



Chairperson, 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:

NYC Soccer Initiative – Mini Soccer Fields
Flushing Meadows Corona Parks – Meadow Lake NW Paths Project

Date: Tuesday, February 18, 2020
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: Community Board 8 Office
197-15 Hillside Avenue
Hollis, NY 11423

Bhithara Martha Fulton, Parks Committee Chair

Board Members: Susan Cleary, Bhithara Martha-Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., Marc A. Haken and Frances Peterson.

Also, in attendance: Diane Dreier, NYC Parks Design Director, Adrian Hayes, NYC Parks Landscape Architect, Meira Berkower, NYC Queens Parks Director of Planning and Project Management, Irfan Ahmed, Senior Programs and Policy Manager at the Mayors Funds for NYC, Paul Jeffries Executive Director of NYC Football Clubs Foundation, Jean C. Silva, Flushing Meadows Corona Park Conservancy, Gabe Echevarria, CB8-9 Regional Manager, Yolanda Gallagher CB8 Resident, Marie Adam-Ovide, CB8 District Manager and Izabela Szczepanska, CB8 Staff Member.

Chairperson Fulton called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Purpose:

Bhithara Martha Fulton – To review the plans for the NYC Soccer Initiative Mini Soccer Fields and the Flushing Meadows Corona Park – Meadow Lake NW Paths Project.

Chairperson Fulton asked Mr. Ahmed to begin the presentation to the Committee.

Irfan Ahmed, NYC Soccer Initiative – Mr. Ahmed stated that the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City, is a not-for-profit organization committed to promoting partnerships between the City and the private sector in support of high impact public programs. He informed everyone that the NYC Soccer Initiative is a five-year initiative that is privately funded which is a \$3 million-dollar initiative. The goal is to install 50 soccer pitches with free programming and a maintenance fund.

These are some of the main highlights of the presentation:

- The NYC Soccer Initiative is funded by the U.S Soccer Foundation, NYC Football Club (NYCFC), Adidas, Etihad Airways, and the Mayor’s Fund to Advance NYC.
- They only work on public land and work with these agency partners for city land: NYC Parks, NYC Housing Authority, and the Department of Education.
- The maintenance fund is worth \$600,000 dollars dedicated to field repairs.
- The NYC Soccer Initiative implements a variety of soccer programs offered by its founding partners and collaborate with other local organizations.

- The primary program is “Soccer for Success”. It is a free after-school soccer program developed by the U.S. Soccer Foundation. Students who participate receive a uniform and soccer ball. The program is 3 days per week for 24 weeks per year.
- The proposed pitch areas in CB8 are Utopia Playground, Pomonok Playground/P.S. 201, Fresh Meadows Playground/P.S. 173. They all sit in an empty area of a yard. They found these locations to be the most viable. They don’t do grass, they don’t do turf, they do acrylic. It’s the fastest and easiest way to build a soccer field. Installation timing is 3-6 weeks.
- The size of the proposed pitch area is approximately 4,500 sq. ft. (90’ in length, 50’ in width).
- Goal posts are bolted into the ground for safety reasons.

Mr. Ahmed introduced Paul Jeffries from the NYC Football Club to speak about the NYCFC programming.

Paul Jeffries, NYCFC Programming - The NYCFC is funded by the Manhattan DA’s office. They offer numerous programs [*health and education program, robotics program, stem program, college and career*]. They offer a crime prevention program with the Manhattan DA’s office. They just opened a site in South Jamaica at the August Martin School. When gyms are closed at high crime times, they open them up to get kids active and connect them with the programs. There is a young leader training program that is a free 40-hour course for 16 to 18-year olds. They give them the skills, tools and training help support their own communities through soccer. In some cases, get jobs to assist coaches to deliver summer programs on the new pitches.

During the presentation, several questions were raised by the Board Members. The following is a re-cap of the questions and the responses received:

Marc A. Haken – The field by August Martin High School, is it behind the school?

Answer: [Mr. Jeffries] – We don’t have a field there. We just opened the gym.

They have a large field in the back of the school and in front of the school there is a park.

Answer: [Mr. Jeffries] – Yes, but this is on Saturday nights from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. They operate the gym and it is open for kids from ages of 10-19.

This is in conjunction with DYCD?

Answer: [Mr. Jeffries] – No, it is funded by the Manhattan DA’s office, but it was launched citywide. They have not put any money in. We would love them to support it and keep it going. We have been doing it in Harlem for five years. We want to take the same program and work in conjunction with other DA’s to offer it. We want to open 100 gyms in five years. These gyms should be open for kids to play. If you have any ideas how we can do that I would love to hear them.

There are about 50 Beacon schools throughout the city and they are open 40 hours a week beyond the regular school day. You can possibly work with the various agencies and possibly expand the program. There is a program in Far Rockaway that is in conjunction with the NYPD that they just initiated and replicates a program from Los Angeles. I just happen to know the Lieutenant that is involved if you are interested in that. It is in conjunction with NYCHA, DOE, and NYPD for 9 to 11-year olds.

Answer: [Mr. Jeffries] – Yes, this is great information. There is a new Deputy Commissioner of NYPD who oversees Community Partnerships and we are discussing. Is there a point person for Beacon schools who coordinates all those partnerships?

No, because there are different agencies that sponsor different Beacons. Child Center of NY has many them. Citywide there are many of them. I can help you with some of the ones in our area and then maybe point you in the right direction or two including a High School.

Answer: [Mr. Jeffries] – Excellent. We can exchange contact information.

Mr. Ahmed announced that the NYCFC offers free tickets to kids and families to come see their games in Yankee Stadium.

Marc A. Haken – What are the dimensions of a real soccer field?

Answer: [Mr. Jeffries] – 120 yards long and 80 yards wide.

Susan Cleary – Is it that plastic stuff?

Answer: [Mr. Jeffries] – No, it is like a thick coating that they add to the ground. They clean the surface; clear the cracks; smooth it out; lay down the acrylic and then put down the goal lines. So, we can transform empty barren areas into lively thriving play spaces. You can do whatever you want on it. It is what the public wants to use it for, but we recommend they use it as a soccer field.

Letters of support from P.S. 173Q PTA and principal were handed out [copies were left at the office].

Marc A. Haken – Only one of them is by a school.

Answer: [Mr. Ahmed] – Two of them are.

Utopia is not by a school. Pomonok is by Pomonok Neighborhood Center. There is a school, but it is all the way by the far side by P.S. 201.

Answer: [Gabe Echevarria] – Yes, P.S. 201 uses the field a lot for afterschool.

[Mr. Ahmed] - The principal of P.S. 201 didn't feel very connected to the field. It is not close to the school but at the same time, he is very supportive of it. We did get the letter of support from P.S. 173 and they are fully on board. If we get approval from the Community Board (CB) that would be very helpful. It will get us to Public Design Commission (PDC) after Parks reviews our drawings. We are hoping for the PDC to review either late March or early April and for approval in May. We can get started as soon as schools close. In the fall we would do a special ribbon cutting ceremony that we coordinate with the NYCFC, NYC Parks Department, and the CB. We have built 30 so far. We make sure that they are well kept and if there are any issues Parks will let us know and we will send out the maintenance funds and take care of the issues.

Marc A. Haken – As time goes on leagues are going to develop for these miniature fields. Will they then be permitted by Parks? Right now, there are certain groups that have permits but they then sublease them and that's not good.

Answer: [Ms. Berkower] – For the Queens Park sites we have not been permitting them. Our special events fields office knows about these fields, but they are not being permitted. We don't want them to just have one group to have preference over them. If it looks like there is one group that is trying to use them then we will reassess it. We are trying to make sure that it is [for] local kids. That is what we will be doing at least with the other sites.

Gabe Echevarria – These locations are all used. Fresh Meadows for example has a high use of basketball but not baseball anymore. They are relocating or re-allocating these fields that don't have permit use and putting some active recreation. Schools are on board and all for it. You are putting active recreation in areas where there was none.

Answer: [Mr. Ahmed] – If there is a demand, there definitively should be a supply. So, if you guys demand more, we are happy to keep looking. We have 14 more slots. We are sourcing everywhere.

Marc A. Haken – Gabe do you think we can identify additional spots?

Answer: [Mr. Echevarria] – We already talked about P.S. 165.

Ifran Ahmed – Vleigh playground would be beautiful.

Answer: [Ms. Berkower] – [to Mr. Ahmed] Yes, basically your fund is working with our marketing division. He must talk to us because this is a partnership. He must go through the Queens Borough Office. Christine our marketing person needs to speak to the capital division. She will also go to DEP to make sure that they have not identified as a green infrastructure site. There is a whole vetting process before us.

Marc A. Haken – [to Gabe Echevarria] Do you think we could identify a site in Cunningham Park?

Answer: [Mr. Echevarria] – They are not going to repave.

Ifran Ahmed – We can't do that; it would blow the budget.

Marc A. Haken made a motion to approve the proposal for the three mini soccer fields within Community Board 8, seconded by Susan Cleary.

Count in favor 5 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0

Board Members in Favor:

Susan Cleary, Bhitihara Martha-Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., Marc A. Haken and Frances Peterson.
The motion passed.

Jean Silva – I was very concerned with Flushing Meadow because of its location and when it rains it just floods. The field is just un-playable. You are not doing any mechanical work?

Answer: [Mr. Ahmed] – No, we are not leveling it. Thankfully it can dry out, but puddling happens that's the problem.

Jean Silva– It's very slick.

Answer: [Mr. Ahmed] – We will always be ready to improve it if there are ways, we can with the maintenance dollars. We can talk about it. That field is only there for five years according to the PDC.

Susan Cleary – Check out the Queens Botanical Gardens they had areas in the gardens that were flooding, and they figured out a way.

Answer: [Mr. Ahmed] – Okay.

Purpose:

Bhitihara Martha Fulton – To review the plans for the Flushing Meadows Corona Parks – Meadow Lake NW Paths Project.

Chairperson Fulton asked Mr. Adrian Hayes to begin the presentation to the Committee.

Mr. Hayes stated that the project has a \$3.75 million dollars budget. The goals are to simplify and clarify existing pedestrian circulation, reduce the impacts of frequent flooding, improve entrances at the pedestrian bridges and create safe crossings at pedestrian/vehicular intersections. Mr. Hayes explained the project location, existing conditions, proposed schematic circulation pattern, the pedestrian bridge improvements (*a copy of the presentation is available in the office upon request*).

These are some of the main highlights of the presentation:

- The project location is in Flushing Meadows Corona Park at the NW Meadow Lake.
- The goal is to create a loop within the park that is accessible to vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- Site photos of the existing pedestrian bridges that are the two main access points (WF Playground and the 64th Avenue Pedestrian Bridge) were shown.
- The new pedestrian bridge improvements were shown. The proposed improvements included:
 - The pathways in the middle would be reduced to a single pathway and include drainage treatments [slide 11].
 - Special paving involved and bollards.
 - Add trees around this area to create more of a moment when entering.
- The improvements include a pathway that will allow pedestrians to quickly cross and walk into a pedestrian zone that's near the lake and not at the roadway [slide 12].
- Site photos of Meadow Lake East were shown to reference the pathway that was treated. This has been successful [slide 15].
- The 64th Avenue bridge improvement were shown including:
 - A decorative entrance planting.
 - Direction of one-way traffic.
 - Planting beds will be created to protect queue space for pedestrians.
 - At grade “speed table” with special pavement at crossing.
- The existing conditions allowed for two vehicles to travel in both directions. The new conditions will create a circulation for a clockwise loop. The path will be narrowed for only one vehicle to travel in one direction.
- Stop signs and stop bars will be installed for visibility.
- At both entrances they will raise the grade significantly.

During the presentation, several questions were raised by the Board Members. The following is a re-cap of the questions and the responses received:

Susan Cleary – Vehicular traffic in the park?

Answer: [Mr. Hayes] – Many people who use the park get there by car. It is a hard park to get to.

Susan Cleary – Are there parking lots for them?

Answer: [Mr. Hayes] – There is parking along the roadways and there are parking lots.

Answer: [Meira Berkower] – If anything we are reducing where traffic can go. The project will make sure to keep all vehicular traffic outside so people can't drive in the interior paths.

Jean Silva – Will you address the leak that is at the other far end that floods out by the bathrooms?

Answer: [Mr. Hayes] – From the spray showers?

Jean Silva – Yes.

Answer: [Ms. Berkower] – That is not in the scope of this project. I think there is a pipe that needs to be repaired. I can't speak to the status of that maintenance.

Adrian Hayes – There will be more opportunities to sit. We will be introducing more planting adding some more willow trees. There will be lighting that corresponds to the pathway.

Bhitihara Martha-Fulton – Is the lake affected by tides?

Answer: [Mr. Hayes] - It is. There is a tide gate that controls that to some degree. It is tidal.

Bhitihara Martha-Fulton – Is Willow the same thing?

Answer: [Mr. Hayes] – Yes, they are connected.

Answer: [Ms. Berkower] – Meadow Lake is both saltwater and fresh water. Willow Lake is more fresh water. They are all connected.

Bhitihara Martha-Fulton – There is a water supply coming from 164th Street and Kissena Boulevard. Is that still happening?

Answer: [Ms. Berkower] – I am not sure. Willow Lake is a spring that's just on the southern end of the lake.

Adrian Hayes – There are historical water ways that go along that corridor.

Bhitihara Martha-Fulton – They use to use that to fill up the ponds in 1939.

Meira Berkower – Just for your awareness with this funding there is no shoreline restoration. You are still going to see phragmites on the edge of the lake. Phragmite removal is a very expensive and needs to get done but this funding is not going to cover that.

Susan Cleary – I have a question about the water that comes down 77th Avenue? You can hear it running.

Answer: [Ms. Berkower] – I am sorry where? 77th Avenue into Flushing Meadows?

Susan Cleary – I have no idea where it goes.

Answer: [Mr. Hayes] – I know what you are talking about. It's water that is going to DEP outfalls.

Susan Cleary – Okay, so it is going into the lake.

Answer: [Mr. Hayes] – Some of it.

James Gallagher Jr. – Towards the northern part by the Long Island Expressway I requested a bus stop. Right where you cross over from one side of the park to the other. If you are taking the Q88 there is no way you can get off to get into the park. That is going to be great and easily accessible for people in the community. I brought it up at the MTA bus proposal.

Marc A. Haken made a motion to approve the plans for the work to be done on Flushing Meadow Park as of a result of this evenings presentation, seconded by Susan Cleary.

Count in favor 5 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0

Board Members in Favor:

Bhitihara Martha-Fulton, Susan Cleary, James Gallagher Jr., Marc A. Haken and Frances Peterson.

The motion passed.

Adjournment:

Marc A. Haken made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Izabela Szczepanska, CB8 Staff

March 11, 2020