

Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting of December 12, 2019 at
Riverdale Neighborhood House, 5570 Mosholu Ave.

Attendees

Committee: Bob Bender, chair; Robert Fanuzzi, vice chair; Eider Garcia, David Gellman, Marvin Goodman, Robert Jacklosky, Laura Spalter, Debra Travis (all CB8); Herb Barret (CCM)

Absent: Eric Bell, Daris Jackson, Donnel Leverett

Other CB8: Dan Padernacht

Agencies: Dan Reynolds, DPR; P.O. Ralph Cintron, NYPD; Stephanie Thayer, deputy administrator Van Cortlandt Park, DPR; Christina Taylor, Van Cortlandt Park Alliance

Elected Officials: Andrew Cohen; Patrick Hill (Councilman Cohen's office)

Community: John Lynch, Maureen Kelly, Deb Dolan, Matt Turov, Carlos Wilcox, Jordan Wolowitz; Laura Carpenter, Van Cortlandt House Museum; Tom Russell and Jen Stiles, Founders Entertainment

Agenda

The meeting began at 7 pm.

Minutes of the October 2019 meeting were unanimously approved.

Discussion of School Construction Authority Project for PS 81 and Vinmont Park/Sid Augarten Ballfield

Bob Bender reported on his phone call with School Construction Authority Bronx outreach coordinator Nicole Holloway. (Ms. Holloway could not attend because of a conflict with SCA's holiday party.) The project involves repairing the southernmost roof on PS 81 and rerouting water runoff from the school into retention tanks to be located in the outfield of the adjacent ballfield. According to Ms. Holloway, the basement of PS 81 floods periodically due to water runoff.

Two retention tanks, 6 feet in height and 6 feet in diameter, will be installed in the outfield and buried under one foot of turf. Work is supposed to begin before Christmas and last four to eight weeks. When work is completed, sod will be laid on top of the work area so that the field will be playable when the Little League season opens in early April. According to SCA there is no alternative site because other adjacent areas contain underground infrastructure.

The outfield portion of the ballfield is jointly owned by DOE and DPR, according to DPR.

Dan Reynolds appeared on behalf of DPR and confirmed the information as relayed by SCA based on a site visit in which he participated with SCA and the contractor on Nov. 19.

Representatives of the North Riverdale Baseball League expressed concern that the sod would not have enough time to knit by early April, given typical weather conditions in March. They would prefer to see the work take place after the Little League season ends in late June. Mr. Reynolds said that DPR could sow grass seed in the area if the sod does not knit in time. DPR will use its resources to make the area playable to the best of its ability.

The chair will communicate the concerns expressed at the meeting to SCA.

Discussion of Proposed Governors Ball Concert in Van Cortlandt Park

Mr. Tom Russell, proprietor of Founders Entertainment, presented plans for the Governors Ball, which he wants to move from Randalls Island to Van Cortlandt Park's Parade Grounds in 2020. It would take place over three evenings, June 5-7, Friday to Sunday, 2020. The ticket price is \$150 a day or \$350 for all three days. It is primarily a music festival; food, including beer and alcohol, will be sold on the site. The event is expected to draw 50,000 people each day. Parking would have to be removed from the east (park) side of Broadway from the Mansion Road (approx. w. 244 St.) to W. 252 St., i.e., the length of the Parade Grounds during the build and breakdown periods from May 26 to approximately June 12.

Mr. Russell says that the event provides substantial financial benefits; the Randalls Island conservancy was paid nearly \$600,000 last year. He said that he has spoken to merchants along Broadway, who favor the event for its economic benefit to them. There would also be some temporary job opportunities at the site.

Mr. Russell believes that most attendees would arrive by the #1 train. He hopes to work with MTA to run more trains on the days of the events. He also plans to have shuttle buses to the Metro-North stations and to the #4 train station at Woodlawn Road. Concertgoers would be advised that there is no parking in the area. Mr. Russell would try to negotiate parking at Manhattan College's facilities for those working at the site. There will be personnel on site to assist NYPD with traffic control.

Mr. Russell emphasized that the Governors Ball has a community service component in which volunteers provide time to New York City nonprofits. He believes that the event will showcase the park and the area and bring public relations benefits to the community. Most of the concertgoers will not be from the Bronx.

The event will limit activity on the Parade Grounds between May 26 and June 12, although Mr. Russell hopes that large areas of the Parade Grounds can remain open before and after the performances. The stages will be oriented so that the sound is directed into the park, away from Broadway. Trees and historic structures and locations will be protected. Any damage caused to the park will be repaired or funding necessary to make repairs will be provided.

Following the presentation there were many questions, most of which are summarized here, with Mr. Russell's answers.

Mr. Russell said that he must secure the venue no later than January. He acknowledged that DPR has denied a permit because of concerns about community impacts.

In response to a concern expressed about selling beer and alcohol, Mr. Russell said that EMT's will be onsite and that many concertgoers will be too young to purchase alcohol. And while food trucks will be at the event, their prices may not be competitive with those of area merchants. There will also be substantial security on the site during the event.

There were concerns expressed that the Parade Grounds could be damaged by the event, to which Mr. Russell responded that he will take responsibility for any restoration that may be required.

For purposes of comparison to the expected 50,000 daily concertgoers, it was noted that the annual New York Philharmonic concert in the park draws between 2,000 and 3,000 people.

Laura Carpenter from the Van Cortlandt House Museum complained that access to the historic house could be compromised by vehicles on the access road. She noted that late May and early June are busy times for the House Museum.

P.O. Cintron observed that the 50th Precinct has not yet reviewed the transportation plan.

The chair noted that no action is needed now because Mr. Russell does not have a permit for his event. The committee also wants to hear the 50th Precinct's response to the traffic plan.

The discussion concluded with thanks to Mr. Russell for appearing before the committee, offering details about the event, and answering questions.

Updating the Parks Resource Guide

The committee agreed that the Parks Resource Guide requires updating. Committee members will read it and offer suggestions at the January meeting. An updated guide could be online only.

Old/New Business

The chair reported that more than 200 railroad ties in the bed of the Putnam Greenway have been removed. Weekly SWPPP reports are shared with the committee's SWPPP Working Group.

Manhattan College will renovate at its expense a ballfield in VCP that will become its exclusive home field. No opposition to this plan was expressed by other park users at a recent DPR meeting.

The transfer of part of W. 242 St. adjacent to Brust Park from DOT to DPR is being reviewed to determine whether an interagency transfer is possible. If not, a ULURP would be required.

The VCP Alliance will bring goats into the park starting next spring to help control invasives. Goats have been successfully used for this purpose in Riverside Park and elsewhere.

David Gellman reminded everyone to begin reviewing budget priorities in January.

The meeting concluded at 9 pm.

Submitted and approved by Bob Bender, chair.

