



Testimony of the **Bronx Council for Environmental Quality**
to the **New York City Council Joint Committee of Finance Hearing**
on the **FY21 Mayor's Executive Budget**, May 21, 2020

BCEQ (www.bceq.org) is a not-for-profit organization formed almost 50 years ago to establish “an aesthetic, unpolluted, environment protecting a natural and historic heritage.” We are all volunteers.

In the April 16th Savings Plan, the City created Vacancy Reductions across the agency, primarily from Maintenance and Operations for (42) Civilians amounting to \$831,000 in FY20, and \$2,493,000 in FY21. These cuts need to be rescinded, especially when (if) federal funds become available.

All parks and green spaces throughout the City are serving New Yorkers every day of the week. They are, in fact, the only game in town. All of our parks have been brimming with visitors since the beginning of the NY Pause order.

Both Mayor DeBlasio and Governor Cuomo acknowledge the importance of parks right now. Parks like Van Cortlandt in the Bronx are helping City dwellers sustain their mental and physical health. And yet, just as visitation is way up, we hear that funding will be cut down.

This is the time for people to experience nature (with proper social distancing and safety precautions) as a way to maintain a sense of normalcy and connection to the world. This is the time for the City to support its parks so that everyone, regardless of economic status, cultural background, or ability can enjoy the clean, green space they deserve.

But the reality we face is that if City funding will be drastically cut, parks will suffer. Bathrooms will go uncleaned or will be locked entirely. Lawns will go uncut. Areas with large groups of people are gathering will go unpatrolled. It will not be pretty.

Parks will not have enough maintenance, operations, and horticultural staff to keep the parks looking good. Seasonal employment, which is a huge part of the Parks workforce, may be cut by as much as 90%. Whatever work we have done so far to improve our parks, will surely fall by the wayside.

And while all parks will see the alarming results of the cuts, nowhere will it be felt more than in the Bronx, where we already receive a much smaller piece of the pie. Low-income Bronx residents do not have country homes to escape to. They do not have backyards. They have parks. Parks are essential infrastructure in a healthy city and critical spaces in a democracy. This mayor talks about equity and inclusion—with no cost of admission, and locations throughout the city, Parks are the most equitable and inclusive asset of them all.

Don't forget that in the 1970s, parks were a blight instead of an oasis. We cannot return to that scenario.

~ Christina Taylor, BCEQ



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November 2019 + January 2020 + April 2020 Initiatives

Initiatives with gray shading are efficiencies. \$ in 000's.

Department of Parks and Recreation	City Personnel as of 6/30/21	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
November 2019 Plan						
Fair Play Expense to Capital Reallocation		(3,826)	-	-	-	-
Reallocation of funding in the Fair Play Program from expense to capital.						
Trees & Sidewalks Expense to Capital Reallocation		-	(5,000)	-	-	-
Reallocation of funding in the Trees and Sidewalks program from expense to capital.						
Seasonal Accrual Savings		(3,300)	-	-	-	-
Savings associated with delays in hiring and general vacancies in seasonal headcount.						
January 2020 Plan						
OTPS Accrual Savings		(6,000)	-	-	-	-
Savings due to projected underspending on OTPS items.						
PS Savings		(1,000)	-	-	-	-
PS underspending.						
April 2020 Plan						
GreenThumb Expense to Capital Reallocation (Fair Play)		(680)	-	-	-	-
Reallocation of funding in the GreenThumb Fair Play Program from expense to capital.						
Vacancy Reductions	(42) C	(831)	(2,493)	(2,493)	(2,493)	(2,493)
Vacancy reductions across the agency, primarily from Maintenance and Operations.						
OTPS Accrual Savings		(10,000)	(1,500)	-	-	-
Delay purchases of non-critical, non COVID-19 items in FY20 and anticipated OTPS underspending in FY21.						
Realization of Outstanding Revenue		(1,870)	-	-	-	-
Realization of aged open cash receipts associated with completed grant funded projects.						
TBTA Revenue Transfer		(2,329)	-	-	-	-
Transfer of TBTA unspent balance from the capital budget to the general fund.						

C = Civilian, P = Pedagogical, U = Uniform

Revised

www1.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/csp4-20.pdf on page 27