

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
RIVERDALE JEWISH CENTER, 3700 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE
February 24, 2016

Attendees:

Committee: Bob Bender (chair), Sylvia Alexander, David Gellman, Marvin Goodman, Laura Spalter (vice chair), (CB8); Christina Taylor (community committee member)

Other CB8: Robert Press

Absent: Robert Fanuzzi, Arturo Guzman, Amy Joy Robateau; Herb Barret

DPR: David McConnell, Danny Su, Mike Ortiz, Margot Perron, Patricia Ferguson

Community: C. Susan Landgraf (The Island Garden); Lesly Lowe (Commonwealth Cricket Club); Patrick Kenny, Ken Katzman (South Riverdale Little League); Damian McShane, Michael Holoszyc, David Bent (Riverdale Soccer Club); Darrell Lewis, Joshua Stephenson (CM Cohen's office)

Agenda:

The meeting was called to order at 7:10pm. Minutes of the January meeting were unanimously approved.

Renovation of the Seton Park Ballfields

Dave McConnell and Danny Su of DPR presented a design for renovation of the baseball and softball fields in Seton Park. The renovation will replace the artificial turf on the baseball field and install new artificial turf on the softball field. In

addition, the softball field will be regraded to improve drainage and erosion behind the baseball field will be addressed. The entrance to the park at Independence Avenue near W. 232 St will be renovated and the chain-link fence along Independence Avenue will be replaced by a new, attractive barrier fence. This new barrier conforms to DPR's "Parks without Borders" requirement for all new capital projects. Bleacher seating will be introduced along the embankment between the soccer field and Independence Avenue. A new handicapped-accessible entrance and path from W. 235th Street to the softball field will be added. The soccer field will be left in its present condition.

Following the presentation representative of the local soccer club and little league that have permits for these fields discussed the design. There was general approval of the design. It is understood that the 2017 baseball and softball seasons will have to be relocated elsewhere to permit construction. Riverdale Soccer Club representatives noted that their season extends from September to November and urged that construction not impact the soccer field during these three months. DPR replied that they will try to accommodate the club.

Concern was expressed that the proposed two-foot barrier fence along Independence Avenue was not high enough to deter young children from leaving the park. In response, DPR agreed to raise the height of the fence to three feet.

There was much discussion of the fact that some teams use metal cleats on the ballfield despite signage that metal cleats are not permitted on artificial turf. The problem seems to lie with un-permitted users of the field. DPR will try to monitor the situation but policing of these regulations by users of the park will help DPR to prevent damage from this sort of improper use of the field.

Parks without Borders Initiative

Margot Perron, Administrator of Van Cortlandt Park, presented photos of the park entrance at Broadway and W. 242 St, site of the former ice rink. She would like to

remove the chain link fence, widen the entrance to the park, and construct a new pedestrian plaza with seating and plantings at this location.

There was unanimous agreement among committee members that this proposal is most likely our strongest candidate for the Parks without Borders initiative. Margot mentioned that there is support from KRVC, the Friends of VCP, and Manhattan College, as well. Suggestions were made about other possible sources of support. The Chair said that he would discuss further with CB8 Chair Dan Padernacht.

Tibbetts Brook Daylighting

Christina Taylor, committee member and executive director of the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, discussed a proposed daylighting of Tibbetts Brook within VCP. She reviewed the current problem: 4 to 5 million gallons of water flow through Tibbetts Brook on a typical day and all of this water ends up in the city sewer system. (There can be twice as much water in a heavy rainfall.) Although DEP will not provide a figure, the cost of putting this water through the city's water-treatment system could be \$5.8 million a year. This water combines with rainfall and sewage to create one of the worst CSO (combined sewer overflow) problems in the city, putting untreated wastewater into the Harlem River on rainy days.

DPR plans to daylight Tibbetts Brook. The plan would include restoring the wetlands south of Van Cortlandt Lake to retain more water in the park and reduce the flow of water into the city sewer system. This plan will be presented at a future meeting, perhaps later this spring.

FVCP has an ongoing project studying the quality of Tibbetts Brook water in the park, funded by the National Fish & Wildlife Federation. The goal is to try to identify the sources of pollution of the brook (and subsequently, Van Cortlandt Lake) and to address these problems at their source. A report will be issued and made available to the community.

A separate plan would daylight the brook south of the park as far as West 230th street. This would be done in conjunction with purchase of the Putnam Trail right of way from CSX from VCP South to West 230th Street, a long-sought goal.

Laura Spalter urged the committee to advocate for resolving the stalemate over acquisition of the Putnam Trail right of way from VCP South to West 230th Street as the committee and many others in CB8 (including elected officials) did to secure funding for the pedestrian bridge in VCP. Committee members agreed.

Old Business

Christina Taylor reported on the Bronx Parks Speak-Up. Over 250 people attended and it was a highly regarded meeting.

Committee members who attended the Feb. 17 scoping meeting at Riverdale Playground reported that the meeting went well although few if any local parents attended. There was much discussion of the spray shower and of the sandbox (should there be sand or not?). DPR will present a design to the committee and the committee will work with the board office on outreach to local parents in advance of the meeting where the design will be presented.

New Business

Laura Spalter reported that Self-Help is arguing before the BSA that its parking requirements for 6469 Broadway can be reduced because people can park in the VCP stables parking lot. She asked Margot Perron about this.

Ms. Perron replied that there is no overnight parking at this location. Vehicles parked after 10 pm are liable to be ticketed. In addition the parking lot is usually full on weekends. The stable is entitled to use of the parking lot for patrons under its concession agreement with DPR. There is a gate that can be closed at the entrance to the parking lot if the concessionaire feels that its parking facility is being abused.

Susan Landgraff asked about the property on W. 238th St. between Blackstone and Independence Avenues. She and a neighbor have been tending this property, which is in the middle of the street. They have named it Island Garden. In addition to gardening there, they teach local children about plants. She asked whether it was DPR property and whether she and her neighbor might receive assistance from DPR in caring for the property.

Local parks manager Patricia Ferguson said she was not aware of the property and didn't think it belonged to DPR but would investigate.

(Subsequent to the meeting, Ms. Ferguson reported that the property does not belong to DPR.)

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm. The next committee meeting will take place March 30, not March 23, because of Purim.

Bob Bender, Chair
Parks & Recreation Committee