

**Minutes of the Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting  
Meeting held June 23, 2021 Via Zoom**

**Attendees**

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

*Other CB8:* Sylvia Alexander

*DPR:* Joseph Magneri (DPR), Stephanie Thayer (DPR), Christina Taylor (VCP Alliance), Stephanie Ehrlich (VCP Alliance)

*Community:* Laura Chenven, Abba Leffler

**Agenda**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm

The minutes of the May 26th committee meeting were unanimously approved. Chair thanked Courtney Dastis-Galvin for her assistance compiling the minutes for May.

**Chair's Report**

Chair congratulated Deb Travis on being elected the new Chair of the Traffic & Transportation Committee. Deb will also continue on the Parks Committee next year.

**Juneteenth Event in Van Cortlandt Park**

The Juneteenth event occurred in Van Cortlandt Park on Saturday, June 19<sup>th</sup>. As part of the ceremony Van Cortlandt Lake was renamed as Hester and Piero's Mill Pond and the Enslaved African and Kingsbridge Burial Grounds were dedicated. Stephanie Ehrlich reported that in addition to the live audience, 1,200 people livestreamed the ceremony on Facebook which was a record. The ceremony was recorded and can be viewed at [VanCortlandt.org](http://VanCortlandt.org). Chair proposed adding this information to the Community Board 8 Facebook page and monthly newsletter. Ehrlich thanked Community Board 8 for providing a curriculum for schools to use on the subject of enslaved people.

**Public Pool is Opening in Van Cortlandt Park**

The public pool opens in Van Cortlandt Park on Saturday, June 26<sup>th</sup>. The ribbon cutting will be Thursday, June 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Follow-up to May Neighborhood Hearing on Concerns with Summer Park Activities**

At the May Parks Committee meeting fifty people came out to express their concern regarding large parties, all-hours noise, ATV's, illegal BBQing and littering in parks around the community board. Chair Ginty, Community Board President Laura Spalter, District Manager Ciara Gannon,

Public Safety Committee Chair Ed Green, Bronx Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, 50<sup>th</sup> Precinct Captain Charles Girven, Stephanie Ehrlich from Van Cortlandt Park Alliance and three PEP officers had a call to discuss what could be done to address the many community concerns. The goal was to move away from discussing, due to limited resources, what cannot be done and rather identify what can be done to address these concerns.

The Community Board has committed to the following:

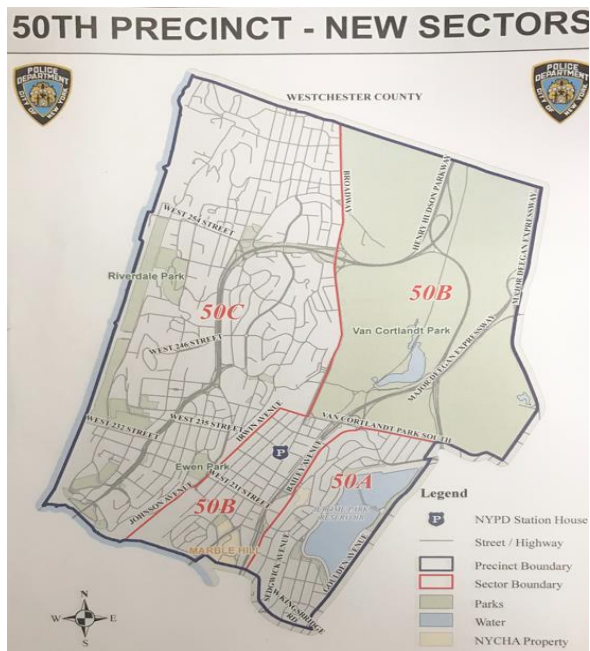
- Community Board will publicize why & how to call “311” with request to call/email CB Office with case number for the purpose of follow-up on agency response. It was stressed that “311” is for disturbance and “911” for violence.
- Community Board will publicize the new NYPD “ATV/Illegal Bikes Turn-In with \$100 Reward” Program with the telephone number to call and the person to request.
- Community Board will publicize Parks Department website information concerning parks activities that require permits and how park’s permits can be acquired.
- Community Board will publicize the authorized BBQ areas in NYC parks.
- Community Board Parks Committee in conjunction with NYPD and Parks Department will consider suggestions for appropriate legislative approaches at city & state level that will deal with component problem issues. Past suggestions have been to examine the possibility of increased penalties and fines, criteria for confiscations, setting decibel levels, etc.
- Community Board will publicize the Parks Department’s new program to deal with trash at the problem locations in the parks. “Stop Litter—Put Trash in a Can!”
- Community Board will publicize Volunteer Programs in VCP that can deal with trash removal or other problem issues.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Precinct suggests the following:

- [The Neighborhood Coordination Officers \(NCOs\)](#) serve as liaisons between the police and the community and problem-solvers in the sector. They familiarize themselves with residents and their problems by attending community meetings with neighborhood leaders and following up on previous incidents. The Community Board will publicize this information along with a precinct sector map, names of the NCO officers by sector and their email addresses. (See map and list below)
- NYPD when regularly patrolling, will ticket illegally-parked cars in bus stops, fire hydrants and double-parked. Also will respond to “311” calls about illegal parking.
- NYPD will deal with after-hours/early morning gatherings whether loud music or presence in closed parks with posted closing times.
- NYPD will continue their partnership with PEP Officers and VCP Alliance, conducting regularly-scheduled operations to enforce regulations concerning illegal bikes, ATV’s on Putnam Trail and in VCP generally.

A map and contact information was presented by the Chair and will be distributed by the Community Board:

NCO Supervisor	SGT Vincent Caprino	<a href="mailto:Vincent.Caprino@nypd.org">Vincent.Caprino@nypd.org</a>
A	PO Nicholas Giordani	<a href="mailto:Nicholas.Giordani@nypd.org">Nicholas.Giordani@nypd.org</a>
A	PO Joseph Rodriguez	<a href="mailto:Joseph.Rodriguez@nypd.org">Joseph.Rodriguez@nypd.org</a>
B	PO Joel Olivencia	<a href="mailto:Joel.Olivencia@nypd.org">Joel.Olivencia@nypd.org</a>
B	PO Nelida Perez	<a href="mailto:Nelida.Perez@nypd.org">Nelida.Perez@nypd.org</a>
C	PO Brandon Day	<a href="mailto:Brandon.Day@nypd.org">Brandon.Day@nypd.org</a>
C	PO Richard Planamenta	<a href="mailto:Richard.Planamenta@nypd.org">Richard.Planamenta@nypd.org</a>
Housing	PO Jordan Gallagher	<a href="mailto:Jordan.Gallagher@nypd.org">Jordan.Gallagher@nypd.org</a>
Housing	PO Joseph Reeves	<a href="mailto:Joseph.Reeves@nypd.org">Joseph.Reeves@nypd.org</a>



The Parks Department suggests the following:

- Parks Department will have PEP officers on their regular schedule including periodic early morning operations to drive to and visit CB 8 Parks to deal with adherence to Parks

regulations including the illegal delineation of areas for exclusive use of a group including setting up tents, tables, alcoholic beverages, bars, BBQ's, loud amplified music. Fort Four Park and Washington's Walk are priority parks.

- Parks Department will review signage in and around the problem parks for sufficiency of public notice in English and possibly Spanish re: necessity for permits, delineating exclusive areas, tents, tables, BBQ's, music, trash, closing times.

The Van Cortlandt Park Alliance suggests the following:

- VCP Alliance will have PEP officers for periodic early morning operations and regular non-fixed post assignment to deal with adherence to Parks regulations including the illegal delineation of areas for exclusive use of a group including setting up tents, tables, alcoholic beverages, bars, BBQ's, loud, amplified music.
- VCP Alliance will review signage around the problem areas for sufficiency of public notice re: necessity for permits, delineating exclusive areas, tents, tables, BBQ's, music, closing times. Special signs to be considered for Memorial Grove for no dogs, no picnicking, etc.

Suggestion is made by Deb Travis that Parks consider reviewing the sufficiency and placement of trash receptacles particularly around the Jerome Park Reservoir. Laura Chenven reinforced this suggestion saying that people are just dumping trash on the curb. She also suggested additional signage.

### New Business

**Tree Removal on Sedgwick Avenue** – Deb Travis reported that on Friday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, a 28" diameter oak tree was partially cut down by contractors for Con Edison at the request of Parks. Workers at the site told residents that the tree was interfering with the electrical lines. They also gave the impression that other trees may also be removed.

Abba Leffler, a resident who lives across the street, spoke to the contractor onsite, and while he felt there may have been a language barrier, that contractor seemed to indicate more trees were going to be cut down. He pursued it with the supervisor who said that there was a cavity in the tree that required its removal and that the work had been requested by Parks. Abba stated his concerns that the tree was apparently healthy and that the community had no notice or participation in the decision to remove it.

Parks Manager, Joseph Magneri, stated that Zev Reuter, Head of Forestry for the Parks Dept, had responded to his inquiry and said that the tree had "structural instability". No additional

details on what was wrong with it or if there had been an inspection of the tree were given. Magneri was unaware of any other trees being targeted for removal.

Bob Bender testified that in his previous dealings with Zev that he was knowledgeable and responsible, which doesn't mean that he is infallible, however Bender reminded the committee that Reuter's responsibility is to protect trees. He is inclined to believe they know what they are talking about. He said that it was appropriate for Con Edison to take down a tree with the Parks Dept request. He would like it confirmed with the Forestry Division that no other trees are going to be taken down. He suggested that Parks open a channel of communication with the community board any time a substantial tree was being removed because the community loves its trees and they are very valuable.

David Gellman said he was sad about the loss of the tree and that a 28" diameter tree is significant. He expressed concerns about the replacement of the tree and asked if there were any plans in place to replace it.

Laura Chenven testified that there were many trees on Sedgwick Avenue that were in poor condition and that should be taken down and that this tree was not one of them. She said an audit of the trees should be undertaken in the interest of public safety.

Rob Jacklosky asked if there was a program of pruning going on. No one was aware of one.

Abba Leffler asked if Parks was aware if there were bird nests in the tree or if there was a protocol to check prior to the removal of a tree.

Chair said she would send Mr. Reuter the questions raised by the committee members and the community residents. They include among other things a better description of the condition of the tree, plans for replacement, plans for other tree removals, protocols for trees with bird nests, and the possibility of CB notification when a significant tree is planned for removal. The responses will be passed onto committee members and Deb Travis will follow-up with community residents in attendance.

#### **Update on Putnam Greenway & Motorized Vehicles**

Stephanie Ehrlich provided an update on the collaboration between PEP and NYPD. They have issued summons and confiscated vehicles. They will continue to do that. Chair thanked them for coming together and working effectively.

Bob Bender said that this problem is not unique to the Putnam Greenway. This is a citywide problem. People are taking advantage of the fact that there is not the degree of enforcement.

#### Old Business

**Seton Park Dog Run** – Janie Lerner was expected but was not on the call.

**“No Cleats” Sign in Seton Park** – David Gellman raised the matter of people using metal cleats in Seton Park. He confirmed that the posted sign does say that metal cleats are not allowed, but is concerned that the print is very small and that there is no enforcement. He would still like there to be a much larger sign but will pursue it at a later time. Joe Magneri requested that it be noted that he had updated the sign after Gellman’s previous request to include the “no cleats” language. Magneri stated he would reach out to the DPR permits office to find out what the permit requires of those who use the field and get that information back to the Chair.

**Putnam Trail Greenway Sign in Van Cortlandt Park** – David Gellman inquired about a sign along the Putnam Greenway in Van Cortlandt Park which could lead bicyclists onto the golf course instead of the greenway. Stephanie Thayer stated that his proposal was being reviewed by the Parks Sign Committee at the Arsenal. They were backed up because of all the new signs for COVID. She will follow up. Gellman noted that the existing sign had been removed and asked if it could be put back. Thayer said she would look into whether it had been disposed of.

**Phyllis Post Goodman Park** – Marvin Goodman reminded the public of the beauty of Phyllis Post Goodman Park and encouraged meeting attendees to visit it. It was named for his wife who was a community activist in Riverdale. The park is cared for by an active volunteer group and he thanked the three women who care for it.

**Next Meeting** - The next meeting will NOT be September 22<sup>nd</sup> due to a conflict with the Jewish holidays. A new date will be distributed soon.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16pm

Prepared by Debra Travis, Committee Vice Chair

Submitted by Rosemary Ginty, Committee Chair