

(Pending Committee Approval)

Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting
January, 26th 2022, 7pm via Zoom

ATTENDEES:

Committee: Ramdat Singh, Bob Bender, Deb Travis, Marvin Goodman, Robert Jacklosky, David Gellman, Courtney Dastis-Galvin,

CB 8 Members: Rosemary Ginty, Osvaly Jimenez

Guests: Stephanie Ehlich, Christina Taylor, Ira Charles Levenberg, Noel Hefele, Jodie Colon

AGENDA:

Ramdat Singh called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

Approval of Minutes

A quorum being present, the minutes of the Joint committee meeting of Environment & Sanitation and Parks & Recreation, December 15th 2021, were approved, 7-0.

Chair's Report

Ramdat began his reports with some updates. He gave an update on the Sedgwick tree issue. The board office has reached out to the Zev, from Department of Forestry, multiple times and he has not responded. Initially, Zev promised to return to the board with a report on the issue and has not fulfilled that promise.

Ha gave an update on the removal of trees on Fieldston Road and thanked committee member Bob Bender for bringing the issue up. Parks inspected and removed 6 trees and Parks reported that the 6 trees removed were in decline and would not have been improved by pruning or other treatments. The trees would have caused potential hazard to pedestrians. Moreover, Parks mentioned that stumps will be assigned to contract and prepare the sites for new tree planting. To Ramdat's knowledge, Parks did not let the board office know about these removals.

Last but not least, Ramdat mentioned the issue with the Ewen Park Tool Box and thanked Committee Member Robert Jacklosky for bringing this issue to his attention. Stewards of Ewen Park does not have a copy of the tool box and have to transport tools to and from the park, which is a hassle. Ramdat sent a request to Joe Magneri for a copy of the key, so Stewards of Ewen Park can have access to the box.

Committee Members recommended to reach out to Commissioner Iris Rodriguez- Rosa on a update on Sedgwick trees. Moreover, it was recommended to make both Councilmembers Dinowitz and Sanchez aware of the issue. Stephanie mentioned that tree replanting can be a 2-3 year process. On the issue of Ewen Park, it was recommended that we follow up with Nina Bonilla.

Debrief of Joint Meeting

Ramdat began the debrief with a thank you the committee members for their participation and engagement on this joint committee effort. Ramdat mentioned that him and Robert Fanuzzi, Chair of Environment and Sanitation, sent a joint follow up to both Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). In the joint follow up, there were a list of questions and unclear items that were heard from the joint. The agenda items were as follows:

- A design schedule for 3 phases, including VC Lake shoreline project, with an engagement calendar for CB8
- Impacts of Putnam Greenway extension route within Van Cortlandt Park on trees and wetlands
- Final route and environmental impacts of VC Park Greenway “crossovers”/pedestrian bridges
- Greenway connection to Van Cortlandt Park South--coordinate with CB8 budget priorities
- Putnam Greenway South access points: ULURP states 230th, 234th, 238th
- DPR “parkland design” elements within Putnam South Greenway
- Bailey Avenue access, parkland, and green infrastructure: corollary to Daylighting
- Greenway route from 230th street to Bailey Avenue?
- ADA compliance/accessibility requirements
- Runoff into VC Lake: impact on water quality and stormwater volume
- Role of Major Deegan runoff on water quality and stormwater volume

Committee members began to express other follow ups that need to occur on the following:

- Jerome Park Connector
- Budget Priorities, such as anticipating what is needed, maintenance of the greenway, staffing equipment
- Programming
- Environmental Education
- Wayfinding Signage
- First phase of the project (Van Cortlandt lake)- there needs to be more transparency around the design and timeline
- Budget Priorities- maintenance of Deegan (runoff) into catch basins

Stephanie mentioned that there is a meeting with BCEQ for a water management plan for VCP in February. Rosemary mentioned that we should have a process for following up with the

Department of Parks and possibly have a community meeting model. Ramdat mentioned that he will follow up Robert Fanuzzi, Chair of Environment and Sanitation, to foster a quarterly community meeting model.

Van Cortlandt Park Alliance

Stephanie Ehrlich and Christina Taylor gave updates from Van Cortlandt Park and Van Cortlandt Park Alliance. May 19th 2022, the Alliance will host their annual event, honoring Commissioner Iris and Sonia Manzano (Maria from Sesame Street). Due to COVID 19, there has been a staffing issue and there was no single day that the park was fully staffed, meaning it is challenging to get all the work needed to get done. The issue of bike signage in the golf course, Stephanie mentioned that she will need to double check and update the committee soon. Stephanie mentioned that VCP lost three vehicles in the storms, which three vehicles submerged because were parked behind the pool. We have seen a uptick in violence around the perimeter of the park, and recently there was a shooting near Sachkerah Woods. Water Management summit in February.

Christina mentioned that there's a winter tree hike, which VCPA will have to reschedule due to the snowstorm. February 12th is the winter animal tracks and forest Fridays will begin to continue. On February 26th, there will be the Bronx Park Speak Up and it will be virtual.

New Business

Half Moon Overlook

David Gellman brought up the issue of the Half Moon Overlook, which is located near the bend of Palisade Ave. There is overgrown shrubs in the lower sections and the upper portion is still available to the public. There's a good Samaritan began helping, but may lack the knowledge for appropriate skills to maintain the overlook and also this might become a liability for the city. The commissioner is aware of the issue of the overlook and we may need to follow up. Ramdat will follow up and make sure the issue is taken care of.

Budget Priorities

David Gellman mentioned that OMB was supposed to release the budget expenses for FY 2023 on January 15th, but that is delayed. The committee should come to the February meeting prepared with ideas for budget priorities, that include expense and capital investments.

In March, the committee should agree on the prioritization of both lists. In April, the committee should vote on the finalized budget priorities.

Jodie Colón asked about outreach to the various parks groups. Ramdat will reach out to the various parks groups and for them to bring their budget priorities to the committee's attention. Bob Bender mentioned to reach out Joe to attend. David mentioned we should focus on equity and equitable distribution of resources throughout the district.

Jodie Colón mentioned that Friends of Spuyten Duyvil is planning to help any parks group interested in participating in the I Naturalist City Nature challenge, with recruitment and engagement. The Challenge is an international event that you photograph any living thing that you see in your environment and upload your picture. The event runs April 29th to May 2nd.

Stephanie mentioned that parks will lose 250 positions citywide, with approximately 50 employees in the Bronx.

Old Business

No old business items were needed to be addressed.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:09 pm.