

MANHATTAN PLAZA TENANTS ASSOCIATION

A VOICE FOR THE PEOPLE

www.mptenants.com

June 2020 Newsletter

From the MPTA President

We commend everyone for your diligence in adhering to the CDC protocols while we face the COVID-19 pandemic. Folks have mostly been wearing masks and limiting themselves to 3 per elevator. These little steps will keep all of us safer. Our security guards were asked to go beyond their normal duties without any additional pay, handing out packages in the lobbies, for example. Thank you everyone.

At our May 11 MPTA meeting, we discussed the *Open Streets* initiative supported by Council Speaker Corey Johnson. As the days get warmer, more of us may venture outdoors. The city would provide barricades to close 43rd street between 9th and 10th avenues to 'through traffic' (not destined for a home or business on the block) in order to create more space for pedestrians and increase the capacity for social distancing. Essential vehicles will be allowed to pass and parking will be allowed. Provided signage would alert vehicles to a limited speed of 5 miles per hour. We voted to submit an application for the program and to further investigate the logistics of implementation while we await review from the Dept. of Transportation (55 in favor, 5 opposed). The application was submitted by the MPTA. This program has already been successful in [many neighborhoods](#), and MP management has been supportive of our efforts. We expect an answer within the next few weeks.

We are happy to report that Related will hire additional security staff. I have also represented the MPTA in conversations with District Leader Marisa Redanty, representatives from the NYPD and Corey Johnson's office, and Related to demand additional police presence in our neighborhood. And they agreed! You may have seen additional police patrolling the streets already. We continue to engage our representatives to ensure that they do everything in their power to keep our streets safe.

Most of you have heard about the tragic events of May 26th. A man lost his battle with mental illness and ended his own life at our 484 building. It has taken time to process this news and to consider how or even if we could address it in a meaningful way. We know that building strength in the community depends on honesty and a willingness to confront the most difficult moments with transparency. The gentleman was living with a friend in MP at the time of his death and was not a full-time resident. He was well-liked by those who knew him. This is not the medium to share more about him or about what happened, but, like many of you, I am devastated by this and by the growing sadness in our community.

These are difficult times for all of us, but they may be more difficult for some than for others. I urge anyone who feels you are struggling, in any way, to please reach out to friends, neighbors or family if possible. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) or see their website www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/. We compiled additional mental health resources at the end of this newsletter thanks to the help of Patricia Peterson at the RKC. No matter who you are or what you're going through, there is someone who will listen and support you. Please reach out.

The last few weeks have been emotionally exhausting, and we thank our security staff for meeting every new challenge. As the veil lifts and the reality of racism becomes impossible to ignore, we at the MPTA are steadfast in our commitment to support this moment in history. Black Lives Matter.

Please, as always, drop a note in our lobby boxes or send us an email with any suggestions. Thank you for your continued support.

MPTA President,
Aleta LaFargue

Floor Captains

We are happy to say this initiative is in full swing! Captains gather contact information from neighbors (who choose to participate) and ensure all receive information on building policies, rules, and programs. Captains are not meant to be the Floor Police or the Complaint Department. These volunteers are your neighbors who have generously agreed to alert others to important notices and check on them by phone or email. This program is designed to help community members look out for each other. Of course, not everyone will want to participate, and that's ok.

Questions? Want to be a floor captain? Email mptenants@gmail.com (subject: Floor captain), and we will send you more information. Please volunteer.

Playground and quiet parks

Thankfully, the playground and quiet parks remain available for folks to get some fresh air and exercise. However, under no circumstances are dogs allowed. They have never been allowed there. Unfortunately, dog feces have been found around the sprinklers and on the walking paths, and this is unacceptable. Not only is it disrespectful to our maintenance workers, but it poses a health risk to us all. Letting your dog run around the courtyards is a violation of your lease.

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Book of Gratitude

We are so grateful to our amazing security and maintenance staff for everything they have done during this difficult time. In an effort to show our gratitude, we call on everyone to contribute your creativity! We will compile artwork, thank you notes, poetry, and photographs that you can send digitally into an album to be delivered to the staff of both buildings. Young and old, talented and “alternatively talented”, we welcome all contributions. Thank you in advance for your participation in this community effort to show our gratitude. *Submissions will be accepted until June 30 at mptenants@gmail.com*

Juneteenth at MP: June 19 at 6:30pm

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Cel-Liberation Day and the Black Fourth of July, is an American holiday that commemorates **June 19**, 1865. On that day, almost two and half years after the implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation, enslaved African Americans were informed of their liberation in the former Confederate States of America. Can you believe that was only 155 years ago? A 75 year old person today easily could have been born with an 80 year old relative who was alive on that day. This Juneteenth, we call on our talented drummers at MP to join us on the playground at 6:30 pm for a (socially distant) drum circle, which will be preceded by a special rendition of “Lift Every Voice and Sing” by André De Shields. If you are interested in participating, please contact us directly for more details.

Picking up packages in the lobbies

Beginning June 15th, Related will allow FedEx and Amazon packages to be delivered to tenants’ doors. Delivery persons will be required to wear masks and use the service elevators. There will no longer be phone calls alerting residents of delivery. We thank the security guards for stepping up and helping with deliveries in the lobbies.

Census 2020

NYC is at risk of losing billions of dollars for the next 10 years. Federal funds that are used for hospitals, medicines, vaccines, buses, schools, and other vital services would be severely limited. Why? Because New Yorkers’ response to the census tends to be very low (48%). To make matters worse, we could also lose two Congressional seats. It's vital that we do our part. Ask your sisters and your cousins and your friends and your neighbors and your therapists and your voice coach and the security guards and your secret crush and everyone else if they have filled it out. Spread the word! Fill out the census at www.2020census.gov. Important note: if you accidentally fill it out twice because you can't remember if you did already, they can easily remove your duplicate response.

News from our Environmental Committee

Composting in NYC took a hit at the end of April with the defunding of drop-off and community programs and DSNY’s residential curbside organics collection. MP residents have been depositing their food scraps in brown bins on the plazas for over two years now. More tenants participated than anyone had predicted, leading to orders for more brown bins. While many tenants still struggle with paper, metal, glass, and plastics recycling, our composters have shown a willingness and dedication to learning to compost properly. This loss of momentum is shared throughout NYC and represents a considerable setback.

In response, the Save Our Compost movement organized a [Town Hall Meeting](#) in early May that was attended by 1,000 people. Justin Green of Big Reuse moderated. City councilmembers and other local elected officials attended and spoke strongly in support of compost. Among them were councilmembers Antonio Reynoso and Keith Powers, who have now introduced the CORE Act, which if passed will build a much more extensive composting and recycling infrastructure than what we have had.

While waiting out this time of suspended organics collection, there are some things you can do:

- * Make a worm bin to compost your kitchen scraps: <https://materials.bwpronline.org/system/tdf/indoor-worm-bin-composting-brochure-06340-f.pdf>
- * Work on reducing food waste. For tips, see: <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/fight-climate-change-by-preventing-food-waste>

In other news, the MP Tenant Gardeners recently planted lettuce, swiss chard, and herbs in four planters in the 400 Quiet Plaza; there is one planter on the 484 Quiet Plaza. Meet-and-Plant Gatherings will continue again in a few months. If you would like to get involved and/or join the watering schedule, email mptenants@gmail.com (subject: Gardening).

NY primary election: June 23rd

The primary elections in NY state will be held June 23rd. The polls will be open in the Ellington Room. Because of COVID-19, you should have received an application to request an absentee ballot in the mail. Please take a moment to fill it out and tick the box that says “due to illness,” then send it back in the prepaid envelope provided. You can also request a mail ballot by phone at (866)-868-3692 or online at nycabsentee.com. The deadline for requests is June 16th. In our district, the ballot will include the nomination for president, Congress, State Senate as well as several judges. For a full list go to www.vote.nyc. To find out if you're registered to vote, see: <https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov/>

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COVID-19 Testing

Similar to other urgent care facilities throughout the city, CityMD (345 W 42nd St) and MiDoctor (715 9th Ave) now offer free diagnostic (molecular) and serology antibody (IgG) tests for COVID-19. A diagnostic test, performed with a nasal swab, will confirm whether or not you have an active infection. A serology test (for IgG antibodies), performed with a small blood draw, will detect the presence of COVID-19 antibodies. In other words, it detects previous exposure to the COVID-19 virus or prior COVID-19 infection. The interpretation of the antibody test can be tricky. It is not used to diagnose a current COVID-19 infection, and a negative result does not rule out an infection (because the body takes time to develop antibodies). A positive result may also be due to past or present infection with non-COVID-19 coronavirus strains (like ones that can cause the common cold). Furthermore, experts are still uncertain what level of immunity (resistance) to a second infection the presence of COVID antibodies generates. And, of course, not all tests are perfectly accurate. However, more widespread viral testing will allow quicker contact tracing and continue to reduce COVID spread throughout our community. Regardless of test results, it is imperative to continue to follow the [CDC guidelines](#): wash your hands, wear a mask in public, practice social distancing. Last reported on June 2, it was not necessary to make an appointment, and neighbors cited no waiting time early in the mornings.

The Actors Fund has been working with the Mount Sinai Hospital System and Related Management to bring free COVID-19 testing to MP residents. Logistics are not set, but it will likely occur over a single three-day period in the near future. There will be multiple announcements when details are finalized.

CARES Act payment on debit cards

Some of the economic impact payments entitled by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act were issued as prepaid debit cards. This is not junkmail. There could be \$1,200 on that card.

The US Postal Service needs saving

The US Postal Service (USPS) is far from perfect, but it serves all corners of the country for affordable prices; provides good, middle-class jobs to thousands; and uses only the money it can raise through commercial sales without any taxpayer dollars. The importance of USPS grows as our reliance on delivery increases and we face huge increases in voting by mail, but their financial future is bleak. Without action, the Post Office will be out of money by this coming October. We can help. Go to [USPS.com](#) and buy \$11.00 worth of first-class stamps today!

News from elected officials

State senator Brad Hoylman attended our May 11 MPTA meeting via Zoom and offered to help everyone who is having trouble securing unemployment benefits. Contact Brad Hoylman at hoylman@nysenate.gov or (212) 633-8052.

* Brad Hoylman's COVID-19 Constituent Resources Guide includes information on financial assistance for small businesses, freelancers, and artists; information on opportunities to work as a contact tracer; and how to get help from non-profits and community groups in addition to basic info:

www.tinyurl.com/hoylmanresources

* Help pick up or deliver groceries

www.tinyurl.com/hoylmangroceries

* Volunteer for Hoylman's neighborhood check-in program www.tinyurl.com/hoylmanneighbor

From State Assemblyman Richard Gottfried's office:

* Help with unemployment:

www.tinyurl.com/gottfriedunemployment

* MyBenefits is an online tool where you can find out if you qualify for programs such as nutrition assistance, cash assistance, and various tax credits. See

www.mybenefits.ny.gov

* Important note: there is a moratorium on evictions until at least August 20

* Contact gottfriedr@nyassembly.gov if you are an actor, small business owner, or restaurant worker for additional resources

* To find one of 400+ hubs distributing food, see:

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/food/free-meals>

* If you or a member of your family is immuno-compromised, do not have anyone to get food for you, and/or cannot afford it, you can get NYC Food Delivery Assistance, which delivers meals to your household:

www.tinyurl.com/deliveryassistance

* Determine your eligibility for programs like SNAP (food stamps) and Cash Assistance and apply for them online
** benefits screening:

<https://access.nyc.gov/eligibility/#step-1>

** SNAP info: <https://a069-access.nyc.gov/accesshra/>

** Cash assistance info:

<https://access.nyc.gov/programs/cash-assistance/>

** Once you determine your eligibility, contact gottfriedr@nyassembly.gov for expedited help!

Reclaim Our Vote

Ongoing voter suppression and voter list purging have been disenfranchising millions of eligible voters, especially voters of color. NYC activist and heroine Sandy Radoff joined our June 8th MPTA meeting to discuss Reclaim Our Vote, a **non-partisan effort** that combats voter suppression by sending postcards to Americans encouraging voter registration. Packets

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containing postcards and all necessary materials begin at \$15. The MPTA will sponsor a number of packets, but you can also buy one yourself. If you wish to participate, email mptenants@gmail.com (subject: Reclaim) by Friday, June 19th. For more information, check out: www.actionnetwork.org/forms/reclaim-our-vote-signup

Quote of the day:

“...African Americans have been living in a burning building for many years, choking on the smoke as the flames burn closer and closer. Racism in America is like dust in the air. It seems invisible — even if you’re choking on it — until you let the sun in. Then you see it’s everywhere. As long as we keep shining that light, we have a chance of cleaning it wherever it lands. But we have to stay vigilant, because it’s always still in the air.” US Cultural Ambassador, Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, author of *On the Shoulders of Giants: My Journey Through the Harlem Renaissance*, civil rights activist and former basketball player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

Upcoming Dates to Remember:

Juneteenth at MP

Friday, June 19th at 6:30pm
Playground

Next MPTA meeting

Monday, July 13th at 7pm
ZOOM: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9322480232>
Meeting ID: 932 248 0232
MPTA meetings are the 2nd Monday of each month.

Additional health resources

Anyone can call the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services (1-844-663-2255) to quickly learn about services and schedule appointments for individual, group, family, or couples therapy and psychiatric services. If you are concerned about someone else, you can find [recommendations for suicide prevention](#) from the Mayo Clinic by going to their site mayoclinic.org and searching ‘what to do when someone is suicidal.’

NYC Well: Free, confidential mental health support. Speak to a counselor via phone, text, or chat, and get access to mental health and substance abuse services (in more than 200 languages). Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355) or see www.nycwell.cityofnewyork.us

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention has resources for those **who have lost someone to suicide or witnessed suicide**. Talk to trained volunteers who have also lost someone to suicide or connect with support groups at www.afsp.org.

See www.personalgriefcoach.net for a resource directory to help those after a suicide.

A Caring Hand, The Billy Esposito Foundation Bereavement Program, supports bereavement tied to all causes of death, **for children ages 4-18** and their caregivers, in Manhattan. 212-229-2273
www.acaringhand.org

The Compassionate Friends, for those who have suffered the death of a child or friend. Various groups are available in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island. Call the national hotline for specific information. 877-969-0010.