



The City of New York

Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

Michael Budabin **Chairperson** / Joseph Marziliano **District Manager**

To: All Board Members

From: Paul DiBenedetto, Parks Committee Chair
Henry Euler, Environmental Committee Chair

Date: February 17, 2022

Re: CB11 Forestry Update and Little Neck Pumping Station Presentation

On Wednesday, February 16, 2022, a joint CB11 Parks and Environmental Committee meeting was held via Zoom regarding an update from Queens Forestry regarding trees in CB11 and to review plans for a new Little Neck Pump Station by the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Present

Committee Members

Michael Budabin, Chair, ex. off.

Henry Euler, 3rd Vice Chair, ex. off.

Jessica Burke

Paul DiBenedetto

Joan Garippa

Laura James

Rob Liatto

Eileen Miller

Christina Scherer

Lourdes December

CB11 Staff

Joseph Marziliano, District Manager

Jane Bentivenga, Community Coordinator

Christina Coutinho, Community Associate

Guests

Matt Symons, Northeast Queens Administrator, NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation

Kyle Walsh, Deputy Director, NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation, Queens Forestry

Karen Ellis, NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection

Tommy Lin, NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection

Alicia West, Director, Public Design Outreach, NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection

Tania Quesada, P.E., Brown and Caldwell Associates

Elizabeth Classen, AIA, Goshow Architects

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Mr. Euler and Mr. DiBenedetto introduced themselves. Mr. Euler thanked Mr. Walsh for attending the meeting. He expressed his concern regarding street trees in the area. Mr. Euler stated that some seemingly healthy trees were possibly removed in error. Mr. Walsh stated that, unfortunately, an error like this can occur although it is quite uncommon. If, at all possible, there is a chance that a street tree can survive, Queens Forestry will do whatever is necessary to mitigate the situation. Trees go through a called retrenchment as they age, essentially conserving their energy. Pruning aids in this process. Mr. Euler asked if there was any information regarding a new “Million Trees” program. Mr. Walsh stated that they have not yet been given any official guidance or information about this program. More details will be shared as they become available.

Mr. DiBenedetto questioned the best process to report tree problems such as a dying tree or an illegal removal. Mr. Walsh stated people should go through 311; a person can also email qf.correspondence@parks.nyc.gov if they think a tree is being damaged. Emergency conditions should be reported to FDNY or NYPD through 911. Mr. Marziliano added that problems can be given to the CB11 office staff as well. Mrs. Garippa spoke about a problem she has with a sidewalk lifted by tree roots. She reported it in October of 2020, but it has not been inspected yet. Mr. Walsh said that would be done under the Trees & Sidewalks Program which lost most of their funding during the pandemic. They are working on an extremely limited budget and they have a significant backlog. Their direct email is treesandsidewalks@parks.nyc.gov. Ms. Burke spoke about trees issues in Crocheron Park and the need for the soil on the ballfields to be aerated. She also spoke of damage done to trees during capital projects. The last big storm caused a lot of damage in this park. Ms. Burke also lauded the tags with QR codes that are put on new trees. However, a standard plan needs to be put in place to remove them. She has found she has to make a request to 311 approximately three or four times before an issue is addressed. Mr. Symons stated that the same person calling 311 several times is not the best avenue to get something done. He also said they take every precaution during capital projects. Mr. Euler said he and others are concerned about bioswales/rain gardens near street trees. Mrs. Miller asked if homeowners can remove the tags that are on newly planted trees. Mr. Walsh said new trees are guaranteed for two years; these tags are scanned during this time to keep track of maintenance. Therefore, a tag on a new tree should not be removed until a tree is over two years old. Mrs. Miller also asked what the procedure will be for requesting a tree through the “Million Trees” program. Mr. Walsh said it will be the same as the procedure that is in place now through 311.

Mr. Liatto questioned a request for dog run in Alley Pond Park that was made a few years ago. He also asked about an area near the Douglaston Shopping Center that used to be used for sledding in the winter but is full of overgrowth. Mr. Symons said that once the funding for such a capital request is approved, it takes some time for the project to be completed. He also stated that, unfortunately, a local civic association will promise to maintain this type of installation; their commitment often wanes over time leaving the area overgrown in some areas, patchy in others and dirty. The base material can also be a problem. Another issue is “off-leash” hours (typically early morning and late evening) are eliminated in parks that have a dog run. Mr. Symons stated he will look at the overgrowth Mr. Liatto referred to.

Next, Mr. Euler introduced the presentation by NYC DEP regarding the Little Neck Pump Station. Ms. West of DEP began reviewing the Power Point presentation pertaining to this project. This pump station is located on 40 Avenue between 247 Street and 248 Street abutting the LIRR tracks. It was built in the 1950s and was last upgraded in the 1990s. This station
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serves a 150-acre drainage area of businesses and residents. Ms. West asked Ms. Quesada to continue the presentation. Ms. Quesada reviewed photographs of the current conditions. Currently, the entire station is below grade; there are hatches on the ground that allow for access. It is an unmanned station, but DEP personnel check on it daily. Ms. Quesada stated they have strived to make the station easily accessible for DEP while being cognizant of the aesthetics for nearby residents. The station is located completely on New York City-owned property. The existing station will be demolished and the new one will be built in its place. The goal is resiliency and reliability which is why any sensitive equipment will be built above grade so as not to be susceptible to flooding. There will be a superstructure to house the electrical equipment. It will be located as far to the rear of this property as possible. The entire area will be fenced in.

Respectfully submitted 2/17/2022