



Chairman, Alvin Warshaviak

*The City of New York
Borough of Queens*

Community Board 8

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

Parks Committee Meeting:

Flushing Meadows-Corona Park – Capital Project
Presentation - NW Paths near Meadow Lake

Date:

Thursday, January 28, 2016

Time:

7:30 p.m.

Place:

Community Board 8 Office
197-15 Hillside Avenue
Hollis, NY 11423

Martha Taylor, Parks Committee Chair

Board Members: Robert Block, Susan Cleary, Marc A. Haken, Frank Magri and Steven Sadofsky.

Also in attendance: Jean Silva, Co-Chair, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Alliance; Tim Thomas representing Assembly Member, Michael Simanowitz; Diane Dreier, NYC Parks; Adrian Hayes, NYC Parks; Meira Berkower, NYC Parks; Marie Adam-Ovide, CB8 District Manager and Alma Karassavidis, CB8 Staff Member.

Mrs. Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. and asked that attendees introduced themselves.

Purpose:

A presentation of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park – Meadow Lake NW Circulation and Planning by NYC Department of Parks and Recreation.

Adrian Hayes – A Power Point presentation was given. He began by pointing out the different areas around the lake where there are existing projects; including those recently completed, in construction and currently in procurement.

Marc Haken – Asked to be refreshed on what those projects are?

Robert Block – Asked if there were copies of the presentation for all attendees?

(Copies were made for everyone present).

Meira Berkower – This is a shoreline restoration path project. It is currently under construction and will be completed in Spring 2016. We received a grant from DEP to catch storm water coming off of the parking lot and that part of the project is actually completed. We still have a construction fence around it until the weather gets nice just to give the grass a chance to grow. We completed the path project and the shoreline restoration. Basically, we are combining the paths, taking out pavement and making one larger path to accommodate recreational biking and pedestrians. That was completed in 2010.

Marc Haken – If they are taking out the pavement, then what will be left to ride bikes on?

Meira Berkower – We are making one path, but it will be a larger path. That way we could have the recreational bikes sharing the path with the pedestrians. It will be asphalt. At the very northern end of the lake, we have a project that is in procurement that will start this upcoming fall after the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival. We are re-doing that area because of flooding.

Susan Cleary – **What are you procuring?**

Meira Berkower – A contractor.

Parks Committee Chair, Martha Taylor asked that everyone please hold their questions until the presentation is completed.

Meira Berkower – It is out to bid. We will receive bids, get a contractor, go through legal review and then we are expecting to start this fall. This is also to alleviate some of the flooding and catch some of the storm water. It will also be elevating the pavement and re-grading to allow the water to flow off.

Adrian Hayes – You will see that the project I am working on is very much in that same vein; raising and circulating the storm water.

Martha Taylor – Is this also going to alleviate the flooding that flows onto the Grand Central Parkway?

Meira Berkower – No. The storm water is flowing from the Grand Central Parkway into the lake but our lake doesn't really affect the storm water on the Grand Central Parkway. NY State DOT just completed a study on that. Specifically right under where the MTA tracks go into the yard. They found that the water table is very high and there had been a stream there at some point. It is not the water from Flushing Meadows.

Martha Taylor – Do they have a plan to fix that? And do you know about it?

Meira Berkower – This is State DOT. They just completed the study. I doubt that they have a plan yet.

Martha Taylor – Are there any plans in the near future for restoration of the Willows we lost?

Meira Berkower – We are planting trees, I don't know if they are specifically Willows. A lot of them were lost during the tornado. Their roots are very shallow. I will have to get back to you.

Marc Haken – I have a boat in the Dragon Boat Races and I would like to know what will be the duration of the project in that area?

Meira Berkower – It is going to be about an 18 month project. There is going to be one Dragon Boat Festival where the location might be moved to a different area.

Adrian Hayes – The area of the project has two pedestrian bridges over the Grand Central Parkway. They are different bridges, one is a ramp bridge and the other has stairs.

Project Goals:

- *Simplify and clarify existing pedestrian circulation.*
- *Reduce the impacts of frequent flooding.*
- *Improve entrances at pedestrian bridges.*
- *Create safe crossings at pedestrian/vehicular intersections.*

Presented was a diagram that shows the current vehicular circulation around the park. It is clockwise, one-way traffic for a large portion. Lines in red are restricted areas. People do drive to this park; so, it is something to consider in the way it is designed. The two bridges that were mentioned earlier were pointed out on the presentation. There are very long ramps on the northwest bridge that leads from the World's Fair Playground side to the entrance at the Flushing Meadows side. Unfortunately the bridges cannot touch. They are not being addressed in this project. What will be addressed is the experience once you get there.

Marc Haken – One side of the bridge is the park, what is the other side?

Adrian Hayes – The dog run.

Marc Haken – Is the dog run part of the park?

Adrian Hayes – No, it is not.

Marc Haken – So the bridges wouldn't fall in the purview of the park? They would be DOT?

Meira Berkower – Yes. All our bridges are DOT bridges. So we are not touching the bridges.

Adrian Hayes – Right, it's more of a reference point. More importantly it the access point. So that spot where you land once you are off the bridge is what we are looking at. (*Presentation shows Existing Circulation and Access and the Proposed Schematic Circulation Pattern*).

All around the northern portion, there is the formal aspect that is left from the World's Fair. This intersection that we are looking at was part of that geometry and has now since fallen by the wayside. Part of what I want to do it re-instate that a little bit and create a little more formality when you arrive at the park. I want to make the entrance a bit grander and balance it out. The red (*shown in presentation*) shows the paths that will be removed in this project and the circulation would be turned into something much simpler.

The key areas would include a connecting pathway between the two pedestrian bridges. It would bring a strong connection to pedestrian areas and create a safe crossing. There would be a Stop sign for vehicular traffic so that pedestrians can safely cross. They can decide whether to go down toward the lake or in this protected pedestrian pathway going up north. There would also be decorative plantings with flowering trees and plantings around the circle that would create an inviting space.

Frank Magri – Are you planning on lighting the walkway?

Adrian Hayes – The existing lighting will be re-configured along the new pathway alignment, so it will be lit.

Frank Magri – So the lightning will have to be removed and relocated?

Adrian Hayes – Yes.

Marc Haken – Are you talking about lighting on the walking path or on the road?

Adrian Hayes – On the walking path. There is pedestrian security lighting on the lower portion of the pathways. There is also street type lighting (*cobra head lighting*) on the roadway. There is one that corresponds to this entrance.

Marc Haken – Does the park officially close at sundown? Why do you need lights on the paths if the park is closed?

Adrian Hayes – For safety reasons.

Meira Berkower – All Queens parks close at 9:00 p.m. so there could be a point where there are people in the park when it is dark. There are a lot of access points, so it is hard to keep people out of the park. It is better to keep it lit.

Adrian Hayes – When you come down the pedestrian ramp you see that giant wall. We would soften that wall with some plantings to make it less emphasized. Along the pathways where there are low points, the hope is that we can establish a little bit of high ground where the low ground is. The water will create low points. We will have some plantings at those points which will hold the water and also act as a filter.

Diane Dreier – This looks really nice on this side of the lake. We will make it happen on the other side.

Adrian Hayes – Moving down here at the other bridge, this would be a “*speed table*”. It would create a raised pedestrian crossing which creates a safer zone for pedestrians. There will be another Stop sign, as well as special pavement and a slight grade change that would alert a driver that they are in a pedestrian area. Also there will be some plantings to create an entrance feeling and soften the wall by the stairs.

Martha Taylor – I still want Weeping Willows.

Adrian Hayes – I will address that.

Meira Berkower – If they are not planting Willows, there is a reason and we will get back to you.

Frank Magri – Willows are great if you are having flooding, because they absorb a lot of water.

Martha Taylor – That is why I thought they were there in the first place.

Meira Berkower – We have been recently planting Bald Cypress trees. They also suck up the water.

Frank Magri – Are those trees native to the park?

Meira Berkower – Yes.

Martha Taylor – I think we are all in agreement that we really want a Willow planted.

Diane Dreier – I don’t see a reason why we can’t plant a Willow in this area. We will get you a Willow. Somewhere we can plant a Willow.

Marc Haken – What is the time frame for this?

Diane Dreier – We are in the schematic phase and we are going to be doing the construction documents. Now that we have seen you, we can continue on with the actual construction documents. We are looking to put it out to the legal review in May of this year. That time frame is sometimes 6-9 months. This would probably begin construction in Spring 2017.

Steve Sadofsky – First I want to say that I love you guys. I think you really work hard and you care. That really comes through!

Will you be considering green technologies such as LED lighting, which uses a lot less energy for the lighting that was mentioned earlier? In my mind that goes along with park space.

Meira Berkower – Park lighting is DOT's domain. They have been replacing the lights with LED lights.

Martha Taylor invited Jean Silva to ask a question.

Jean Silva – We had built a bird line in this area. Sandy took down a lot of our trees. One of them was a magnificent Willow.

Meira Berkower – It has been put back up in the same area but closer to the lake.

Jean Silva – We had the two paths there and the bird line was behind the second path where there were bicycles and pedestrians.

Meira Berkower – During construction we may have to take it out again, but we stored it last time and we will put it back where it was.

Jean Silva – We also have one over on Willow Lake.

Meira Berkower – The Conservancy has been very generous. They know that there is a group of people that are interested in seeing birds and taking pictures.

Jean Silva – It is directly opposite the boathouse. It's a really nice area to take pictures. There are a lot of birds and ducks that go to that area.

Meira Berkower – Our Park Rangers also do periodic programs.

Susan Cleary – Just an FYI...we spotted a Bald Eagle.

Meira Berkower – Three actually, two adults and one baby.

Steve Sadofsky – I think they did a terrific job in returning it to some of its earlier state as far as the World's Fair stuff, especially the circles. The drainage was handled great on that side. The two low areas on either side is a great idea and to mirror the other side of the park makes total sense. Just please get her a Willow! No matter what, get her a Willow!

Susan Cleary – When are you going to come into the south end of the park and work on the paths around Willow Lake because they are awfully soggy?

Meira Berkower – At some point after the World's Fair they put in asphalt paths along Willow Lake. Willow Lake is now a State designated Wetland. So we've put wood chips and raised it. We have placed large stepping stones and constructed little boardwalks. Ultimately if more is going to be done there, we will need to construct boardwalks, which are very expensive. We are doing what we can.

Frank Magri – At the end of Willow Lake, there is a train yard where they clean the trains. Does that water and all the chemicals leak into Willow Lake?

Meira Berkower – I am not sure if they do or not. Periodically our Natural Resources Group monitors the lake. We haven't found that the contaminants from the yards are going into the lake.

Susan Cleary – When was the last time that they did the monitoring?

Meira Berkower – I am not sure.

Frank Magri – That is a serious issue.

Diane Dreier – We need a letter of support from the Community Board.

Martha Taylor – Can we all unanimously agree that we will give a letter of support?

Frank Magri made a motion to send a letter of support, seconded by Steve Sadofsky.

Martha Taylor took a hand count for all those in favor of sending a letter of support.

The vote passed unanimously, with no opposition

Count in favor 6 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0

Frank Magri – This is the highlight of Queens. This is what we are known for. How do we highlight that to the public? We painted it; maybe we should light it up?

Jean Silva – The Borough President has already allocated for this budget. There is over \$3M to \$4M for getting the electricity put back into it. Also they are doing some staircases. It will be lit at night the same way that the Unisphere is lit up. They had a trial last year and it was wonderful. I think by the end of this year it will be lit up.

Meira Berkower – No, it is not going to be lit up by then. The Borough President has allocated funding to do restoration on the Pavillion. Most of it is going towards the Towers. That was based on the community input that we had a few years ago. Recently she has said that she would also like to dedicate funding to lighting up. That would be Capital funding which would go through the Capital process so it would not be complete by the end of this year.

Martha Taylor – So it will happen we just don't know when?

Meira Berkower – Yes, she has promised to allocate additional funding in the upcoming budget.

Marc A. Haken – The painters' union volunteered their time to work on that.

Steve Sadofsky – We painted too. A lot of the unions volunteered.

Meira Berkower – Everything was donated. It was awesome.

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alma Karassavidis, CB8 Staff

February 4, 2016