



Chairperson, Martha Taylor

*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 – Farmers Market Proposal
Date:	Monday, August 1, 2016
Time:	7:10 p.m.
Place:	Community Board 8 Office 197-15 Hillside Avenue Hollis, NY 11423

Martha Taylor, Parks Committee Chair

Board Members: Jagir Singh Bains, Bhitihara-Martha Fulton, James Gallagher Jr., Marc A. Haken, Tammy Oshero, Mark J. Lefkof, Kevin Forrestal and Maria DeInnocentiis.

Also in attendance: Kevin Selig, NYC Parks; Miriam Haas, Down to Earth Markets; Jon Zeltsman, Down to Earth Markets; Elaine Young, West Cunningham Park Civic Association; Edward Toriello, Jamaica Estates Association; Marie Adam-Ovide, CB8 District Manager and Alma Karassavidis, CB8 Staff Member.

Chairperson Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Purpose:

A presentation by Down to Earth Markets that proposes to establish a farmers market in Cunningham Park.

Miriam Haas – She stated that the Cunningham Park Farmers Market would take place on Sundays, from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The market would be in a little corner to the left when you enter the parking lot. The vendor trucks would create a little wall around the market so when people come in they will not have to worry about other cars coming in and out of the market.

Martha Taylor – The location would be the northeast corner of the 196th Place parking lot, which we feel is the least used, correct?

Miriam Haas – Correct. It is proposed that the vendors be a combination of produce, baked goods, breads, pickles, fish and meats. All of the vendors are from real farms. None of the vendors buy and resell from a grocery store. The farmers come down with their trucks with produce that was picked the day before. It is the freshest available and they sell directly. There are no “middle men” so to speak. With products such as jams or chutneys, it is required that the product be made with fruits from the farms in approved kitchens. All vendors are fully insured and use the best ingredients in their products. Down to Earth Markets runs all the administration of the markets. They make sure that the vendors have all the proper permits, that they are insured and that all their garbage is removed after the market closes. There is a manager on-site who is there 1½ hours prior to the opening of the market. They make sure that everyone is set up in the right spots and that the vendors clean up at the end of the day. All the public relations are done by Down to Earth Markets but it

helps to engage local community groups to get the word out into newsletters and local blogs. She also mentioned that they typically like to install banners on the adjacent streets to remind residents during the week that the market will be there on Sundays. Once the market is gone people tend to forget about it.

Martha Taylor – *Where do you hang the banners?*

Miriam Haas – There are different types. If there is a fence we have a horizontal banner; if there is a light pole we have a vertical one that is about 3' x 5'. We get permission from the municipality to put the banner up a week before the market starts and take them down during the winter.

Martha Taylor – *Can we do this Kevin? (question being posed to Kevin Selig, Parks Manager)*

Kevin Selig – Parks generally does not allow people to leave and hang banners.

Marc A. Haken – *Could we have (2) two posts along the grassy area on Union Turnpike and put the banner across?*

Kevin Selig – I was thinking that they could post signs on Park kiosks. Permanent banners would invite other people to hang banners and that is something that we don't want.

Bhithara-Martha Fulton – *Aren't those kind of banners usually placed on light posts?*

Martha Taylor – You really can't post things on trees, poles or light posts. It is against the City of New York ordinance.

Jon Zeltsman – *On some light poles, Department of Transportation (DOT) allows pole banners, maybe we can get permission to do that?*

Kevin Selig – Maybe we can work with DOT along Union Turnpike to do that.

Martha Taylor – *It would have to be a DOT project then?*

Jon Zeltsman – Yes.

Kevin Forrestal – *How do you do it in the Jamaica market?*

Miriam Haas – We don't do it in Jamaica. We do it in Morningside Park right on 110th Street.

Marc A. Haken – *I am looking at the market that is on Parsons Boulevard and 161st Street on the south side?*

Miriam Haas – What day?

Marc A. Haken – *I don't know about a day. I know that originally when they tore down the Jamaica Theater, there was a farmers market in that spot. It is not really a farmers market but a food court. Is that what we are talking about?*

Miriam Haas – No, we are outside on 160th Street on the sidewalk, in front of the food court. Friday it is on Parsons Boulevard in front of the subway entrance.

Marc A. Haken – *You mentioned meat and fish. The fish would come from local fishermen?*

Miriam Haas – Yes, from Long Island.

Marc A. Haken – *Where would the meat come from?*

Miriam Haas – We have many farmers raising meat in upstate New York: cows, pigs and chickens. I don't guarantee that we will have all of these products available. The beef or pork would be frozen. When you kill an animal there would be 400-500 lbs. of meat. It would have to be cut up in parts and frozen.

Marc A. Haken – The seafood would be fresh?

Miriam Haas – Yes.

Mark J. Lefkof – You said that in Morningside Heights you have something similar to what you are proposing here and there you have banners on the street light poles?

Miriam Haas – Yes.

Mark J. Lefkof – So the banners are pretty high on the poles?

Miriam Haas – Yes, they are.

Mark J. Lefkof – How many poles do you have there?

Miriam Haas – We have them on two (2) poles. In Chelsea on 23rd Street off of 9th Avenue we have two pole banners.

Mark J. Lefkof – Was there a process that you had to go through to do this?

Miriam Haas – Yes. We had to show a design to the Department of Transportation; we had to show proof of insurance for banners and we also had to have an authorized rigger to put up the banners. We don't go up with a ladder and put up the banners ourselves.

Mark J. Lefkof – So you have done this a few times and are familiar with the process?

Miriam Haas – Yes.

Maria DeInnocentiis – Why Cunningham Park?

Miriam Haas – We got some input from the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation. They said that this would be a great place because the area is underserved. Many of the people in this area don't go to the Jamaica Market. Our main concern is that one market does not hurt another. We think that the two communities shop differently. Ed [*Toriello*] who lives in this community, told us that he thought this would be a great place. We took tours and were totally amazed at the amount of people living in this area that are underserved.

Maria DeInnocentiis – We have the Big Apple Circus in the park.

Martha Taylor – We are no longer having them in the park. They will not be back next year.

Maria DeInnocentiis – What is the impact on parking in the community? How many spots are we losing on a summer weekend?

Kevin Selig – Approximately 30 spaces. That corner of the parking lot is generally not used on weekends. People are parking in the upper parking lot, along the interior road and other places on the interior of the park. They are not using the front lot so I don't think you will see much of a difference.

Martha Taylor – In addition, that particular corner is the most under-utilized portion of the whole parking lot. It's not close to the tennis courts or the ball field, so we thought that would be the ideal spot.

Marc A. Haken – It can't be equated with the Big Apple Circus because the circus took all of the parking spots and there are several hundred spots there. The Friends of Cunningham Park has advocated for years to get the Farmers Market there. Within the last two years we have gotten support from the civic associations in the area and we are looking forward to having it serve our area.

James Gallagher Jr. – From what month to what month will you be there?

Miriam Haas – It usually starts Memorial Day weekend until the week before Thanksgiving. It is only once a week on Sundays.

Maria DeInnocentiis – How many fruit and vegetable vendors do you plan to have?

Miriam Haas – In a beginning market we would have no more than three. We would need to develop a customer base. There would be one or two bakers, three vendors of produce, pickles, chutneys and specialty items. The Department of Agriculture has allowed a lot of local breweries and distilleries to participate if they use locally grown corn, rye and barley.

Martha Taylor – Are they being allowed in NYC Parks?

Miriam Haas – Yes. They are allowed.

Ed Toriello – In the proposal you talk about sponsors. Who do you usually have as sponsors? What kind of input do they have and what are their responsibilities?

Miriam Haas – Sponsors are people we use to help us promote the market. We don't ask for financial contributions. We ask the civic groups to help us get the word out to all of their members. We have a newsletter and would like to have people sign up to receive it. Usually the Parks Department requires a support letter from the Community Board. Also they sometimes need a non-profit sponsor but I don't think that is going to be necessary to obtain a permit. We would love if the Parks would provide a waste basket for the shoppers.

Martha Taylor – Marc Haken is the President of Friends of Cunningham Park (FOCP) which is a 501c3. Marc would you be willing to help with support?

Marc A. Haken – Should it be necessary, I am sure that FOCP would be willing to support it. We will put it up on our website and all of the other things that go along with promoting it. We really want it to succeed.

Miriam Haas – John can you think of anything else you want to add about sponsors?

Jon Zeltsman – Our goal is to build a community relationship and not just do our business and leave. We like to offer space in the market for community organizations to have a table to present their agendas to the shoppers and help sponsor some events that may happen at the market; such as music or cooking demos.

Martha Taylor – Stated that many people are going to want to respond by forming relationships. She shared a piece of information that Marie Adam-Ovide supplied. According to the Department of Health's Community Health Survey of 2015, our community is underserved by supermarkets and access to fresh fruit and vegetables. She added that we really do want and need this. She would love to see it succeed.

Mark J. Lefkof – If I was a farmer/vendor and I had tomatoes and corn, how many other vendors with the same produce will be there?

Miriam Haas – Each farm decides what they want to grow. At a certain time you will see everyone growing corn and tomatoes, but someone will be also be growing an Asian specialty like bok choy and someone else might have cauliflower or cucumbers. There is an overlap but the prices are pretty similar. No one tries to undercut, price wars or price fixing does not take place.

Maria DeInnocentiis – How do the prices compare to what people purchase in stores?

Miriam Haas – Many people believe that farmers markets are more expensive than the supermarkets. We have done surveys and found that supermarkets will sometimes do huge sales on certain produce just to lure you into the supermarket. You can get a huge bunch of beets and radishes that will last for several meals for about \$2.00 at the markets. The farmers are very reasonable.

Jon Zeltsman – The price of produce is competitive. You will get some differences between the vendors. Certain items will be more expensive than other items, because less people are growing it or it may be a specialty. Early in the season the prices may be higher and then a few weeks later the price will go down. That price rises and falls with the season. The specialty items such as meat and fish will be expensive. It is not industrial quality food. The chickens and meats will be a high ticket item. Specialty foods like chutney and jams will be competitive with what is available in specialty food stores. It will not be out of line with pricing usually found for an unusual item.

Ed Toriello – Could you just give us some examples of what you have done this year in some other markets with reference to the community programs in education and entertainment?

Miriam Haas – We have had for instance, the Girl Scouts doing a drive for a soup kitchen. They come in and ask people to donate food that they bought from the market. We have a company called Green Textiles who are trying to reduce the amount of fabric: clothes, shoes being thrown away. They recycle the items at a mill in South Carolina and they separate the cotton and use it for auto making. Some of the markets also have textile and compost recycling. We have cooking demos where we ask a local restaurant to come in to do the cooking demos. We make sure that all the ingredients being used in the recipe is available at the market.

Ed Toriello – If someone in a local store or restaurant wanted to do something like that how would they go about it?

Miriam Haas – We have a territory manager who goes to restaurants and asks if they would like to do a cooking demo. We then ask them to give us the recipe and we put it on a card so that the recipe is there when someone comes to the cooking demo.

Jon Zeltsman – In some markets we regularly have music. We invite musicians to set up and play for two hours or so and give them a small stipend. It's nice for local musicians to be able to provide entertainment for the community.

Marc A. Haken – The Klein Farm that was on 73rd Avenue was always more expensive than a supermarket and it didn't even come from their farm and didn't taste that good. If you have been to the Farm Museum they sell fresh eggs that are still warm sell for \$6.00/dozen. As quickly as they come out of the chicken they are sold! Is there any provision in the market for organic produce?

Miriam Haas – Most people, when they come to a farmers market, think that everything is organic. It's a misunderstanding. The majority of organic farmers are a small group. They do CSAs (*Community Supported Agriculture*) drop offs at a church. A CSA is when you buy a share for \$400/year and get a box for 26 weeks. We are always looking for organics. It is one of our quests. We would love to have an organic farmer.

Marc A. Haken – On Jamaica Avenue there is a building where the entire roof is now a farm. You may want to touch base with them since you cannot get any more local than that?

Miriam Haas – A lot of the farms in Queens just grow lettuce and many of them sell to Whole Foods and don't do markets. We'll look into it though.

Maria DeInnocentiis – ***You have other markets and you say you have 12-15 vendors. Can you go through how many of each vendor and what types they are?***

Miriam Haas – In McGolrick Park we have one certified organic, one rooftop organic, two other conventional produce, cheese, sausage, baked goods, yogurt, pies, another bread baker, ice pops, tempeh and pickles.

Jon Zeltsman – They are farmers markets but also food markets focused on ingredients that are locally sourced. It is direct produce and also indirect produce in the small batch, artisanal processed items. Our objective is for people to be able to go home with a full meal. It is more than just produce.

Mark J. Lefkof made a motion to approve the proposal for the Farmers Market in Cunningham Park by Down to Earth Markets seconded by Marc A. Haken.

Martha Taylor went around the table for a quick discussion with the motion on the floor. The motion passed unanimously, with no resistance.

Count in favor 8 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0

Martha Taylor – Stated that the proposal will be presented to the full board in the fall and invited Down to Earth Markets to be in attendance. She also added that based on the lack of resistance tonight she believes that we will have the same kind of support from the entire Community Board.

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alma Karassavidis, CB8 Staff

August 30, 2016