

**Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting
Bronx Community Board 8
Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 7:00pm
Virtual Only¹**

Attendees

Committee:

Present (3): Carol Blake, Miriam Filer, Debra Travis (Chair)

Absent (1): Bob Bender

Department of Parks and Recreation:

Stephanie Ehrlich (Van Cortlandt Park Administrator); Christina Taylor (Deputy Executive Director, Van Cortlandt Park Alliance); Valerie Davis-O’Neal (Special Assistant to the Bronx Borough Commissioner)

Community Board: Farrah Kule Rubin (District Manager)

The meeting commenced at 7:04pm

Welcome and Introduction of Committee Members and Guests

Approval of the January 28, 2026 Minutes

The meeting minutes were approved unanimously

Chair’s Report

- **City Budget shortchanges the Parks Department** - Mayor has released first draft of his budget. Proposed Parks Department funding was \$33m less than prior year and not close to 1% of city budget which Mayor Mamdani campaigned on.

- **DEP and the Parks Department have released their Green Infrastructure Opportunity Analysis Update 2026** - Parks in our district that are in design or procurement for green infrastructure projects are: Van Cortlandt Park Stables, the triangle in front of St Patrick’s and Kingsbridge Heights Community Center. Fort Independence Park is in feasibility analysis. We also learned from this report that the name of the new park adjacent to the Major Deegan which the Harlem River/Putnam Greenway will pass through is called Spring Day Park

- **Seton Park Dog Run** – a few members of the community braved the cold to do a walkthrough of the Seton Park dog run with Partnership for Parks to discuss needed improvements and forming a dog run group. Farah Kule Rubin and Ardhmir Malziu from

¹ In the interest of public safety and due to the weather conditions, this meeting was shifted to a virtual setting only.
Resource: Governor Kathy Hochul Executive Order No. 58 – Declaring a Disaster Emergency in the Counties of Albany, Bronx, Columbia, Greene, Delaware, Dutchess, Kings, Nassau, New York, Orange, Otsego, Putnam, Queens, Richmond, Rensselaer, Rockland, Schoharie, Schenectady, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester, and Contiguous Counties: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/executive-order/no-58-declaring-disaster-emergency-counties-albany-bronx-columbia-greene-delaware>

the Bronx Community Board 8 office also attended. If anyone is interested in being connected with the group, they should reach out to the board office at bx08@cb.nyc.gov.

- **Bronx Parks Speak Up on Saturday** – the new NYC Parks Commissioner, Tricia Shimamura and former NYC Parks Commissioner, Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, will be speaking along with New Yorkers for Parks. There will also be a celebration of the Bronx River Alliance which is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Discussion of FY28 Committee Capital and Expense Budget Priorities

The committee discussed the most pressing of the budget requests along with the agency feedback.

Spring Day Park – a new needs request has been submitted for the park when it opens in 2030. The new needs request includes planned for additional needs to support the park such as maintenance staff, vehicles, a coordinator and additional Parks Enforcement Patrol. Since we are working on the budget priorities for FY28, it would be premature to request support for this request in our FY28 budget priorities, however, it was agreed the committee should consider it for FY29.

Swimming lessons – there's still a need for more swimming lessons to be available particularly given our district's proximity to the Hudson and Harlem rivers. There is the possibility to grow the capacity at Van Cortlandt Pool, although in FY28 the pool will be undergoing renovations. The committee would like to explore city funding for instructors for swimming classes at community facilities that have a pool such as Hebrew Home, Riverdale Y, Riverdale Neighborhood House and other non-profits with indoor or outdoor pools.

Marble Hill Playground Lighting – in the agency responses from last year the Parks Department referred our request for playground lighting at Marble Hill to the Department of Education. It appears that this playground may be a "Jointly Operated Playground" with DOE. The board will investigate.

Lighting in Sid Field – this was requested by a member of the community, and the committee voted on a resolution supporting it in the fall. Committee tentatively added this request to the FY28 priorities.

Lighting in Old Fort Four Park – more lighting would be helpful, particularly for the basketball courts in the summer. The committee was not sure what time the park was locked and therefore how many additional hours of use would be gained.

Lighting in Van Cortlandt Park from the golf course parking lot to the parade ground – Stephanie Ehrlich proposed adding lighting fixtures along the path from the parade ground/Enslaved People's Burial Ground to the parking lot. This is the route used by the public after events on the parade ground, like the annual New York Philharmonic concert. To support these events, expensive temporary lighting needs to be procured. This was added to the budget priorities and is considered of a more pressing need than the reconstruction of the cross-country trail at this time.

Discussion of the Revisions to the Community Board 8 Parks Resource Guide

Committee discussed the first draft of the Parks Resource Guide. Next steps, will be to:

- Revise the map so that the numbered dots are in the correct position
- The board office will provide a list of all the leagues
- Miriam will send a list of the baseball leagues
- Deb will make a draft based on this feedback for review at next meeting.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Committee will draft a letter to the mayor's office and our city council members to advocate for more money in the city budget for FY27. Miriam volunteered to do this.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10pm

Minutes submitted by Deb Travis

Recording Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDXXr_sZT9E