

Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting of September 25, 2019

W Assisted Living at Riverdale, 6355 Broadway

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 B. Jackson, Donnel Leverett

Other CB8: Dan Padernacht

CB12: George Torres

DPR: Ellen Macnow, John-Paul Catusco

DDC: Maria Centeno, Ivan Estevez, Joshua Cortes, Alimur Rahman

Community: Councilman Andrew Cohen, Karen Argenti, Caroline Clanton, Benigno Veraz, Wing Tseung, Hugh McCarey, Joel Guerrero, Seth Condell, Christina Taylor, Miriam Allen, Roberta Todd, Matt Turov, Betty Lev, Regina King, Karen Selsey, Sheila Coppin, Jacki Fischer

Agenda:

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm. The chair welcomed new committee members Eider Garcia, Robert Jacklosky, and Debra Travis, and welcomed back Laura Spalter.

DDC Presentation for Pedestrian Bridge over I-87 (Major Deegan Expressway) in Van Cortlandt Park

Maria Centeno of DDC presented a preliminary design for this east-west bridge and accompanying ramps, which are required for ADA accessibility. Since the conceptual design was presented to the committee in March, 2018, the bridge design has changed. It is now a trestle design, not quite as high as before, and it is 10 feet wide instead of 12 feet wide. Ms. Centeno said that these changes were made to lower the cost of the bridge. The project is now expected to cost \$23.5 million, which has been allocated by state and local elected officials. The ramps have been shortened from the conceptual design by increasing the slope of the ramps closer to the maximum permitted under ADA regulations. The bridge will still be 17.5 feet above the highway, higher than the required DOT minimum.

Because the area where the ramps are located is heavily forested, a significant number of trees will be lost. There will be re-plantings to compensate. A final tally of trees is yet to come. Committee members expressed disappointment that this information was not available for the presentation and asked that it be provided as soon as possible.

The project is anticipated to being in early 2020 and to conclude in late 2024.

There was an extensive question and answer session, which elicited additional information. The bridge will be lighted; water runoff will take place into the park (DOT regulations forbid water runoff onto the highway); the location of the bridge was moved farther north from the original site in order to avoid possibly compromising the Croton Aqueduct; environmental impacts of the project are still being studied by DDC and DPR; DOT review of the project is not complete because the design is not yet final; the expected lifetime of the bridge is 75 years.

Although the bridge is intended for pedestrian use, it is possible that bicycles could use the bridge, but the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail, which the bridge connects, is designated as a pedestrian trail. The ramp materials will be asphalt, but at the request of those in attendance DDC will study a permeable surface at ground level and will investigate the possibility of other surfaces for the ramps; DOT will maintain the bridge, but DPR will maintain the ground surface; a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) may be required; State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) approval may be required.

The chair proposed a resolution affirming the committee's support for the bridge, which will join the eastern and western portions of Van Cortlandt Park. But he noted the many unanswered questions and concerns that were raised and in discussion with committee members drafted a Be It Resolved clause containing several conditions for the committee's approval of the preliminary design. It is expected that DDC will answer these questions at or prior to its return to the committee next spring with a final design presentation.

Resolution

Whereas Van Cortlandt Park is divided by three highways, the Henry Hudson Parkway, Mosholu Parkway and the Major Deegan Expressway (I-87); and

Whereas pedestrian access throughout the park, especially east-west access, is difficult due to the obstacle presented by the highways; and

Whereas, the City Council of the City of New York made the construction of a pedestrian bridge in Van Cortlandt Park, if feasible, among its conditions for its 1999 ULURP resolution allowing the construction of the Croton Filtration Plant in Van Cortlandt Park; and

Whereas the Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan 2034, endorsed by Community Board 8 at its May 2014 meeting, proposes three pedestrian bridges over the highways to improve access to all parts of the park; and

Whereas the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee (CFMC), comprised of representatives of community boards 7, 8, and 12, and representatives of local elected officials, called for a pedestrian bridge to be built over the Major Deegan Expressway when the feasibility of such construction was determined, which was done in 2009; and

Whereas Community Board 8 endorsed the construction of this pedestrian bridge recommended by CFMC at its June 2010 meeting; and

Whereas local community organizations, environmental advocates, and trail and hiking associations have endorsed the building of this pedestrian bridge and supported the position of the CFMC and Community Board 8; and

Whereas \$25.5 million in funding for this pedestrian bridge was secured from the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), our councilman and our state representatives; and

Whereas the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) has proposed a preliminary design of the bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway to enable easier east-west access in Van Cortlandt Park and connect the eastern and western portions of the trail on the Old Croton Aqueduct, which is on the New York State and national historic registers; and

Whereas DDC presented its conceptual bridge design to the Parks & Recreation committee at its March 28, 2018 meeting, which the committee approved, and presented its preliminary design for the bridge to the committee at its September 25, 2019 meeting;

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the committee approves the preliminary design with the following conditions:

that DDC will provide an accounting of the trees that will have to be removed in the course of building the bridge and ramps, and will make every effort to minimize the number of trees to be removed, and that all tree restitution required by the construction of the bridge, whether in the form of tree replanting or financial compensation, will take place in Van Cortlandt Park, as close as possible to the construction site;

that DDC will provide the committee with more information about the materials to be used in constructing the ramps, including what sort of materials might be used to minimize the impact of the ramps on the park, the total number of square feet of impervious material to be used and what non-permeable alternatives might be available, and that DDC will consider using natural materials for that portion of the ramps that are on the surface of the park, in every instance explaining to the committee its choice of materials;

that DDC will coordinate with DPR to determine whether the project will require a SWPPP (Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan) and will report back to the committee on its decision and the reasons for its decision if negative, and if a SWPPP is required will consult with the committee on planning the SWPPP;

that DDC and DPR will contact the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) to determine whether the project requires SHPO review because of existing historic designations;

that DDC and DPR together with any other relevant agencies will determine whether the project will require a negative declaration of environmental impacts and will advise the committee before declaring a negative declaration;

that DDC will return to the committee with a final design and will address these conditions prior to presenting the final design to the committee and at that final design presentation will note all substantive changes to the design since the preliminary design presentation.

The resolution was approved as follows:

In favor, 8: Barret, Bender, Fanuzzi, Garcia, Goodman, Jacklosky, Spalter, Travis

Abstain, 1: Gellman

Opposed, 0

Report from SWPPP Working Group on Putnam Greenway

On Sept. 12, the SWPPP Working Group – Karen Argenti, Bob Bender, Robert Fanuzzi, Laura Spalter, and Christina Taylor – met with DPR officials, representatives of the Putnam contractor (Grace Industries), and others to review the SWPPP protocol during the reconstruction of the trail.

A SWPPP specialist will be responsible for making sure that all sediment is contained in the project area. That specialist will inspect the site weekly and within 24 hours of a rainfall of 0.5 inch or more. The resident engineer will inspect the site daily. There will be weekly and monthly reports of erosion inspection, which will be shared with the Working Group via our DPR liaison. Christina Taylor will be the liaison for the Working Group and will have access to the site on a schedule to be determined with the resident engineer. The ongoing water-quality testing at Van Cortlandt Lake will continue.

Discussion of October Joint Committee Meeting with Manhattan College on the Enslaved Peoples Project at the Van Cortlandt House Museum

The chair mentioned that the October 23 committee meeting will be held in conjunction with a Manhattan College undergraduate history class to discuss this ongoing investigation into the history of the Van Cortlandt House Museum site. The chair also mentioned that the community board has again received an allocation from Councilman Cabrera for a community event. The chair suggested that the committee propose spending some of this allocation for a public event designed to raise awareness of the Enslaved Peoples project. More detailed discussion will take place at the October meeting.

Chair's Report

The chair reported on the budget consultation meeting, which did not provide much new information except for the woeful status of the PEP program, which is now staffed at 50% of its allocated strength.

The chair updated the committee on capital projects in the community, several of which are underway. Capital projects can be tracked at this website: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/planning-and-building/capital-project-tracker>

On a Sept. 13 phone call to meet organizers, school athletic directors, and other permit holders for cross-country events on the Parade Grounds in VCP initiated by DPR, everyone was reminded that double-parking of school buses and private vehicles on Broadway will not be tolerated. Maps indicating the authorized bus-parking site on Jerome Avenue were distributed to all permit holders. The chair participated in the call and stressed the importance of respecting the community during

events. Also on the call were Bronx Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa and 50th Precinct commander Capt. Emilio Melendez.

Joel Guerrero reported that he has raised \$15,000 toward renovation of the basketball courts in Fort Four Playground. He is cooperating with DPR in planning this renovation. Committee member Debra Travis said that she was aware of this work and will coordinate with Mr. Guerrero. Mr. Guerrero is to be commended for his dedication to this work.

Minutes of the June 2019 meeting were unanimously approved.

The next meeting will take place October 23 at the Kelly Commons at Manhattan College.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Minutes submitted by Bob Bender