

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

HELD ON MARCH 30, 2016

AT THE RIVERDALE TEMPLE, 4545 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE

Attendees:

Committee Members: Bob Bender (chair), Sylvia Alexander, Robert Fanuzzi, David Gellman, Marvin Goodman, Amy Joy Robateau, Laura Spalter (CB8); Herb Barret, Christina Taylor (Community Committee Members)

Absent: Arturo Guzman

Other CB8: David Kornbluh

DPR: Margot Perron, Patricia Ferguson, Leenda Bonilla, Mike Bolger, Alison Shipley, Bryan Cantwell

Guests: Henry L. James, Jr., Shlomo Liran, Diane Sargent, I.C. Levenberg-Engel, Patsy Smyth, Diane Meenagh, Lou de Holczer, Rhea Varadi

Agenda:

The meeting began at 7:15 pm.

Minutes of the February meeting were unanimously approved.

Henry Hudson Park Renovations

Mike Bolger and Alison Shipley showed a design for the renovations to Henry Hudson (lower) Park. The renovations are funded by Councilman Cohen and the NY State Dormitory Authority. Total budget for the project is \$1.9 million.

Highlights of the renovation include:

Reconstruction of the basketball courts with new pavement, hoops and fencing. There will be one lengthwise full court plus two crosswise half courts;

New path on the north side of the basketball with seating to provide a viewing area and better connection to the comfort station and handball courts;

Reconstruction of the handball courts with new paving and drainage to address settlement at the court;

Clearing vegetation at the fence line around the handball courts;

New chain link fabric at the handball court fence;

Reconfigure the handball court entrance to the west to eliminate the steep slope;

Remove play equipment next to handball court and add adult fitness equipment;

Reconstruct asphalt path from entrance at Kappock Street to the handball courts and around the triangle next to the courts. Add granite block gutter/edging at the path to prevent trucks driving on to lawn areas next to path.

The playgrounds will be unaffected by the renovations.

Funding should be sufficient to permit repair of the adjacent sidewalk on Kappock Street.

Several neighbors of the park were present and commented favorably on the design. They asked about additional benches but were told that because of the slope of the park there are no additional relatively flat surfaces on which to place benches.

A question was raised about the proposed new path on the west side of the basketball courts, which is one of the few grassy spots in the park. There was a consensus among the neighbors that keeping the grassy surface was more important than adding the additional pathway.

Residents of the adjacent building asked about more plantings along the fence beside the handball courts to help mask noise and provide privacy for apartments on the first and second floors of the building. DPR agreed to do additional planting there.

A final design will be ready by September and will be sent to the board office. The project will then go into procurement. Construction work is estimated to last into Fall 2017.

“It’s My Park” Day

Committee members discussed possible locations for the annual “It’s My Park” Day. Patsy Smyth advocated for a clean-up of (upper) Brust Park. Other candidates include Henry Hudson Park, Tibbetts Tail, and Washington’s Walk. There are clean-ups scheduled at Tibbetts Tail; weekly clean-ups and pruning at (upper) Henry Hudson Park; and there is a planned clean-up of lower Brust Park in cooperation with Manhattan College on April 23.

There was discussion about the best date to hold the event. The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park are holding their “It’s My Park” Day event on Saturday, May 14 and the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy has an event in the park on May 21.

The chair proposed sending an email to committee members with the names of the parks and suggested dates to see whether a consensus could be reached.

Preliminary Budget Priorities and Follow-Up on Parks Inspections

The chair reminded committee members to turn in their park assessment forms by the April meeting. These forms will be useful in determining the committee's budget priorities.

Other Business

Following a brief discussion about a possible resource guide for parks, it was agreed that a list of parks that have "Friends of" groups would be valuable. The chair will work with Leenda Bonilla of DPR to try to establish a comprehensive list of such groups.

There was discussion of the Environment & Sanitation Committee's Tibbetts Brook daylighting resolution. Those elements in the daylighting plan that will take place in the park will remain under the jurisdiction of the Parks & Recreation Committee, which will continue to coordinate with the E&S Committee.

Bob Fanuzzi reported on the March 23 BCEQ meeting, where the Tibbetts Brook daylighting was discussed. There will most likely be a public meeting on the subject this spring. DPR hopes to expand the wetlands in VCP to reduce the amount of water flowing into the city sewer system.

Christina Taylor reminded committee members that the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park has started an advocacy campaign for the Tibbetts Brook daylighting. More information is available on the FVCP website: vancortlandt.org

There was brief discussion of dumping in Riverdale Park and the difficulty in catching those responsible and issuing summonses. Such activity takes place near the Spaulding Lane parking lot.

The chair mentioned the recent slashing of a jogger in VCP and reported that he has been trying to reach Capt. O'Toole and Officer Ramos in the 50th Precinct to get more information about police patrols in VCP. Margot Perron said that criminal actions in the park fall under the jurisdiction of the NYPD and not DPR.

At the conclusion of the meeting local parks manager Patricia Ferguson announced that she will be transferring to other districts and will no longer supervise CB8 parks. The committee appreciates her excellent service and wishes her well in her new position.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm. The next meeting will take place on April 27 at Riverdale Neighborhood House.

Bob Bender, Chair
Parks & Recreation Committee