

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD OCTOBER 24TH, 2012 AT THE RIVERDALE MENTAL HEALTH
CONFERENCE ROOM

Attendees

Committee board members: Bob Bender (Chair), Laura Spalter (Vice Chair), Sylvia Alexander, Rosemary Ginty, Marvin Goodman, Nils Graham, Mike Heller, Thailary Lim, Damian McShane, Robert Press; Herb Barret and Lawrence Moiatto (Memorial Grove); Christina Taylor (Friends of VCP)

DPR: Margot Perron, Ben Kramer, Tannise Palmer

Community: Andrew Sandler (Councilman Koppell's office), Miawling Lam (Riverdale Review), Michael Zablauskas, America Rosario

New Business

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM. Minutes of the September meeting were approved with this change: the sentence "Margot Perron, VC Park Administrator, observed that even on the flat rock-dust surface around the Parade Ground" will read "Margot Perron, VC Park Administrator, submitted photographs showing that even on the flat rock-dust surface," etc.

Borough Consultation Meeting Discussion

The Chair provided members of the committee with copies of a document that the Community Board office received from the Parks Department in response to questions raised at the September Borough Consultation meeting. The committee then discussed some of DPR's responses, which concerned topics ranging from the number of PEP officers on patrol in Bronx parks to the number of trees planted in the Bronx under the Million Trees Program. Particular attention was given to the DPR report on capital spending in Community Board 8. The report showed that most of the capital money spent in CB8 came from Croton mitigation funds. All of the remaining capital spending came from Councilman Koppell and/or the Borough President's office with the exception of a single project at the Kingsbridge Recreation Center (better known as the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center), where upgrading of the HVAC system cost \$1.25 million. Although the source of that funding was unclear at the time of the meeting, District Manager Nicole Stent subsequently reported that it came from mayoral funds.

The Chair observed that with the exception of the Kingsbridge Recreation Center, there was no capital funding in CB8 from mayoral funds, nor was he aware of any such spending other than minor amounts for repairs in the past five years. Bronx Parks Commissioner Hector Aponte reported at the Borough Consultation meeting that mayoral funding provided slightly more than \$10 million for Bronx parks capital projects in the current fiscal year. Why is CB8 not receiving this funding?

The committee then discussed the matter of how DPR allocates Van Cortlandt Park capital spending. Currently nearly all VCP projects are assigned to CB8 despite the fact that jurisdiction of the park is shared by three community boards: 8, 7, and 12. In the opinion of the Chair, assigning funding for VCP to CB8 alone inaccurately inflates the level of DPR capital spending in CB8.

A related matter is whether Croton mitigation funding in the Bronx is really supplementing Bronx parks capital spending as was intended at the time that the Croton filtration plant was sited in VCP or whether such funding has instead become a substitute for mayoral funding of capital projects in Bronx parks. Comptroller John Liu is auditing Croton mitigation funding at present to determine the answer to this question. The Chair suggested that even if the audit shows, as many Bronx parks-watchers anticipate, that mayoral capital spending on Bronx parks declined as Croton mitigation funds came online, nothing will be done to rectify this situation.

Other Business

There was discussion of Int 0948-2012, legislation introduced by Councilman Koppell that would amend the city charter section 371 to require additional time for notice of public hearings on franchises and concessions. This legislation was drafted by CB8 member Skip Piscitelli in conjunction with Jamin Sewell of Councilman Koppell's office. It is a direct result of the community board's experience with the Van Cortlandt Park ice rink. The Law, Rules & Ethics committee will consider a resolution in support of the legislation at its October 25 meeting. There was agreement among committee members that we should support the legislation and urge other community boards in the Bronx to do so. It was suggested that CB8 write to Speaker Quinn and Councilwoman Gale Brewer, in whose committee this legislation originates, in support of the bill.

Mike Heller complained about conditions in Ewen Park and more generally about the lack of maintenance in the parks. Tannise Palmer of DPR said that she would request that DPR address Mr. Heller's complaint about a fallen dead tree. She said that there is clean up of the trash in Ewen on a daily basis and that grass is cut as needed, not according to any pre-determined schedule. Ms. Palmer reported that there already is a Friends of Ewen Park group but that she did not know who the contact person was. We will try to identify that person and work with this group to expand Friends of Ewen Park. The committee agreed that one of the schools near the park (e.g., PS37, MS/HS 368) might provide students who could assist in maintaining the park in return for service credits.

Vice-Chair Laura Spalter reported on a recent clean-up of Endor Garden on October 16, which was done in conjunction with Riverdale Country School. A follow-up trail mulching will take place on October 30, weather permitting.

Christina Taylor of FVCP announced that Halloween events will take place the weekend of October 27/28 at various locations in the park. There will be a group hike on November 3 at 10 am (meet at the subway) and a gardening event on November 4 from 10-1 at the VCP compost site.

Herb Barret announced that Veterans' Day observances would be held in the Memorial Grove at 1 pm on November 4.

Community resident America Rosario asked whether bikes will be permitted in the skateboard park when it is constructed. The consensus was that the park will be too small for bikes. He asked whether mountain bikes can be used on unpaved trails in VCP. Both Ms. Perron and Ms. Taylor explained that mountain bikes can be dangerous to others using unpaved trails and that they can cause erosion on these trails.

Ms. Perron said that the VC Ice Rink has determined that it needs only 3 parking spaces on Broadway adjacent to the rink for purposes of auto and bus pick up and drop off. She also

reported that the Trust for Public Land wants to site an “adult play” area in VC Stadium. This area would offer gym equipment to everyone in the community.

Marvin Goodman asked Ms. Palmer to inspect the site directly across the street from Phyllis Post Goodman park, where landscaping was recently done. He said that the trees and bushes seemed not to be thriving and that he was concerned that the time period for the contractor’s responsibility for the area would soon expire. Ms. Palmer indicated that she would do so.

The Chair mentioned that DPR has said that it expects to present its design for the reconstruction of the basketball court and installation of a “tot lot” in Ewen Park at the November meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Submitted by,

Bob Bender
Chair
Parks & Recreation Committee