

## Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting, March 28, 2018

### St. Patrick's Home Rehabilitation and Health Care, 66 Van Cortlandt Park South

#### Attendees:

Committee: Bob Bender (chair), Eric Bell, Robert Fanuzzi, David Gellman, Marvin Goodman, Daris B. Jackson, Tao Moran (CB8); Herb Barret, Christina Taylor (Community Committee Members)

Absent: Laura Spalter

DPR: Iris Rodriguez-Rosa (Bronx Commissioner), Michael Ortiz, Margot Perron, Stephanie Thayer, Joseph Magneri, Ellen Macnow, Leenda Bonilla, John-Paul Catusco

Guests: Councilman Andrew Cohen; D.I. Terence O'Toole, 50<sup>th</sup> Pct.; Joshua Stephenson, Councilman Cohen's office; Farrah Rubin, Senator Klein's office; Alimur Rahman, Bharat Parekh, Maria Centeno, DDC; Charlotte Fahn, Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct; Stacey Wieder; Laura Carpenter; Peter Gauss, Pat Kenny, South Riverdale Little League; Karen Argenti

#### Agenda:

The meeting began at 7:10 pm. Minutes of the January meeting were unanimously approved.

#### Seton Park Basketball Court Renovation.

The basketball full court and half court in Seton Park are in disrepair. There is partial funding to repair them, however some residents say that there are sufficient basketball courts in the area and that there is greater need for a skate park. There is agreement that the half court should become an adult fitness area, leaving the question of whether to renovate the full court as a basketball court or a skate park.

Michael Ortiz of DPR showed conceptual designs for these two options. The costs are virtually the same: \$2.20 million for the basketball court, \$2.25 million for the skate park. In addition, badly deteriorated stairs would be repaired and there would be new lighting.

Discussion followed the presentation. Some guests, including a couple of skateboarders, advocated for the skate park. Councilman Cohen said that he has received complaints about skateboarders using the staircase and open area of HS/MS 141, across the street from Seton Park. Questions were asked about whether there is enough area for a skate park, and both Mr. Ortiz and Commissioner Rodriguez-Rosa said that there are other skate parks with similar dimensions. Maintenance of the skate park should not be a concern, Mr. Ortiz said.

D.I. O'Toole acknowledged that there have been complaints about drinking and drug use in the wooded area behind Seton Park that slopes down to Raoul Wallenberg Forest. He recommended that security cameras be installed with the new lighting. That would add roughly \$50,000 in costs, according to Mr. Ortiz.

Karen Argenti asked that green infrastructure in the park be maximized in any renovation.

After listening to the discussion, committee members voted unanimously to recommend the skate park option. The resolution follows:

Whereas the basketball full court and half court in Seton Park are in need of repair; and

Whereas some community residents have asked that the area be used instead for a skateboard park and an adult fitness area; and

Whereas there are several public basketball courts located in Spuyten Duyvil Playground directly across West 235th Street from Seton Park, as well as in nearby Riverdale Playground on Hudson Manor Terrace and West 237th Street; and

Whereas the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) presented to the Parks & Recreation Committee at its March 28, 2018 meeting designs for use of the space as an adult fitness area where the half court currently is located and either a skateboard park or renovated basketball full court where the basketball full court currently is located; and

Whereas partial funding for the project, which includes repairing badly deteriorated staircases and adding improved lighting, has been secured from Councilman Cohen and State Senator Klein; and

Whereas local residents attending the meeting spoke in favor of the skateboard park option; and

Whereas Deputy Inspector O'Toole, commander of the 50th Precinct, recommended that security cameras be included in the project because of reported drug and alcohol use in the wooded area behind the basketball court; and

Whereas DPR requested that the community board recommend its preferred option;

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the committee recommends that DPR convert the area to a skateboard park and adult fitness area and also recommends that the relevant agencies investigate the feasibility of including security cameras during the renovation of the site.

In favor: Bell, Bender, Gellman, Goodman, Jackson, Moran (CB8); Barret, Taylor (CCM)

Opposed: none

Abstain: none

The chair passed along a complaint from a local resident about the condition of the dog run in Seton Park. Parks Manager Joseph Magneri said that new wood chips to improve the condition of the soil would be delivered to the dog run in the coming weeks.

Van Cortlandt Park Pedestrian Bridge Conceptual Design

Mr. Bharat Parekh of the Department of Design & Construction (DDC) presented a conceptual design for a proposed pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway (I-87) in Van Cortlandt Park.

After briefly describing background history, Mr. Parekh explained the siting of the bridge, which is constrained by DEP requirements regarding aqueducts in Van Cortlandt Park as well as existing infrastructure (parking lot, ballfield) on the east side of the Deegan. Locating the bridge farther south would require much longer ramps because of grade differential between the east and west sides of the park. Locating it farther north would interfere with the northbound exit to W. 233 St.

Mr. Parekh showed the bridge design, the siting for the ramps, and provided basic information, such as the height of the bridge (17 ½ feet clearance), the length (220 feet), and the width (12 feet interior). He explained that the ramps are so long because they must meet ADA requirements regarding the slope from the bridge to grade level – even though the bridge connects the east and west portions of the Old Croton Aqueduct, which is not itself ADA accessible. Because the area in question is heavily forested, approximately 82 trees will have to be removed. Every effort will be made to minimize the number and to preserve valuable trees. Tree restitution will be required.

Committee members asked many questions, chief among them the cost of the project. Although \$12 million has been allocated for the bridge, Mr. Parekh said that the final cost will be approximately \$21.5 million. \$12 million represents the construction cost, but there are additional costs for design, testing materials and supervision, inspection, and tree restitution. Committee members expressed dismay at the cost, as did some guests, such as Councilman Cohen.

Questions were raised about whether there will be safety features at the bridge such as lighting and police call boxes. At present there is no lighting nor are there call boxes in this part of the park. There are pros and cons: lighting cannot distract drivers on the Deegan, for example, and lighting would change the esthetic nature of that part of the park.

A question was raised whether there might be funding from unexplored sources, such as DOT or other state or city agencies. There seemed to be no definitive answer to the question.

Following discussion the committee passed the resolution below unanimously.

Whereas Van Cortlandt Park is divided by three highways, the Henry Hudson Parkway, Mosholu Parkway and the Major Deegan Expressway (I-87); and

Whereas pedestrian access to all parts of the park, especially east-west access, is difficult due to the obstacle presented by the highways; and

Whereas, the City Council of the City of New York made the construction of a pedestrian bridge in Van Cortlandt Park, if feasible, among its conditions for its 1999 ULURP resolution allowing the construction of the Croton Filtration Plant in Van Cortlandt Park; and

Whereas the Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan 2034, endorsed by Community Board 8 at its May 2014 meeting, proposes three pedestrian bridges over the highways to improve access to all parts of the park; and

Whereas the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee (CFMC), comprised of representatives of community boards 7, 8, and 12, and representatives of local elected officials, called for a pedestrian bridge to be built over the Major Deegan Expressway when the feasibility of such construction was determined, which was done in 2009; and

Whereas Community Board 8 endorsed the construction of this pedestrian bridge recommended by CFMC at its June 2010 meeting; and

Whereas local community organizations, environmental advocates, and trail and hiking associations have endorsed the building of this pedestrian bridge and supported the position of the CFMC and Community Board 8; and

Whereas \$12 million in funding for this pedestrian bridge was secured from the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and our local state officials; and

Whereas the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) has now designed this bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway to enable easier east-west access in Van Cortlandt Park; and

Whereas DDC presented its conceptual bridge design to the committee at its March 28, 2018 meeting;

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the committee approves the conceptual design with the understanding that all tree restitution required by the construction of the bridge, whether in the form of tree replanting or financial compensation, will take place in Van Cortlandt Park, as close as possible to the construction site, and that the committee recommends that the relevant agencies investigate appropriate security elements for pedestrians at the bridge.

In favor: Bell, Bender, Fanuzzi, Gellman, Goodman, Jackson, Moran (CB8); Barret, Taylor (CCM)

Opposed: none

Abstain: none

#### It's My Park Day

The committee agreed to conduct its annual "It's My Park" Day event at Fort Independence Park on Saturday, May 12, 10 am to 2 pm. Debra Travis, founder of Jerome Park Friends and Neighbors will partner with the committee.

#### Community Service Award

The committee agreed on a candidate. The vote was unanimous, with abstentions from two committee members who also serve on the Community Service Award committee. Following the meeting the chair forwarded the nomination to Lisa Daub, who is chairing that committee.

#### Parks Resource Guide

The Parks Resource Guide has been finalized and will be printed and disseminated soon.

### Parking on Broadway for Events at the Parade Grounds

The chair asked Margot Perron, VCP Administrator, to comment on the spring cross-country schedule. She said that it is lighter than the fall schedule and she does not anticipate problems from permitted events. The problems usually come from groups that arrive without permits. Both she and D.I. O'Toole are working together to make sure that there is no double-parking at these events beyond temporary double-parking for pick-ups and drop-offs.

### Chair's Report

The chair noted that the playground at the Broadway & Mosholu entrance to VCP is ready to be bid.

He commented on the number of trees that came down in storms in early March. Margot Perron said that VCP lost dozens of trees. Street trees came down throughout the community.

DPR will hold a meeting to show the design for the garden area to be installed at West 261<sup>st</sup> Street and Broadway on March 29. The chair will attend and will report at the April committee meeting.

The April meeting will discuss the committee's capital and expense budget priorities.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 pm.