



Donovan Richards
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Community Board No. 2

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Anatole Ashraf
Chairperson
Debra Markell Kleinert
District Manager

May 23rd, 2024

Environment, Parks and Recreation Committee

this was a teleconference zoom meeting

Attendees

Laura Shepard, Chair
Carlos Castell Croke, Vice Chair
Warren Davis
Alexandra Gonzalez
Benjamin Lucas
Thomas Mituzas
Jolly Patel

Absentee

Nellie Afshar (*excused*)
Danielle Brecker
Lauren Springer
Andie Olivares

Mariana Mogilevich, Public Member
Pearl Brady, Public Member

Community Board 2 Staff

Debra Markell Kleinert

Guests

Willis Elkins, Newtown Creek Alliance
Shangtong Li, Newtown Creek Alliance
Holly Porter-Morgan, Professor at LaGuardia Community College
Fanny Chang
Louis Kleinman
Jason Sinopoli

Laura Shepard, Chair of the CB2 Environment, Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Laura Shepard stated there will be a presentation by Newtown Creek Alliance on local flooding issues and estuary use.

- Willis Elkins of Newtown Creek Alliance started the presentation.
- Newtown Creek Alliance is a community-based organization fighting to restore, revitalize and reveal Newtown Creek.
- Newtown Creek is a waterway that touches LIC, Blissville, Maspeth and Ridgewood.
- Newtown Creek is a superfund site.

“Serving the Communities of Long Island City, Sunnyside, Woodside, and Maspeth”

- The Creek is 4 miles long from the East River to Brooklyn.
- Newtown Creek was originally surrounded by 1200 acres of tidal saltmarsh.
- All of that was filled in in the beginning of the 1800's to transform the waterway into a resource for the Industrial Revolution.
- During this time period there was not a lot of environmental awareness and regulations.
- The oil industries that were present created significant amounts of contamination.
- The last refineries left in the 1960s. The clean up is still going on.
- The Newtown Creek issues are:
 - Toxic Sediment - the industries dumped contamination into the water and the land. Since the creek is very stagnant, anything dumped would sink to the bottom.
 - Ecosystem needs - Limited habitat for returning wildlife
 - Lack of Access - People do not have access to this creek.
 - Combined Sewage - Over 1 billion gallons per year of untreated sewage enter the creek especially after it rains.
- Dutch Kills Tributary is one of the five tributaries that go through the creek.
 - Presently there is no real access to this tributary.
 - This tributary has a lot of potential and opportunity for the community.
 - This tributary has not been used for shipping for many decades.
 - Willis Elkins mentioned Riverkeeper and their vision plans on how to improve industrial activity for this area in their reports of 2012 and 2017.
- The Newtown Creek Alliance acknowledges and wants to encourage the use of Newtown Creek as a commercial waterway. They want to find smart ways to move materials in and out by the water.
- The Army Corp did a study this year proposing new depths for the Creek. The depths are 23 feet to 12 feet.
- Willis Elkins shared a link <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dep/whats-new/tibbetts-brook-daylighting-project.page>
- Shangtong Li, Newtown Creek Alliance spoke about the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Plan.
 - This plan is part of the superfund process.
 - Three government agencies oversee this plan to seek compensation from the companies that have done all the damages to the creek.
 - These agencies are trying to see how much of the wildlife has been affected by the toxins.
 - Natural Resource Damage Assessment Plan (Comments Due May 30th): <https://www.newtowncreekalliance.org/nrda-the-future-of-newtown-creek/>
 - East Branch Tributary is about 10% of the creek and is one of the five tributaries. A cleanup plan for the East Branch will be published in the summer of 2024.
 - Visit www.NewtownCreekcag.org to learn more.

- Willis Elkins mentioned that the storm water management is being looked into with DEP
- Holly Porter-Morgan, Professor at LaGuardia Community College
 - Holly Porter-Morgan spoke about the Neighborhood Flood Mapping Program.
 - She explained how NYC is working on the flood areas but more work still needs to be done
 - She received a grant to work on this with community partners.
 - The community partner is Newtown Creek Alliance.
 - The grant will help with filling in the gaps of actual locations of where the flooding is occurring.
 - Holly Porter-Morgan spoke about Flood Net. Flood Net is a sensor network.
 - The sensors are run by solar power.
 - Holly Porter-Morgan spoke about Participatory Flood Mapping - Community members can get to point out where the actual flooding is going on in their street.
 - An in-person community mapping workshop will be taking place on June 5th at Queens Landing.
 - That data will be placed on digital maps and sent to the city.
 - A discussion took place on how the data will be used.

Old Business

Laura Shepard explained to the new members what the Queens SWAB (Solid Waste Advisory Board) meetings were about.

New Business

Tom Mituzas mentioned composting in the community. He stated there might be land available for Big ReUse to occupy on the border of Blissville and Laurel Hill under the Kosciuszko Bridge.

Tom Mituzas mentioned Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez has received a great amount of funds for our district. The Councilmember decides how the money is spent. Tom Mituzas is suggesting we ask Councilmember Julie Won to dedicate some money to the area next to Newtown Creek pertaining to the sewers.

Willis Elkins of Newtown Creek stated that the city will be redoing proposing a modification for their long-term control plan which deals with sewage overflow. This plan will get submitted to the state and will have a comment period.

Laura Shepard, Chair stated that over the summer is when the Budget Committee meets to determine the Community Board's capital and expense requests. The June meeting is a good time to mention any issues to be suggested for the report.

The daily CO₂ reading is 426.23 ppm of CO₂ in the atmosphere and that is up from a year ago when it was 424.02 ppm.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kim Waber