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*The City of New York  
Borough of Queens*

**Community Board 8**

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

**Parks Committee Meeting:** Cunningham Park – Capital Projects  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 16, 2015  
**Time:** 7:30 p.m.  
**Place:** Community Board 8 Office  
197-15 Hillside Avenue  
Hollis, NY 11423

**Martha Taylor, Parks Committee Chair**

**Board Members:** Marc A. Haken, Robert Harris and Douglas Sherman.

**Also in attendance:** Kevin Selig, CB8 Parks Manager; John Williams, Principal of MKW & Associates; James Mituzas, NYC Parks; Mayank Kumar, NYC Parks; Joanne Amagrande, NYC Parks and Alma Karassavidis, CB8 Staff Member.

Mrs. Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and asked that attendees introduced themselves.

**Purpose:**

A presentation of Cunningham Park – Capital Projects by NYC Department of Parks and Recreation.

**Ms. Joanne Amagrande** thanked Queens Borough President, Melinda Katz for allocating almost \$900K into this project. We also have monies from the City Council through the Participatory Budget which brings us to a total budget of \$1.7 million.

**Marc Haken – Were not specific dollars allocated for specific things?**

Answer: Yes, I will tell you exactly. The Borough President gave us \$875K for the *Oval Pathway*. Through the Participatory Budget with former Councilmember Weprin, we have funding for the *Performance Space* in the amount of \$300K and also \$375K to enhance the *Picnic Grove*. Since we had these projects in Cunningham Park, it just made sense to bundle them together. This way we have consistency and we will get better bids, rather than having to bid out the projects separately. We have one of the best designers at the park. Our park team always work with our consultants.

**Martha Taylor – This money does not include the money for the playground?**

Answer: No, it does not. The playground is the new FY 2016 money. On a side note, we got almost \$50 million this year in the Capital Budget. We have yet to sit down to figure out which Elected Officials have projects in the pipeline and to be equitable, because we just don't have the designers right now to pump out all those projects. It is not scoped yet, but I will give you advance notice when we plan on that project. It will be an important one coming up for us.

**Marc Haken – I think that project was funded by both the Borough President and Mark Weprin, right?**

Answer: Yes.

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – This is one of my favorite projects. We did work on the master plan years ago. It was the first design competition that NYC Parks held. We were successful and had a great time working on it. This is the presentation that we will show to the Public Design Commission in early October. They require that we show the entire context; neighborhood location, the site itself, flood hazard zones. I think you all know there is no flood hazard in Cunningham Park. We are nicely elevated here.

**Marc Haken – It helps when you have a park on top of a hill.**

Answer: Yes, it absolutely does.

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – We have identified three goals;

- *The Oval Pathway* – Replace pavement; re-align curve in Path; add mile/meter markers and fitness facilities.
- *Picnic Grove* – Add NEW paths, surfaces, mulch, picnic tables, grills and accessibility to all.
- *Performance Area* - Stage and seating area for readings and puppet shows; full accessibility.

**Marc Haken – There is \$875K allocated to do the work on the Oval, right? Isn't that a lot of money for that, considering that it's not the first time work has been done on that walking path?**

Answer (*Joanne Amagrande*): We combined the monies now for the one project. Maybe a little extra is going into the Performance Space, etc.

**Marc Haken – I'm asking because I remember when Sheldon Leffler was City Councilman, because he walked and ran, he put a lot of money into that track.**

**Martha Taylor – That was a long time ago.**

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – We did our analysis and spent a few days walking, noting the areas of deficiencies. It was noted where the pavement is cracked and rolled; where it was missing an edge completely as well as areas of drainage problems. We also indicated where there are some areas of good pavement. Overall the entire thing needs quite a bit of work. We will be showing the Public Design Commission (*PDC*) some of the photos of the Oval again. Some areas were patched in the southeast area. We will show them how the pavement has been eroding and de-laminating in different spots. This has to do with surface, drainage and the edge or lack of edge. We are making a case for *PDC* to see what is out there now. This is the plan for improvement (*presentation shows bright green color for new pavement throughout*) A small spur is being added so that you don't have to make a 90 degree turn which makes the loop a little more pleasant. We are adding all new pavement on the north side. Another part of the project is the addition of Fitness Stations and mile markers, so they know how far they are going and how much they are walking. There is about a 5/8 of a mile loop which is just about 1,000 meters. Four loops in the entire oval makes that 2.5 miles. This will allow people to judge how far they have gone and how far they want to continue. At every one of these mile markers, we will have an adult fitness station.

**Martha Taylor – Would you define a fitness station please?**

Answer: Yes, I will show you some photographs.

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – We will have these roughly at an eighth (1/8) of a mile/200 meter marks all the way through quarter (1/4) mile/400 meter, three eighths (3/8) mile/800 meters and then back up to the finish which is just about 1,000 meters. These distances will be indicated with these mile posts. Every one of the stations will have an indication as to how far it is. There will also be a sign at each of the fitness stations so that people will know that this is for adult fitness. There are a number of activities that can be used by people in wheelchairs. There will be a nice range of activities for a full range of users, from young adults to seniors.

- *Assisted Row/Push Up*
- *Parallel Bars*
- *Balance Steps*
- *Ab Crunch/Leg Lifts*
- *Cardio Step*
- *Chest Press*

These are the six (6) stations that will be spaced through the entire loop of the path.

**Marc A. Haken – Does that include a sign at each station explaining what it is and how they are used?**

Answer: Yes. It will tell you what exercise you are doing and what you are accomplishing, explaining the nature of the exercise and how valuable it is.

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – We now have to be certain that we have a resilient surface under each of these pieces of equipment. We will carve out a small area along the *Oval Pathway* about 24' square. The piece of equipment will be centered in that space on these resilient tiles. In the event that someone either using the equipment falls or trips or someone is using it inappropriately or climbing on it, falls or trips, they will be protected. There will also be an accessible route so that anyone can use the equipment.

**Douglas Sherman – Are the tiles more desirable than the other type of spongy surface?**

Answer: Yes, it is.

Answer (*Joanne Amagrande*): Yes, maintenance wise for us. The sponge has been failing in the past several years. We are really trying not to use it. We are using the mats more. They are more durable and easier for us to replace.

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – The second goal is improving the *Picnic Area*. (*presentation shows areas of concentration in purple, pink, red and green*). A great amount of area cannot be used due to erosion, deterioration and some of the areas are not accessible to all users. The grills and tables are in poor condition. We would like to enlarge the picnic areas. We would bring in some mulch around some of the existing trees. The picnic area would encompass these large beautiful trees. Each area would get new picnic tables, new grills and new coal bins. They will also each have an asphalt paved path, and along that path will have accessible picnic tables and grills so that all users can actually use the picnic areas. We will

have 7 or 8 spots in each of these new areas, so we are greatly increasing the numbers of spots available. The monument plaza will be improved with some plantings added along with a small post and chain fence to protect the plantings. We will be using very sturdy tables made of steel and recycled plastic lumber. There will also be accessible tables so people with wheelchairs can use them. We will also add new grills and new hot coal cans. One of the things we were asked to include were these heat shields. People were putting Hibachis or camping stoves on top of the recycled plastic lumber tables and the tables were melting. So now any type of tabletop Hibachi could be placed on top of the heat shield. There are numerous plants that we are recommending for monument plaza and also the post and chain fence, which is there now.

The third area is the *Performance Area*. We talked about this previously. A nice small area holding maybe 50 people at a time, for poetry readings, small musical events, puppet shows, etc. We looked at a couple of different areas in the park. The area we chose has a really nice topography. The amphitheater works very well. There is a really nice view looking out and is not distracted by the backstop or the infield and would not impact any of the large shade trees.

**Marc A. Haken – Is that bar seating?**

Answer: Yes

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – The hill lends itself to a nice hill side seating amphitheater. Situated in this space, when something is going on in the theater, there are no distractions from ball playing, the infield or backstop. It will be a very nice long view of the Oval. This plan shows a pathway coming in with a row of seats. The stage is raised up slightly. There is a ramp. There is some plantings along the main *Oval Pathway* to separate it. There are 3 rows of seating made of large granite blocks. There will be areas that are going to be accessible for wheelchairs or strollers. There is a gentle slope up the hill and a raised stage at the bottom. It can easily accommodate 50 people in this area. We don't have the benefit of large shade trees, so we will add new shade trees along the south side.

**Marc A. Haken – What is a thermal finish, because granite is hard?**

Answer: It is a smooth finish but not polished.

**Marc A. Haken – But you are saying the seating is going to be granite, which is hard to sit on?**

Answer (*Joanne Amagrande*): These are not going to be long shows. They will be 30 minutes to an hour. You can bring your own chairs.

**Martha Taylor – You can bring a cushion.**

**James Mituzas – NYC Parks** – Those lawn panel areas are pretty wide, so there will be room for people to bring their own chairs.

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – What is nice about the granite is that it has a very natural look. It has a really appealing look in Cunningham Park. We are going to use the same granite that was used in the buildings. This kind of natural amphitheater does not take a lot of attention from the park itself. It looks like it's been there for a long time. On the raised stage we are going to use the blue stone which is used in Monument Plaza. There will be a very nice natural lawn in between the seats. There was a question about

whether the lawn would survive with the activity. I think that with the modest number of events and people there will not be a problem. The lawn will do very well.

**Marc A. Haken – It looks like the Coliseum.**

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – Yes in some respects, yes. Amphitheatres have been around for thousands of years. The form is nice, the fact that you have a sloping topography really helps. This is a natural built-in way to see what is going on at the stage.

**James Mituzas – NYC Parks** – I had worked with John on a project up in the Bronx and we really transformed the lake areas, Indian Lake and Crotona Park. It is a really big improvement to the areas. It was very successful.

**Marc A. Haken – Are the fitness stations going to be on the grass or what we call the core area, or on the other side of the path?**

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – They will be on the other side of the path, housed on the outside. It will not interfere with any of the ball playing or any other activities that take place within the Oval.

**Marc A. Haken – Is it possible to put bulletin boards on the bollards for the fitness stations? In case the park may want to advertise a show or concert that will be happening?**

Answer (*Joanne Amagrande*): Why not put the bulletin board near the building. That would be a little redundant. We have so many bulletin boards. The main core is that building by the Bocce courts. If you are advertising there, I think that people walking there will see it.

**Marc A. Haken – We do have one on 193<sup>rd</sup> Street side also by the Cherry Tree Grove.**

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – Once you start using it as a bulletin board, it will be like “open season”. If anyone wants to post “dog missing”, “cat missing” or whatever. It is hard to control that and before you know it, you will want to take the sign down.

**Joanne Amagrande** – **Do you have electric in the Performance Space?**

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – We do, yes.

**James Mituzas – NYC Parks** – The electric will actually come from an environmental center.

**Joanne Amagrande** – **Are the heat shields for the grills stationary?**

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – Yes, they are fixed.

**Robert Harris** – **There are roots coming through the pathway on the southeast corner, which is dangerous. When discussions first began the homeowners didn’t want the picnic area too close to their houses. It looks like it will be alright the way you are planning it now. Just be aware that on the west side there should not be too many picnic areas because the houses are closer there. With regards to the Chest Press; is it strong enough to withstand heavy usage and who will maintain them if they break?**

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – Parks will be responsible for maintenance but these are pretty robust pieces. The posts and the moving parts are designed for public parks. This is one of the manufacturers that have been approved by Parks.

**Joanne Amagrande** – We have been putting this equipment in a lot of parks and some of them have been failing. We have been learning as we are going along. This company is being put through the ringer. We will be able to replace the parts that might break. Anything can happen if the equipment is not being used properly.

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – We have limited these to using few moving parts. For instance, the Row/Push Up is nothing more than bars.

**Marc A. Haken – In this past year, as part of the participatory budget, money was allocated toward a senior fitness center at Alley Pond Park. Would it be similar to this?**

Answer (*Joanne Amagrande*): It will be very similar because we are limiting the companies. Instead of doing 10 companies, this is one that we are comfortable with from our list. We are able to get standard parts for the equipment with this company. The senior fitness center in Alley Pond Park will be more contained, not in a track setting. There will be quite a few in one area. They will be fitness units.

**James Mituzas – NYC Parks** – We also learned from our past experience too. We put in these companies that didn't last so we are no longer using those companies. We are no longer using certain pieces from companies that are successful because we know those moving parts are not successful.

**Marc A. Haken – Does it go to the lowest bidder?**

Answer (*Joanne Amagrande*): The whole contract will, yes.

**Douglas Sherman – Is this in use at any other parks right now?**

Answer (*Joanne Amagrande*): Yes, we have many parks that we have fitness facilities. Marconi Park in Jamaica. We are putting it in Elmhurst Playground now. We did them in Jackson Heights, in Corona, Astoria. I look for things for teenagers and seniors. For instance, if you go into a park what do you do, you sit on a bench? I looked at the Balance Steps for the first time and thought it was so important for seniors to have something like this for their balance. It has a support bar so it's great.

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – Marc you mentioned the lowest bidder; but the bidder is the general contractor and our specs for the fitness equipment. There are only 3 manufacturers that are approved by Parks and he has to choose one of those 3.

**Joanne Amagrande** – I think this is fabulous, it is going to make such a nice impact in this area.

**Martha Taylor – What is your time frame?**

**James Mituzas – NYC Parks** – We go the Public Design Commission (*PDC*) and then we get a letter from you. We already submitted to *PDC* and they are asking us questions about the project. We go back and forth like that, so we expect approval. Then from there, John and his company will produce the construction documents. Mayank what is the due date?

**Mayank Kumar – NYC Parks** – The final design is due 3/29/16.

**James Mituzas – NYC Parks** – Then we have 9 months of procurement. So then typically they will build in the spring.

**Marc A. Haken – All 3 projects?**

**James Mituzas – NYC Parks** – Yes, it's all one contract.

**John Williams - MKW & Associates** – We think we can do better than that. We are going to try and wrap it up sooner.

**Marc A. Haken – This stays in-house with Parks, it doesn't involve DDC?**

Answer (*Joanne Amagrande*): No, just Parks. These guys move pretty quick, so hopefully *PDC* and everything will be fine. If there are any major changes that they make we have to come back to you and tell you.

**Martha Taylor – So when you let us know we will do it quickly.**

**James Mituzas – NYC Parks** – Right now it looks very positive. It looks like we will have an easy time with *PDC*.

**Martha Taylor – What kind of letter do you need and does Marie know what it is and how soon do you need it?**

**Joanne Amagrande** – Do you have to have a vote for this?

**Martha Taylor** – No.

**Joanne Amagrande** – So we just need a letter that Parks came on 9/16/15 to present the plans for the Cunningham Oval, Performance Space and Picnic Grove and it was unanimously approved by Community Board 8.

**Marc A. Haken – Have we sent you such a letter before? Can you send us a copy?**

**Martha Taylor** – I am sure we have it.

**Joanne Amagrande** – It doesn't have to be long, just a few sentences. Just so that they can see that we were here and you liked it.

Martha Taylor thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Alma Karassavidis, CB8 Staff*

*September 25, 2015*