

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting Held on June 26, 2013, at the Board Office

Attendees

Committee members: Bob Bender, Laura Spalter, Marvin Goodman, Robert Press, Rosemary Ginty, Mercedes Zegarra-Soja, Sylvia Alexander, James Rather, CB8; Christina Taylor, FVCP

Other CB8 members: Maria Khury, Robert Fanuzzi

DPR: Tannise Palmer, Rakeem Taylor, Dennis Burton, Margot Perron

Others: Lisa Kaplan, New Yorkers for Parks; Rebecca Alford, Laura Carpenter, Van Cortlandt House Museum; Andrew Sandler, Councilman Koppell's office; Elizabeth Thompson, G. Slade, KHNA; Matthew Turov, Suzanne Corber, John Young, Catherine O'Brien, Save the Putnam Trail

Agenda

The meeting began at 7:05 PM.

Minutes of the May meeting were approved with this change: Under "Discussion of the Putnam Trail," change the words "the following resolution was proposed" to "the following resolution was proposed and rejected."

Discussion of the Van Cortlandt House Museum Renovation Project

Laura Carpenter Myers discussed plans for a renovation to the dining room in the Van Cortlandt House Museum, where she is the director. DPR's design group has already approved the design, which will go before the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) on August 6.

This design, which has been planned for several years, will return the dining room to its appearance circa 1823. (The mansion itself was built in 1748.) The restoration will remove some later additions. The dining room had been deteriorating and is the last principal room in the house to be renovated. In the course of repairs to the dining room, wallpaper from around 1820 was discovered as was 18th century chimney paneling. These discoveries changed the planned renovation, which will now restore the paneling to its original almond color and will use a reproduction of the circa 1820 wallpaper that was recently identified.

The mansion is owned by the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, but it is licensed to the National Society of Colonial Dames, which oversees the interior and operates the museum. The Colonial Dames are paying the cost of the renovation.

If the LPC approves the renovation, then a contractor will be found to do the work. It is expected that the work will take about one year to perform.

Ms. Carpenter asked for a letter of support from the committee addressed to Mr. Robert Tierney, chair of the LPC. It was unanimously agreed by committee members that such a letter of support should be sent subject to approval by Board Chair Robert Fanuzzi.

Discussion of New Yorkers for Parks “Parks Platform 2013”

Lisa Kaplan of New Yorkers for Parks spoke about this proposal for changing the funding formula for NYC parks. She briefly summarized the platform, which can be found on the group’s website at www.newyorkersforparks.org. Among other things, the proposal would make funding of capital projects for city parks a part of the mayoral budget instead of, as at present, subject to the discretionary funds of local Council members and Borough Presidents. The platform also proposes baselining maintenance expenses in the budget rather than zeroing them out annually; accurately estimating the maintenance costs of each city park; limiting public-private partnerships; requiring DPR to adopt best practices of other agencies that handle substantial capital funds, such as DDC; and instituting new restrictions on alienation of parkland.

Ms. Kaplan said that her group has been meeting with mayoral candidates as well as community boards. There will be a rally in support of the NY4P proposal at City Hall on August 15.

Andrew Sandler reported that Councilman Koppell agrees with the NY4P proposal.

Ms. Kaplan requested a letter of support from the committee. Committee members unanimously agreed to endorse such a letter, subject to approval of the Board chair.

Old and New Business

Committee chair Bob Bender reported on recent developments concerning the proposed LG building on the Palisades, notably that Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer jointly wrote to Gov. Chris Christie asking that the project be scaled back to avoid piercing the tree line on the Palisades.

Board chair Robert Fanuzzi will testify at the hearing on Intro 948, the change in the FCRC regulations to give community boards and the public 30 days to comment on proposed franchises and concessions rather than the current 15 days.

Andrew Sandler reported that it’s unlikely there will be another site visit to Ewen Park because DPR planners believe that the public comments at a previous Parks & Recreation Committee meeting provided them with sufficient information to alter their design proposal. It is expected that a revised design for the renovations to Ewen Park will be presented by DPR in the fall.

Parks manager Tannise Palmer reported that an arrangement is being made with Riverdale Neighborhood House to open and close Sid Augarten ballfield so that neighborhood residents will have access to the recently renovated field when it is not in use by the North Riverdale Baseball League, which holds permits for the field.

Laura Spalter reported that neighbors are asking for additional mulch for the dog run at Hackett Park and for an enlargement of the dog run. Ms. Palmer said that mulch can be delivered if

residents are on hand to help disperse it. In order to expand the dog run, additional fencing will be required, which is an expense that will have to be funded. It was agreed that the committee would contact the Friends of Vinmont and Hackett Parks to discuss the dog run details with them.

Suzanne Corber and others from Save the Putnam Trail discussed their proposal to do some repair work on a chronically muddy area of the Putnam Trail. Following a brief discussion of the extent of the drainage problem on the trail, Margaret Eremeyeva said that she has a formal proposal to address the muddy area on the trail that Ms. Corber mentioned. Margot Perron, VCP Administrator, said that it was generally not advisable to do such work in park areas that are expected to undergo major capital projects and that DPR does not allow excavation projects. Both she and Ms. Taylor of FVCP discussed the extensive procedures for approval of volunteer projects in VCP. After further discussion, Ms. Perron agreed to accept a formal proposal for this work when it is sent to her and to refer this proposal to the appropriate person or group within DPR.

Christina Taylor reported that FVCP will hold a fund-raiser in conjunction with the Van Cortlandt House Museum at the July 16 NY Philharmonic concert in VCP. She also reported that a Youth Farm Stand will operate at the Amalgamated Houses on Sedgwick Avenue on Wednesdays, 4 – 7 PM, from July 10 to August 28. There will be FVCP trail maintenance in VCP the second Saturday of July and August, weather permitting.

Bob Bender mentioned a phone call he received concerning the change in the name of Raoul Wallenberg Park to Raoul Wallenberg Forest. Andrew Sandler said that this change was made by Parks Commissioner Henry Stern. Tannise Palmer reported that the DPR Natural Resource Group oversees this area. There was no consensus on whether calling the area a “forest” as opposed to a “park” has any practical consequences.

A resident representing KHNIA reported that there will be a neighborhood party in Fort Four Park from 11 AM to 4 PM on the first Saturday in August. KHNIA recently did a clean-up in the park.

The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.

Submitted by,

Bob Bender, Chair
Parks & Recreation Committee