

Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting, October 24, 2018

Conservative Synagogue, 475 West 250th Street

Attendees:

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

Absent: Marvin Goodman, Herb Barret

Other CB8: Rosemary Ginty, chair

DPR: Joseph Magneri

Guests: Michael Holoszyc, David Bent, Riverdale Soccer Club; I.C. L'Engel, BCEQ; George Diaz; Sharon Brown; Lydia Silverman

Agenda:

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm. Minutes of the September meeting were approved unanimously with this correction: the person identified attending on behalf of DPR as "Officer Cruz" should instead be "(Officer) Domingo Sanchez."

Proposal to Name the Soccer Field at Seton Park

Prior to the meeting committee members were sent letters of recommendation and information about Bruce Silverman, who died in 2015, and for whom it is proposed that the soccer field in Seton Park be named. The Riverdale Soccer Club (RSC), the South Riverdale Little League (SRL), and Councilman Andrew Cohen have endorsed the proposal. The chair explained that he has communicated with the Bronx office of the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) and there is no objection to the proposal provided that the community supports it. Final approval rests with DPR. There are other fields in the community that are named for people who have contributed to the community, such as Sid Augarten Field in Vinmont Park and (Frank) Kelly Field in Van Cortlandt Park.

Michael Holoszyc spoke about Mr. Silverman on behalf of the Riverdale Soccer Club. His statement is attached at the end of these minutes. Mr. Silverman's widow, Lydia, spoke about her husband's love for the children who played soccer and about how much time and energy he devoted to community soccer.

The chair said that the original letters in support of the naming of the field were dated 2015, shortly after Mr. Silverman passed away. Bob has since confirmed the support of RSC and of Councilman Cohen, but had not yet heard from the SRLL. He offered the following resolution, conditional on confirmation of SRLL's support. *(Following the meeting, SRLL co-presidents Peter Gauss and Patrick Kenny emailed the chair to confirm the support of SRLL for the naming of the soccer field in memory of Bruce Silverman.)*

Whereas Seton Park is located between West 235th and West 232nd Streets, and between Independence and Palisade Avenues; and

Whereas Seton Park contains baseball, softball, and soccer fields and is heavily used for youth sports; and

Whereas Bruce Silverman was a coach and official with the South Riverdale Little League (SRLL) and Riverdale Soccer Club who was known for his dedication to the children and his warm and welcoming relationship with their parents; and

Whereas Mr. Silverman passed away in 2015; and

Whereas SRLL and the soccer club asked the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to name the soccer field in Seton Park for Mr. Silverman after he passed away; and

Whereas Councilman Andrew Cohen supports the request for the naming of the soccer field; and

Whereas DPR permits athletic fields within parks to be named after outstanding individuals who have made an important contribution to their community; and

Whereas representatives of the soccer club appeared before the Parks & Recreation Committee at its October 24, 2018 meeting to confirm their support for naming the soccer field the Bruce Silverman Soccer Field in Seton Park;

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Parks & Recreation Committee of Bronx Community Board 8 requests that DPR officially name the soccer field in Seton Park the Bruce Silverman Soccer Field.

In favor, 6: Bell, Bender, Jackson, Leverett, Moran, Spalter

Opposed, 0

Abstain, 0

Update on Capital Projects

The chair shared with the committee the latest information on DPR capital projects in CB8. The process begins with a scoping meeting at the committee meeting or at another time, attended by members of the committee and the public. Following that meeting, capital projects go through three stages: design (which is shown to the committee for its comments), procurement, and construction.

The following capital projects are in the stages identified below:

Design. Van Cortlandt Park pedestrian bridge; Fort Four playground restroom.

Procurement. Van Cortlandt Park playground at Broadway and Mosholu Ave.; Van Cortlandt Park, Parks without Borders entrance, W. 242 St. and Broadway; Van Cortlandt Park, Putnam Trail.

Construction. Van Cortlandt Park, skateboard park; Seton Park reconstruction of baseball and softball field; Spuyten Duyvil playground reconstruction of spray shower.

In addition, the basketball court at Seton Park is being converted to a skateboard park. A design meeting will be forthcoming.

Old Business

The chair reported on a press conference held on October 18 by Sen. Charles Schumer and other local elected officials at West 238th Street to highlight CSX's refusal to abide by its agreement to accept an independent appraisal of its property south of Van Cortlandt Park known locally as "Putnam South." The chair thanked CB8 chair Rosemary Ginty and Parks Committee member Laura Spalter for attending. He also thanked committee community member Christina Taylor, who attended in her capacity as executive director of the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park.

New Business

Community resident Sharon Brown complained about the condition of a greenstreet on Henry Hudson Parkway East between W. 230th and W. 231st Streets. She said that it is not maintained: benches are in poor condition, grass isn't mowed, shrubs aren't trimmed, and in the winter the sidewalk is not shoveled when it snows.

Parks supervisor Joe Magneri responded that several people in our parks district are out on sick leave and one has resigned, consequently there are too few people on staff to do proper maintenance. Committee members expressed their disappointment that a way could not be found to deploy other people to cover and do basic maintenance. The chair observed that over the summer poor maintenance was blamed on lack of equipment; now it is blamed on lack of personnel. There always seems to be some excuse for inadequate maintenance.

Christina Taylor said that the problem is lack of funding for parks, whether for equipment or personnel.

Mr. Magneri agreed, saying that even when everyone is healthy, he is understaffed.

The chair said that the lack of maintenance should be brought to the attention of borough officials and Councilman Cohen, who sits on the City Council's Parks Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Michael Holoszyc Statement about Bruce Silverman

My name is Michael Holoszyc and I am one of the original founders of the Riverdale Soccer Club in 1997, and the only one still actively involved in the club's operation. In 1997, the only local soccer program was a small league run by the South Riverdale Baseball League in Seton Park during the fall when baseball wasn't going on. They had around 150 to 200 boys (and a handful of girls) playing in that league. By comparison, we now have around 700 players in our programs each fall, which include, in addition to that original league that we inherited, a thriving local girls league, and travel teams that play in a regional league.

Bruce Silverman joined the Soccer Club board in 2003 and immediately became very active in the club. He then served as president for 9 years, from 2005 to 2014, when he had to step down because of his illness. During those years is when player participation roughly doubled to the 700 players we currently have.

For many years, Bruce and I worked closely together managing the local soccer league. Bruce's dedication and commitment to this effort were incredible. While I was more of the behind-the-scenes person doing a lot of the logistical work, Bruce was always the public face of the league. Living across the street from Seton Park, he would spend much of each weekend at the field, observing games, talking to parents and players, and offering encouragement to everyone. If it rained the day before, he would be out there pumping and sweeping water from the puddles so the kids could have their games. Countless times, he would be filling in holes that suddenly appeared on the field to keep the field safe. (Located on top of the foundation of the old Seton Hospital, the Seton Park playing field is very unstable, with sinkholes frequently appearing that need to be filled in.)

When Bruce's illness prevented him from no longer being able to help out, it was a real setback to me and the league. Still, I remember him during his last fall season, still coming down to the field in his wheelchair, continuing to offer his cheerful banter to anyone who passed by. I have continued to run the local league without him, but I miss Bruce's enthusiasm tremendously and continue to think about him every time I am doing work for the soccer league.

Naming the Seton Park athletic fields for Bruce is a really appropriate tribute to him, because there are few people in the community that have shown the commitment to youth sports that Bruce did. I very much hope that you approve this resolution.