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COMMUNITY BOARD No. 2, MANHATTAN

3 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE

NEW YORK, NY 10012-1899

www.cb2manhattan.org

P: 212-979-2272 F: 212-254-5102 E: info@cb2manhattan.org

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April 29, 2011

William T. Castro
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Parks
Arsenal West, 24 61st Street
New York, New York 10023

Bradley Romaker
Director of Capital Budget
NYC Department of Parks
Arsenal West, 24 61st Street
New York, New York 10023

Dear Manhattan Borough Commissioner Castro and Mr. Romaker:

At its Full Board meeting on April 21, 2011, CB#2-Man., adopted the following resolution:

A resolution supporting, with considerations, of a design proposal for renovation of J.J. Walker Field.

Whereas the artificial turf at this field was installed in 1997 and was the first of its kind installed by DPR; and

Whereas the field has exceeded its life expectancy of ten years and is in need of replacement, and

Whereas the field was installed using recycled crumb rubber, a technology no longer used in NYC Parks because of various potential health concerns; and

Whereas the field was tested by DPR and found to have higher lead levels than all but one other field of its kind; and

Whereas the design of the field includes clay cut-outs on the baseball field that have been a source of drainage problems; and

Whereas the bleacher area has no area to accommodate turning around a wheelchair; and

Whereas wheel chair access to the field is limited and there are no accessible drinking fountains; and

Whereas infill technology now used by DPR provides a similar play experience with greater safety and fewer health concerns; and

Whereas the clay cut-outs are not necessary and have proved problematic, but clay-colored carpet around the base areas is attractive, safe, and helpful for children learning to play baseball; and

Whereas the youth leagues expressed willingness to provide information about the best kinds of goals and pitcher's mound; and

Whereas the fence is deformed in various areas and there is colored fence in the outfield that detracts from the appearance of the park because it is semi-opaque; and

Whereas the fences are currently not high enough in some areas to protect buildings and pedestrians from batted balls; and

Whereas it may not be possible or practical to create fences sufficiently high to keep balls in the park, especially when used by competitive adult players; and

Whereas extra high fences would be unattractive and very expensive, and still unlikely to be effective; and

Whereas there may be better ways to keep batted balls in the park, including limiting the use to youth and less competitive adult leagues, and improving the backstops; and

Whereas balls hit over the fence are an important aspect of the game for youth baseball; and

Whereas the field lighting is insufficient, especially for youth baseball; and

Whereas lighting usually remains on after 11 PM, creating a nuisance for residential neighbors and wasting electricity; and

Whereas the little league has requested sun shading in the dugouts; and

Whereas there is a need for a location to safely store soccer goals and pitching mounds when they are not in use; and

Whereas there is a concrete ramp at a center field gate that represents a hazard for outfielders and this gate may not be needed;

Whereas the current location of the scoreboard makes it subject to damage from batted balls; and

Whereas concern was expressed by neighbors regarding the need for rodent control during construction projects; and

Whereas a plan was presented by DPR that addresses many of the needs and the presenters were very receptive to ideas and concerns expressed at the hearing;

Therefore it is resolved CB2 applauds the work on the design of this project so far and requests that a final design reflecting the concerns discussed herein be presented at a subsequent final hearing to review the proposal; and

It is further resolved that as always CB2 strongly supports improvements to wheelchair access but urges DPR to find a solution that does not include accessibility to the handball courts by crossing the ball field, possibly instead providing accessibility to the field from the handball court entrance; and

It is further resolved that CB2 supports the goal of improved safety, but requests Parks to evaluate methods that may be more effective than higher fences, such as improving backstop design and limiting baseball and softball use of the field to youth and less competitive adult leagues; and

It is further resolved that CB2 supports improvement of field lighting but only if the control of the lighting can be designed in a way that assures that lights are off by 11 PM.

Vote: Unanimous, with 41 Board members in favor.

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Jo Hamilton, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Tobi Bergman, Chair
Parks, Recreation & Open Space Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

JH/gh

c: Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Thomas K. Duane, NY State Senator
Hon. Daniel L. Squadron, NY State Senator
Hon. Sheldon Silver, Assembly Speaker
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, Assembly Member
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Man. Borough President
Hon. Margaret Chin, Council Member
Hon. Rosie Mendez, Council Member
Sandy Myers, CB2 liaison, Man. Borough President's office
Lolita Jackson, Manhattan Director, CAU