

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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February 13, 2017
Start: 1:08 p.m.
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,
16th Fl.

B E F O R E:

MARK LEVINE
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Darlene Mealy
Fernando Cabrera
James G. Van Bramer
Andrew Cohen
Alan N. Maisel
Mark Treyger
Joseph C. Borelli

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Sarah Neilson
Chief of Policy and Long-Range Planning
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Nancy Prince
Deputy Chief for Design
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Matt Drury
Director of Government Relations
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Lynn Kelly
Executive Director
New Yorkers for Parks

Deborah Marton
Executive Director
New York Restoration Project

Carol Anastasio
Representative
The Seward Park Conservancy

Julian Macrone
Program and Development Manager
Fort Greene Park Conservancy

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[sound check]

2

[pause]

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[background comment]

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CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright, good

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afternoon everybody. We are going to get started.

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Welcome. Welcome. For those who I haven't had a

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chance to meet, I'm Mark Levine, Chair of the City

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Council's Committee on Parks and Recreation; joined

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by a rowdy group of colleagues, Parks Committee

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member Andy Cohen from the Bronx, our visitor from

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Staten Island today, one of our bill sponsors, Joe

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Borelli, Council Member from Staten Island, and Parks

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Committee member and Minority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer

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from Queens. We'll be hearing from all of them

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shortly.

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I'm going to dispense with my usual

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prepared statement to offer some brief extemporaneous

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remarks and then I'm going to pass it on to Council

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Member Borelli, if he's done his chat at that point,

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and we will hear from him in a little more expertise

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on one of the bills at hand.

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We're going to be conducting an oversight

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hearing today on a very popular program, Parks

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Without Borders, and we are also going to be hearing

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2 two bills; one, Int. 1411, which is lead sponsored by
3 Council Member Borelli and I'm proud to be a co-
4 sponsor, will set out rules in relation to pedestrian
5 access to parks. We're also going to consider
6 Int. 1449, which concerns the ceremonial co-naming of
7 40 streets and thoroughfares in New York City.

8 And I'm very pleased that we have been
9 joined by stalwart Committee Member from the Bronx,
10 Fernando Cabrera, and this actually brings us to
11 quorum, and so I think I'm going to pause my remarks
12 and we're going to take care of our vote on the
13 street naming just so that if one of our colleagues
14 needs to leave, we don't lose quorum. So is the
15 committee clerk here yet? [background comment] We
16 are waiting for the committee clerk. [background
17 comment] Before we do the vote. Okay.

18 So we're going to... I'm going to ask --
19 what's the panelist's name? [background comment] We
20 do have one member of the public who wanted to speak
21 on the street naming and we should do that before the
22 vote anyhow uh while we're waiting for the committee
23 clerk, who is administering a vote in another
24 committee. [background comment] And maybe you could
25 identify yourself; I don't think that person filled

1
2 out a slip. Is there someone here to speak on a
3 street co-naming? [background comment] Wonderful.
4 Alright. Thank you very much.

5 Okay, so I'm going to continue my remarks
6 until [background comment] our committee clerk
7 arrives, the play for time here [sic]. But actually,
8 I do want to share a few important concepts related
9 to what we're talking about today.

10 You know, we've talked often in this
11 Committee about the fact that the design of a park
12 influences the culture of the community and the city;
13 talked a lot about that -- books have been written on
14 that topic. But that actually both ways; the culture
15 of our city affects the design of our parks and you
16 can see that very clearly if you look back to the 70s
17 and 80s, when crime was rising in New York City and
18 there was fear often among New Yorkers and they often
19 looked at the parks as a refuge from the more
20 dangerous neighborhood around them, and the design of
21 parks started to reflect that and you started to see
22 walls and gates and barriers built up surrounding
23 parks all over the city; often reflecting this
24 mentality, kind of a fortress mentality of let's keep
25 these parks safe from the outside neighborhood. And

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2 many of those barriers have remained with us today,
3 even though, thankfully, we're in a very different
4 place as a city and culturally we have now seen the
5 value of integrating parks directly with the
6 surrounding neighborhoods; we want people to come
7 into parks, we want them to be open to the community
8 and we have a Parks Commissioner who as an urban
9 planner has thought a lot about this idea of weaving
10 together the fabric of neighborhoods by connecting
11 parks to the street grid and the surrounding
12 community. So he created one of his signature
13 initiatives, the Parks Without Borders program, which
14 put in I believe \$50 million of capital to reimagine
15 the borders of parks, reimagine how parks connect to
16 the surrounding neighborhoods; to the surrounding
17 street grid and a lot of that is simply about undoing
18 the wall-building and barrier-making that occurred in
19 the city in a very different time, so it was very
20 needed, reflecting I think a much more contemporary
21 view of green space in our city and all the
22 communities where these programs have been rolled out
23 have been incredibly positive about it; we look
24 forward to hearing more about Parks Without Borders,
25 and I hope we can look forward to an expansion of

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2 this program into the next fiscal year with
3 additional capital money allocated; I will certainly
4 be advocating for that.

5 We have been joined by the most popular
6 man in the room, Billy Martin, our Committee Clerk
7 and we have a quorum now Billy, so I'm going to ask
8 you to take the roll for Int. 1449. [background
9 comment] No problem.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,
11 Committee Clerk, roll call vote Committee on Parks
12 and Recreation, Introduction 1449-A. Council Member
13 Levine.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright, I vote aye.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Cabrera.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Van Bramer.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Cohen.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Aye.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So how long can we
22 leave the vote open; can we... [background comment]
23 Alright, great. Thank you. So stick around if you
24 can.

1
2 I did want to say briefly a couple words
3 on the two bills being considered. First, 1411,
4 which as I mentioned, I'm pleased to be co-sponsoring
5 with Council Member Borelli, relates directly to the
6 topic I was just speaking about; the ways in which
7 parks connect to their neighborhoods and to the
8 streets around them.

9 To understand the context of this bill,
10 you cannot be a Manhattanite, or at least you cannot
11 be a Manhattanite who doesn't visit the outer
12 boroughs. It's very difficult to understand if you
13 are a Manhattanite that there are streets in the city
14 that don't have sidewalks. Yes, this is true, there
15 are streets in the outer boroughs which don't have
16 sidewalks and there are parks which are not
17 surrounded by sidewalks. I cannot imagine that in
18 the context of a dense urban area, but this is the
19 reality in places like Staten Island and elsewhere
20 and that presents an obvious problem; how do you get
21 to the park if there is not a sidewalk? And in
22 communities where people arrive by car, if you're
23 parking on the road or street near the park, how is
24 it that you get from your car to the park entrance?
25 And the answer is: you have to walk in the street and

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2 that is not healthy, it's not smart urban design, so
3 Council Member Borelli has, to his credit, put
4 forward some legislation that would ensure that parks
5 have sidewalk access for safety for all of us, a very
6 sensible bill. We're going to hear more about that
7 in a minute.

8 And I'll just say briefly on the street
9 co-naming bill we're considering 40 co-namings; one
10 in which I'm proud to co-sponsor with my colleague
11 Helen Rosenthal in honor of one of the moral giants
12 of our time, Elie Wiesel, really the most famous
13 survivor of the Holocaust who turned the pain of that
14 horrific episode into a very powerful witness and
15 really embodied the most important two words in the
16 20th century for me, which are "never again" and he
17 held us up to that standard time and again in
18 conflicts around the world, whatever ethnicity or
19 religion the victims were and he was a New Yorker, a
20 very proud New Yorker who came to this country
21 shortly after the war and always took enormous price
22 and being part of the city and enriched it in so many
23 ways, and then like a lot of New Yorkers, went from
24 the East Side to the West Side and back, but their
25 roots were set down on West 84th Street and Central

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2 Park West -- that's where the kids grew up and where
3 they went to school -- and so with his passing late
4 last year, we wanted to honor his memory in a way
5 that all New Yorkers would be able to see and so I'm
6 sponsoring with Council Member Rosenthal a street co-
7 naming in his honor on West 84th Street and Central
8 Park West will be Elie Wiesel Way.

9 So I think I'm going to pause unless
10 there are other colleagues who want to speak on the
11 street co-naming issue. No. Okay. Then Council
12 Member Borelli, please, if you'd like to speak on
13 Int. 1411.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Sure, thank you
15 Mr. Chairman and thank you to the members of the
16 Parks Committee for having this hearing. I want to
17 be very brief.

18 So as the Chairman pointed out, many
19 parts of the city are unlike many others and I did
20 have the pleasure of dragging the Chairman out to my
21 district to witness this problem firsthand. In
22 Staten Island, we're very fortunate; I'm probably the
23 only Council Member who can bass fish and mountain
24 bike in property right next to my house, I mean it's
25 kind of an odd thing to think about in a dense urban

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2 area like New York City, but the topography and the
3 geography of Staten Island are simply different. I
4 recognize that there are concerns over how many
5 properties need sidewalks, and I'll give you a fun
6 fact. When I worked for my predecessor this issue
7 came up and it was my job as a staffer to literally
8 count the number of blocks and lots that were on
9 Staten Island in Community Boards 2 and 3 that didn't
10 have sidewalks, and the number was about 1,100
11 individual properties that were owned predominantly
12 by Parks that didn't have sidewalks; not to say that
13 there are some DEP properties that do the same or
14 DCAS properties. We're not asking for sidewalks to
15 be installed on all of these properties; in fact, I
16 think it would probably change Staten Island and
17 parts of the city for the worse if we did that; there
18 is no need in many places to put sidewalks when there
19 are no people that need to go there. But we do know
20 that when we have playgrounds and when we have
21 athletic facilities, we know that that's where
22 children and families oftly [sic] do.

23 This had been an issue for my district
24 for many, many years and frankly, we have heard many
25 people from Parks over the years saying that this

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2 would be a priority and yet here we are where we
3 design many new parks and playgrounds; the inclusion
4 of sidewalks for people to access, even when some of
5 these playgrounds are or feature things that are to
6 accommodate children with special needs; you would
7 think that that would be a clear place where there
8 would be sidewalks, but there isn't.

9 So given the City DOT's goal of
10 maintaining their 12,000 miles of sidewalks on City
11 properties and the fact that whenever any other City
12 agency builds a facility, whether it be on Staten
13 Island or elsewhere, they always include sidewalks, I
14 am very interested to hear why Parks does not make
15 this same requirement with themselves or make the
16 same policy themselves and I hope they will be very
17 favorable to this bill. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you Council
19 Member Borelli. And now we're going to turn it over
20 to the Parks Department; I believe Sarah Neilson will
21 be the lead testimony today, please. And as a
22 procedural matter, we have to administer the
23 affirmation, which I'll ask Chris to take care of; go
24 ahead.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell
3 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
4 in your testimony before this committee today?

5 SARAH NEILSON: Yes, I do. How's the
6 volume; can you hear okay? [background comment]
7 Okay.

8 Good afternoon Chair Levine; members of
9 the Committee on Parks and Recreations and other
10 members of the City Council. My name is Sarah
11 Neilson; I'm the Chief of Policy and Long-Range
12 Planning at New York City Parks. Joining me here on
13 the panel is Nancy Prince, Deputy Chief for Design
14 and Matt Drury, Director of Government Relations.
15 Thank you for inviting me to provide an update on
16 Parks Without Borders and the opportunity to discuss
17 Int. 1411.

18 As you may recall -- and thank you for
19 that very generous introduction about Parks Without
20 Borders, Chair Levine -- Parks Without Borders is New
21 York City Parks' innovative and exciting initiative
22 to connect parks with their surrounding communities
23 in stronger and more meaningful ways. When NYC Parks
24 last testified on Parks Without Borders before this
25 committee in December 2015, we had just launched the

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2 program and we are pleased to appear before the
3 Council today to provide an update on our progress.

4 Parks Without Borders was first announced
5 in April 2015 in the Mayor's Comprehensive Plan,
6 OneNYC: The Plan for a Just and Strong City, which
7 called for greater access to parks. Parks Without
8 Borders is a key strategy to achieve this important
9 goal and \$50 million in mayoral funding has been
10 allocated to make it a reality. Parks Without
11 Borders is a new approach to park design; it focuses
12 on the accessibility and connectivity of three main
13 areas within our parks: entrances, edges and adjacent
14 park spaces; these are the places where parks and the
15 surrounding neighborhoods interact most directly.
16 This is not a new concept, it harkens back to that
17 giant of landscape architecture, Frederick Law
18 Olmsted, who once said, "The sidewalk next to the
19 park should be considered the outer park."

20 So we are applying this design approach
21 in two ways using the \$50 million allocation; we've
22 dedicated \$10 million of that funding to incorporate
23 the design principals of Parks Without Borders into
24 the existing capital projects already in process and
25 we've set aside the remaining \$40 million to

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2 construct a set of eight showcase projects receiving
3 large-scale capital redesigns. These were specially
4 selected by gathering direct input from New Yorkers,
5 people who know the parks the best.

6 So to select the eight projects, we
7 carried out an intensive approach to community
8 engagement. For the first time in New York City
9 Parks' history, we gave New Yorkers the opportunity
10 to directly nominate local parks for inclusion,
11 asking them to suggest parks they thought could
12 benefit from this new design philosophy. We built a
13 dynamic interactive online map that New Yorkers not
14 only -- it allowed them to suggest parks for
15 consideration, but they could also zoom in on any
16 park and suggest specific improvement. So your
17 constituents had the opportunity to tell us where
18 they wanted to see new entrances, park benches or
19 other improvements for the parks they enjoy every
20 day.

21 The online map was the centerpiece of our
22 comprehensive outreach effort that helped us connect
23 with New Yorkers across the city, including those who
24 may have limited access to the internet. To reach
25 those who did have limited access or were less

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2 comfortable using web resources, we did hold 37 in-
3 person events all over the city to present the
4 program and collect feedback. We presented at
5 community board meetings and civic organizations,
6 which helped focus our outreach across the city. We
7 specifically targeted these meetings in neighborhoods
8 with low levels of home high-speed internet access so
9 that we could focus on reaching the people who were
10 least likely to just come across our website. For
11 the in-person events we developed a tabletop exercise
12 that replicated the online map; this allowed us to
13 hear from more New Yorkers, regardless of their
14 computer skills, their internet access or their tech
15 savvy.

16 So this many-layered approach, it was a
17 success; we received over 6,100 nominations relating
18 to 692 different parks, roughly one-third of all of
19 the city parks and they were spread across all 59
20 community boards, so a true citywide saturation.

21 The website comments, they were
22 anonymous, but the letters and the emails we received
23 and the diversity of the attendees at our in-person
24 events made it clear that New Yorkers of all walks of
25 life participated in the process; it showed they care

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2 about their parks. We had kids, we had community
3 board members, local business owners, landscape
4 architects; the wide diversity of participants and
5 the sheer volume of the feedback and the nominations
6 for parks all over the city reflected how New Yorkers
7 really responded to Parks Without Borders; they
8 showed they appreciated having a voice in shaping the
9 initiative.

10 So in selecting the eight showcase sites,
11 the first step was examining the parks that received
12 the most nominations. We evaluated the top ten vote-
13 getting parks in each borough, with three criteria in
14 mind. The number one was community support, as
15 evidenced by the nominations we received, both via
16 the online tool and in-person.

17 Park access: a major goal of NYC Parks
18 and the OneNYC Plan is to bring 85% of New Yorkers
19 within a walk to a park, so we welcome the
20 opportunity to consider new entrances for a park,
21 which can greatly increase the access for nearby
22 residents.

23 The last factor to consider was the
24 actual physical condition and context for each site.
25 Because Parks Without Borders is primarily a design

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2 approach, it relies on certain physical conditions to
3 be properly implemented. We wanted to make sure we
4 selected projects where the approach would be
5 feasible and projects which would provide
6 transformative benefits for the community. NYC
7 Parks evaluated the most popular park choices to
8 determine locations that had the most potential to
9 benefit from this design approach. Using the
10 criteria, we selected eight showcase projects; we
11 announced these at our Parks Without Borders summit
12 last May, which was the first of its kind conference;
13 it brought together thought [sic] leaders from a
14 range of disciplines to discuss the future of parks
15 and public spaces; many of the Parks Committee
16 members here today were able to attend the event,
17 which we hope you enjoyed and we thank you for being
18 there.

19 So the eight showcase projects are: in
20 the Bronx we have Van Cortlandt Park and Hugh J.
21 Grant Circle/Virginia Park -- [background comment]
22 woo -- in Queens we have Flushing Meadows Corona
23 Park; in Brooklyn we have Fort Greene Park and
24 Prospect Park; on Staten Island we have Faber Park;

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2 and in Manhattan we have Seward Park and Jackie
3 Robinson Park. Alright.

4 So catching you up to today, we are in
5 design for all eight of the projects. Last fall we
6 held robust, very well-attended community input
7 meetings for each of these eight projects to kick off
8 design and continue the dialogue with the community
9 about Parks Without Borders. Design on these eight
10 will wrap up by the end of this calendar year and we
11 look forward to unveiling these reimagined spaces to
12 the public by early 2020.

13 Beyond the eight showcase projects, the
14 design goals and principles of Parks Without Borders
15 are being applied to projects that are already in the
16 capital pipeline, where is feasible and appropriate.
17 So far we have about 40 projects that have received
18 supplementary funds using the \$10 million in the
19 mayoral allocation to expand the project scope and
20 incorporate Parks Without Borders design principles.

21 In addition, we are already incorporating
22 Parks Without Borders design concept into dozens of
23 other capital projects across the five boroughs
24 within the existing budget and scope. So for
25 example, when we construct a playground or redesign a

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2 set of basketball courts, we're looking for
3 opportunities to open up those parks and make them
4 more connected to the surrounding neighborhood. We
5 recognize this approach won't work at every site, but
6 we expect to impact hundreds of additional existing
7 projects across the city.

8 One example is our current project to
9 expand Brooklyn's Friends Field Playground. Today
10 the entrances to the playground are narrow pathways
11 that are both unwelcoming and pretty hard to find.
12 We're expanding the playground but we've also
13 included clear and more welcoming entrances, one on
14 the left and one on the right. You can see here that
15 the new entrance on the right will align with Avenue
16 L; we worked with DOT on our plan to include
17 crosswalks and a bump-out at the Avenue L
18 intersection. We're also installing a new sidewalk
19 at this location where none had existed before. This
20 design will make the entrance safer and more
21 welcoming.

22 So as we hope you will agree, Parks
23 Without Borders initiative has been a real success.
24 This represents the efforts of NYC Parks to reimagine
25 the role that parks and open space can serve in our

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2 communities and find innovative ways to breathe new
3 life into older parks.

4 We thank the Council for your partnership
5 and advocacy for our city parks and we'll be sure to
6 keep you updated as these efforts continue.

7 We would also like to briefly address
8 Int. 1411 -- which as the Council Member just
9 reviewed -- which would mandate that all parks with
10 an athletic facility located within 500 feet of a
11 public street provide paved pedestrian sidewalks and
12 pathways linked to the street. As we think today's
13 testimony makes clear, NYC Parks takes connectivity
14 and accessibility very seriously when we design our
15 park projects; we always look for opportunities to
16 improve access and connections to park facilities.

17 The vast majority of our properties with
18 active recreation uses that are within proximity to
19 city streets already have some level of adjacent
20 sidewalks and pathways providing connectivity to
21 pedestrian access, public transit and parking lots.

22 Capital funding for planned work at a
23 given site can often incorporate costs to bring
24 existing sidewalks and pathways up to a state of good
25 repair and can be used to construct new sidewalks and

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2 pathways where it's deemed necessary and appropriate.
3 Our capital division also employs an accessibility
4 coordinator working with our team of trained
5 architects and landscape architects to personally
6 review every capital project to ensure that we're
7 providing the best experience for our park visitors.

8 It is true however that some Parks
9 properties, such as greenways, parkways, natural
10 areas, or parks in less pedestrian-accessible areas
11 which are not abutted by sidewalks [sic]. Of course,
12 issues around pedestrian access and connectivity are
13 not unique to Parks property; these are important
14 considerations everywhere throughout the city, which
15 is why we work closely with DOT and DEP to address
16 safety, storm water capture and other issues at park
17 edges.

18 If a Council Member or other stakeholder
19 feels a given property warrants the installation or
20 improvement of sidewalk or pathways, we welcome that
21 feedback and would seek to incorporate those elements
22 into any planned capital work at that site.

23 We encourage Council Members with
24 concerns about specific properties to work with our
25 borough commissioners to address concerns about

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2 accessibility, connectivity or safety. Though we
3 appreciate the goals and the intent behind Int. 1411,
4 we think a legislative approach to compel the
5 installation of sidewalks or pathways on specific
6 properties is overly broad. This one-size-fits-all
7 approach would prove for us operationally and
8 fiscally problematic. So with that, I will conclude.

9 Thank you for allowing me to testify
10 before you today and for all of your great advocacy
11 on parks via your work on this committee. We are
12 happy to answer any questions that you may have.
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Sarah.
15 And I'm going to ask shortly some questions on Parks
16 Without Borders -- it was an excellent presentation
17 -- but I just want to focus in on Int. 1411. So the
18 bill is crafted to focus on parks with athletic
19 fields -- somewhat narrow in that way; I think that
20 was the intent of the lead sponsor -- how many parks
21 with athletic fields lack sidewalk access currently?

22 MATT DRURY: So it's difficult to say
23 with an exact certainty because of the way that our
24 geospatial data is organized and the way that things
25 change and evolve so quickly, so it's hard to give an

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2 exact number, but it's fair to say that there are,
3 specific to at least the properties that are germane
4 to the way the bill is currently crafted, certainly
5 dozens, you know throughout the city, clustered
6 largely, as you might imagine, in Staten Island, and
7 to some degree, Eastern Queens. It's hard to have an
8 exact number, but it's a considerable number.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So you talk about
10 this as being overly broad; it applies to 30 or 40
11 properties...

12 MATT DRURY: Right.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: and you consider
14 that overly broad?

15 MATT DRURY: In terms of mandating an
16 approach at which -- you know, the installation of a
17 given amenity, like a sidewalk -- and compelling that
18 that be installed without consideration to site
19 conditions or other factors, we would consider the
20 approach overly broad.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So there are site
22 conditions that could prevent a sidewalk?

23 MATT DRURY: Sure... [crosstalk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Like what?
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MATT DRURY: the presence of wetlands or other ways in which traffic is sort of convened on a certain street, you know how the surrounding neighborhood actually connects to that given site of a given park, you know I think there are scenarios in which -- as Council Member Borelli mentioned, sometimes a sidewalk's not appropriate in every place, so I think having that sort of flexibility, you know to determine, work with the community; work with other stakeholders to determine if and when that sidewalk is indeed necessary, you know I think we'd prefer that approach.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: What's the cost normally for a sidewalk installation?

MATT DRURY: It's a good question; it varies extremely widely, especially on the Parks side where there are various conditions that can come up. I know DOT has publicized some per square footage costs, and I'm afraid I don't have those with me, but you know... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: It's probably a few hundred thousand; you can barely move a rock for less than that, but uh... [crosstalk]

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MATT DRURY: In this construction market it's always hard to say, but I mean I think it's fair to say that budgetarily it would be a significant undertaking... [crosstalk]

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CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: But not in the millions per project I wouldn't think; right?

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MATT DRURY: per project, one would hope not, per project.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. So do you have a long-term plan to -- if you're not comfortable committing to doing it all immediately, is there a five-year or ten-year plan to hit all of these locations to install the sidewalks?

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MATT DRURY: It's certainly an agency objective, as every capital project is being considered to make sure that the edges and entrances, including you know sidewalks or pathways connecting sidewalks to important amenities, making sure that that's being fully accounted for. I wouldn't say that we have a timetable per se, but as each project sort of comes online, if you will, that's something that's very central to our discussions and our considerations... [interpose]

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So the Mayor's
3 Capital Plan, which was released a couple weeks ago,
4 was updated to go ten years out now; it didn't
5 include any money for this kind of work?

6 MATT DRURY: It didn't specifically
7 include a line item for sidewalk repair per se, but
8 it's something that within the course of the way
9 these projects get funded, sometimes with mayoral
10 funding, other times with discretionary funding from
11 Council Members and/or borough presidents, that's
12 something we definitely want to make a priority.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. And when we
14 hear that there's no money in the Capital Plan for
15 ten years, that makes us concerned and I think the
16 reason why Council Member Borelli wanted to push this
17 bill -- and I'm going to pass it to him now -- is
18 that we can't wait another ten years to take this on
19 and we can't let it be haphazard.. [interpose]

20 MATT DRURY: Sure. But I do want to
21 clarify, you know there's mayoral funding, for
22 example, you know through a given initiative, like
23 Parks Without Borders or the Anchor Parks Initiative
24 or CPI, our Community Parks Initiative, where it's
25 mayoral funded and it's sort of centrally provided

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2 and out of that, you know obviously sidewalks and
3 other, you know, entrances, edges, connectivity and
4 accessibility are very much a part of that
5 conversation, as those individual projects are funded
6 with that central funding, if that makes sense.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Have any of the
8 Parks Without Borders projects included creating a
9 sidewalk where none existed?

10 MATT DRURY: Yeah, I believe there have
11 been several; I know there are about 25 or 30 of CPI
12 funds that took advantage of... [interpose]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: CPI projects you
14 mean...

15 MATT DRURY: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: as opposed to Parks
17 Without Borders?

18 MATT DRURY: Oh sorry, but in terms of
19 Parks Without Borders [background comment]...
20 [crosstalk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: **[inaudible]** for
22 both, yeah.

23 MATT DRURY: Yeah. Well I mean, Parks
24 Without Borders has just begun design, but I think,

1
2 as Nancy I think can step in, I think it's very much
3 been a consideration.

4 NANCY PRINCE: A consideration for all
5 our work, any time we're doing a capital project,
6 now. In the past half a dozen years we've been
7 really seriously looking at the sidewalk and the
8 access from sidewalk to the ball field, both dugout
9 to both sides of the ball field. So I think in the
10 half-dozen years we really looked at that for every
11 project, and you may have known for some projects we
12 go to quite some bit of work to get in sidewalks; New
13 Springfield Greenway in Staten Island is one, you
14 know where we removed trees because the sidewalk is
15 important to us.

16 MALE VOICE: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, I'm going to
18 pause and pass it over to Council Member Borelli.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you...

20 [crosstalk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Oh I want to
22 acknowledge we've been joined -- sorry, Joe -- I want
23 to acknowledge we've been joined by our colleague
24 Mark Treyger from Brooklyn, Parks Committee member,
25 and let's see if we could grab a vote from you

1
2 Council Member Treyger and I'll ask Billy to
3 administer that.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Introduction 1449-A,
5 Council Member Treyger.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I vote aye.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright, thank you
8 and Council Member Borelli.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you. And
10 I just want to make a statement before I ask a
11 question. In terms of what you said about when
12 Council Members and stakeholders feel a given
13 property warrants, that's the reason why I think this
14 does need legislation, because with the most
15 egregious park in my district that doesn't have
16 sidewalks, Owl Hollow, you had the Council Member,
17 the community board, the parents, every single person
18 who uses that park has asked for sidewalks and
19 supplied pictures and kids walking in the street, the
20 whole nine yards, and even that didn't cause Parks to
21 put sidewalks along the perimeter of that park;
22 that's why we're legislating it.

23 So reading DOT's policy on their website,
24 and then looking at the liability laws and the
25 property owner's requirements for parks, which say

1
2 that property owners have to install sidewalks and --
3 where do you get the authority to not install
4 sidewalks on properties, given that every other City
5 agency says they have to install them?

6 MATT DRURY: Actually, you know, and this
7 is where I think delving into the admin code, we're
8 happy to have a broader discussion and sort of sit
9 down and discuss it; you know obviously it'll involve
10 the Law Department when it comes to this sort of
11 interpretation, you know obviously things can vary.
12 But our perspective as an agency is that, you know
13 each agency can determine whether a sidewalk is
14 necessary or appropriate, you know next to a given
15 parcel under its jurisdiction and actually the City
16 capital construction budget process is the process
17 through which those decisions are sort of
18 administered. So it's our perspective that it is
19 within the agency's purview to determine in any given
20 case. So as opposed to an individual homeowner
21 property... [interpose]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: But the law
23 cites exemptions to sidewalk law and it lists
24 specific types of property, but it doesn't exempt the
25 City, so I mean is there a specific statute that you

1
2 could cite that exempts the City properties from
3 sidewalk?

4 MATT DRURY: Yeah, I meant I think this
5 is, again, I think the interpretation that the City's
6 taken on and you know, I'd hate to sort of delve into
7 the details of this and misspeak, so it may be -- and
8 when it comes to that, you know, interpretation, that
9 piece, I think you know it'd be probably better to
10 involve a few other parties in that discussion. But
11 I do think that the City in general has sort of taken
12 the position that each agency as property owner has
13 that leeway to make that determination.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So you're saying
15 it's basically a policy, it's a policy decision that
16 made that determination?

17 MATT DRURY: It's a policy decision
18 reinforced by the current interpretation of scanning
19 the statute.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Okay. What's
21 the policy rationale when you don't choose to include
22 sidewalks; what goes into the criteria that
23 **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

24 MATT DRURY: Sure, a variety of different
25 considerations can be at play, you know ecologically

1
2 sensitive, you know if something's in the surrounding
3 area; sometimes it's wetlands that are under
4 regulatory jurisdiction of DEC and other elements.
5 Sometimes it's just the very sort of context and
6 nature of the neighborhood; if a given site of a park
7 is generally not as pedestrian focused and
8 pedestrians are getting to other kind of corners or
9 other sections of the park, that's something that we
10 would take into account. But again, I think to echo
11 what Nancy said earlier, you know, moving forward and
12 for the last several years this is something that's
13 become an increased priority. I mean for context I
14 think it's important to note that Staten Island is
15 developed in a very sort of unique and unconventional
16 way, right; probably from the 70s through the 90s
17 kind of growing a little bit bigger than the
18 surrounding infrastructure... [interpose]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Sure.

20 MATT DRURY: you know could support it; I
21 mean that's not just true of Parks property
22 obviously, I think that's a citywide, boroughwide
23 conversation that we're happy to be a part of, but I
24 think that involves a lot of different elements, you
25 know whether from DOT, City Planning; DCAS obviously

1
2 a big property owner in Staten Island as well, and
3 you know, we want to be a part of that conversation,
4 'cause I think you're now seeing, with influx of new
5 population, not necessarily everybody owns a car that
6 maybe... [crosstalk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Sure.

8 MATT DRURY: 10, 15, 20 years ago would
9 have, so I do think the context of these parks have
10 changed over time from when they were originally
11 founded or established, so I think that's something
12 we're still growing... [interpose]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Right and the
14 law we would be passing doesn't go back in time and
15 make you install sidewalks where you wouldn't; this
16 is only going forward. I mean can you describe a
17 scenario where you would be building a baseball field
18 and see an example of why within 500 feet there
19 shouldn't be a sidewalk there?

20 MATT DRURY: I mean I guess the...
21 [interpose]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I mean there are
23 wetland laws regulating it; I mean it's probably
24 likely that if you're building on the proper part of
25 the property; the little part that abuts the street

1
2 wouldn't be covered by wetlands; I mean that's very
3 unlikely.

4 MATT DRURY: Well yeah, I mean actually,
5 they can take odd shapes and things like that, so I
6 think it's more about the principle that without
7 knowing what the exact site conditions are it's kind
8 of hard to say and I think there are athletic --
9 especially in the area of Staten Island where, you
10 know, if the general usage of the property is
11 generally vehicular access or, you know, make sure
12 that there's appropriate parking and things like that
13 and determining how folks will be accessing that
14 property, sometimes that's a primary consideration
15 and then if it's abutting a road which,
16 theoretically, someone could be walking along but
17 that's not the primary way in which the park is
18 accessed, I think that's something that has to sort
19 of fall into the discussion.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: When you
21 calculate the costs for installing sidewalks, do you
22 calculate the tree restitution fees?

23 MATT DRURY: I mean it's sort of all part
24 of a capital project, so it's not exactly line-itemed
25 out in that way in terms of -- you know there is a

1
2 tree replacement that needs to happen, that sort of
3 **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Can you waive
5 your own tree restitution fees? Can Parks as an
6 agency waive their tree restitution fees?

7 NANCY PRINCE: We often can plant trees...
8 [interpose]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Right.

10 NANCY PRINCE: in restitution on those
11 same properties... [crosstalk]

12 MATT DRURY: On the same property; that's
13 usually the approach we take... [crosstalk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Okay. The next
15 time... next time someone tells me they can't afford it
16 because of trees; I should just say that's not true.

17 NANCY PRINCE: I think that's not true.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Okay.

19 FEMALE VOICE: Yeah.

20 MATT DRURY: Well a homeowner, for
21 example, in terms of restitution, is always able to
22 actually, you know, replace-in-kind... [interpose]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Right, right; I
24 understand that point.

25 MATT DRURY: Okay.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Yeah, I
3 understand that point.

4 NANCY PRINCE: There's other
5 considerations and other costs that go -- if a road
6 doesn't have a sidewalk at all now, that means
7 there's no curb and it affects the drainage in the
8 street, so it can get kind of involved because if you
9 start... when you put a sidewalk, you have to deal with
10 the drainage, which is possible and is definitely
11 something we can do and we look at for every project.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: When you talked
13 about sidewalks in your testimony, and just now you
14 said that there were sort of policy decisions why one
15 wouldn't put sidewalks but that the majority of
16 properties outside of Staten Island have sidewalks;
17 can you cite an example where some sidewalks may not
18 be always a good thing, where you had a park that had
19 sidewalks but then you removed them? I mean if there
20 are policy considerations to not have sidewalks, then
21 surely there's got to be an example where they didn't
22 belong where they once were, right?

23 MATT DRURY: Sure, that's true as well,
24 although I think the presence of an existing sidewalk
25 would probably infer that there is some degree of

1
2 usage to that front or it's serving some ends in that
3 direction... [interpose]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Because if
5 Staten Island wasn't developed in the way that it
6 was, if we were developed like everywhere else in the
7 city for the past 40 years; it would be safe to say
8 that most of our parks would have sidewalks, so...
9 [interpose]

10 MATT DRURY: I mean... that's an
11 interesting sort of what if, you know sort of to
12 explore; I mean the way Staten Island has grown over
13 the decades and the way it was, you know, sort of
14 planned initially, you know which is not necessarily
15 with pedestrian access in mind, you know you raise a
16 really interesting point; it's hard... you know it's
17 interesting that if it had grown sort of in a more
18 sort of holistic way, with a sort of boroughwide sort
19 of approach, you know I think that's are ally
20 interesting question.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: If a playground
22 was being built with... as most little tot lots are,
23 with no parking, and the park was to have sensory
24 type features that would be for children with special
25 needs...

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MATT DRURY: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: would there be any scenario where you would not put a sidewalk there?

MATT DRURY: I mean I guess it would depend on the immediate surrounding area, but presuming that it's meant for like primarily pedestrian access, it would certainly be our goal and intention to move in that direction, like if there were properties of that nature, that's something we'd really want to take a very close look at.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I mean your... is your opposition to the bill based on the cost or based on the fact that you want to have discretion to still do this?

MATT DRURY: I think it's more... I mean the costs would not be inconsiderable, but I think it's more about having the latitude to take a given site and make sure it's being treated appropriately. I think in many cases a sidewalk would certainly be, you know, necessary or appropriate and that's something I think we'd like to do, but the challenge with a legislative approach is that having it sort of

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2 locked into sort of a one-size-fits-all approach is
3 something I think we're less than comfortable with.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: One-size-fits-
5 all approach though is good for tree restitution fees
6 though, right? 'Cause I mean there's certainly times
7 when we've had arguments with Parks Departments
8 where, you know, a tree might not need to remain and
9 the agency hasn't bent on that one.

10 MATT DRURY: Well no, I think I would
11 differ with that characterization a bit; I mean I
12 think there's actually a lot of flexibility in terms
13 of, I mean on our projects, like you know, in a
14 perfect world we hate to see a tree go down, but if
15 it has to serve the larger, especially for safety
16 concerns or for a valuable amenity, it's something
17 where we absolutely have proved I think quite
18 flexible on that front.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So at Owl
20 Hollow, were the trees a factor in deciding whether
21 or not there were sidewalks?

22 MATT DRURY: You know unfortunately I
23 think... I don't know if any... I think that project
24 predated most of us, so it's hard to speak exactly to
25 the design considerations that went into play there;

1
2 I'm not sure if you have more to add, Nancy, but...

3 [crosstalk]

4 NANCY PRINCE: Yes. That was a little
5 while ago when we designed it, but some other
6 factors, like grading and the elevation and the berm
7 and the drainage in the street all went into that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Okay. That it.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright, well I'm
11 pleased that we've been joined by another stalwart
12 Parks Committee member; Council Member Alan Maisel
13 from Brooklyn, and we have a vote open, so we're
14 going to ask Billy to call the roll so that Council
15 Member Maisel can vote on our street co-naming bill;
16 it's a very controversial one; you might want to
17 weigh it in [sic] carefully.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK: Introduction 1449-A,
19 Council Member Maisel.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: **[inaudible]**

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you very much.
22 I want to return to Parks Without Borders for a
23 moment. Do I have it right that for the core eight
24 parks it comes out to about \$5 per park? So...

25 SARAH NEILSON: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Is that right?

SARAH NEILSON: Uhm-hm.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And then for the expanded group of 40 parks, it's about a quarter million per park?

SARAH NEILSON: I don't know if it averages out quite like that; there... I know...
[interpose]

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Well it's \$10 million for parks; right?

SARAH NEILSON: Yes. [background comment] Yeah, so far. So...

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. So if it was equally distributed, it would be a quarter million per park; is that right...? [crosstalk]

MATT DRURY: Right [sic].

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So what can you do for a quarter million a park... [background comments] Other than a couple of benches?

NANCY PRINCE: No, we've been able to do some sidewalk improvements; street trees. It all depends on the particular situation at the park; that's why it's not an even amount at each park...

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it.

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2 NANCY PRINCE: just what the site
3 requires; the example you see, it's creating a
4 sidewalk where there wasn't one and the bump-out and
5 path. So it's different for each site; our sites are
6 so varied. So it's with the goal of making access
7 from the street or from the nearby subway stop to the
8 park, into the park, into the facility.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And so the expanded
10 group of 40 were picked from among those 600 plus
11 that applied or these are really more enhancements of
12 projects that were already underway?

13 NANCY PRINCE: The second..

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it.

15 NANCY PRINCE: enhancements of projects
16 already underway.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: At some point, if
18 you could get us a list of those 40; I don't know if
19 it's included here today, if there's a map or
20 something to see how evenly distributed it is. And
21 were there criteria.. you have, I think ten times that
22 many projects underway now; I believe there's 400..
23 approaching 500 capital projects, so how did you pick
24 40 that were lucky enough to get that little bump up
25 in money for the perimeter?

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2 MATT DRURY: I think in some degree it
3 had to be factors in which there was funding already
4 in place and noting where, you know, a relatively
5 small amount could be used to sort of expand that
6 scope, so I think it had more to do with where they
7 were in their process and the existing funding that
8 it had and whether a certain amount would be helpful,
9 you know in terms of the overall scale.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And so would a
11 Council Member who was overseeing an existing capital
12 project have been informed of this good news that
13 there's an enhancement for some extra perimeter work?

14 MATT DRURY: I believe they would've been
15 and... [crosstalk]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay.

17 MATT DRURY: I think... because again, in
18 some cases the expansion is maybe not necessarily all
19 that dramatic; it's sort of you know, literally
20 around the edges of the project, but I think we tried
21 our best to be proactive about communicating, if and
22 when that happened, and if that didn't happen we can
23 certainly circle back and make sure all the members
24 are aware when it happened, 'cause those projects
25 are, you know, in many cases still underway.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I think every member
3 would be happy to get the good news that there's a
4 little more money for the project, but I think it
5 would help the public's understanding of this new
6 design principle if we make sure that the Council
7 Member is well aware of the plan [sic]... [crosstalk]

8 MATT DRURY: Sure and it's also important
9 to note that beyond the 40 and then eight signature
10 projects and the 40 expansions, if you will, that
11 this is now a philosophy and approach, you know when
12 it's appropriate and when the conditions are right,
13 that we're interested in introducing, so you know to
14 a degree, if we have a scoping session and folks sort
15 of express well you could really use a better
16 entrance over here or you know maybe better site
17 lines into this section of the park, and that's
18 something that's a conversation we're very much
19 encouraging.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So with 600
21 applicants, there's clearly a lot of demand and need
22 for this program; there was not additional money in
23 the Capital Plan the Mayor present a few weeks ago;
24 is that correct?

1
2 MATT DRURY: Yeah, currently the
3 Preliminary Budget did not include funding of that
4 nature.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: A second round would
6 be about another \$50 million presumably; I guess it
7 could be any size, but...

8 MATT DRURY: It's very scalable,
9 obviously; I think we've shown that it's an approach
10 that works throughout the city and has been of great
11 benefit. So yeah, I think it's scalable in that
12 sense.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Well I would
14 certainly advocate for an additional round, both of
15 the core significant project work and the
16 enhancements that can be spread more broadly; it's
17 something that I expect to talk about in the upcoming
18 budget hearings, but I've heard from a lot of members
19 who are excited about this program and feel they see
20 a need in their parks and so we want to meet that
21 need everywhere we can.

22 MATT DRURY: Yeah, we appreciate that. I
23 think obviously this is just the beginning of the
24 budget process, so you know I think we are happy to
25 participate in that conversation along with the

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2 Committee and the Mayor's Office, obviously, and
3 other key stakeholders and I look forward to having
4 that conversation.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright. Council
6 Member Cohen has some questions I believe.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you, Chair.
8 Since it's really all about me and my 160,000
9 constituents, could you give us an update on the
10 Parks Without Borders progress in Van Cortlandt Park?

11 NANCY PRINCE: We're in early design with
12 that; we're just looking at preliminary designs now,
13 so the design has started.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: But there's been
15 substantial community outreach I assume?

16 NANCY PRINCE: Yes.

17 MATT DRURY: Yes.

18 NANCY PRINCE: Yes, we got a lot of
19 community outreach, a lot of interest in it; we're
20 working away on the design of the program..

21 [crosstalk]

22 MATT DRURY: In essence, the design and
23 process was sort of, you know kicked off, if you
24 will, by the community scoping and taking that input
25 into account -- explaining the program, but also, you

1
2 know, doing a whole lot of listening is sort of often
3 what sort of gets the design process started.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: We should
5 definitely coordinate, 'cause actually, I would like
6 DOT to make some changes to that corner too so that
7 maybe [background comment], maybe we could certainly
8 get everyone working at the same time... [interpose]

9 MATT DRURY: That'd be great.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Do you know if
11 Kossuth Playground was awarded as part of the 40?

12 MATT DRURY: It doesn't ring a bell as
13 one of the 40, but I'll have to double-check.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Okay, I'd
15 appreciate that. I had a question about 1411. You
16 know, as Matt knows, there have been some battles in
17 my district about pathways and surface material; in
18 terms of sidewalk, I mean is sidewalk always a
19 sidewalk; is it always concrete; are there other ways
20 that you do it that might... [crosstalk]

21 MATT DRURY: Yes.

22 NANCY PRINCE: So sidewalks are typically
23 concrete; DOT has a guideline book that talks about
24 appropriate materials for sidewalks. Asphalt paths
25 can also be appropriate if they are slightly inside

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2 the park, which is sometimes the solution to some of
3 these difficult issues. But we always work with DOT;
4 we either follow the guidelines or we can get
5 approval for alternative materials. We don't use
6 stone screenings and loose materials, which are very
7 difficult to keep ADA, to keep wheelchair accessible,
8 so.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: As I learned, they
10 can be ADA accessible; we just don't like to do it
11 'cause it's hard to maintain. But this narrowly
12 tailored legislation really describes -- and you're
13 not obligated to do the DOT specs because we're
14 talking about inside park property.

15 MATT DRURY: Well the way the... Sorry.
16 The way the bill is currently drafted, is that it
17 would compel the installation of not only pathways,
18 which I think fits the description of what you're
19 talking about, but also sidewalks, which would have
20 to fit DOT guidelines.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: But inside park
22 property... [crosstalk]

23 MATT DRURY: Yeah.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: in other words,
25 from -- if I understand the bill, and I think I do --

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2 we're talking about getting access to the actual
3 athletic facility inside the park.

4 MATT DRURY: Both. Well the bill as it's
5 currently drafted would say a paved pedestrian
6 walkway between such facility, like say a ball field
7 or what have you, and the public street, but then
8 also a sidewalk that abuts such park, and then making
9 sure that there's connectivity between the two.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: So obviously the
11 abutting portion would have to comply with the DOT
12 regs... [interpose]

13 MATT DRURY: Correct.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: inside the park
15 you'd have some flexibility in terms... [interpose]

16 NANCY PRINCE: That's correct.

17 MATT DRURY: That's correct.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you, Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you Council
20 Member Cohen. Alright, I think we're done with
21 hearing from the Administration; thank you very much.
22 We're going to... [background comment] oh forgive me,
23 forgive me, Council Member Treyger, please, take it
24 away.
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Hey listen,
3 Southern Brooklyn, I know we're the outer outer
4 borough, but we matter too.

5 Just a quick question. Certainly I'm all
6 for increasing pedestrian access and beautifying
7 access and all these nice things and in a city with a
8 budget that has limited resources, I'm also concerned
9 about the investments or lack of investments and also
10 keeping up with resiliency efforts and how they are
11 coupled with this initiative. So for example, there
12 are still parks or areas that are called parks on
13 Coney Island that are still predominantly covered
14 with concrete and they still have fences around them
15 too, so there's your access issue, but my focus and
16 concern, my priority, is building up our
17 neighborhood's resiliency, and I do appreciate the
18 Parks Department's investments and partnership on the
19 issue of Lafayette Playground in the Bensonhurst,
20 Bath Beach part of the district, which we greatly
21 appreciate, but I do think that moving forward we
22 need to keep up with that investment to protect more
23 of our coastal communities and how this is coupled
24 with this initiative, and I can give you one area,
25 the Surf Playground in Coney Island, still

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2 predominantly concrete and we've heard from your
3 agency, from DEP; others, that we need to you know
4 not just beautify but build up our neighborhood's
5 resiliency. So... and I'm not familiar with the park
6 in my colleague's district, but I'm pretty sure my
7 colleague, Councilman Borelli's district was also
8 very hard-hit from Superstorm Sandy; I'm sure these
9 are very overlapping, similar conversations in his
10 parks as well, but can you speak to the investments
11 or the focus on building up resiliency? Because
12 look, the reason why -- I applaud everyone that put
13 applications in and they want beautiful parks, and
14 every neighborhood deserves a beautiful park, but
15 we're also talking about the safety of our
16 neighborhoods too, so can you speak to my concern?

17 MATT DRURY: Yeah, I think I would say
18 that you know luckily it doesn't have to be an either
19 or proposition, obviously this initiative was sort of
20 structured in a certain way that it focused on
21 certain amenities and certain elements, but that's
22 not to detract from the other efforts that are
23 happening and Nancy, I don't know if you want to talk
24 a little bit about it, but I think it's fair to say
25 that Sandy was a game changer in terms of the

1
2 agency's approach, especially to design and
3 resiliency and it's something we're thinking very,
4 very, very hard about, but Nancy; you want to speak
5 to that?

6 NANCY PRINCE: Yes. Yes, I agree with
7 that, that we have two parallel initiatives really
8 looking at resiliency and in a little while we're
9 going to have some guidelines that come out about
10 design and planning in the flood zone and so as we're
11 writing those guidelines and develop them, we've been
12 implementing those ideas in our current projects that
13 are in the flood zone. So it's less pavement, you
14 know changes in grades and resilient materials;
15 things that rust less, a lot of different ways to
16 deal with that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right. And are
18 you still accepting recommendations on areas in our
19 vulnerable coastal communities that are still covered
20 with concrete?

21 MATT DRURY: I think we're always open to
22 feedback about improving our parks citywide and
23 systemwide, so we'd love to hear all the feedback and
24 input that would be out there.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Yeah, I'm sure
3 this is not the first time the Parks Department and I
4 have discussed concrete issues in my district as
5 well, but I look forward to continuing to work with
6 you. Thank you, Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Council
8 Member Treyger. I did want to ask about one park
9 which is just footsteps outside of my district, which
10 is Jackie Robinson Park, one of your core eight Parks
11 Without Borders parks. Could you tell us just
12 briefly what the vision for that park is and what the
13 status is?

14 NANCY PRINCE: That had really robust
15 community input and it's in design, so we're looking
16 at the various paths and stairways and walkways and
17 sidewalks of that project. So we're in early
18 schematic design; we should be coming to the
19 community shortly with our schematic plans.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright. Well that
21 district is currently without a Council Member; that
22 will change tomorrow, but I would also love to be
23 kept abreast of that, since many of the residents of
24 my district use the park on a regular basis. Thank
25 you all very much.

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2 And we're going to call our next panel,
3 which will be Lynn Kelly from New Yorkers for Parks
4 and Deborah Marton from New York Restoration Project
5 (NYRP). [background comments]

6 [pause]

7 Alright. Lynn; you want to start us off?

8 LYNN KELLY: Good afternoon everyone, I'm
9 Lynn Kelly. Thank you to the Council Committee on
10 Parks for having me here today and we're here to talk
11 about the bill that's on the table.

12 So first I want to say I was very excited
13 just as a citizen of New York City to hear that the
14 Commissioner of our Parks Department was a city
15 planner, because I think that's a very exciting
16 approach to an integrative way of looking at open
17 space in New York City. I've often said this; parks
18 is critical infrastructure; you wouldn't deny someone
19 sewer or electricity or anything else for that
20 matter; why in a planning process would you deny open
21 space and parks? And so the fact that Parks Without
22 Borders came out of some of this thought process is
23 something that I think is really important and I
24 applaud the Parks Department and the Council for
25 supporting that financially as well.

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2 I'll say that as an organization whose
3 bread and butter is advocacy and community
4 engagement, Parks Without Borders was absolutely
5 representative of that and we think that there should
6 be more of that going forward.

7 We would add that during the budget
8 process, if the Council continues with the
9 Administration to support Parks Without Borders that
10 you also consider the ancillary maintenance costs
11 associated with parks, 'cause as we all know, those
12 go hand in hand, infrastructure and maintenance.

13 [interpose]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I'm actually sorry
15 we didn't ask the Administration that, but do you
16 know -- well I don't know if Matt Drury's still here
17 -- whether there is accompanying operations money
18 **[inaudible]**...? [crosstalk]

19 LYNN KELLY: I don't know personally.
20 We... [background comment] Okay. But I always advocate
21 that when you're putting in money for infrastructure
22 or capital there should be ancillary discussion about
23 ongoing maintenance, and that comes from someone who
24 operated an 83-acre park.

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2 So I'll say this with regard to today's
3 legislation, and I actually had flashbacks as Council
4 Member Borelli -- I grew up in Staten Island and I
5 had flashbacks as Council Member Borelli was talking
6 about, you know moms with kids walking along lines of
7 cars to get -- I can remember my mother grabbing our
8 hands; we were white-knuckled walking down the street
9 as oncoming traffic or you had the alternative, which
10 was to walk on the other side of the cars, which was
11 often muddy or snow-covered or just not accessible.
12 And he's right; there are absolutely areas in Staten
13 Island that are in need of sidewalks around parks and
14 there are absolutely areas in Staten Island with
15 Parks property where you don't want to encourage the
16 pedestrian traffic. I wish that Parks was still
17 here, Commissioner Rigadoni [sic] was still here; I
18 think you have a very good partner in the borough
19 level to work out some of these issues at a borough
20 level and we feel that would be probably the least
21 path of resistance and the easiest way to get this
22 done is the Council working directly at the borough
23 level. We would hope that as a part of the budget
24 process this is considered, because clearly there are
25 neighborhoods throughout the city, believe it or not,

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2 that are still in need of sidewalks and Council
3 Member Borelli is absolutely correct about that.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: But do you have an
5 opinion on the Parks Department's assertion that the
6 bill is overly broad or constrains them too much?

7 LYNN KELLY: I do; I actually think it is
8 broad to set precedent in that way. If it was an
9 issue that was happening in all five boroughs, I
10 think that's a different discussion. That said, I am
11 sensitive to what goes on in Staten Island, having
12 lived through it myself, and I do think they have
13 great partners at the borough level to have that
14 initial discussion.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right, but it's also
16 often about the money and the borough commissioner,
17 as committed as she is, wouldn't necessarily have the
18 funding if it wasn't a department-wide imperative;
19 right? I think that's what we're trying to do in the
20 bill is like... [crosstalk]

21 LYNN KELLY: Right.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: create this
23 department-wide imperative to get it done so we
24 ensure the money's there...

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2 LYNN KELLY: If there's a way that in
3 future Parks Without Borders projects or future
4 capital projects there is some way of ensuring that
5 there is money in the budget for access -- egress,
6 access, sidewalks, pathways. You know the other
7 thing that didn't come as a part of this discussion
8 is desire lines, you know there is -- you ever notice
9 when you go into a park you might see a path that was
10 clearly made by people walking through it 'cause it's
11 the desired way to get into the park as opposed to
12 the way in which Parks may have you go, vis-à-vis a
13 sidewalk, and so I think there's a lot of ways of
14 approaching this. In the case in Staten Island, I
15 still believe that there's a boroughwide solution,
16 but overall in all five boroughs, I think it's a
17 discussion that should happen at a budget level as
18 opposed -- you know within the projects, within the
19 capital budget process as opposed to mandating all
20 five boroughs for this.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, I don't know
22 if any of my colleagues have questions for Lynn; if
23 not, Deborah, please. We have been joined by
24 Committee member from Brooklyn, Darlene Mealy; thank
25 you very much Council Member, and we have a vote

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2 open, so I'm going to pause now and ask Billy to read
3 the roll and then we will have unanimous
4 participation.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK: Introduction 1449-A.
6 Council Member Mealy.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I vote aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Final vote on this bill
9 now stands at 7 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative
10 and no abstentions. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright. Good news
12 for the street renamings. Okay, Deborah, please.

13 DEBORAH MARTON: Good afternoon... Am I on,
14 Chair? [background comments] How 'bout now? Yeah.
15 Okay.

16 Chair and Council Members, good afternoon
17 and I want to just start by saying that I think the
18 goals of what you're trying to do with the bill make
19 perfect sense, as does the goals of Parks Without
20 Borders; I think to some extent what Lynn's getting
21 at is this problem that we have in multiple areas
22 where we're trying to make decisions within
23 particular jurisdictions and pushing the envelope of
24 that, which is what Parks Without Borders is trying
25 to do. There are cities in Europe and other places

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2 where decisions are made based on neighborhoods, so
3 I'm not proposing that our city restructure all of
4 its decision-making processes, but I think I would
5 applaud this Committee for -- and you know and maybe
6 we should -- but for trying to kind of use this bill
7 to push the boundaries of what can be done within the
8 jurisdiction of the agency, which is a challenge. So
9 actually I'm here to speak a little bit about that
10 and to encourage this Committee to both work with
11 Parks, its primary mandate, and then to push the work
12 beyond that, and thinking about NYRP in some ways as
13 operating beyond jurisdictions as a nonprofit in
14 managing open spaces regardless of ownership.

15 So I think many of you are aware we were
16 founded on the idea that clean, safe and beautiful
17 open spaces that are well-integrated within
18 communities and neighborhoods form the necessary
19 foundation for stable, thriving communities and we're
20 here today to urge this Committee to consider
21 extending the goals of Parks Without Borders beyond
22 parks and across the city. There's enormous
23 opportunity for this and the Municipal Art Society's
24 Public Assets Report that was recently published --
25 likely many of you have seen it -- it identified more

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2 than 3,000 properties owned or leased by the City
3 that are classified as having no current use. So
4 totaling approximately 1,800 acres, opening these
5 properties to the public would add public space more
6 than twice the size of Central Park. The benefits of
7 this increase obviously would be profound; that's a
8 lot of land.

9 So at NYRP we use the land entrusted to
10 our care to drive social justice; that's our goal and
11 the way that we do everything about the way that we
12 manage our land. Joining forces with the community
13 itself, our integrated process includes community
14 engagement, design and construction, maintenance and
15 operation, education, and activation of open spaces
16 through programs; it's a very holistic approach to
17 land management, with a particular focus on low-
18 income neighborhoods. We strongly believe that our
19 approach optimizes use in urban open spaces and
20 should be standard practice citywide.

21 Recently we received a letter that
22 illustrates this approach in action. We built a new
23 garden; it was on Staten Island actually in a new --
24 it was a vacant lot in West Brighton neighborhood,
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2 and we got a letter from a community member last
3 week; I'll just read a quick excerpt from that.

4 "Thank you for your help last March in
5 the build of the garden beds and all the materials
6 you provided to help us get off to a great start.
7 This past growing season we grew, harvested and
8 donated over 1,000 pounds of organic and
9 nutritionally dense veggies to our local community;
10 we established a relationship with a senior center,
11 where our produce was cooked and served to the
12 seniors in a day program; we also hosted some kids
13 groups who came to the garden for some great
14 education and hands-on work. We plan to create a
15 teen program for education and garden work and to
16 help teens see the garden as a safe, welcoming place,
17 a refuge."

18 So I love that letter because what it
19 points up is that really, open spaces is -- it's not
20 about beautification; at the outset, in the most
21 shallow way it is about that; it's also about
22 environmental sustainability in terms of being able
23 to filter and hold storm water, being able to filter
24 air, bringing down energy usage, all those things are
25 true, but ultimately, we can optimize the use of our

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2 open spaces to build social capital and to build a
3 happier, healthier, safer city and so I am speaking
4 to this Committee today to say that, you know, NYRP
5 works on our own spaces, but we've worked on City
6 land across jurisdictions -- parks, transportation,
7 housing, education; all of those spaces -- and we
8 stand ready to partner with this Committee and with
9 the City to bring the Parks Without Borders vision of
10 a more inclusive, accessible public realm to reality
11 citywide in parks and beyond.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you. Alright,
13 we have a question from Council Member Treyger.

14 DEBORAH MARTON: Of course.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I just want to
16 thank both of you for your fierce and persistent
17 advocacy; it's a pleasure to work with great
18 organizations such as yours. But I just a quick
19 question, because I alluded to this in my questioning
20 before of the Parks Department about the topic of
21 resiliency and safety.. [interpose]

22 DEBORAH MARTON: Uhm-hm, yeah.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: and I agree that
24 it shouldn't be an either or; these are parallel, you
25 know, of critical importance, but I'm just curious to

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2 hear from advocates and people who have been working
3 on this for a long time. I am getting increasingly
4 concerned about just the cost of doing business in
5 the Parks Department, so you know, this is a
6 wonderful initiative, I mean I... again I'm all for
7 increasing access and making it more beautiful, but
8 when we're told now that it's going to cost \$3
9 million to build a toilet in a park and there are
10 some parks where parents and kids use the tree as the
11 bathroom and there are some parks that have
12 playgrounds that are in decrepit, disgusting, unsafe
13 conditions, and in some other neighborhoods we're
14 talking about just making the sidewalk more
15 beautiful, if you catch my drift. And so is there a
16 discussion in the advocacy world joining with us in
17 the Council and pushing for procurement reform,
18 pushing for reforms to how Parks does business?
19 Because we're getting increasingly frustrated, you know
20 we hear on one end that we need to engage our
21 communities more, and we want to, but when I do
22 budgeting in a community where people get to vote on
23 projects, PB, right, half the room leaves when they
24 want to do a bathroom in a park and the question is:
25 what would you do with a million dollars in your

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2 district and a million dollars can't get you a
3 toilet...

4 DEBORAH MARTON: Right. Yeah.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So I just want
6 to hear; is there... I think we need your help to work
7 together to push for significant reforms and how we
8 do business in the Parks Department; just want to
9 hear your thoughts on that.

10 DEBORAH MARTON: Well I started my career
11 working for the Parks Department and I remember at
12 that time the Procurement Policy Board rules book was
13 like yag thick and then you know that was pre-
14 digitization, but I can imagine what it is today. I
15 think procurement reform is like the ultimate unsexy
16 but critical answer to your question. I really do
17 believe that my colleagues in the Parks Department
18 attempt to operate as efficiently, both from a cost
19 and time perspective as they can, but they really are
20 burdened by an enormous set of permitting,
21 procurement constraints and labor practice
22 constraints, right. So I mean speaking as a land
23 manager who -- we do capital work; in fact, we're
24 building a comfort station at Sherman Creek Park
25 right now -- when you are, to some extent, liberated

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2 from some of the practices that the Parks Department
3 is required to adhere to, you can construct for less
4 and faster... [interpose]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: May I...

6 DEBORAH MARTON: I mean our gardens that
7 we own outright, where we are not required to adhere
8 to those rules at all, we pilot things much faster
9 and for example, we have piloted compost toilets
10 which were not permitted in parks, for reasons I'm
11 not aware of, and now Parks is piloting them.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: May I ask: how
13 much are you spending on the bathroom?

14 DEBORAH MARTON: Well we'll expand the
15 building that we have, which is a single unisex
16 stall, to... it will be likely four to five men; four
17 to five women, a little office space and storage for
18 \$1.8 million.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: \$1.8 million?

20 DEBORAH MARTON: Yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: When just
22 recently the Chair had a hearing where we were told
23 the cost is now \$3 million and if you know what we
24 get to spend on capital in our districts, that's more
25 than... almost three-quarters... [interpose]

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DEBORAH MARTON: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: of our entire capital allotment. It's just not acceptable and I think that we need to work with the advocates and first of all, finding way... you know this term "equity," right; neighborhoods that don't have the luxury of having either conservancies or big nonprofits care for the parks, they're at a significant disadvantage..

DEBORAH MARTON: Absolutely, they are.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I mean... just, like an example; my fight to preserve the Coney Island Boardwalk, which is a whole different discussion, we're doing it at the grassroots level; there's no friends of the High Line at Coney Island Boardwalk.

DEBORAH MARTON: And likely there won't be one.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right.

DEBORAH MARTON: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So this has to be an issue, and I think that -- the Chair has been very vocal on this as well, and I appreciate his leadership on this -- but you know I'm sitting here

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2 and I appreciate this great discussion on increasing,
3 beautifying access to parks when I know of parks that
4 are in just terrible, terrible condition, not safe
5 and some other neighborhoods are discussing how to
6 make access more beautiful. So we need to make
7 contract reform, permit reform a priority in this
8 administration to level the playing field for
9 disadvantaged neighborhoods. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you Council
11 Member Treyger for being persistent in raising this
12 issue and you point out that there is a double
13 inequity between parks that have conservancies and
14 parks which only survive on public money; not only do
15 the parks with conservancies have more money, but
16 they're able to use that money on capital projects
17 which typically are about half the cost and half the
18 time of a Parks Department project, so it almost
19 magnifies by a factor of two inequity. But I'll
20 point out something, because Deborah you're right;
21 the Parks Department is under constraints that you as
22 a private entity are not; we understand that...

23 DEBORAH MARTON: Yeah.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: but even if you
25 compare public entities, such as the Parks Department

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2 versus the School Construction Authority, which is
3 also building exclusively at prevailing wage and has
4 myriad procurement requirements; you can build a new
5 schools in this city from scratch in three or four
6 years, and that is a far more complicated, far larger
7 project than the typical Parks capital project. So I
8 think we can actually learn from comparing amongst
9 public agencies and if it does turn out that
10 authorities have fewer constraints, the City
11 agencies, so let's find out what those are and let's
12 eliminate them for the Parks Department, but it's
13 actually led some of my colleagues to propose -- why
14 don't we just create a Parks Construction Authority -
15 - and there might even be some work on this up in
16 Albany as we speak -- in order to cut through all
17 this bureaucracy. So did you have a comment, Lynn?

18 LYNN KELLY: Yes. I'd like to actually
19 respond to Council Member Treyger, just for a moment.
20 [background comment]

21 So you might not know this, but I
22 actually served ten years at the New York City
23 Economic Development Corporation and my project the
24 entire time was the redevelopment of Coney Island, so
25 I feel for you, it is one of my babies, and I will

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2 say this, having both run a park, been on the side of
3 managing capital projects, maintenance,
4 administration and now advocacy, I testified at the
5 previous Council hearing that you had on the capital
6 process and while I fully agree there's need for
7 procurement reform in the city, I would say that
8 there are things that are, to some degree, outside of
9 the Parks Department's control that impact the
10 timeline in which projects occur and therefore the
11 cost. So if you have a land use process, like in
12 zoning, for example, ULURP is a very public calendar;
13 certain agencies, certain regulatory bodies have to
14 make decisions within very distinct periods of time
15 by law; that is not the case necessarily with a
16 capital project which adds to cost. For example, a
17 contract could be at the Law Department for an
18 extended period of time; a contract or a CP
19 application could be at OMB for an extended period of
20 time. This doesn't absolve measures for
21 accountability, let's say, or an increased sense of
22 accountability within managing projects at the Parks
23 Department, which all impact costs. But the Council
24 should be aware that there are things that do drive
25 this extended timeline which then increase the costs.

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2 I can tell you, as someone that, like I said, worked
3 at EDC and also worked with other agencies that had a
4 very high sense of internal accountability -- DEP
5 being one -- we were able to get projects done faster
6 because, honestly, you are responsible, even as a
7 low-level project manager for reporting on what your
8 project was on a regular basis, often to the
9 president of the corporation, so there was not layers
10 in-between; you were solely accountable for the
11 timeline of your project. So while I wouldn't
12 necessarily say we're at the stage yet of going to a
13 full-blown authority mode; I do think it is worth
14 having discussions within the agencies and this
15 administration that are able to move capital projects
16 along faster and cheaper about what their best
17 practices are.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: If I could
19 respond, Chair, I... [interpose]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Please, Council
21 Member.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: and I thank you
23 for caring about Coney Island; it's just, for us, I'm
24 not sure if we're sensing a sense of urgency on the
25 part of the decision-makers in the administration

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2 about this issue. There's no way no one could
3 justify to me that a toilet and a sink can cost
4 \$3 million; it just -- you can't justify it and
5 plus, the amount of time. It's going get to a point
6 where many members of the Council are not going to
7 fund these projects and with all due respect to all
8 their initiatives, you know, CPI; again, which are
9 very nice, by the time these things get implemented
10 and get done, first of all, some folks in these
11 communities, which are very vulnerable already, might
12 be priced out of their neighborhoods and might not be
13 able to enjoy that park that we built six, seven,
14 eight; ten years from now and a new influx of people
15 will. This has to be a priority, because you know...
16 and the Parks is reliant on the Council significantly
17 for capital money, significantly. Thanks to the
18 Chair's leadership, he makes this an issue year after
19 year to give more capital money to the Parks
20 Department, but it just... the amount of time and money
21 is just not acceptable and I applaud advocates and
22 nonprofits that find a way to get it done faster and
23 cheaper; we should be learning from you. If they can
24 do it; why can't we do it? And so again, we want to
25 work with you on this; this ties in to every

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2 initiative we're working on -- time and money will
3 impact every initiative out of this Committee and
4 every initiative that advocates that push forward as
5 well. Thank you.

6 LYNN KELLY: Point taken.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Council
8 Member and thank you panel, excellent... [crosstalk]

9 DEBORAH MARTON: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: thank you Lynn and
11 Deborah. Next up we have Carol Anastasio from The
12 Seward Park Conservancy and Julian Macrone from the
13 Fort Greene Park Conservancy. [background comments]

14 [pause]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: You may begin.

16 CAROL ANASTASIO: Hello, as you could
17 imagine, my name is Carol and I'm representing The
18 Seward Park Conservancy and I want to thank the Parks
19 Committee for this opportunity to speak in support of
20 Parks Without Borders. I actually was a former Parks
21 Manager at Fort Greene Park and spend 25 years
22 working for the agency and when I retired, became
23 very active in my local community, and we are an
24 example of what you're talking about, about a
25 community that's underserved, economically diverse,

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2 but we, together, with Amy -- who's here in the
3 audience, along with some other community members --
4 said if there isn't a group caring for this park, it
5 will fall apart. So we've been caring for it for
6 about ten years and then we became a conservancy and
7 we had all these fancy ideas -- we're all nonprofit;
8 not a single paid person -- and we had all these
9 ideas for what we could do with this park and were
10 trying to figure out how can we do it, and along came
11 this call for Parks Without Borders. And one of the
12 greatest things about this was it jumpstarted our
13 nonprofit to a much higher level and it gave us an
14 opportunity to really go out into the community in a
15 much more efficient and time-sensitive way, and as a
16 result, we engaged so many stakeholders that we
17 would've been looking for an opportunity to engage,
18 but with this program we did, and we found the
19 response from the community to be overwhelmingly
20 supportive and in fact, so much so that after
21 Prospect Park, we got the most votes out of the
22 entire city; that's how much the community on the
23 Lower East Side loved this idea, so much so that when
24 UNIQLO came up with an opportunity to put arts in
25 parks, the Parks Department looked back to see how

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2 people voted on the Parks Without Borders and they
3 saw that this park, our park, Seward Park, wanted
4 art, so they came to us and they'll be installing
5 art. So there are all these little like fringe
6 effects from this Parks Without Borders that we're
7 beginning to see, and also what it did was; it gave
8 us some capital to talk to all of our elected
9 officials; we have just finished a round of speaking
10 from the Borough President down to, you know, every
11 single person on that ladder to ask for more capital
12 dollars, because what they are giving to the park
13 doesn't really give us what we need to have done.
14 There's one section called Essex Plaza, for example,
15 where there's a fountain; they could do the
16 beautification, but not the restoration, so we're
17 taking that on as community members.

18 So I want to just wrap up by saying how
19 much in support of the program we are, because not
20 only did it help a park that hasn't had any
21 investment in quite some time, but it's helping a
22 really incredibly economically and socially diverse
23 community that will only be getting, as one of the
24 other Council Members said, many more community
25 members; within the next three to five years there's

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2 over 7,000 new apartments being built in our
3 neighborhood, so a lot of people are going to be
4 enjoying this and we really thank you for your
5 support and for support of our conservancy.

6 JULIAN MACRONE: To the Committee, thank
7 you for having me. My name is Julian Macrone; I'm
8 the Program and Development Manager for the Fort
9 Greene Park Conservancy and this is actually my very
10 first City Council hearing, so please, I ask that you
11 bear with me throughout this.

12 First off, we applaud Mayor de Blasio and
13 Commissioner Silver for their visionary leadership
14 and really making every possible effort to create
15 connected parks and equitable park systems here in
16 New York City and it's our real sincere hope that
17 Parks Without Borders will only see further funding
18 for capital investment and long-term improvement and
19 maintenance of these new improvements that are being
20 built in Fort Green and around the city.

21 So enjoyed by children, parents,
22 families, and commuters throughout the entire 80,000
23 members of our district, the Myrtle Avenue landscape
24 of Fort Greene Park is going to see critical
25 infrastructure improvements that we probably wouldn't

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2 have seen for ten years, had Parks Without Borders
3 not come along; that's including sidewalk
4 improvements, plaza improvements to two of the park's
5 largest open spaces, as well as the corridor of the
6 park that sees the single-most vibrant street life;
7 it's the only side of the park with benches and as
8 such, that's the only side of the park that people
9 actually enjoy, but unfortunately, the infrastructure
10 is crumbling and it also happens to be the only side
11 of the park that's adjacent to 6,000 NYCHA residents
12 living in the Whitman and Ingersoll Houses and also
13 the future home to a new 140-unit all-affordable
14 senior housing building. Parks Without Borders
15 **[inaudible]** improved lighting and other safety
16 issues, visibility site lines in the plaza, really
17 ensuring that longstanding community needs and asks
18 for increased safety in our district are met.
19 Additionally, the program will bring vital
20 infrastructure improvements to a park in the center
21 of the community that for the last four years has
22 been ranked as the third highest in permits for new
23 authorized units and first in new certificate of
24 occupancy issued citywide. So we really are firm in
25 our belief that this is planning done right and

1
2 planning that our community desperately needs to
3 preserve livability.

4 The funding allocated -- together with
5 historic commitments from Borough President Eric
6 Adams and Council Member Cumbo -- anchor the single
7 largest investment in Fort Greene Park since Robert
8 Moses was Parks Commissioner in the 1930s and in
9 stark contrast to the style of those years, the
10 Commissioner has been nothing but intentional and
11 deliberate about ensuring that there's transparency
12 and public engagement in this process and that the
13 public's voice is really truly heard and ensuring
14 that these improvements actually bring what is needed
15 to Fort Greene Park. Through both online channels
16 and in-person meetings, neighbors recommended
17 specific improvements and engaged in a public process
18 exhibiting tremendous transparency and Commissioner
19 Silver and his team showed nothing but an eagerness
20 to listen and an eagerness to learn throughout the
21 entire process.

22 Further, as Carol mentioned, it's been a
23 huge boon, the experience to enhancing our ability to
24 connect with communities and the constituencies of
25 Fort Greene Park. Somebody in a community meeting

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2 that Comptroller Stringer hosted the other day
3 mentioned that there might not be any single greater
4 discrete boundary between poor [sic] and new Brooklyn
5 as Myrtle Avenue is in Fort Greene and everything
6 that Parks Without Borders embodies and everything
7 that we have worked together with the Myrtle Avenue
8 Brooklyn Partnership in our outreach to communicate
9 to constituencies signaling that the City is
10 committed to turning that around and that the City is
11 committed to building one New York here in Fort
12 Greene, and without that, as I mentioned earlier,
13 these improvements would have taken decades, if not
14 lifetimes, to truly see through to fruition, and so
15 we as an organization are truly thankful for this
16 opportunity to build community solidarity and also
17 use these programs and these spaces that are going to
18 be designed to encourage interaction and public
19 coming together in a place to truly create an
20 inclusive community in Fort Greene Park and celebrate
21 all the cultures and abilities and personalities to
22 use our park.

23 So again, we believe, just as you do,
24 just as the Mayor does and just as Commissioner
25 Silver does, that connected communities are stronger

1
2 communities in every true sense of the word, and so
3 Parks Without Borders is laying the literal and
4 figurative groundwork for a stronger Fort Greene and
5 a stronger CB2 in Brooklyn. And so without these,
6 you know we just... it's just been such a huge, huge
7 boon to our operation and we are... nobody in the
8 community has been sad that Parks Without Borders has
9 happened, for lack of a better term, and DPR's been
10 an amazing partner throughout all the -- at the
11 borough level and the Commissioner **[inaudible]** and
12 we're just really excited to be a part of the process
13 and hope that the initiative and initiatives like it
14 continue to find support from the Council, both for
15 capital and for maintenance needs.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: For your first
17 time, you did a very good job..

18 JULIAN MACRONE: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: did a very good
20 job; you were very succinct and to the point. And I
21 applaud you both for your outstanding work and
22 advocacy; I wish every neighborhood park had great
23 groups like yours, because that's really what it's
24 about; that engagement and capacity building and it's
25 a beautiful park and to the credit of the

1
2 neighborhood residents who really work hard to keep
3 it beautiful, it's not easy and again, I think that
4 we should learn from organizations and how they get
5 things done sometimes faster and cheaper and I'm
6 sure, if you agree with that statement, because it is
7 -- you don't have to comment, but it is an outrageous
8 amount of money sometimes for what they ask to do
9 basic things in a park, but again, thanks to groups
10 like yours that really are on the ground and hold us
11 accountable. Thank you so much.

12 JULIAN MACRONE: Thank you.

13 CAROL ANASTASIO: You're welcome. Thank
14 you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Oh I'm sorry,
16 forgive me; Council Member Mealy has a question.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yes, and you did
18 an awesome job... [crosstalk]

19 JULIAN MACRONE: Thank you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: first time. I
21 just want to say, all these organizations, have you
22 ever thought about not... to me, everyone is getting --
23 Prospect Park, Fort Greene -- that's big parks that
24 have foundations and organizations; have you thought
25 about going out to other parks? I know Wingate Park

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2 has an organization, a good organization that is
3 trying to build up the park. We have Lincoln Terrace
4 Park; have you ever thought about not just those big
5 parks; that you can go a little deeper into the
6 communities to help and if we're really talking about
7 Parks Without Borders; why not go into Brownsville,
8 East New York; Crown Heights, to the smaller parks --
9 Lincoln Terrace is an awesome park. I haven't heard
10 anything about Lincoln Terrace Park and that would be
11 a great park to start with. So do you coordinate
12 with other parks? I know you just -- Fort Greene --
13 but you've got to be without borders.

14 JULIAN MACRONE: No... [interpose]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: There's one
16 community, right; one New York... [crosstalk]

17 JULIAN MACRONE: I whole... I
18 wholeheartedly agree and we... I'm relatively new to
19 the world; I've only been working with parks for the
20 last two years, but just in my short time here I've
21 witnessed a tremendous a tremendous degree of warmth
22 and community among the parks community, whether it's
23 at events hosted by New Yorkers for Parks and
24 Partnerships for Parks. I think there's definitely a
25 willingness and sincere desire to make sure that

1
2 everybody's got the strongest parks group that we
3 possibly can and that we're building the coalition
4 that we need to and there are tremendous resources
5 out there teaching fundamentals of organizing and
6 fundraising and working to develop one singular voice
7 for the betterment of parks in the city, and the
8 Commissioner acknowledges that it's the smaller, and
9 I think everybody with DPR acknowledges that it's the
10 smaller community-based parks and neighborhood parks
11 that are the lifeboat of our community.. [crosstalk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Are you all
13 collaborating as of yet or you all have not gotten to
14 that point as of yet?

15 JULIAN MACRONE: We might have some
16 things in the hopper.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Excuse me?

18 JULIAN MACRONE: We.. I do talk frequently
19 with other neighborhood groups and other community
20 parks groups, so we're currently brainstorming ideas
21 to create a little more of a unified voice for
22 advocacy.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: That will be very
24 nice, to be one Brooklyn, one New York; we have to
25 bring all those resources together to make sure

1
2 across the board everyone has a park; park is to me,
3 a quality of life that everyone needs and...

4 [crosstalk]

5 JULIAN MACRONE: Absolutely.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: and in every
7 neighborhood; no matter what age, demographic, we
8 need it all across the board.. [crosstalk]

9 JULIAN MACRONE: And...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: so I thank you for
11 this.

12 JULIAN MACRONE: And I... thank you -- and
13 I think that's also to speak to one of the virtues of
14 Commissioner Silver's new approach is that it's
15 really reinvigorating a desire and a need for
16 community advocacy and for people to acknowledge that
17 they need to be engaged in the political process and
18 that their voice is valued in how parks are being
19 crafted and designed in New York City.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you. Just
21 know... [crosstalk]

22 JULIAN MACRONE: Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: that some parks
24 need more than just sidewalks and lights; they need...

25 [interpose]

1
2 JULIAN MACRONE: Our park needs a lot of
3 work.

4 CAROL ANASTASIO: And... [crosstalk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: There you go.

6 CAROL ANASTASIO: if... if I may add also,
7 I mean I'm... we're like... like I said, we're a park
8 without a budget as opposed to a conservancy, like a
9 **[inaudible]**, right... [crosstalk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: With a budget, big
11 budget.

12 CAROL ANASTASIO: but even that being
13 said... [crosstalk]

14 JULIAN MACRONE: Small budget.

15 CAROL ANASTASIO: yeah, no seriously,
16 'cause as the former manager of Fort Greene, I
17 remember what their budget was like and I actually,
18 as the former manager there, reached out to Central
19 Park to ask them for help on how to restore our lawns
20 because the Parks Department didn't have the
21 resources to restore our lawns. And then for like
22 any of the parks that you mentioned, some of which I
23 was very familiar with as having been riding [sic]
24 manager in the borough in my working years, there is
25 partnerships without parks and so all you need is one

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2 community member, literally one community member
3 who's interested and they get in touch with their
4 outreach coordinator who will help them learn how to
5 start a group, learn how to work the maze of getting
6 in touch with your local Parks Department manager or
7 supervisor, and they will help you, and then also, a
8 lot of the bigger nonprofits, like Prospect Park and
9 Central Park Conservancy, are reaching out to the
10 smaller parks and if they aren't; they're extremely
11 welcoming for a local park to go to them and ask for
12 help and guidance, and it is some of the things that
13 we've been doing, and our outreach coordinator from
14 Partnership for Parks has helped put us in touch with
15 who would be the most appropriate person to talk to
16 at other more established parks.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay, thank you,
18 'cause I already know, I know Wingate Park, we have...
19 thinking about outside sponsors also, I have
20 Imagination Playground, the second in the world, in
21 Brownsville; I wanted something different, so you
22 could think about partnering with people who have
23 that same vision and think about a two-level park
24 right in the middle of Brownsville. Lincoln Terrace
25 Park -- I know people already organized, so I hope

1
2 you really reach out -- you can call my office --
3 they are already organized, they just need help with
4 the funding; I give them every year, we redid Lincoln
5 Terrace Park, state-of-art [sic]; Brownsville Park,
6 state-of-art -- majority of all my parks, but there's
7 still other small parks, like Wingate, that's not
8 even in my district, but that's my alma mater, so I
9 still want it done, so please, think about Wingate
10 Park also, 'cause they have an organization; they
11 email me; I try to go to their meetings, so please
12 think about them if you... [crosstalk]

13 JULIAN MACRONE: If you have any contacts
14 there, I would be happy to reach out **[inaudible]**...
15 [crosstalk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: That's why I said,
17 let's talk. Thank you so much, and thank you, Chair
18 for this important meeting, hearing today. Thanks...
19 [crosstalk]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Council
21 Member Mealy for your excellent comments and
22 questions and thank you panel; this concludes our
23 hearing for today.

24 [gavel]

25 Alright.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date February 27, 2017