

**Minutes of the Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting
April 28, 2021**

Attendees

Committee: Rosemary Ginty (Chair), Debra Travis (Vice Chair), Bob Bender, Courtney Dastis-Galvin, David Gellman, Marvin Goodman, Robert Jacklosky, Herb Barret (CCM)

Absent: Donell Leverett

Other CB8: Councilman Eric Dinowitz, Laura Spalter (Community Board 8 Chair), Jyll Townes, Omar Murray, Betty McCray (BP Office)

DPR: Joseph Magneri (DPR), Stephanie Thayer (DPR), Christina Taylor (VCP Alliance), Stephanie Ehrlich (VCP Alliance), Pilar Maschi (Partnership for Parks), Michael Ortiz (DPR), Kirsten Myhr (DPR), Tara Valenta (DPR)

Community: Amy Schimmel, Damian McShane, Daniel Ranells, Danielle Guggenheim, Debra Levy, DePrator, Jason Cohen, Judi Raymund, Michele H, Richard Pretti,

Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm

The minutes of the March 24th committee meeting were unanimously approved.

Enslaved Peoples Project –

Update by Van Cortlandt Park Alliance Stephanie Ehrlich and Christina Taylor

Stephanie Ehrlich and Christina Taylor presented an informative overview of the history of enslaved people of the Van Cortlandt plantation. In recognition of the work done by the enslaved people who lived on this plantation, the Alliance will be creating an interpretive path near the mansion, presenting a Kamau Ware exhibit in late June and renaming elements of the park in honor of enslaved people. If you would like to be involved with planning future projects, please email info@vc.org. Stephanie was asked about funding for these projects and encouraged anyone who would like to make a donation in support of their work to please visit vancortlandt.org.

Van Cortlandt Park Adult Fitness Equipment –

Parks Department Presentation of the Capital Project Schematic Design

Michael Ortiz and Kirsten Myhr presented proposed updates to the Classic Playground in Van Cortlandt Park. They previously presented to the committee on January 27th their conceptual plan. Now they walked viewers through their schematic plan. They will be eliminating two of the four handball courts, lowering fencing to improve sightlines, adding benches, replacing basketball backboards and adding exercise equipment suitable for all ages.

The committee approved the following resolution unanimously:

Whereas, representatives of the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR)

appeared before the Parks & Recreation Committee of Bronx Community Board 8

January 2021 meeting to present a plan for a Van Cortlandt Park Exercise

Equipment Capital Project in Van Cortlandt Park which will better utilize and make active park space for residents; and

Whereas, those representatives listened to testimony from residents and responded to questions concerning the proposed project; and

Whereas, our former City Council Member Andrew Cohen supported the project and it is fully funded in New York City's Capital Budget;

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Parks & Recreation Committee of Bronx

Community Board 8 supports the proposed Van Cortlandt Park Exercise Equipment

Project as presented to the committee requesting that the DPR return to the

committee in the event that substantive changes are made to the design or location of equipment.

Strong Street Playground – Parks Department Presentation of the Capital Project Schematic Design

Michael Ortiz and Judi Raymund presented proposed updates to Strong Street Playground near Washington's Walk. Previously, they presented to the committee on January 27th their conceptual plan. Now they walked viewers through their schematic plan. They will be removing and replacing 4 trees, addressing grade changes and flooding, updating all the play equipment, widening the sidewalk, moving the 197th Street entrance to the corner of the playground, adding four feet to the interior of the park, adding perennials and grassy areas and tables and benches for passive use. They will also be adding a privacy fence along the rear of the playground between the park and the private residences and adding gates at each entrance so

that the park can be locked at night if the need arises. The drawings will be finalized by October, construction would begin in 2022, and re-opening in 2023.

The committee approved the following resolution unanimously:

Whereas, representatives of the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) appeared before the Parks & Recreation Committee of Bronx Community Board 8 at its January 2021 meeting to present a plan for the Strong Street Playground Capital Project which will rehabilitate the park and improve active park space for residents; and

Whereas, those representatives listened to testimony from residents and responded to questions concerning the proposed project; and

Whereas, our City Council Member Fernando Cabrera and our Borough President, Ruben Diaz Jr. supported the project and it is fully funded in New York City's Capital Budget;

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Parks & Recreation Committee of Bronx Community Board 8 supports the proposed Strong Street Playground Project as presented to the committee requesting that the DPR return to the committee in the event that substantive changes are made to the design or location of equipment.

FY 2023 Capital and Expense Budget Priorities

The committee discussed the priority order for capital and expense budget items. The following order was agreed to:

CAPITAL

1. Redesign and reconstruction of Bailey Avenue Park and Playground to reduce paving and introduce green space, update equipment, and repair deteriorated drains. Incorporating the adjacent Tibbett's Tail into an expanded Bailey Avenue Park and Playground is recommended. (FY22 ranking: 3)
2. Construction of a restroom at Broadway and W. 251st St. in Van Cortlandt Park adjacent to the Parade Grounds. (2)
3. Van Cortlandt Mansion Capital Work— Rehabilitation of the wrought-iron boundary fence and exterior red brick stairway into the Mansion. (4)
4. Improvements to Washington's Walk including new benches, replacing the temporary fence with a wrought-iron fence, and repair of the sidewalk. (8)
5. Erosion control study and corrective measures in northwest section of Ewen Park to prevent runoff downhill toward Riverdale Avenue. (5)
6. Construction of a pond wall at Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park to prevent runoff from the pond onto the parking lot at the adjacent Metro-North station. (6)
7. Reconstruction of Old Fort Four Park including playground equipment, basketball courts, benches, green space, stone walls and fencing. (~)
8. Rehabilitation of Van Cortlandt Park Stadium, particularly restoration of its historic nature, repair leaks and the restrooms. (10)
9. Repair of the footbridge (the Birding Bridge) over Tibbetts Brook outside the fence around the golf course in Van Cortlandt Park. (7)
10. Installation of a sewer connection from the former Mosholu Golf House in Van Cortlandt Park to the street sewer so that the golf house can become a park headquarters building. The committee urges DPR to ask DEP to provide funding for this project. (9)

EXPENSE

1. Gardeners and other personnel sufficient for proper maintenance of lawns, landscaped areas, and sidewalk Greenstreets in Community Board 8. (FY22 ranking: 1)
2. PEP personnel sufficient to alleviate, with the assistance of NYPD, the illegal use of the Putnam Trail by electric bikes, motor bikes and ATV's, the seasonal problem of unlawful BBQs in CB8 parks, the chronic double-parking along Broadway adjacent to the Parade Grounds, and to enforce regulations in Van Cortlandt and other CB8 parks, in particular bicycle-mounted PEP officers in both Van Cortlandt Park and neighborhood parks. (2)
3. Two Large (16 Yard) Packer Garbage Trucks—Given serious and increasing trash conditions, the Parks Department needs one large garbage truck for the District. Currently equipment is shared with another District. An additional large garbage truck is requested by Van Cortlandt Park Alliance. (~)
4. Mini-Packer to deal with the growing trash problem in Van Cortlandt Park particularly to reach remote and difficult areas of the Park. (~)
5. Gator for Van Cortlandt Park –The VCP Alliance requests a replacement gator for use by the Landscape Management and Maintenance & Operations staff to maintain the park. The existing gator is in disrepair. Additionally we join CB8 Public Safety Committee in requesting a second gator for use by the 50th Precinct in Van Cortlandt Park. (~)
6. Purchase of a crew cab pickup to transport staff & equipment/tools around CB8. Necessary to address the maintenance needs of the District. (3)

7. Deere Tractor with Cutting Unit— Equipment essential for mowing. Given the constant need for this maintenance especially with hilly topography, such machinery is necessary. (5)

New Business

A community member, Kim, raised the topic of conditions at the Seton Park Dog Run. The Chair stated that the Seton Park Dog Run will be on the May agenda and that Kim should return to that meeting for a unified discussion.

Betty McCray, the Director of Capital Projects for the Bronx Borough Presidents Office wanted to remind the community to bring priority capital projects to the Borough President's attention, particularly if they are on the Community Board Budget Priorities list.

Daniel Ranells inquired about what could be done to address the conditions under the blue bridge in Van Cortlandt Park. It is very muddy when it rains and is a barrier to the continuation of the Empire State Trail.

Stephanie Thayer reported that one e-scooter was confiscated by the police for riding on the Putnam Trail. This is part of the effort to eliminate illegal ATV's, scooters and motorcycles from Van Cortlandt Park.

Community Board 8 resident Marianne Kraft presented her idea for a grove of trees to be planted in a park in the district in memory of those who have died from COVID-19. She will continue to seek community input and support.

Damian McShane and Richard Pretti with the Van Cortlandt Football Club presented on a recent issue they are experiencing. They have been playing soccer for the last ten years in a lawn area in the northwest corner of Van Cortlandt Park that does not require permits. A Yonkers based soccer club which reserves the permitted playing fields needed overflow space and was given a permit to have games on this lawn area. The Van Cortlandt Football Club does not feel this is an appropriate use of this public lawn which is also used during their games by others for passive use. The chair said that the Bronx Parks Commissioner is aware of the situation and that all concerned can spend the time between now and the next meeting seeing if there is an appropriate accommodation.

Deb Travis proposed that the committee put together a resolution thanking New York City Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver for his work as he will be stepping down from his post in June. A resolution will be crafted for the next meeting.

We will be hosting an It's My Park Day with Friends of Van Cortlandt's Tail on Saturday, May 15th from 10am to 12:30pm. The rain date is May 16th. There will be bench painting and some gardening. No experience necessary. All are encouraged to attend, especially committee members.

The chair nominated Student Veterans Organization at Manhattan College for their work in Van Cortlandt Park, on Greenstreets and highway beautifications. There was general agreement that they would be a worthy nominee.

Old Business

April 10th there was a cleanup in Memorial Grove led by the Student Veterans Organization of Manhattan College. The cleanup went very well and Memorial Grove is looking great. Herb Barret said that it was great to see better care for Memorial Grove and he would like to see better signage with the names of the veterans who are honored there. He also said that some people let their dogs off leash there which is not appropriate.

Christina Taylor reported that the Parks Department will be adding 250 seasonal positions. College and high school students who are interested in summer employment should visit nycgovparks.org for more information

The next meeting is scheduled for May 26th, 7pm.

The meeting adjourned at 9 pm.

Submitted by Debra Travis