

Monday 10/24/11 Statement to Design Commission

A Community Board thirteen meeting was held on May 24, 2011. At that meeting a motion was made concerning the New York City Parks Department's proposal to use concrete for the reconstruction of the Riegelmann Boardwalk. After hearing strong community opposition to the use of concrete and being presented with thousands of signatures stating opposition to the use of concrete, the Community Board voted against the proposal that you are considering today, 21 – 7, agreeing with the community's request against replacing our boardwalk with a sidewalk.

The NYC Parks Department has stated that because of cost, maintenance and the use of emergency vehicles, concrete is the best product to use when compared to wood or recycled plastic lumber. Experts that we have asked have shown us and the Parks Department that using alternative woods or other materials would be more cost effective for both initial installation and for maintenance costs after completion than using concrete. Alternative products will also take into effect the quality of life, environmental, historical and esthetic issues with replacing a boardwalk with a sidewalk.

The Friends Of The Boardwalk have been surveying the concrete sections of the boardwalk since its installation and found that almost every 4' x 20' section has cracks, missing expansion joints, missing pieces of concrete, etc. We have documented over two thousand cracks that are growing in number and size every month. These cracks are a result of a plan that you have previously approved as requested by the NYC Parks Department. We have pictures that document the results of this and past projects approved by you at the request of the Parks Dept. These projects have all been completed nearly a year ago and are all in poor condition requiring extensive repairs. These cracks are sure to grow when salt water enters them, freezes, expands, contracts and rusts the re-bars in the slabs causing continuous deterioration.

The maintenance of a concrete sidewalk – which is what it would be –would be astronomical. You could not simply patch two thousand cracks. It would be labor intensive and certainly more costly than maintaining a wood or recycled plastic lumber boardwalk. Keep in mind that we cannot see what the pre-cast concrete installed under the recycled plastic lumber looks like. One would reasonably expect that it is deteriorating in a consistent manner as the concrete we have been surveying. Additionally we are concerned about the use of concrete as it enhances the effects of waves from a major storm, and many residents fear more property damage that would result from its use.

We are talking about the World Famous Coney Island, Brighton Beach Riegelmann Boardwalk. It is part of the history of Coney Island, NYC and is a historic part of our community used by tens of thousands of joggers, walkers and strollers, visited by millions of tourists. If New York City decided that the maintenance costs of Central Park or Prospect Park were to be eliminated from the budget, would we concrete over them? Unfortunately, the City of New York has for years let the Boardwalk deteriorate by not allocating enough money to the Parks Dept. specifically for the maintenance of the boardwalk. It is the same as not maintaining you car. It would not last as long if you did not give it a tune up and oil change as needed.

This will be the sixth failed project that the NYC Parks Dept. is asking you to approve! Trial and error is not the proper way to build any project, especially if the cost of these projects (about 36million dollars), are at the expense of New York City taxpayers. We strongly recommend that proper engineering and environmental studies are performed before this project is considered.

Sincerely,
Todd Dobrin,
President
Friends of the Boardwalk