



Chair, Martha Taylor

*The City of New York*  
*Borough of Queens*

**Community Board 8**

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

**Parks Committee Meeting:** Park Drive East Force main and Willow Lake Bridge  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 11, 2025  
**Time:** 7:30 p.m.  
**Place:** In-Person

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**Bhithara Martha Fulton, Parks Committee Chair**

**Board Members:** Saaif Alam, Wendy Gennaro

**Committee Members absent:** Ahsan Habib, Kenneth Cohen II, Mohammed Islam “Delwar”, Caitlin Marzliano, Dilip Nath, Frances Peterson.

**Also, in attendance:** CB8 Member Israel Peskowitz, DEP Queens Commissioner Alfonso Lopez, Deputy Administrator Flushing Meadows Corona Park Latisha Williams, Marco Zefi, Tania Quesada, John Denegall, Matthew Osit, Irene Papadopoulos, Francesca Tindal, and CB8 Staff Member Soleil Griffin,

*Committee Chair Bhithara Fulton called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. She welcomed all attendees.*

*The Chair asked Queens DEP Commissioner Alfanso Lopez to begin the presentation. A presentation deck was handed out.*

**DEP Commissioner Lopez started out with an overview of DEP’s mission and the project.**

This DEP work will restore the water infrastructure under the bridge. The force main conveys up to 15 million gallons of wastewater a day across Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. It was originally constructed in the 1930s. Sections were replaced in the 1960s and 1990s.

**Matthew Osit, DEP Portfolio Manager** – My first project at DEP was in 1991 or 1992 to put the watermain in.

**Response: Committee Chair Bhithara Fulton** – You must be proud of it.

**Answer: Matthew Osit** – I am not proud that it has to be replaced so soon. It should have lasted fifty years, and it is only about thirty.

**Tania Quesada representing Brown and Caldwell**

East of the Van Wyck Expressway is the Park Drive East Pumping Station. This is the pump station that will be rehabilitated. There is a corresponding force main that conveys that flow to the pump station that goes through the park. There are portions of it that need to be rehabilitated. If it is not, it could lead the force main to fail. The project will rehabilitate the force main and restore service life and mitigate the risk of it breaking.

Given the proximity of Willow Lake Bridge to the Force main, DEP is coordinating with the Department of Parks and Recreation. They decided that the bridge should be incorporated into this project.

**Matthew Osit, DEP Portfolio Manager** – There have been a few breaks in the pipe on the Grand Central Parkway side. When the breaks happen, they are quickly repaired, and service is restored. There is always a risk that it could happen again.

**Committee Chair Bhitihara Fulton** – Do you know how it was broken?

**Answer: Matthew Osit** – The pipe could be damaged by a few different factors. One factor is gritty material such as rocks and dirt, which could wear out the metal. Another factor could be water hammer. These pipes have a lot of ups and downs, it creates pressure hot spots. Turning on and off the pipes creates cycling and in turn can lead to damage.

**Tania Quesada representing Brown and Caldwell**

The pipeline can be dug up and replaced, but it could disturb the soil. Instead, DEP is going to align the pipe to make it like a new pipe. To line the pipe, there will be a flexible liner that is soaked with resin. You push it through the pipe with something like a balloon that inflates. It will hug the pipe and harden over a couple of days. We will then remove the balloon and then you will have a new pipe inside the old pipe.

**Matthew Osit, DEP Portfolio Manager** – The pipe will be just as good as the old one and have a forty-year life span.

**Tania Quesada representing Brown and Caldwell**

To get underneath the highway, there is a technology called microtunneling. There will be a tunnel boring machine that will dig a whole underneath the highway and then you push a pipe underneath it. There will be no impact to the highway.

**DEP Commissioner Lopez** – There will be no impact to the flow of traffic and parking.

**Committee Chair Bhitihara Fulton** – How will this affect the other renovation projects that are happening? There were plans to raise the electrical vaults in the park because of the water level.

**Answer: Matthew Osit** – We haven't had any coordination with Parks on those projects. There is a main path that goes from foot bridge to foot bridge and an MTA subway yard. Those two paths are where they are going to put wood on the ground to protect it from damage. Any areas outside those zones will not be affected.

**Tania Quesada representing Brown and Caldwell**

The Willow Lake Bridge is not in the best shape. It is on the west side of the park that has phragmites. The project will clear them and plant native species.

**Committee Chair Bhitihara Fulton** – What is the source of the phragmites?

**Response: Israel Peskowitz** – England. They are pasture food. If we had cows there, then there would be no phragmites.

**Israel Peskowitz** – The door to the trail is locked, but then my friend told me the door is open again.

**Answer: Latisha Williams** – We had to close the trail while we were working with DOT to re-enforce the bridge. They finished the work on Friday; however, they still had material and equipment on the trail.

**Israel Peskowitz** – Is it open again for good?

**Answer: Latisha Williams** – It is open again until this project starts, unless there is something else that comes up.

**Tania Quesada representing Brown and Caldwell**

The bridge will be made of steel so that it can last longer. This is similar to other bridges that Parks have in their system. After the bridge is built, it will have a mulch and stone dust path leading up to the bridge that will be ADA accessible. DEP has been coordinating with Parks to determine which trees need to be removed. Those trees will be replanted with native species.

**Tania Quesada representing Brown and Caldwell**

The slide deck shows the plants that will be planted. Construction is scheduled to take a year from October 2025 - October 2026 to do the work on the force main and replace the bridge. Planting may continue outside that window. The pedestrian path is the main accessway to get to the bridge and to do the force main work. There will be periods when that path is closed off again while this project is happening. The construction hours are 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday – Friday.

**Committee Chair Bhitihara Fulton** – Will there be two shifts per day or a very long shift?

**Answer: Matthew Osit** – No, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. is the normal Department of Buildings permit allowed. Most contracts close by 3:30 p.m., but they are allowed to work until 6 p.m. on our contract.

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**Israel Peskowitz** – If the trail is going to be closed, please put up a notice closure so that the community knows when it is going to close and open. Also, provide a reason for the closure. You also mentioned that the construction will take place from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., will the trail be accessible during the rest of the time?

**Answer: Tania Quesada** – We are not anticipating long shutdowns. If there is heavy traffic, then it might be locked.

**Israel Peskowitz** – Will it be locked on both sides?

**Answer: Tania Quesada** – Yes.

**Israel Peskowitz** – Will you let us know when this is happening?

**Answer: Tania Quesada** – This is something that we need to coordinate with Parks.

**Answer: Latisha Williams** – We are still trying to figure out how the opening and closures will work. This is because we do not have a full understanding of the type of staging or the equipment. When we get closer to the project, we will have an understanding of what will be left on the trail. This is a year-long project. There will be signage that states work is being done on the trail and what the project is. Ideally, we would not allow an area to stay open while we have an active contractor on site. We are reconsidering this for this project because it is heavily used by the public. The administrator for the park, Anthony Sama, has been putting out email blasts and newsletters to communicate what has been going on with our parks.

**Israel Peskowitz** – When the weather is nice, the religious Jewish community use the location on the Sabbath and on holidays, as a shortcut to get from Forest Hills Jewish community to the Kew Gardens Hills Jewish community. If it is closed, at the very least put up a sign that renovation is taking place.

**Matthew Osit, DEP Portfolio Manager** – We want to make sure everyone is safe. We do not want to put anyone in danger with uneven surfaces or tripping hazards.

**Latisha Williams, Deputy Administrator Flushing Meadows Corona Park** – The last closure that happened because of the DOT work was last minute. We did not think we would be able to mobilize a team on the DOT side. When we tried to get an official sign, they had already finished the work.

**Israel Peskowitz** – It seems kind of jarring that there will be a steel bridge instead of a wooden bridge. Since it is going to be steel can you at least make it aesthetically pleasing and not like an industrial plant in the middle of the park?

**Answer: Tania Quesada** – Sure. We are choosing the color and coordinating with Parks on what they typically use. This will also go through the Public Design Commission.

**Wendy Gennaro** – I appreciate that the bridge is being replaced. As a representative for people with disabilities, there are no stairs, so it is accessible.

**DEP Commissioner Lopez** – If there are any questions for the Queens DEP team, you can email [queensdep@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:queensdep@dep.nyc.gov). That is the email that my team and I will get.

**Committee Chair Bhitihara Fulton** – Do you need a letter of concurrence, or did you want to let us know what is happening?

**Answer: Matthew Osit** – Before we present to the Public Design Commission, they are going to ask if we spoke with the Community Board. It is not a formal approval.

**Response: Tania Quesada** – Minutes are helpful.

**Matthew Osit, DEP Portfolio Manager** – The access to the area will be through the MTA yard. The trucks will not go through Park Drive East Road. It is underneath the highway. There will be no truck traffic to affect the residents of the neighborhood.

*Committee Chair Bhitihara Fulton thanked the presenters.*

**Wendy Gennaro** made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Soleil Griffin, Community Assistant  
March 18, 2025*