

COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2012 AT THE BOARD OFFICE

Attendees:

Committee Members: Bob Bender, Chair; Laura Spalter, Vice Chair; Rosemary Ginty, Robert Press, Nils Graham, Marvin Goodman, Sylvia Alexander, Damian McShane, CB8; Herb Barret, Memorial Grove; Christina Taylor, Friends of VC Park

Others: Andrew Cohen, CB8; Margot Perron, Dennis Burton, Ben Kramer, Steve DesNoyer, Tannise Palmer, DPR; Ron Kraut, Marjorie, VCP Ice Rink; Lawrence Moiatto, Don Tannen, Lillian Tannen, Frieda Barret, Memorial Grove; Andrew Sandler, Councilman Koppell's office; I-C Levenberg-Engel, BCEQ; David Burg, Wild Metro; Sarina Trangle, Riverdale Press; Miawling Lam, Riverdale Review; Anita Dutt, Joan Goldman, 2530 Independence Ave Co-Op; Ana Komnonic, Valerie Plesch, Columbia Journalism School

Agenda

The meeting began at 7 pm. Minutes of the May meeting were approved with the exception of a reference to parking at the Van Cortlandt Park Ice Rink, which Robert Press observed was inaccurate. The Chair suggested approving without this item since it was on the agenda and would be updated at the meeting. (New members of the committee who did not attend the May meeting abstained from the vote approving the minutes.)

Van Cortlandt Ice Rink

Ron Kraut of VCP Ice Rink updated the committee on operational details. Power has been brought to the curb by Con Ed and final hook-up to the site should take place by September 30. Construction at the site should begin around October 1 and will continue all month. This will include removing fencing on the stadium side and fencing on the south side and installing chillers. New lights and light poles will be installed, and the tennis courts will be leveled. The chillers should become operational around November 1. The rink will experience a "soft opening" soon afterward with a grand opening planned just prior to Thanksgiving.

The site plan is unchanged. Guest services buildings will be ADA accessible. A pavilion constructed of shipping containers will be the location for guest services.

Rink operators have applied for a street activity permit for loading and unloading and for bus and private vehicle pick up and drop off. The area required for buses and vehicles could cause the removal of five to six parking spaces during the months from October through March. It was agreed that this matter will be brought to the attention of the T&T committee and that any permit should be considered by the community board before it is approved.

The rink will place a heavy emphasis on learn-to-skate programs. EMTs will be on site on weekends.

The rink has developed a "community partners" program that mainly involves spreading information about the rink via brochures and flyers that will list the names of local sponsors. In addition, names of community partners and their logos may be featured at the site. Rink operators have not sought advertising per se. All sponsorship advertising is subject to Parks

Department approval. Approximately a dozen community partners have indicated their desire to participate so far.

There will be no food preparation on site. Beverages will be available and there may be deliveries from local food vendors such as pizza shops.

VC Ice Rink is responsible for security around the clock once it arrives on site around October 1.

In response to questions, Mr. Kraut indicated that there will be some ambient noise from the chillers, but he does not anticipate it to be a problem. Ice Rink Events, the parent company of the VC Ice Rink, has stopped playing music at some locations such as Peter Cooper Village and may not play any music at the VC rink.

Cooney Grauer Field

Steve DesNoyer of the Parks Capital Group discussed a plan for renovations at Cooney Grauer ballfield in Bailey Park, which is used exclusively by the Kingsbridge Little League. The fence along the third base-left field side of the ballfield will be raised to a uniform height of 20 feet; portions of the fence are now 16 feet. Councilman Koppell allocated \$275,000 for the project, which will also include other features such as reinstalling the electrical line to the scoreboard below ground, new concrete decks behind home plate and the third base dugout. The batting cage, however, will be removed and not reconstructed. New sod will be laid in left field near the fence.

The league has been concerned that the loss of some mature trees just beyond the fence might result in foul balls clearing the fence and landing on the Major Deegan Expressway, which is nearby at the bottom of a slope from the ballfield fence.

Andrew Sandler expressed disappointment that he was not informed about the loss of the batting cage and asked Mr. DesNoyer for an estimate on the cost of reconstructing it. Committee members suggested planting trees alongside the fence when the work is finished, but Mr. DesNoyer said he was not sure who owned the property and whether this would be permitted. He will investigate.

Mr. DesNoyer said that he hopes a contractor will be in place in 2013 to begin work after the baseball season ends. He anticipates that the work will take around 3 months. Because no one could attend on behalf of KLL, none present knew whether KLL has a fall baseball season.

Mr. DesNoyer asked for the committee's approval because the project must go to the Buildings Department and the Public Design Commission for approval. The committee unanimously approved. *(A formal letter of approval was subsequently sent from the Board office to Mr. DesNoyer.)*

Putnam Trail

At the Chair's request, Mr. DesNoyer addressed concerns that have been raised by the Save the Putnam Trail Committee about paving of the Putnam Trail vs. using rock dust/crushed stone to renovate the trail surface.

Mr. DesNoyer noted that ADA compliance is required. Rock dust can be made ADA compliant if it is constantly maintained and repaired, which is not possible in Van Cortlandt Park. Even with continual maintenance rock dust would not offer a multi-user surface satisfactory for in-line skaters and bikers, among others. Rock dust would require stone screenings to stay in place

and so it would not be possible to plow or power-brush the surface in the event of snowfall and heavy leaf fall. Margot Perron, VC Park Administrator, observed that even on the flat rock-dust surface around the Parade Ground, dips and puddles occur frequently despite regular maintenance. DPR is firm in its position that only a hard surface will meet the requirements of the Putnam Trail renovation.

The trail plan is currently under review by NY State Department of Transportation. Mr. DesNoyer hopes that approval may be in hand by the end of this year. Then a contractor must be found via the usual bidding process. He does not anticipate construction work to begin until late 2013.

Other Business

Tannise Palmer, the new CB8 Parks Manager, reported that repairs to the water pipe and sprinkler at Ruth McLaughlin playground on Greystone Avenue are underway and should be completed this fall.

She expects that a plan for the renovation of the basketball courts and fence at Ewen Park should be ready by the end of October. A tot lot will be included in the plans. The Chair observed that when the plan is ready for presentation to the committee, the committee will meet in a location close to the park and the Board will reach out to the nearby community to encourage strong attendance.

There was discussion of recent use of pesticide or herbicide spray at Seton Park, specifically about the spray itself and whether sufficient notice was given to the community. DPR representatives observed that the spray used by DPR is less powerful than over-the-counter products widely available, e.g., Round-Up, which can be bought at Home Depot and elsewhere.

(Subsequent to the meeting Ms. Palmer reported that the spraying was done to combat poison ivy on a fence near the dog run and that notices were placed on Friday 9/7 and spraying was done Monday 9/10. NYC local law 37 requires 24 hours' notice before such spraying can occur.)

The Chair reported that he has discussed with Vice Chair Laura Spalter the formation of a Friends of Vinmont Park that would include nearby residents and Riverdale Neighborhood House. An approach to these parties will be made in the coming weeks in the hope that the renovated park can be maintained by volunteers who will supplement the maintenance performed by DPR staff. If the Friends of Vinmont Park can be successfully established, it may be possible to replicate this model in other parks, such as Ewen Park.

Marvin Goodman observed that Partnership for Parks provides training and equipment for parks volunteers and that perhaps they can be tapped for volunteers for local parks. Committee members agreed that we should try to find volunteers through this group.

I-C asked whether committee members will participate in an upcoming Coastal Clean-Up. Rosemary Ginty observed that she had investigated this program and found that coastal clean-up in Riverdale is all but impossible because of the Metro-North tracks, which prevent access to the Hudson River.

There will be a Million Trees planting day on October 27. Committee members are encouraged to sign up at www.milliontrees.org.

The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park are holding a 20th anniversary gala on October 4.

David Burg of Wild Metro said that his group operates throughout the tri-state area and has done projects at Van Cortlandt Park in the past. They hope to return to VCP soon.

The meeting adjourned at 9 pm with apologies to all for the crowded conditions.

Submitted by,

Bob Bender
Chairman
Parks & Recreation Committee