

**Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting  
Bronx Community Board 8  
Wednesday, February 26, 2025 at 7:00pm  
Board Office – 5676 Riverdale Ave, Suite 100, Bronx, NY 10471**

**Attendees**

**Parks & Recreation Committee:**

Present: (5) Bob Bender, Carol Blake, Johanna Edmondson, Ramdat Singh, Debra Travis (Chair)

Absent: (0)

**Other Bronx Community Board 8:**

Laura Spalter, Julie Reyes

**Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR):**

Christina Taylor (Deputy Executive Director, Van Cortlandt Park Alliance); Stephanie Ehrlich (Van Cortlandt Park Administrator); Joe Magneri (District Parks Manager, DPR); Valerie Davis-O’Neal (Special Assistant to the Bronx Borough Commissioner); Katerine Borrome (Director of Capital Projects)

The meeting commenced at 7:03pm

**Welcome and Introduction of Committee Members and Guests**

**Approval of the January 22, 2025 Minutes**

The meeting minutes were approved unanimously

**Chair’s Report**

**Community Input Session – Fort Independence Playground** – NYC Parks will be hosting a community input meeting for the reconstruction of Fort Independence Playground on Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Everyone is invited to attend particularly if you use this park. You can RSVP at [nyc.gov/parks/input](https://nyc.gov/parks/input)

**Minutes of September 25<sup>th</sup>** – the October 30<sup>th</sup> Parks Committee minutes stated that the September 25<sup>th</sup> minutes were approved with changes. At the January 22<sup>nd</sup> parks committee meeting, the chair was asked what the changes were. Upon review of her notes, this was a typo and no changes were made. The October 30<sup>th</sup> minutes were amended to state “The meeting minutes were approved unanimously.”

**Sedgwick Avenue Street Trees** – parks committee chair confirmed with the Permits and Plan Review Team of the Forestry Unit at DPR that 3870 Sedgwick Avenue has enrolled in the Parks Department Plan Review process. This new construction will be in the footprint of the former

library and adjacent house. We have confirmed that their current plans do not require the removal of any street trees and that any new driveway curb cut will be placed between existing trees. There are three existing street trees and four are required due to the frontage width. The Parks Department is not mandating that the developer plant a fourth tree due to underground utility interference. The developer will pay into a street tree fund instead for trees that must be planted within the community board.

**Van Cortlandt Park Shindig** – Van Cortlandt Park Alliance will be hosting their annual Van Cortlandt Park Shindig on Thursday, May 15<sup>th</sup> from 6-9pm at the Lake House. The event will be honoring long time Memorial Grove advocate Herb Barrett

**PRESENTATION – 10 Years Later – A review of the Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan ten years after its adoption. Presentation by Katerine Borrone, Director of Capital Projects, Bronx Parks Department and Stephanie Ehrlich, Van Cortlandt Park Administrator**

Stephanie Ehrlich and Katerine Borrone presented on the capital work which has been done within Van Cortlandt Park since the adoption of the Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan in 2014. The COVID-19 pandemic which paused capital projects and increased the cost of materials, Hurricane Ida which caused record damage due to flooding, and aging infrastructure like the current failure of the electrical transformer which provides power to Van Cortlandt Golf Course, Van Cortlandt House Museum, the Van Cortlandt Nature Center and the maintenance and operations headquarters, have all created headwinds to completing the work outlined in the master plan, however, substantial work has been completed or is slated to be completed in the next few years.

Projects of special note are the creation of the Putnam Greenway which opened in 2020 and the extension of the greenway to West 230<sup>th</sup> Street which is moving into the procurement phase and is underway; the daylighting of Tibbetts Brook which began phase 1 last summer; the stadium CPSD study which will be completed this spring; and the official naming of the Enslaved African Burial Ground and recent receipt of a Mellon Foundation Grant to improve activation of the site.

Governor Hochul has provided \$10million for restoration of the Van Cortlandt Park Pool which led to a discussion on swimming lessons. Parks stated that lessons at the pool have been very popular and that the lack of swimming lessons was not caused by conditions at the pool, but by lack of funding. Borrone does not know what the plan is for next summer but she will follow-up with the Aquatics team and get back to the committee. Chair requested help from Parks on how to best craft a budget request for the FY27 expense budget priorities to provide funding.

The pedestrian bridge long planned over the Major Deegan but ultimately not feasible has been converted to the Woodland Crossing project which would utilize the existing East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street overpass to cross the highway. This allows for the funds which have been allocated to be used on other projects such as the birding bridge replacement; sewer connection at Shandler; and

improvements to Van Cortlandt East Perimeter. Parks is in the process of formally transferring these funds to other necessary projects within Van Cortlandt Park.

There were questions about the prioritization of work that hasn't been done yet such as entrances to Yonkers which are in need of improvement, fencing around the golf courses which is in poor condition or restricts flow, and a trails plan. Stephanie Ehrlich stated that the next step was a broader discussion with the Parks Borough President, the DPR capital unit and VCPA to determine the next projects to prioritize and come back to the committee.

### **DISCUSSION – FY27 Committee Capital and Expense Budget Priorities**

The committee reviewed the prior year's capital and expense budget priorities and compiled a list of five capital and five expense budget priorities. The committee will rank them at the next committee meeting. Highlights from the discussion include:

**Crescent Park** – we have received requests for more plantings in the horticultural areas in Crescent Park to make the space more pleasant. Joe Magneri will speak to the horticulture team to see what can be done as an operating item.

**Old Fort Four Park** – more work is coming in the spring when a water fountain will be replaced and the basketball court will be resurfaced. The basketball courts will be closed at this time. Old Fort Four has been a budget priority for several years. Despite recent capital improvements, the existing play equipment and spray shower were installed in 1998 and are in poor condition. The committee will continue to include this park in its budget priorities with some modifications thanks to recently completed capital work.

**Restoration of Lower Brust Park Staircase** – the staircase in this park is heavily used particularly by residents as an alternative to Moshulu Parkway and by Manhattan College students. Chair noted that the park is adjacent to Methodist Nursing Home and that residents there use the park for recreation which makes the current poor condition of the stairs a serious hazard. This project was returned to the list for FY27.

**Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park Trails** – Jodie Colon, with Friends of Spuyten Duyvil reported that recent rain has badly damaged trails in this park that her group had restored over the last few years. The necessary work now exceeds their group's capacity and a project is needed. Committee added this request to the list of requests for future consideration.

**Marble Hill Playground Lighting** – this park is very dimly lit and is the only capital request in Manhattan District 10, whose council member is Carmen De La Rosa. This is significant because all DPR capital projects are funded by discretionary funds from council members. It was returned to the list for FY27.

**Riverdale Park Pathway** - Joe Magneri reported that Riverdale Park from West 232<sup>nd</sup> Street to Spaulding Lane has very deteriorated edge conditions and requires reconstruction. From West 232<sup>nd</sup> Street to the new pump house, which is located at 3869 Palisade Avenue, DOT will replace curbing and do repairs, however, the erosion on the edge of the park from the pump station to Spaulding Lane is very bad and pedestrians are no longer able to use the pathway to walk along the side of the road. There is a concern that Palisade Avenue is actually 120 feet wide and parts of it overlap with what is commonly considered to be part of Riverdale Park. This may complicate DOT plans for reconstruction of the curb. The board office will follow up with DOT.

**Pressure washing needed** - chair raised that several retaining walls in the district require power washing and painting. Magneri stated that there is only one pressure washing truck in the Bronx and that it is very heavily to remove graffiti. He was asked if the district purchased a pressure washer for use in the district, if that would be a possible solution to improve state of repair and make it easier for them to remove graffiti. He said it would. Chair will follow up with the board office.

**Bailey Playground** – there was discussion on how to advocate for Bailey Playground since the cost of the reconstruction is substantial and it has been on the budget priorities list for many years. Borrone suggested making it a Bronx delegation project where all of the elected officials pitch in some money for the reconstruction. Bob Bender proposed organizing a walk through or an event to increase awareness at the playground and build support for more funding. Parks was asked if phasing out the projects was an alternative. Borrone stated that they do not like to do this because it ends up costing more. Magneri also noted that the Parks Maintenance and Operations staff does not have a home in the district and have informally used Bailey Playground for this in the past because it is centrally located. They would need enough space for supervisors to work on their computers, an area to eat lunch and space to store small equipment and trash bags. He requested that if there is reconstruction work, that this be considered as well, for the park. It was agreed to add this to the request.

**Parks Enforcement Patrol Command in Van Cortlandt Park** – there was a discussion of whether this was viable as a request at all. It was agreed that there was a need for more enforcement and that despite all of the other issues which must be addressed in order to enable the Parks Enforcement Patrol to complete the work expected of it, that the committee should still continue to ask for a more active presence in Van Cortlandt Park because of our distance from the existing command in Pelham Bay Park. Chair will reach out to Community Board 7 and 12 to encourage them to include this request in their priorities as well.

**Bruckner Box in Upper Henry Hudson Park** – Magneri reported that Parks has completed its repairs, however, DEP must do repairs which are more extensive than were first understood. This likely needs to be a budget priority for DEP and the Environment and Sanitation Committee. The board office will follow up with DEP to confirm.

A preliminary list of the budget priorities is attached.

### **Old Business**

**Parks Committee Website List** – committee reviewed the current Parks and Recreation Committee material that is listed on the Bronx Community Board 8 website. Chair will let the office know to remove some of the older material that is no longer of general interest. In addition, it was decided to add the Tibbetts Brook Final Design, Vital Parks for All information, the Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan Update, Capital and Expense Committee Priorities for FY 25 and FY26 and links for events and inspections information. Carol Blake also proposed a list of parks to increase awareness of parks in the district. She will draft a list for the next meeting.

**Update on Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park and Seton Park** – Friends of Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park wanted the general public to know that phragmites were recently cut as part of the work on the pond in Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park. She has been fielding concerned calls and wanted to let people know there is nothing wrong. She also saw on social media that someone was requesting a pollinator place garden in Seton Park. There is one there already near the tennis courts.

### **New Business**

**Request for Eames Place Conversion** – Elvis Machuca requested that Eames Place between Webb Avenue and Claflin Avenue be converted into parkland for the benefit of the children in the adjacent school at 124 Eames Place, Success Academy Charter School. Since this would impact a street, the committee chair suggested that he bring this up with the Traffic and Transportation Committee instead.

The meeting adjourned at 9:46pm

Minutes submitted by Deb Travis

Meeting Recording: <https://youtu.be/1FWnARrERaQ?si=NaBu6KcpgbNoEMgI>

## Proposed Capital Budget Priorities for FY27

FY 2027 Ranking		FY 2026 Ranking
	<u>Redesign and reconstruction of Bailey Playground</u> Reconstruction of play equipment, safety surfacing and fencing along the Major Deegan. Incorporate adjacent Tibbett's Tail area into an expanded Bailey Playground. Reduce asphalt and add green space. Add space for District 8 operations.	1
	<u>Restoration of Lower Brust Park Staircase</u> Restoration of flagstone, pavers, steps and handrails	4
	<u>Reconstruction of Old Fort Four Park</u> Reconstruction of Old Fort Four Park including replacing existing playground equipment, spray area, benches and fencing, repairing the stone walls, updating the greenspace and improving lighting for the basketball courts (current capital improvement include construction of restroom and resurfacing basketball courts). <i>This neighborhood does not have a dog run within a 10 minute walk and so this park should be considered for this amenity.</i>	2
	<u>Marble Hill Playground Lighting</u> Install park lighting to light the pathways and activity areas within the interior of Marble Hill Playground	3
	<u>Equipment for Litter Collection</u> Additional mini-packer vehicle to reach remote areas for litter collection in Van Cortlandt Park in District 13 and one packer vehicle to be assigned in District 8	5

## Proposed Expense Budget Priorities for FY27

FY 2027 Ranking		FY 2026 Ranking
	<u>Parks Enforcement Patrol Command within Van Cortlandt Park</u> Create a new Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) command and station it in Van Cortlandt Park sufficient to properly enforce DPR rules and regulations to maintain public safety and order in Van Cortlandt Park and other Community District 7, 8 and 12 district parks	1
	<u>Repair Bruckner Box Connection in Upper Henry Hudson Park - DEP</u> Connect the Bruckner Box Connection in Upper Henry Hudson Park to the main sewer and install and RPZ (DEP) – Farrah will bring this back to DSC to get more information.	2
	<u>Crushed Stone and Boulders for Maintenance</u> Crushed stone and boulders to enable repairs of tracks, walkways and dog runs within District 8 and Van Cortlandt Park	3
	<u>Replacement Gator-Type Utility Vehicles for Landscape Management, Maintenance and Operations Staff Within Van Cortlandt Park</u> Replace three existing utility gator-type vehicles due to age and maintenance issues	4
	<u>Swimming Instructors For Summer Swimming Lessons For Children</u> Swimming Lessons for Children at Van Cortlandt Pool and/or other New York City owned pools such as Lehman College, DeWitt Clinton High School or the Walton Campus	New

## Capital Priorities Considered for FY26 & FY27 But Not Added

### Local Parks

#### Reconstruct Riverdale Playground Basketball Courts

Reconstruct the basketball courts at Riverdale Playground to replace the nets, rims, backboards and re-surface the court

#### Jerome Park Reservoir Pedestrian Safety Lighting

Install World's Fair park lighting along the walkway within the parkland surrounding Jerome Park Reservoir to improve safety, encourage usage after dusk and discourage encampments and dumping

#### Reconstruct Washington's Walk

Reconstruct Washington's Walk to make the pathway ADA accessible, update and add benches and replace temporary chain link fencing with a wrought-iron fence

#### Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park Trails Reconstruction

Reconstruct the trails in Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park

#### Riverdale Park Walking Path

Reconstruct the walking path adjacent to Riverdale Park from West 232<sup>nd</sup> Street to Spaulding Lane Park along the edge of Palisade Avenue – *Board office will talk to DOT*

#### Reconstruct Hackett Park Dog Run

Reconstruction of Hackett Park dog run – *Local community group support needed*

### Van Cortlandt Park

#### Reconstruct Van Cortlandt Park Fencing and Entrances Along Yonkers Border

Replace chain link fences and open edges with wrought iron fence along the Yonkers border of Van Cortlandt Park from Broadway to Kimball Avenue. Establish entrances that prevent motorized vehicle access to trails but allow for pedestrian and greenway usage – *Westchester based groups may be an alternative funding source*

#### Upgrading the Restrooms; Conversion of the Nature Center Into Additional Restrooms *Internal meetings are underway. Feedback will be provided soon*

#### Installation of Adult Exercise Equipment in Van Cortlandt Park



## **Equipment**

### Crew Cab For District Operations

Crew Cab Pickup to transport staff & equipment within the district.

## **Natural Areas**

### Upstream Stormwater Management of Alder Brook Stream Bed in Riverdale Park

Remove sedimentation and invasives and restore native plantings along Alder Brook stream in Riverdale Park

## **Greenways**

### Tibbetts Brook Greenway Harlem River Connection

Construction of pedestrian and bicycle connection between West 230<sup>th</sup> Street public access terminus of the Putnam Greenway and the Harlem River Greenway

## **Cultural Institutions**

### Reconstruct Wave Hill Swale

Reconstruct the cobblestone swale adjacent to Wave Hill along Independence Avenue between West 249th Street and Spaulding Lane

## **Expense Priorities**

### Tool Cat For District Park Maintenance

Purchase of a Tool Cat with a Bucket, Brush & Cutting Unit for District Park Operations

## **2024-2025 Continued Support - Funded Capital Budget Priorities**

### Old Fort Four Restroom Construction

Active. Construction to be completed spring 2025

### Van Cortlandt Park Bailey Pedestrian Plaza

Active. Construct an entrance to Van Cortlandt Park at Bailey Avenue and Van Cortlandt Avenue West to provide safe pedestrian and bicycle access to the Van Cortlandt Golf House and lake area – NYC DOT project in progress to add bike and pedestrian path and to reduce conflicts with cars.

### Tibbetts Brook and Van Cortlandt Lake Improvements

Active. Daylighting of Tibbetts Brooks and creating a greenway to West 230<sup>th</sup> Street. Removing invasives from Van Cortlandt Lake and installing a living shoreline. Invasive removal began summer 2024. Greenway construction planned to begin early 2026.

### Restoration of Historic Kingsbridge Heights Community Center Building

Complete funding of the roof repairs, re-point the façade, and restore interior walls back to a state of good repair from water damage. Update heat and windows to meet energy efficiency best practices. Roofing work planned for FY27-FY28.

### Engineering Study of Van Cortlandt Park Stadium

Funding for engineering study to assess and to develop a restoration plan for Van Cortlandt Park Stadium – Study results expected spring 2025

### Van Cortlandt Park Construction of New Restroom North Parade Ground

Active

### Van Cortlandt Park Pedestrian Bridge Replacement Project

\$23.5 million has been allocated to construct a pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway. In 2023 it was determined that this project was not feasible and that alternatives that achieved the same goal would be reviewed. Planned for FY26.

At this time the alternate projects are:

- Converting an existing overpass at East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street to a park friendly trailhead.
- DOT making improvements to the intersection at East 233<sup>rd</sup> and Jerome Avenue and studying the intersections of West Gun Hill Road/Moshulu Parkway and West Gun Hil Road and Mosholu Parkway North.
- Improving the underpass near the nursery along the John Muir Trail

- Sewer connection to the Adam Shandler Recreationl Area picnic area and temporary golf house structure
- Perimeter improvements along Van Cortlandt Park East
- Birding Bridge replacement

#### Update Play Equipment at Fort Independence Playground

Replace 20 year-old playground equipment and safety mats at Fort Independence Playground. Planned. Design process will begin in early 2025 with construction set to begin in late 2026 or early 2027. Short term fixes to re-anchor the mats is planned for spring 2025.

#### Washington's Walk Fort Four Playground (PRB X038-118M)

Planned for FY26

#### NEW - Van Cortlandt Park Electricity

The transformer which provides power to the park headquarters, the nature center, the restrooms and the Van Cortlandt House Museum is not operational. Planned for FY27-FY30

#### Van Cortlandt Park Pool Reconstruction

This project will reconstruct the entire pool complex at Van Cortlandt Park, including the pool tubs and decks for the main and wading pools, filtration system, and will also add new security lighting, locker rooms and offices, while making the facility fully ADA accessible. This marks the first substantial renovation of the facility since it was originally built in 1968. Planned for FY27-FY28

#### Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park Pond Wall Construction

Creation of a barrier wall to prevent water from the pond from overflowing into the Metro North parking area and station entrance at Spuyten Duyvil train station. This project is being managed by multiple agencies and will continue to move slowly through the process. Planned for FY29.

#### NEW in 2025 – Henry Hudson Park Basketball Court Renovation

Capital Commitment for FY29

#### NEW in 2025 - Van Cortlandt Park Alliance Equipment and Furniture

Planned for FY29

NEW in 2025 - Sewer Connection at Shandler Recreation Area

Complete sewer connection to convert temporary structure for use by Mosholu Golf House during Filtration Plant construction to permanent Parks Operations Building. Also connect sewer line with adjacent comfort station in Shandler BBQ area.

**Additional Funded Capital Projects**

Bailey Playground Public Restroom

Active. Construction scheduled to be complete summer 2025

Strong Street Playground Reconstruction (X123-119M)

Active. Construction expected to be completed spring 2025

Van Cortlandt Park Forest Tree Replacement Phase 1

Active

Van Cortlandt Park Reconstruction of Headhouse & Demo Greenhouse

Active

FY21 Street Trees BX CB's 5-8, 11, 12 (3Y)

Planned for Spring 2025

NEW - Van Cortlandt Park Golf House Telecom Service Installation

Install telecommunication service to the Golf House. Construction planned for summer 2025.

Ewen Park Staircase Reconstruction

Rebidding due to an issue with a low bidder. This procurement phase is expected to be completed summer 2025. Planned FY 26 through FY28

Van Cortlandt Park Trails Reconstruction

Planned for FY26

Van Cortlandt Park Limited Scope Synthetic Turf & Track Reconstruction

Planned for FY26

Van Cortlandt House Museum Renovation

Scope will include repair of the roof and exterior envelope and making the house ADA accessible. This project is in the design phase.

NEW - Van Cortlandt Park Woodland Crossing Project

Construct a trail connection at East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street. Planned for FY27-FY32

Green Infrastructure in Van Cortlandt Park

Planned for FY27

Van Cortlandt Park Museum Fencing

Renovation of the historic wrought iron fencing around the Van Cortlandt House Museum. Planned FY27-FY29

Van Cortlandt Park – Woodlawn Park Renovation

Planned FY28

Tibbett's Tail Fence

Construction of a chained link fence between Tibbett's Tail Park and the Major Deegan Highway. Planned FY29

NEW - Seton Park Tennis Court & Pickle Ball Court Reconstruction

Need more information. Planned FY29

Van Cortlandt Park Renovate Indian Fields

Planned FY33

**2024-2025 – Continued Support - Funded Expense Budget Priorities  
In FY25 Budget**

Funding to Support Free Swimming Lessons Within the Bronx to All Youth Under 16

Gray Foundation pilot will provide \$1.5 million for swim lessons for 2,000 second graders starting this summer or through the school year. City Council passed a bill to provide free swim lessons to all second-grade children, but it is not funded yet. Hochul announced in January New York SWIMS which will improve access to pools

Repair Bruckner Box Connection in Upper Henry Hudson Park Borough Operations for the Parks Department has identified the issue which must be repaired. They will be able to complete the repair once the water is turned back on in April. Then NYC DEP can restore.

## Recently Completed Capital Projects

- Seton Park Adult Fitness Area and Skate Park (completed 2025)
  - Old Fort Four Park Basketball Court Reconstruction (completed 2025)
  - Classic Playground Adult Fitness Area (completed 2024)
  - Ewen Park Adult Fitness Station (completed 2024)
  - Van Cortlandt Park Reconstruct Shandler Recreation Area Paths (completed 2023)
  - Van Cortlandt Park Museum & Nature Center Telecom Service Installation (completed 2022)
- Van Cortlandt Park Skate Park (completed 2020)
- Van Cortlandt Park Broadway Entrance (completed 2020)

## **Documents on the Parks Committee Home Page**

### **Existing**

- Parks Resources Guide
- Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan
- Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan 2025 Update
- Be Coyote Smart – Information Sheet
- 
- Enslaved People Project 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade - Remove
- Enslaved People Project 4<sup>th</sup> Grade - Remove
- Bus Parking for Van Cortlandt Park Events - Remove
- Preliminary Presentation – Ewen Park Stairs Design - Remove
- Feasibility Study for the Yonkers Greenway to 242<sup>nd</sup> Street - Remove

### **Add**

- Tibbetts Brook Final Design
- Vital Parks For All Links
- Capital and Expense Committee Priorities for FY25, FY26
- Link for Parks Inspection Program - <https://www.nycgovparks.org/park-features/parks-inspection-program>
- Link for Parks Events - <https://www.nycgovparks.org/events>

### **Being Developed**

List of Parks in the District