Environment, Open Space, & Parks Committee
Wednesday, February 15, 2017, 6:00 p.m.
Board Office, 1664 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10035

***MINUTES***

Present: Frances Mastrota, David Giordano, Chandra Smith, Marie Winfield

Excused: James Garcia, Russell Shuler

Absent: Brodie Enoch

Guests: Charles Cochran, DPR; Angela Maull, Chenchita’s Community Garden; Renee Keitt, Chenchita’s; Chantal Gailloux; Runelvi De La Rosa, Concrete Safaris; Shakira Henderson; Jeffrey Monteiro; Paul Dawkins, NYSoM; Danielle Davi, CIVITAS; Eileen Munsen, Randall’s Island Park Alliance

1. Call to Order - Adoption of the Agenda

The chair, F. Mastrota, called the meeting to order at 6pm. The committee achieved quorum at 6:30pm.

Motion to adopt the agenda by D. Giordano, seconded by M. Winfield. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Announcements

a. GrowTogether Conference, March 25, 2017 at Hostos Community College, 9am – 4pm
b. 2017 Making Brooklyn Bloom, Connecting the Drops, at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, March 11, 10am – 4pm bbg.org/community
c. Fusion of the Musical and Visual Arts, February 28 at 7:30pm

3. Presentations & Discussions

a. Informational presentation on street trees mapping initiative, Charles Cochran, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (20).

Charles Cochran, Street Trees Census coordinator, gave a presentation on Trees Count! 2015 detailing the history of street tree inventories and the Million Trees program (see attached slides). Information specific to community district 11 included: Arsenal North Parks staff mapped a lot of trees in East Harlem, compared to other areas where volunteers made up the bulk of the street tree
mappers. 41% of trees in CB11 have signs of stewardship. New street tree capacity in CB11 is at 1,200. 17% of street trees have helpful tree guards (765). 330 trees have harmful tree guards.

b. Committee discussion on 2017 goal for committee street tree initiative (20).

The committee and public engaged in a discussion on how the Community Board could help with encouraging street tree stewardship in the East Harlem community. Starting with awareness in the community, suggestions included: putting up curb your dog sign, information in newsletters, symposiums, while focusing on educating the benefits of street trees in the community, such as positives for individuals with asthma. The Parks Stewardship division provides resources, including signs, connection to super-stewards within the neighborhood, as well as potential grants. Angela Maull suggested to work with schools that do community service and adopt-a-tree programs. Charles Cochran suggested that CB11 could apply for a Citizens Committee grant for more curb your dog signs and tree guards. Runelvi Delarosa from Concrete Safaris suggested working with afterschool programs and stated that this would be a great way to educate children. *The committee will follow up with Mr. Cochran, Chenchita’s and Pleasant Village Gardens, Concrete Safaris and the Parks Department Street Trees Stewardship division.*

4. Informational Updates

a. NYC Council Parks and Recreation Committee meeting report back (January 19, 2017)

M. Winfield reported back on the city council meeting which addressed the Intros reviewed at the last committee meeting. The Parks Commission testified on improvements on the capital projects process to respond to City Councilmembers concerned about the lag time on completing capital Parks projects (testimony attached). Some of the improvements included: reducing time in the design phase, increasing approval rate of first submissions at the Public Design Commission, awarding $91 million in M/WBE contracts. She noted that anyone can look up the status of capital projects on the Parks Department online capital project tracker and follow up with the Community Board for any further questions.

5. Continuing Business

a. Report on community gardens, CPI parks sites, and ongoing capital projects

Angela Maull, from Chenchita’s, reported back on East 111th Street site gardens. She said that the other gardens not included in the development site (Blue House and Friendly Garden) were going to join other gardens that were not that active. Blue House didn’t find somewhere that they want as of yet. She stated that a gardener from Friendly Garden will be working with a garden on 117th Street. She also said that Bill LoSasso, Director of Green Thumb, will be at the next community garden coalition meeting on Thursday Feb 16th. East 111th Street gardens will be planting this season, which includes Blue House and Friendly Gardens.

There was no update from other RFQ lots. *M. Winfield will send out information about any upcoming meetings on the East 111th Street development at the Community Board to the Parks committee email list.*

b. Budget: Preliminary budget responses for FY18 budget
Motion to submit revised comment to budget committee FY18 and use for testimony at Parks and Recreation City Council budget hearing by D. Giordano, seconded by C. Smith. Motion passed unanimously.

c. Environmental review

F. Mastrota noted that the plastic bag law was rejected by the State and the Governor will put together a task force.

M. Winfield said that the Educational Construction Fund Co-op Tech project environmental review and scoping documents can be found on the CB11 website.

6. New Business

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:50pm by D. Giordano, seconded by C. Smith. Motion passed unanimously.
Hearing before the New York City Council  
Committee on Parks & Recreation  
Oversight: Capital Process  
January 19, 2017

Testimony By: Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP Commissioner

Good morning, Chair Levine, members of the Parks Committee and other Members of the City Council. I am Mitchell Silver, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. I am joined here today by Therese Braddick, our Deputy Commissioner for Capital Projects, and Matt Drury, our Director of Government Relations. Thank you for inviting us today to testify about our agency's capital process, as well as Introduction 407 and Introduction 1340, both pertaining to the notification of Council Members regarding work performed on capital projects.

When I began my tenure as Parks Commissioner in May 2014, it was clear that many were frustrated with the agency's capital process. My professional background as a planner and professional consultant has provided me with broad experience in identifying and reducing inefficiencies, so I made it my top priority to take a hard look at our internal operations and improve our ability to deliver smart and well-designed capital projects as quickly as possible. We have undertaken a comprehensive and focused effort to streamline every portion of the capital process within our control, and we have seen significant and tangible improvements: improved communications, increased transparency, better efficiency and shorter delivery timelines.

I'd like to begin by providing some background about our capital portfolio, because I think the unique nature, scale and raw volume of our capital projects are important factors to keep in mind. NYC Parks is currently managing **549** active capital contracts for Parks improvement projects, including 217 in design, 151 in procurement and 181 in construction. To put this in perspective, at this time in 2015, we had 398 projects in process, a 38% increase over two years. Another indicator of our increased volume is the number of construction contracts we bid out; 182 construction contracts went out to bid during Fiscal Year 2016, representing a 61% increase over Fiscal Year 2014. Of those 182 contracts bid out, we registered 101 contracts for construction, higher than the number of contracts registered by the City's Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Protection and the NYPD, combined. This increase, and the corresponding investment in NYC Parks capital staff to manage a growing
portfolio, demonstrates a marked commitment from the Administration to further park equity and ensure all parks achieve a state of good repair, and we will take it as a vote of confidence that the Council continues to make significant and much-needed investments in our parks and open space. Since Fiscal Year 2014, we’ve been fortunate enough to receive $155M from the Borough Presidents and $278M from the City Council. But it’s also true that this robust volume of projects increases our exposure to the kind of delays inherent in a process that is governed by state and local laws, multiple regulatory entities, and rigorous citywide policies.

Throughout our discussion today, it’s important to keep in mind that thoughtful, engaging and efficient design can be difficult to define, but we all know it when we see it. New Yorkers recognize that beautiful, vibrant parks are vital to our quality of life, and NYC Parks believes that an effective design can create a new beloved neighborhood amenity or completely redefine an existing public space in surprising and delightful ways. Perhaps more importantly, the spaces we build need to be safe and maintainable, and that requires thoughtful planning. Good design is important, and that takes time. Avoiding the hiring of non-responsive or non-responsible contractors is important and that takes time. Safely constructing a quality project that will last and provide value is important, and that takes time as well. In all, we believe that the final products resulting from our capital process reflects the advanced forethought, preparation and due diligence necessary to make sure that every completed project has a full, useful life as a valuable public asset.

We can always do more, and our efforts to improve continue every day at NYC Parks, but I’m tremendously proud of the great strides we’ve made and even more proud to introduce the person responsible for overseeing this effort. I’d like to introduce Therese Braddock, our Deputy Commissioner for Capital Projects to give you more detailed information about our capital process.

I’d like to publicly commend DC Braddock and her team for their hard work and dedication—as I think their presentation makes clear, we have tackled concerns about the capital process head on, and we are seeing results. Comparing Fiscal Years 2015 and 2016, we reduced the average time period for design by 54 days, nearly 2 whole months. Furthermore, in past years, only 20% of our project designs were being approved by the PDC on our first submission—that approval rate is now 83%. We automated and standardized the process to compile our contract books, which used to take two weeks and now can be done in only two hours. On the topic of
contracts, this is a good moment to mention our exemplary M/WBE efforts, as we awarded $91 million in contracts in Fiscal Year 2016 to M/WBE firms, the second-highest total amongst city agencies.

We reduced the number of change orders for projects in the construction phase by 78%, from 407 to 90, and nearly a quarter of our Fiscal Year 2016 construction projects were completed early—over 30 days before their scheduled completion date. The average construction project in Fiscal Year 2016 took 99 fewer days than in Fiscal Year 2015. Keep in mind, these improvements are all taking place in the context of the highest volume of individual projects ever seen by the agency—as I mentioned earlier, we registered over 100 construction contracts in Fiscal Year 2016. Despite this ambitious portfolio, the Mayor’s Management Report on Fiscal Year 2016 demonstrated that NYC Parks’ construction completions were 86% on-time, and 88% within budget, a significant improvement over years past.

At the same time, we have made more robust public information available about ongoing capital projects than at any point in the agency’s history. Our online Capital Project Tracker, launched in Fall 2014, makes the process more transparent than ever. The Capital Project Tracker is an online, searchable tool updated daily that allows anyone, be it an elected official, supporter of a specific park, or just your average curious New Yorker, to look up a specific park and learn more about any capital project’s status. I’m proud to update the Council that to date, the Tracker has received 255,571 website visits, giving citizens the information they need and deserve about park improvements in their community in real time.

To be clear, we understand there is still more work to be done. We are always searching for additional ways to make the process more efficient, and would value your partnership in this effort. For example, we would welcome the Council’s support in prioritizing funding for critical state of good repair projects in your district, and ask that you communicate with us in advance before making any allocation decisions to discuss the project and obtain a formal estimate from our Capital division. We’d ask you to continue working with us to ensure your constituents get involved early in our scoping process to ensure our designs truly reflect the community’s desires and don’t face design changes later in the process. And we would ask that you carefully consider the potential impacts of local laws and proposed legislation, to help us streamline the number of administrative steps in the process, which is a perfect segue to the proposed legislation, Intros. 407 & 1340, under discussion today.
NYC Parks understands the importance of ensuring Council Members get regular updates on the capital projects in their districts. We believe NYC Parks’ existing practice of regular and robust communication between Council Members and our dedicated Borough Commissioners, in addition to our Capital Project Tracker, provide Council Members with up-to-the-moment status updates for the capital projects they support with discretionary funding. If a given Council Member feels that is not the case and has a specific question about a project, whether it regards change orders, the project timeline or other issues, my door is always open and our borough commissioners are always available to address your concerns. In short, we are concerned that mandating additional administrative steps like those described by these two bills would only serve to delay our capital process and add back time that we’ve worked so hard to save, in direct conflict with our shared goal of moving projects forward as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Intro 1340 further would compel the agency to provide an update to Council Members when a contractor is denied payment. It may be helpful to provide some background here. Pursuant to a directive from the City Comptroller, every agency that deals with construction projects has an Engineering Audit Office, operating independently from the Capital unit to audit and assess proposed payments to contractors. The engineers of Parks’ EAO verify that costs are reasonable, consistent with the contract or change order, and properly documented, all in a timely manner, to enable prompt payment pursuant to the rules of the Procurement Policy Board. Upon arriving, it came to my attention that communication between the key parties was not as robust as it could be, leading to delays in resolving disagreements and processing payments. So I created a new position, Assistant Commissioner for Agency Compliance, to directly oversee the EAO and encourage more productive and pro-active communication between the contractor and our agency.

I’m pleased to report that complete payment denials to our contractors are extremely rare, as our EAO is empowered and encouraged to authorize partial payments for work performed, withholding only those amounts which require further documentation, clarification or review. While the EAO continues to identify discrepancies in the contractors’ processes and calculations, we communicate more openly and encourage the project to continue, while specific issues are being worked out. As a result, contractors can anticipate agency demands, and work stoppages and delays due to non-payment are increasingly rare. Similar to other
concerns about a capital project, if a Council Member has received specific feedback about a project audit, our agency is fully available to answer any questions.

We appreciate the Council's interest and advocacy regarding these topics, and look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues to make New York City's parks and playgrounds better than ever. As we hope today's testimony has demonstrated, NYC Parks has made it a priority to streamline our capital process and deliver quality improvements to our parks in a faster and more thoughtful manner. Of all of the initiatives I have started under my tenure here at NYC Parks, streamlining the capital process is the one of which I am most proud. Thank you for inviting us to testify today, we would now be happy to answer any questions you may have.
NYC’s Urban Forest

Street trees 666,134

Park trees: Census in Process

Forest trees 6,500 acres
NYC Urban Forest Facts

• 1 million trees planted 2007 - 2015
• 21% canopy cover (7 million trees)*
• 29,000 acres of parkland (14% of land area)
  ✓ 6,500 acres forest and upland
  ✓ estimated 1 million landscape trees
  ✓ 666,134 street trees
  ✓ 2,200 greenstreets

• Street and park trees last year (FY16):
  ✓ 90,000 public service requests
  ✓ 22,000 planted
  ✓ 130,000 pruned
  ✓ 16,000 removed
  ✓ $60 million in contracts
  ✓ 184 arboricultural staff

*based on field observations from 2013 and modeled data from 2008. From draft report from the U.S. Forest Service, The Urban Forest of New York City, by Nowak, Dave et. al., expected publication early 2017
NYC Urban Forestry Goals

Healthy Neighborhoods
Plant trees in areas where they are most needed

Engaged Communities
Empower citizens to advocate and care for the natural resources around them

Data Driven Management
Use analytical tools and technology to optimize benefits and minimize tree care costs and risks
Why Count Trees?

Trees make our city cooler, our air cleaner, and our neighborhoods more beautiful. Thanks to street tree inventories in 1995 and 2005, we can even quantify the dollar value of the benefits that our trees provide.
Street Tree Inventories

1996

- 700 volunteers
- baseline data
- customer service responses (block pruning, dead tree removal)
- first forestry database

2006

- 1,200 volunteers
- digital inventory
- eco-benefits (STRATUM); stocking levels
- 2\textsuperscript{nd} forestry management system
- community forestry management plans
- tree procurement
- block tree planting for equity
TreesCount! 2016

- **Technology**—innovative web-based app for volunteer training, event scheduling, progress tracking, cloud-based data collection and tree mapping

- **Accuracy**—first spatially accurate tree inventory integrated into agency operations

- **Transparency**—share all 3 decadal data sets through NYC Open Data portal
Data Collection Overview

- Simpler than a GPS unit.
- More consistent than heads-up digitizing.
- Collects highly standardized, spatially accurate data with little training
- Widely tested and easy to use
- Enables systematic quality check
From this in 2005…

address-based (approximate) tree location

…to this in 2015

survey method (precise) tree location
Data Collection Variables

- Location (XY)
- Alive / Dead / Stump
- Size
- Tree Species
- Overall Health
- Signs of Stewardship
- Tree Guards
- Sidewalk Condition
- Tree Problems (root / trunk / branch)
Goals of Data Engagement

• How might you use this data as an environmental professional, a civic techie, and/or a citizen steward?

• How might you transform, analyze, and connect this dataset with others in meaningful ways?

• How might you create actionable insights using this data?
Goal—to foster collaboration between government, community members and civic technologists to use open data to improve our understanding of and care for the urban forest.
Street trees counted in 1996, 2006, and 2016:

1996: 498,470
2006: 582,131
2016: 666,134
Street Trees by Borough

Street trees counted in 1996, 2006, and 2016 by borough (% increase from 2006)

- Queens: 242,414 (1%)
- Brooklyn: 173,063 (21%)
- Staten Island: 103,313 (4%)
- Bronx: 83,115 (38%)
- Manhattan: 64,229 (29%)
Change from 2006--Tree Count

Percent Change in Stem Count per Census Tract

- >100%
- 50% to 100%
- 6% to 49%
- no change*
- -6% to -49%
- -50% to -100%

* indicates change within +/- 5%
2,241 volunteers participated, contributing 12,000 hours
Top Five Species

2016 Top Five (46%)
- London Planetree (13.3%)
- Honeylocust (9.9%)
- Callery Pear (9.0%)
- Pin Oak (8.2%)
- Norway Maple (5.2%)

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- Honeylocust (9.9%)
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Tree Condition and Size

- **Good**: 79%
- **Fair**: 14%
- **Poor**: 4%
- **Dead**: 2%

- **Small 0-6 in**: 32%
- **Medium 7-18 in**: 48%
- **Large 18-30 in**: 16%
- **X-Large 30+ in**: 4%
Street Tree Benefits

NYC’s street trees produce $151 million in total annual benefits*, including:

- Stormwater capture ($36.6 million)
- Increased property values ($86.3 million)
- Improved air quality ($2.4 million)
- Energy savings ($21.6 million)
- CO₂ reductions ($4.3 million)

Tree benefits increase exponentially with tree size. A large tree provides up to 65 times the benefits of a smaller tree (U.S. Forest Service).

* U.S. Forest Service i-Tree Streets
Manhattan CB11 At-A-Glance

**Urban Tree Canopy**
- tree canopy covers 15.7% of land area
- 48% of the CB’s tree canopy is managed by NYC Parks (30% on parkland and 18% on streets)

**Street Tree Stocking**
- 79% of potential street tree locations are filled
- estimated new street tree capacity is 1,200
- 64% increase in street trees from 2006 (2,917 to 4,777)

**Street Tree Characteristics**
- Most common species is honeylocust (London planetree is second)
- almost half (44%) of trees are small (less than 6-inches diameter)
- 41% of trees have signs of stewardship (1,882)
- 17% of trees have helpful tree guards (765)
- 330 trees have harmful tree guards
Interactive Street Tree Map

Ongoing Public Engagement—public facing NYC Street Tree map… updated daily

➢ See the location of NYC’s street trees
➢ Learn about their species, size and ecological benefits
➢ Record your street tree care activities (watering, weeding, planting)
➢ Share your favorite trees and activities on social media

Promo Video:
https://youtu.be/MIJo4SQS1ql
NYC Tree Map

London Planetree •
Platanus x acerifolia

Species Map and Details
ID Number: 1433723
Trunk Diameter: 4 inches
Suggest an Edit

Closest Address
1664 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10035

Tree Care Activity
There are no activities reported for this tree.

Get tips on tree care activities in the Learn section.

Ecological Benefits
Benefits are calculated using formulas from the U.S. Forest Service. Learn more about the benefits of trees to NYC ➔

- Stormwater intercepted each year
  317 gallons
  Value: $3.14

- Energy conserved each year
  238 kWh
  Value: $30.07

- Air pollutants removed each year
  0 pounds
  Value: $1.73

- Carbon dioxide reduced each year
  35 pounds
  Value: $0.12

- Total Value of Annual Benefits
  $35.17
NYC Tree Map

New York City Street Tree Map
Explore and Care For NYC’s Urban Forest

East Harlem North
Neighborhood Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trees on the Map</th>
<th>Activities Reported</th>
<th>Trees Favorited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,534</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Species: 68
Most Common Species: Thornless Honey Locust
515 trees, 20% of East Harlem North trees on the map

Recent Tree Care Activities
There are no activities reported for this species. Click on a tree to report your care.

Ecological Benefits
Benefits are calculated using formulas from the U.S. Forest Service. Learn more about the benefits of trees to NYC.

- **Stormwater intercepted each year**
  - 2,888,991 gallons
  - Value: $28,600.99

- **Energy conserved each year**
  - 2,055,948 kWh
  - Value: $259,552.89

- **Air pollutants removed each year**
  - 3,793 pounds
  - Value: $19,832.10

- **Carbon dioxide reduced each year**
  - 995 tons
  - Value: $6,644.44

- **Total Value of Annual Benefits**
  - $321,274.91
Please
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Pick Up After Your Dog---

He's beggin' you...
Remember to pick up your dog's poop after taking them for a walk or while out.

Thanks for keeping our neighborhood clean and safe!

[Image of a dog]

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[Image of a dog]

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[Image of a dog]

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[Image of a dog]
Our long-standing budget priorities – *increase in PEP/Rangers, DPR maintenance and programming staff, East River Esplanade/Harlem River Greenway infrastructure, Marcus Garvey Fire Watchtower and Pier 107 rehabilitation, and comfort stations in our heavily used parks* – remain all highly important needs as indicated in our previous Statements of District Needs, the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan and New York City resiliency initiatives. **We recommend a comprehensive plan for funding these priorities starting with the FY ‘18 budget cycle.**

The following projects within our budget priorities have been identified as the most viable for funding in the FY ‘18 budget, while serving our community’s greatest needs.

- **DPR Staffing (District-wide)** 311201838/842/852/867E

  Notably, East Harlem will lose three playground associates (Cherry Tree, Poor Richard’s and Thomas Jefferson Park), which are currently funded through an agreement with MTA around Second Avenue Subway staging. This funding will end shortly. **We recommend baselining these 3 Playground Associates into the FY 18 DPR expense budget to avoid the loss of these positions in a future fiscal year.**

- **Poor Richard’s Playground (E 109th St./3rd Ave)** 311201822C

  This large, multi-use site is the nexus of recreation space for many neighborhood schools and community residents. This site abuts Franklin Plaza and five adjacent schools. **We recommend FY 18 capital funding in the Mayor's, City Council Speaker's and Manhattan Borough President’s discretionary budgets** to ensure the rehabilitation of this important asset to the community.

- **Eugene McCabe Field (E 120th St./Park Ave)** 311201815C

  This field is located next to P.S. 79, a school that services many children with special needs, where instructors have indicated an interest in using the field if it were in better condition and easy to schedule time for school use. **We recommend expense funding in FY 18 for the in-house rehabilitation of the field by DPR, through the incoming councilperson in District 9 and the Borough President’s Office.** Funding this project under expense budgets would reduce the costs significantly than if allocated as a capital project (more than five times the expense funding).

- **Street Tree Maintenance (District-wide)** 311201849E

  The success of the Million Trees program has created a huge street tree infrastructure without adequate resources for communities to care for these trees. **NYC DPR needs**
expense funding in FY ’18 to hire out for contracts for street tree maintenance and/or to hire additional Forestry staff so that communities without the volunteer maintenance capacity do not lose the environmental benefits due to lack of care.

- **Green Thumb staffing (District-wide) 311201868E**

Given the increase in construction and a proposed rezoning, we are concerned with the current level of staffing at Green Thumb in order to provide oversight and services to our community gardens, specifically the transition of the East 111th Street gardens within the SustaiNYC development project. **We recommend greater funding for Green Thumb programming and staffing in the FY ’18 budget.**

We also support the Parks Department and our government agency partners in their consideration of the urgent need to renovate **P.S. 155 playground, Thomas Jefferson Park playground, Mae Grant (“Black Park”), and Sunshine Playground** and to move forward on allocating funding to these much-needed capital projects. Our schools, neighborhood residents and non-profit partners heavily use all of these sites for programming and general recreation. We are happy to advocate for these capital projects alongside your efforts, in addition to our stated budget priorities.