



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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CHRISTINE BERTHET
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

June 6, 2014

Mr. Mitchell Silver
Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation
Arsenal West
24 West 61st Street
New York, NY 10023

Re: Introduction to Manhattan Community Board 4

Dear Commissioner Silver,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner and we look forward to getting better acquainted as you get deeper into your term. MCB4 wanted to take this opportunity to introduce our district to you as it relates to Parks.

As you know from your experience working in the Manhattan Borough President's office, Manhattan Community District 4 comprises the area between West 14th and West 59th Streets - to the west of Eighth Avenue north of West 26th Street, and to the west of Sixth Avenue south of West 26th Street, commonly referred to as the Chelsea and Clinton/Hell's Kitchen neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are seeing an explosion of new residential development. And Parks has played its role. Over the last few years at least two new fields have been installed in our parks – one in Dewitt Clinton Park the other in Chelsea Park. MCB4's Waterfront, Parks and Environment Committee, in the past month, has reviewed and commented on plans for the renovation of Mathews Palmer Playground, plans that will enable that playground to serve its community even better. We understand that work on that project is to commence shortly.

Our open space, however, is not growing and our small neighborhood parks are being used by increased numbers of people. Within MCB4 the area from Sixth to Eighth Avenues between West 14th and West 26th Streets is devoid of open green spaces. Our district has traditionally ranked near the bottom for open green spaces. MCB4 welcomes any opportunity to add open green space to our district, but we are also concerned about the state of our current parks and Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) operations in general. Some of these concerns include:

- Renovations and repairs that are already funded take a long time to implement. Hell's Kitchen Park has had a small project on hold for quite some time for example.

- We hope that Parks will work even harder to be sure the community is informed about its plans with respect to park design and the timeline of the process.
- While Parks has limited ability to control the activities of organizations receiving permits to use our parks, MCB4 wants to work with you to be assured those activities are appropriate.
- We welcome Parks participation in our Waterfront Parks and Environment Committee and hope that we will be able to touch base on a monthly basis.
- Despite the recent welcome addition of a dedicated gardener for our district, staffing is stretched very thin and is inadequate to meet the needs of our community.
- There is a desperate need of new or renovated comfort stations.
- There are limited or no recreational facilities or resources, like ping pong or chess tables (we are pleased to note there is a ping pong table in the Mathews Palmer Playground plan).

Many of our residents are very dedicated to our small neighborhood parks. We have an active core of local volunteers that raise money and work with the Department of Parks and Recreation to maintain planting beds and add programming. Fostering partnership and encouraging consistent communication between DPR and these community volunteers can pay large dividends for our neighborhoods. Promoting an “Adopt a Park” program may be a great way to formalize and expand this relationship. We look forward to your visits to these parks where you can meet the residents and hear their concerns.

MCB4 reached out to Borough Commissioner William Castro earlier this year to express some of these same concerns. We specifically stressed our hope for better communication between DPR and the community. Attached you will find our letter to Borough Commissioner Castro. As these issues are of the utmost importance to our community we invite you, members of your staff and representatives of the de Blasio administration to sit down with our Committee, MCB4 officers and our elected representatives to discuss some of these matters.

Again, congratulations on your appointment and MCB4 eagerly awaits your response and looks forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Christine Berthet
Chair



Maarten de Kadt Co-Chair
Waterfront, Parks &
Environment Committee



Delores Rubin Co-Chair
Waterfront, Parks &
Environment Committee

cc: William Castro, City of New York Parks & Recreation
Brad Hoylman, NY State Senator 97
Richard Gottfried, NY State Assemblymember 98
Jerrold Nadler, Congressman 99
Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President 100
Corey Johnson, NYC Councilmember