

**Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting**  
**March 27, 2024**  
**Final**

**Attendees**

Present: Bob Bender, Robert Fanuzzi, Rashida Hilliard, Debra Travis (Chair)

Absent: Margaret Della, Rob Jacklosky, Ramdat Singh

Department of Parks and Recreation:

Valerie Davis O'Neal (Bronx Borough Commissioner's Office, DPR), Stephanie Ehrlich (Van Cortlandt Park Administrator), Christina Taylor (Van Cortlandt Park Alliance)

The meeting commenced at 7:03pm

**Approval of the January 24, 2024 and February 28, 2024 Parks and Recreation Committee Minutes**

The meeting minutes were approved unanimously

**Chair's Report**

Committee Goings: David Gellman is no longer a member of the Parks Committee. Robert Fanuzzi and Robert Jacklosky have both decided to not seek re-appointment to the community board and so this is their last Parks Committee meeting. We would like to thank them for their service to the board, the committee and the community.

**Strong Street Playground** - The capital reconstruction of Strong Street Playground will begin April 15<sup>th</sup>. Construction is expected to take 12-18 months. If you would like further information about the design it can be found on the Parks Department website in the Capital Project Tracker.

**Chauncy Young, Bronx Council of Environmental Quality Harlem River Working Group on Greenway Connections Between the Harlem River Greenway and the Putnam Greenway Extension**

Chauncy Young presented on the history of the Harlem River Greenway, which was first proposed by the Dinkins administration in 1993. The Harlem River Working Group was formed in 2009 to advocate for the greenway which would extend from Randall's Island to Van Cortlandt Park along the Harlem River. At the time the land was primarily publicly owned, however, over the years there has been more development and more and more of it is now privately owned. In August, 2022 the United States Department of Transportation announced a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant for New York City for expansion of the existing greenway system across all five boroughs. Building the Harlem River Greenway is part of this expansion and a portion of the money would be used to study the creation of the greenway. The New York City Department of Transportation and Department of Parks and Recreation have now been tasked by the New York City Council with developing a plan for the Harlem River Greenway and to expedite creating a near term protected bike pathway and a long term greenway as part of this project.

Dynamic Star is developing a 30 acre site on former CSX property called Fordham Landing along the Harlem River near Fordham Road. This site will include a ferry dock and canoe and private boat launch. The developer has committed to building the portion of the greenway which runs through

their property including access to the south to Roberto Clemente Park and access to the north to connect to a future extension of the Putnam Greenway. They intend to demolish the old power station near West 225<sup>th</sup> Street and the Target store and construct a ramp over the Metro North tracks and have hired an architect to create drawings to demonstrate the feasibility of this plan and their commitment to it.

In order to connect this ramp to the existing planned Putnam Greenway southern extension, additional land between West 230<sup>th</sup> Street and West 225<sup>th</sup> Street would need to be acquired either through lease, purchase or easement by the New York City Parks Department (DPR) and the Putnam Greenway would need to be extended the additional length to the ramp.

The Putnam Greenway southern extension is located along the west side of the Major Deegan starting within Van Cortlandt Park and forms a linear park and greenway south to West 230<sup>th</sup> Street. This linear park is part of the Tibbetts Brook Daylighting project, a joint venture of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and DPR and will include a stream that will bring water from Van Cortlandt Lake to the Harlem River, diverting 4-5 million gallons of water a day from the city sewer. During the development of the Tibbetts Brook Daylighting project, in 2011, the Universal Land Review Procedure (ULURP) City Council resolution of necessary mitigations called for the future conversion of land to DPR from Metro North (MTA) through lease of the CSX railroad tracks along the Major Deegan between West 230<sup>th</sup> Street and West 225<sup>th</sup> Street for an extension that would connect to a future Harlem River Greenway. This extension would be 1,164 feet long and 40 feet wide and is presently used by CSX to sort trash.

Now that formal planning for the Harlem River Greenway has begun, the Harlem River Working Group is seeking resolutions from Community Boards 1, 4, 5, 7 and 8, which represent the districts along the Harlem River Greenway, requesting that the Parks Department initiate the ULURP process for acquiring use of the land between West 225<sup>th</sup> and West 230<sup>th</sup> Streets. The ULURP process is the first step of government review for a change of use of this type. Once the impacts and necessary mitigations of those impacts for acquiring the land are understood through the ULURP process, the NY City Council would vote to enjoin Corporation Council to lease/acquire the land to create parkland.

The committee drafted a resolution in support of acquiring this land for this use to be voted on during the April committee meeting. The draft language is:

**RESOLUTION ASKING THE CITY TO ULURP THE LEASE, PURCHASE, OR  
EASEMENT OF LAND ALONG THE MTA TRACKS FROM WEST 230TH STREET  
TO WEST 225TH STREET IN BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 8**

**Whereas** the NYC City Planning Commission (CPC) authorized the 2011 New York City Council ULURP resolution for the acquisition of CSX property with the following statement for the future lease of MTA tracks south of W230<sup>th</sup> Street:

*“The MTA will continue to maintain and use these tracks until at least 2013, after which time DPR is planning to lease the ROW from the MTA for the purpose of creating another segment of greenway that will*

*connect to that of the current proposal. Eventually the goal is to have the greenway continue along the waterfront of the Harlem River, connecting to other existing and proposed greenways further to the south.”*

And,

**Whereas** the current planned route for the Putnam Greenway will end at West 230<sup>th</sup> Street with minimal connections along city streets which are far from the Harlem River waterfront; and

**Whereas,** the City of New York has committed to planning and building the Harlem River Greenway as a continuous greenway from Van Cortlandt Park to Randall’s Island along the Harlem River waterfront; and

**Whereas** the continuation of the Putnam Greenway south of 230<sup>th</sup> Street along the route of the former Putnam Railroad is integral to the success of the Putnam Greenway as planned by connecting it to a larger greenway system within the Bronx from Van Cortlandt Park to Randall’s Island, and was described as “a priority project for the borough” and a “significant opportunity to expand the off-road greenway system, providing an off-street route to the Harlem River waterfront” in the 2007 Bronx Greenway Plan; and

**Whereas,** this section of land between West 230<sup>th</sup> Street and West 225<sup>th</sup> Street would provide a vital connection between the Northwest Bronx and Randall’s Island over ten miles south via the planned Harlem River Greenway; and

**Whereas** the continuation of the Putnam Greenway south of W. 230<sup>th</sup> Street will bring needed recreation opportunities to the Marble Hill community, the most economically disadvantaged census tract in Bronx Community District 8, and provide access for this community to the Harlem River Greenway; and,

**Therefore be it resolved,** that Bronx Community Board 8 supports the extension of the Putnam Greenway as outlined in the 2011 ULURP authorization for the purpose of creating a continuous linear parkland along the Harlem River

**Therefore be it further resolved,** that Bronx Community Board 8 calls upon the New York City Department of Parks to initiate the process of submitting a ULURP application for lease, purchase, or easement of the currently owned MTA property running along the tracks of the Old Putnam Railroad between West 230<sup>th</sup> to West 225<sup>th</sup> Street to the New York Department of City Planning (DCP) in compliance with all relevant rules and standards outlined by DCP.

**Prioritize FY26 Budget Items**

The committee discussed the list that was previously assembled and put them in a priority order. The order, which will be finalized at the April committee meeting, is:

**CAPITAL – FY26 Priorities**

FY2026 Ranking		FY2025 Ranking
1	<b><u>PARKS – DPR - Redesign and reconstruction of Bailey Playground</u></b> Reconstruction of play equipment, safety surfacing and fencing along the Major Deegan. Incorporate adjacent Tibbett's Tail area into an expanded Bailey Playground. Reduce asphalt and add green space.	1
2	<b><u>PARKS – DPR - Reconstruction of Old Fort Four Park</u></b> Reconstruction of Old Fort Four Park including playground equipment, benches, greenspace, stone walls and fencing including improved lighting for the basketball courts	7
3	<b><u>PARKS – DPR - Marble Hill Playground Lighting</u></b> Install park lighting to light the pathways and activity areas within the interior of Marble Hill Playground	3
4	<b><u>PARKS – DPR - Restoration of Lower Brust Park Staircase</u></b> Restoration of flagstone, pavers, steps and handrails	4
5	<b><u>PARKS – DPR - Equipment for Litter Collection</u></b> Additional mini-packer vehicle to reach remote areas for litter collection in Van Cortlandt Park in District 13 and one packer vehicle to be assigned in District 8	5 & 6

## EXPENSE – FY26 Priorities

FY2026 Ranking		FY2025 Ranking
1	<u>Parks Enforcement Patrol Command within Van Cortlandt Park</u> PEP Personnel, stationed in Van Cortlandt Park, including additional PEP officers, sufficient to properly enforce DPR rules and regulations in Van Cortlandt Park and other CD08 district parks	3
2	<u>Repair Bruckner Box Connection in Upper Henry Hudson Park</u>	4
3	<u>Crushed Stone and Boulders for Maintenance</u> Crushed stone and boulders to enable repairs of tracks, walkways and dog runs within District 8 and Van Cortlandt Park	2
4	<u>Replacement Gator-Type Utility Vehicles for Landscape Management, Maintenance and Operations Staff Within Van Cortlandt Park</u> Replace three existing utility gator-type vehicles due to age and maintenance issues	1

### **Old Business**

Chair Travis raised that in order to follow-up on concerns expressed about the restrictive membership requirements of the National Society of Colonial Dames of New York, who operate Van Cortlandt House Museum and whose license is up for renewal, she reached out to the New York City Commission on Human Rights to get guidance on New York City law as it applies to public accommodation. They did a cursory review of the details of the case and recommended that she submit a formal inquiry because it merited review. Members of the committee expressed concern that this may give the general public the perception that overt discrimination has occurred which the committee agrees has not been observed. Since there is a concern by members of the committee and the public that there is a perception of bias which may not be legal, the determination was made that the committee chair will work with the board chair on next steps such as sending a letter to our elected officials to request assistance.

### **New Business**

None

The meeting adjourned at 9:16pm

Minutes submitted by Deb Travis

Recording Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVd1y1lsQqQ>