

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee, January 23, 2019 at the W Assisted
Living at Riverdale, 6355 Broadway

Attendees:

Committee: Bob Bender (chair), Robert Fanuzzi, David Gellman, Marvin Goodman, Donell
Leverett (all CB8); Christina Taylor, Herb Barret (community committee members)

Absent: Eric Bell, Daris B. Jackson, Tao Moran

Other CB8: Dan Padernacht, Laura Spalter

DPR: Margot Perron, Dave McConnell, Jennifer Nemecek, Chris Syrett, Ellen Hartig, John-Paul
Catusco, Nick Cuaya

Other City Officials: Capt. Melendez, Officer Ventura, 50th Precinct; Patrick Hill (Councilmember
Cohen's office)

In addition, at least 16 members of the community attended. Names are on file in the CB8 office.

Agenda:

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm.

Parks without Borders Presentation and Discussion

Dave McConnell and Jennifer Nemecek from DPR's Capital Projects group showed a revised design for the Parks without Borders entrance to Van Cortlandt Park at Broadway and W. 242 St. The revised design has fewer paved pathways and more green space than the previous design. As before the central plaza is the focal point, designed to be a meeting place. There will be two security cameras, one in the BBQ area, the other in the central plaza, added to the project at the request of the committee and former 50th Precinct CO O'Toole. A new pathway will enter the BBQ area, and efforts will be made to grade the area to minimize flooding, to which the area is susceptible. There will be increased lighting of the plaza area and it will be visible at night from the street.

All staging will take place inside the park, in the former ice rink area. There will be no loss of parking on Broadway during or after construction. The pool will be unaffected and will remain open during construction. Construction is expected to begin in March and take 18 months.

Concerns were expressed about closing the BBQ area during the summer. There was a consensus that this should be avoided if possible. If not, a secondary BBQ area should be identified in advance. It was also suggested that signs be placed at the #1 train alerting people to the closing of the BBQ area. There was also concern about the closing of the path to the golf house/Putnam Trail during the summer months. (The Putnam Trail will be closed for renovation during this same period. See below.) One speaker deplored the condition of the stadium bathrooms, a sentiment that was widely echoed. The committee will add renovation of these bathrooms to its list of budget priorities. There were suggestions to coordinate carefully with the natural areas group to try to improve the hydrology of the area.

The presentation was generally well received. The committee will follow up with a list of suggestions made at the meeting to be emailed to DPR representatives.

Minutes of the November 2018 meeting were unanimously approved.

Putnam Trail Discussion

Before beginning the agenda discussion, the chair introduced Margot Perron to update everyone on the recently reported possible burial site of enslaved workers at the Van Cortlandt plantation. The burial site is reported to be in proximity to the Putnam Trail. A ground-penetrating radar survey is underway to identify areas where there may have been burials. Margot introduced Peggy King Jorde, who worked with the African burial ground in Manhattan. She explained that in the event that graves are discovered, the best practice is to leave them undisturbed but to add a sign or some other information in that area explaining the significance of the burials. The chair remarked that this is a wonderful educational opportunity for school groups and the community.

SWPP Procedure during Construction. The chair identified the five members of the SWPPP Working Group, all present at the meeting, and introduced Ellen Hartig from DPR, who will be the ecologist overseeing the SWPPP (Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan) during construction. She will be the liaison between the Working Group and the contractor. The procedure will be more precisely defined once the contractor is on site, but there will be weekly access and other access as required. Christina Taylor will be the liaison for the Working Group. Further discussion to come.

Public Safety Issues after Construction. Chris Syrett from DPR showed a slide of safety markings planned for the Putnam Trail. Cyclists and pedestrians will not be separated, but the path will be

divided by directional markings, which will direct cyclists and pedestrians to stay to the right of center on the pathway. Currently markings are planned for the north end of the trail and for the golf house. All present agreed that this was inadequate and that we need signs and markings at the south end of the trail, in the vicinity of Van Cortlandt Lake, where pedestrian use is heaviest. Chris agreed. A series of questions and comments followed. Among the issues raised were whether curves could be introduced into the trail. The trail's location is already fixed, but it does include some gentle curves. One cyclist said that the trail is too narrow to permit speeding. (It is eight feet wide north of the second bridge and ten feet wide from that bridge south.)

A suggestion was made that cyclists be advised to dismount and walk their bikes at the south end of the trail and that signs be posted advising cyclists that they must yield to pedestrians. Someone else asked about enforcement. This is an operational question, and Margot Perron said that she would ask the mounted PEP officers in VCP (there are two) to patrol the Putnam Trail following construction. She also suggested that the committee consider adding a specific request for PEP officers on bicycles to our budget requests. Other concerns were expressed about risks to birders from cyclists. Cyclists present at the meeting agreed with the need for proper signage to alert everyone, but particularly cyclists, to their presence on a shared pathway in a heavily used area of the park and of cyclists' responsibility to yield. One cyclist suggested that cyclists should be present at the opening of the renovated pathway to help instruct cyclists on proper behavior, perhaps handing out flyers. The chair suggested making an event out of the opening of the trail, and using that event as an educational and publicity opportunity for everyone on how to share the trail.

The committee will follow up with DPR on the many good suggestions made at the meeting.

Note: Following the meeting Margot Perron reported that the Putnam team is working with DPR's Sign Committee to add signage as discussed at the meeting.

Old Business

The equipment supplier will finish the installation of equipment at the VCP skate park, where the original contractor declared bankruptcy. This project will now resume in March.

Ground will be broken for the new playground at the Mosholu entrance into VCP in March. Both projects are estimated to take 12 months to complete.

“It’s My Park” Day. The chair noted that last year’s IMP Day drew only three CB8 members. If these projects are going to continue, we will need greater participation from CB8.

Preliminary Discussion of Budget Priorities. The chair asked committee members to start thinking about what our parks need. He will send committee members a list of the current capital and expense priorities prior to the February meeting.

The annual Bronx Parks Speak-Up will take place Saturday, Feb. 23 at Lehman College.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.