

Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting, April 25, 2018

Manhattan College School of Engineering, 3825 Corlear Avenue

(pending committee approval)

Attendees:

Committee: Bob Bender (chair), Eric Bell, Robert Fanuzzi (vice chair), David Gellman, Marvin Goodman, Daris Jackson, Tao Moran, Laura Spalter (all CB8); Christina Taylor (community committee member)

Absent: Herb Barret, community committee member

DPR: Sunny Corrao, DPR Wildlife Unit, Stephanie Thayer, VCP Deputy Administrator

Guests: P.O. Almonte, P.O. Salomon (50th Precinct); I.C. Levenberg (BCEQ)

Agenda:

The meeting began at approximately 7:15 pm.

DPR Wildlife Unit Presentation on Coyotes

Sunny Corrao from DPR's Wildlife Unit presented a slide show about coyotes. The Wildlife Unit was founded in 2016 and does community outreach. This slide show is available on request.

Information about coyotes can be found on this DPR website:

www.nycgovparks.org/programs/rangers/wildlife-management/coyotes

Following the slide show, Ms. Corrao answered questions from committee members. She noted that coyotes have been seen in Van Cortlandt and Riverdale parks and elsewhere in the community. She said that an independent coyote research group, Gotham Coyote (www.gothamcoyote.com), is working with DPR on coyote studies. Ms. Corrao noted that coyotes den during the winter. Their dens are often small and well hidden, not likely to be found.

Coyotes are unlikely to approach people. In the event that a coyote does approach, stand your ground, make noise, and if necessary, throw an object. Act like the alpha predator. Rabid coyotes may approach people. If they do, maintain your distance from the coyote. Coyotes primarily hunt rabbits and rodents, and scavenge roadkill. There are no natural predators of coyotes in our area.

Committee member Daris Jackson reported frequently seeing coyotes in the vicinity of West 233rd Street near Van Cortlandt Park.

The committee thanked Ms. Corrao for her presentation.

The minutes of the March committee meeting were unanimously approved.

Discussion of Budget Priorities

With the assistance of VCP Deputy Administrator Stephanie Thayer and comments received on last year's priorities from the Borough Commissioner's office earlier in the day, the committee carefully reviewed the list of budget priorities. They are as follows:

Capital Priorities:

1. Construction of a restroom at Broadway and W. 251st St. in Van Cortlandt Park, adjacent to the Parade Grounds.
2. Renovation of the Van Cortlandt Mansion in Van Cortlandt Park to bring it into code compliance, provide handicapped accessibility, and do repairs associated with waterproofing the structure. (NEW)
3. Redesign and reconstruction of Bailey Avenue playground. The drains at the southeast end of the playground require immediate repair to eliminate pools of standing water, which are a health hazard.
4. Funding for the proposed pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway (I-87) in Van Cortlandt Park to bridge the gap between the \$12 million in hand and the funding required by DDC to build the bridge. The committee urges DPR to work with DEP, DDC, and other relevant parties to find ways to lower the cost of the project. (NEW)
5. Renovation of Strong Street playground.
6. Construction of a pond wall at Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park to prevent water runoff from the pond onto the roadway of the parking lot at the adjacent Metro-North station.
7. Erosion control measures in Ewen Park to prevent runoff downhill toward Riverdale Avenue.
8. Repair of the footbridge over Tibbetts Brook outside the fence around the golf course in Van Cortlandt Park.
9. Renovation of Van Cortlandt Park stadium.

Expense priorities:

1. Horticulturists and other personnel sufficient for maintenance, especially of lawn, landscaped areas, and sidewalk Greenstreets in Community Board 8.
2. PEP personnel sufficient to alleviate with the assistance of the NYPD the chronic double-parking on Broadway adjacent to the Parade Grounds, especially on weekends and other times of high use, and to enforce regulations in other CB8 parks.
3. Purchase of a tractor and accompanying trailer, a lawnmower, and a wood chipper to aid in maintenance of CB8 parks.

4. Purchase of new crew-cab pick-up trucks to replace aging vehicles in Van Cortlandt Park. (NEW)

These budget priorities were unanimously approved.

It's My Park Day

The chair reminded committee members about the upcoming "It's My Park" Day event scheduled for Saturday, May 12, from 10 am to 2 pm. The event will take place in Fort Independence Park in cooperation with the Jerome Park Friends and Neighbors group. The event will be announced at the May board meeting.

Other Business

Christina Taylor announced that the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park (FVCP) will be holding a fundraising dinner at the VC Mansion just prior to the New York Philharmonic appearance in Van Cortlandt Park on June 12. It is always a wonderful event.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:15 pm.