

**COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
HELD SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2011 AT THE BOARD OFFICE**

Attendees

Committee members: Bob Bender (Chair), Robert Press, Anthony Piscitelli, Laura Spalter (Vice Chair), Marvin Goodman, Tom Durham, Steven Balicer, Amy Moore, Thailary Lim, CB8; Herb Barret, Memorial Grove.

DPR: Benjamin Kramer, Gal Lavid, Margot Perron

Others: Herb Young, CB8; Lawrence Moiatto, Memorial Grove; Richard Brause, BBC/Time's Up; Dinesh Kumar, community resident; Mark Fleischner, community resident; Leana Orr, Columbia Univ.; Adele Finer Rabin, community resident; Graham Kates, Riverdale Press; Brendan McHugh, Riverdale Review; Daniel Johnson, rep. Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz; Andrew Sandler, rep. Councilman Oliver Koppell; Frieda Barret, community resident.

Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 7 pm. Minutes of the May, 2011 meeting were approved. The Chair welcomed new committee members Marvin Goodman and Anthony Piscitelli.

The Chair noted lack of progress at the Memorial Grove. Reproduction of the missing plaques has been approved. Work on post holes for the fence had begun but because the contractor was not using a subcontractor as required by contract, a stop-work order was issued

The Van Cortlandt Park headquarters and public restroom is behind schedule because a new electrical subcontractor must be found following the defaulting of the original subcontractor.

The Putnam Trail reconstruction project is the subject of a campaign by a group called Save the Putnam Trail (website of the same name). The group objects to the width of the proposed new trail, the paving material, and the loss of trees. Ben Kramer, manager of VCP, said that the trail contains a large number of Norway maples, which are considered by DPR to be invasive species that crowd out native plants and damage the ecosystem (e.g., they prevent plants from growing at ground level). He explained that the stone dust recommended by the Save the Putnam Trail group would require maintenance in excess of the capabilities of DPR. In response to the Save the Putnam Trail campaign, DPR has issued a letter explaining the trail width requirements of NYS DOT, which administers the construction funds, and stating that 7 mature trees will be removed and 42 young trees planted in the re-design. The Putnam Trail redesign was approved by this committee and by the Public Design Commission. It is awaiting approval by NYS DOT and DEC.

The Chair provided background information on the proposed ice-skating rink in VCP for new members. Robert Press proposed a resolution on the skating rink, which the Chair disallowed

because there have been no new developments since the last committee meeting and because the rink will be discussed in a forthcoming meeting once a proposal has been received by CB8.

Mr. Press asked about the condition of the golf course parking lot at VCP after Hurricane Irene. Mr. Kramer responded that the parking lot suffered no damage and drained after approximately one to one and a half days.

Committee member Tom Durham reported on the August 4 meeting with DPR and Councilman Koppell at Ewen and Seton Parks, which he attended in the Chair's absence. Councilman Koppell will fund repair of the basketball courts in Ewen Park and repair and extension of the fence between the park and homes on Cambridge Avenue that abut the park's northern boundary.

Nearby resident Adele Feiner complained about deteriorating conditions at the park. She said that the temporary fences surrounding the sinkholes in the park have fallen, and that erosion in the park is worsening. Parks supervisor Gal Lavid said that the poor quality of the soil in the park is exacerbating the erosion problem, which is caused primarily by the steep slope of the park. There was a consensus that the park is troubled and needs significant attention from DPR. Discussions of the conditions at Ewen Park will continue in future meetings.

Andrew Sandler observed that in his opinion DEP had repaired the underground leak responsible for street damage in the vicinity of Ewen Park but that it was the responsibility of DPR to repair the sinkholes in the park caused by these leaks.

Mr. Durham reported that at Seton Park there is disagreement about whether to install artificial turf in the park or whether to level, aerate, and re-seed the natural surface. Councilman Koppell has made funds available but wants to know what park users desire. Either way the park would have to be closed for a period of time, which would interrupt the use of the park by youth athletic leagues. There was agreement that a committee meeting should be scheduled in the vicinity of the park and outreach done to the local youth athletic leagues and to community residents to learn their preferences for renovating the park.

Two area residents complained about the condition of Seton Park. Mark Fleischner said that the increased fee for tennis permits (now \$200 as of July 1, 2011) is causing friction between those who have permits and those who use the courts without permits. He complained that the courts are not kept clean and that there is no attendant on weekends.

Dinesh Kumar said that the blacktop in the park is damaged, that soil erodes onto the tennis court, that drains in the courts are not cleaned and clog. He complained about lack of enforcement as well as lack of maintenance.

Andrew Sandler complained that a water fountain and a chess table have been removed from the park.

Committee member Marvin Goodman urged that more volunteers be recruited to help maintain the parks. He and parks supervisor Gal Lavid mentioned the work being done by Partnership for Parks, which sponsors volunteer efforts year round as well as the semi-annual "It's My Park Day."

Mr. Sandler reported that the fence around the dog run in Hackett Park is deteriorating and that volunteers are needed to help maintain it. Mr. Lavid observed that all parks dog runs require the assistance of volunteers to be maintained.

The Chair reported on work underway at Vinmont Park/Sid Augarten Field. A question was asked whether portions of the park can be opened prior to completion of the work on the ballfield. The Chair will inquire about this with DPR. Committee member Amy Moore expressed her concern that the walkway at the south end of PS 81 adjacent to the park has been removed and the current condition of the walkway makes it difficult for PS 81 students to use.

The Chair observed that because DEP has determined that trees must be removed from the Jerome Park Reservoir, the planned renovation of Ft. Independence Park has been delayed. DEP and DPR are discussing a plan for replanting trees in the vicinity of the park and the reservoir. Thus far they have not agreed. The Chair commented that this problem is on the agenda of the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee and CB8 will urge the Public Design Commission to review any tree removal and tree replanting program to make sure that the minimum number of trees is removed and that new plantings take place as close as possible to where trees will be removed.

Gal Lavid reported on a small reconstruction project at the upper level of Brust Park (MC Parkway and Greystone Avenue). Tom Durham mentioned that the brook flowing through Brust Park had split into two channels and was causing problems. Mr. Lavid said he would investigate.

Marvin Goodman complained that plants recently planted at Phyllis Post Goodman Park had died. Mr. Lavid said he would investigate.

Mr. Lavid reported that Hurricane Irene had brought down trees at the north end of Henry Hudson Park, in Seton Park (one large tree was removed, but it damaged a fence at the tennis courts that will have to be repaired or replaced), in Riverdale playground, and in Riverdale Park.

There was a complaint about lights being left on at night at Seton Park basketball courts that Mr. Lavid said he would investigate.

The Chair mentioned that repairs have been made to the curb and storm drain at Spuyten Duyvil park but that no planting has taken place in the area recently damaged by construction work.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm. The next meeting will take place October 26.

Submitted by,

Bob Bender
Chair
Parks & Recreation Committee

