



New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
Hearing: Oversight – How to Protect the City’s Beaches from Increased Erosion
June 25, 2018
Lynn Kelly, Executive Director

Good afternoon, my name is Lynn Kelly, and I am the Executive Director for New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). I would like to thank the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation for inviting us to speak on this important issue today.

As the citywide independent organization committed to research and advocacy for parks and open spaces, we strive to view the issue of parks through a community lens. We echo the disappointment that many in the room share today that the issue of the closure from Beach 91st to Beach 102nd Streets was not shared publicly until the eve of the beach season’s opening weekend. Further, we believe more could, and should, have been done to notify local officials, from the Community Board, City Council, State, and Federal representatives. Additionally, it cannot be overstated that such a late public notification of the closure of this stretch of beach constituted an undue burden on the concessionaires who have businesses along this vital corridor of the boardwalk.

While we believe more should have been done at an earlier date to notify the public of the closure, or the potential of the closure, we also understand that when it comes to our coastline, there are truly issues beyond the control or purview of NYC Parks. Superstorm Sandy was a powerful and potent reminder of fragility of our beaches, especially along our City’s peninsulas. The need to dredge and dump sand has been critical since Sandy, and this is work that can only be completed by the Army Corps of Engineers, not NYC Parks. Additionally, when we experience winter storms that are increasingly intense and frequent, there is little that can prevent sand from disappearing. We appreciate that NYC Parks made the decision to close this half mile stretch out of an abundance of caution for the safety and well-being of the public, but still reiterate that more could have been done to share this news on a broad scale at a far earlier date.

NY4P believes additional consideration must be paid to the twelve concessionaires at Beach 97th Street that will be impacted by the half mile closure of the beach. We are heartened by the efforts the City is already undertaking to help promote these new businesses, including additional programming and wayfinding to encourage beach-goers to spend time on the stretch of boardwalk adjacent to the closed section of beach. Marshalling marketing resources from NYC&Co is also a step in the right direction.

However, we strongly encourage the City to explore all possible avenues to provide economic relief to the small business owners who are still likely to be impacted this season, be it through hardship grants, rent credits, or waiving some of the standard City contract regulations that might leave these concessionaires unable to make any profit this season.

With the reality of our changing climate, we know that the issue of erosion will continue to impact our City's swimming beaches in the years to come. We urge the administration and City Council to view this experience as a clarion call for increased funding and coordination with the Army Corps of Engineers, so that some of these issues can be properly mitigated to the extent possible before the hot summer months begin. Further, we urge the city to ensure that the local stakeholders, from elected officials, local business owners, and the public-at-large, are kept informed early and often about how the issue of erosion is likely to impact our public beaches.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak and I welcome any questions you may have.

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For over 100 years, [New Yorkers for Parks](http://www.ny4p.org) (NY4P) has built, protected, and promoted parks and open spaces in New York City. Today, NY4P is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. www.ny4p.org