

City Council Hearing On Concession Reform - 24 October 2007
Testimony of Sherrill Kazan, President, Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza

As FRIENDS OF DAG HAMMARSKJOLD PLAZA - A 501C3 (TAX EXEMPT –NON PROFIT, volunteer ORGANIZATION),

WE RAISE MONEY THROUGH MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS, GRANTS, AND REQUESTS TO LOCAL PUBLIC OFFICIALS.

WE ARE BOTH A CONSERVANCY ORGANIZATION AND AN ORGANIZATION THAT PRODUCES CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN THE PARK FOR PUBLIC ENJOYMENT AND EDIFICATION.

AS WE SPEND MUCH TIME AND RESOURCES TO FUND THE BASIC MAINTENANCE OF THE PLAZA (COLLECTING GARBAGE, CLEANING AND REPAIRING FOUNTAINS, REPAIRING STONE WORK, POWER-WASHING CONCRETE, WATCHING OUT FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY); OUR STAKE IN CONCESSION REFORM IS THE FOLLOWING:

THE AWARDING OF A CONCESSION – THE PRESENTATION OF THE RFPs PARKS’ PROCESS OF EVALUATION – SHOULD BE LOGICAL, DETAILED And READILY AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC.

Furthermore, - a PERCENTAGE OF CONCESSION REVENUE should be ALLOCATED TO SUPPORT THE MAINTENANCE OF THE PARK IN WHICH IT IS SITUATED –

Ideally, in the case of Friends of DHP as a 501c3 that manages the MAINTENANCE, BEAUTIFICATION, and PROGRAMMING of the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, such revenue would be allocated to us, as is the case with some other park conservancy groups in New York City (such as Central Park Conservancy).

Some parks have contracts with the City that enable them to receive revenues from concessions, while most do not – there should be a uniform policy on this matter.

Alternatively, the revenue from all concessions should be directed to a transparent fund to be established by Parks Department to attend to the upkeep and repair of all parks on the basis of need.

This fund should enable parks to have adequate personnel to carry out its mandate. For example, there should be one uniformed, trained park worker on site in every park (every day – especially towards the evening).

Recognizing that we service the Communities needs, we expect the Dept. of Parks to respect our crucial Partnership and to consult us on matters affecting Dag Hammarskjold Plaza by responding to our queries and insuring the appropriate follow-up in a timely fashion.

If Friends walked away from DHP tomorrow, it would collapse and revert to what it was ten years ago, an unusable waste of public space: the Katherine Hepburn Garden would be full of construction debris.

Our intent is to further develop our WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DEPT. OF PARKS IN A COLLABORATIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE AND EFFICIENT MANNER TO BETTER SERVICE THE COMMUNITY AND NEW YORK CITY AT LARGE.