are guaranteed for two years; these tags are scanned during this time to keep track of maintenance. Therefore, a tag on a new tree should not be removed until a tree is over two years old. Mrs. Miller also asked what the procedure will be for requesting a tree through the “Million Trees” program. Mr. Walsh said it will be the same as the procedure that is in place now through 311.

Mr. Liatto questioned a request for dog run in Alley Pond Park that was made a few years ago. He also asked about an area near the Douglaston Shopping Center that used to be used for sledding in the winter but is full of overgrowth. Mr. Symons said that once the funding for such a capital request is approved, it takes some time for the project to be completed. He also stated that, unfortunately, a local civic association will promise to maintain this type of installation; their commitment often wanes over time leaving the area overgrown in some areas, patchy in others and dirty. The base material can also be a problem. Another issue is “off-leash” hours (typically early morning and late evening) are eliminated in parks that have a dog run. Mr. Symons stated he will take a look at the overgrowth Mr. Liatto referred to.

Next, Mr. Euler introduced the presentation by NYC DEP regarding the Little Neck Pump Station. Ms. West of DEP began reviewing the Power Point presentation pertaining to this project. This pump station is located on 40 Avenue between 247 Street and 248 Street abutting the LIRR tracks. It was built in the 1950s and was last upgraded in the 1990s. This station

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serves a 150-acre drainage area of businesses and residents. Ms. West asked Ms. Quesada to continue the presentation. Ms. Quesada reviewed photographs of the current conditions. Currently, the entire station is below grade; there are hatches on the ground that allow for access. There is a backup diesel pump. It is an unmanned station, but DEP personnel check on it daily. Ms. Quesada stated they have strived to make the station easily accessible for DEP while being cognizant of the aesthetics for nearby residents. The station is located completely on New York City-owned property; it is DEP and DOT property. It is bordered on the north by the LIRR tracks. The existing station will be demolished and the new one will be built in its place. The goal is resiliency and reliability which is why any sensitive equipment will be built above grade so as not to be susceptible to flooding. The majority of the pump station will be below grade. The only other equipment above grade will be a generator and a back-up pump that will be located behind a screen. There will be a superstructure to house the electrical equipment. It will be located as far to the rear of this property as possible. The entire area will be fenced in.

Next, Elizabeth Claassen of Goshow Architects reviewed the proposed design of the building. They studied the neighborhood so they could respect the design of the surrounding structures. They will be using grey brick and dark green panels as to blend in with the trees to the north. The main entrance and stairway will be in the rear hidden from view. There will be solar panels and some mechanical equipment on the roof. There will be a continuous, metal architectural fence instead of the existing chain link. It is a one-story building approximately 18' high. The lights will only be turned on when someone is on the site. They will be using permeable pavers on the site wherever possible. Ms. West added that they have been coordinating with DPR/Queens Forestry regarding tree removals and replacements.

Ms. West continued reviewing the plans regarding temporary construction conditions. She stated a construction fence will be erected along the curb line. They will need to operate a temporary station while the new one is being constructed which will be removed when the new station is completed. There will be some roadwork required. Work will be done on the north side of 40 Avenue first and then work will move to the south side; there will be limited parking during the day. Construction is expected to begin in October 2023 and last until March 2026. The roadwork portion of the project is expected during October and November of 2023. The peak period of limited parking along 40 Avenue will take place from August 2024 to March 2025 during the construction of the substructure. Construction hours are generally 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday; however, activity usually ramps down at 3:30 p.m.

Mr. Euler asked how many trees are going to be removed. Ms. West stated they are still coordinating with DPR regarding that. Mr. Euler also asked about contact information for the surrounding neighbors during construction. Mr. West said information will be distributed but it is not available at the present time. Mr. DiBenedetto inquired if work will be done weekdays during daytime hours. Ms. West said yes. Mr. DiBenedetto commented that it is a nice design and looks like it will fit well into the neighborhood. Ms. James asked if the lights on the building will be pointed downward away from the adjacent residence to the east of this property. She also inquired about the type of fencing that will be used along the shared property line. Ms. West stated that the lights will only be on when personnel are on site and they will be pointed downward. Ms. West said they are planning to use the black, picket fencing. Ms. James also requested some plantings be done as a buffer on this side of the property. Ms. James also advised that 40 Avenue is a notorious high speed, heavily trafficked street that is often used as an

alternative to Northern Blvd. They need to be aware of this when they are working there. Ms. James also commented on the nice design.

Mr. Marziliano asked that a copy of this plan be emailed to the CB11 Office. He also asked if they would like the Board to vote on this and send a letter of support for the project. Ms. West said they would appreciate a letter of support as they need to take the proposal to the Public Design Commission.

Ms. Burke asked if Percent for Art would be appropriate for this project. Ms. West said it would not apply in this case as it is an infrastructure project. Mr. Euler asked what the cost is. They will get back to the Board with that information. Ms. James asked if this facility will mitigate any flooding issues in the future. Ms. West replied it will not, it is a sanitary station. However, that is why the electrical room will be built above grade. Ms. Ellis asked if anyone sees any flooding, they report it to 311 so that crews can go out to ensure that basins are not clogged and are functioning properly. She said storm sewers are designed to take in 1 ¼ to 1 ½ inches of water per hour. Three inches of water per hour fell during Storm Ida. Mr. Symons added that a culvert under the LIRR that was clogged with debris which exacerbated the problem.

Mrs. Garippa suggested that these plans be sent to all the adjacent homes. Mr. Marziliano said we can publicize it by having it on our agenda at the next Board meeting. Mr. Euler requested someone from DEP present at the March 7 meeting. Mr. DiBenedetto agreed. DEP personnel will get back to CB11 regarding their availability at the March 7 meeting.

Mrs. Miller made a motion to support the Little Neck Pump Station reconstruction. Ms. James seconded the motion. Ms. Burke also feels that the neighbors should be notified; perhaps the local civic association (Little Neck Pines) could get involved. A voice vote was taken resulting in 8 in favor, 1 opposed and no abstentions. The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40

Respectfully submitted 2/18/2022