

Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting, September 26, 2018

Citadel Rehabilitation Center, 3400 Cannon Place

Attendees:

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

Absent: Marvin Goodman, Daris Jackson, Laura Spalter (all CB8); Herb Barret (ccm)

DPR: Jennifer Greenfeld, Joseph Magneri, Margot Perron, Stephanie Thayer, Jean-Paul Catusco, Suzan Marciona, Chris Syrett, Michael Ortiz, J. Prado, G. Saygin, Henri Bonner, **Captain Sanchez**

Guests: D.I. O'Toole, 50th Precinct; Joel Guerrero, Barbara Velez, Toni Butler, Keith A. Ramirez, D. Sanchez; I.C. L'Engel, BCEQ; Zak Kastro, Riverdale Press; Dwayne F. Alexis, Collegiate School; Beatriz Muylaert, Columbia Journalism School; Cruz Pastrano, Larry Santarelli, Luke Stamm, Fort Four Community Empowerment Organization; Deb Travis, Jane Bedell, Jerome Park FANS; Donovan ?, Leighton Ramsey, Bronx Youth Soccer Club; George Febles, Catholic High Schools; Phil Zadda, Manhattan College Cross Country.

Agenda:

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm.

The chair explained that the agenda was lengthy and urged everyone to be respectful of time constraints.

Design Presentation for Fort Four Restroom

Mr. Prato of DPR presented the design. The project is budgeted at \$3.2 million. The restroom will be located at the site of the former restroom, in the back of the park, close to Our Lady of Angels church. The site will be closed off during construction. A couple of trees may be lost during construction; they will be replaced. The men's and women's restrooms will both include ADA accessible stalls and baby changers. There will be glass to provide light just below the roof, and two-color brick and a screen design with leaf motifs on the exterior. There will be a drinking fountain. The activation button for the spray shower will be moved from its current location to the side of the restroom. During the construction the spray shower will be out of operation. The restrooms will be cleaned daily but it is not likely that there will be an attendant on site.

The project is currently in design and will next go into procurement, which typically takes about 9 months. Construction follows and is expected to take 18 months. There will be excavation down to Sedgwick Avenue for new plumbing pipes. All construction areas will be fenced off from the public.

Inspector O'Toole noted that there is a box camera in the front of Fort Four, at the entrance where Sedgwick and Reservoir aves. meet, but that camera does not cover the entire park. He would like a box camera in the back, where the restroom is being built, which would give full coverage of the

park and playground. There is no budget allocation for the box camera, which costs about \$70,000. The chair suggested bringing this request to the attention of Councilman Cabrera.

Several people asked that the work be scheduled in such a way that the spray shower would be lost for only one summer. DPR representatives noted that they want to proceed as soon as they have approvals and while they understand the concern, they cannot promise that they can avoid the possibility of losing the spray shower for two summers.

DPR representatives asked for a letter of support. The chair will discuss with the Executive committee.

Mr. Joel Guerrero mentioned outreach he has done to Project Backboard, an NBA organization that helps to repair basketball backboards. He would like DPR to work with Project Backboard to repair the basketball courts in Fort Four Park. Mr. Guerrero and Michael Ortiz in the Bronx Parks office would discuss further after the meeting.

Discussion of Summer Barbecuing Problems in Washington's Walk

The chair began the discussion by observing that several complaints were received over the summer concerning illegal barbecuing, noise, and urinating and defecating in Washington's Walk, which is adjacent to Fort Four playground. D.I. O'Toole said that summonses had been issued in response to complaints. There were also reports of garbage left on site and rats.

Several residents said that "No Barbecuing" signs are too few and too small. They asked for more and larger signs, which DPR said it can supply.

There was discussion of possible locations in Kingsbridge Heights where barbecuing could be legally permitted. One site suggested was the Harris Park annex adjacent to the Jerome Park Reservoir on Goulden Avenue. DPR and the committee will follow up.

Review of Traffic and Double Parking at Fall Parade Ground Events

The discussion began with a brief overview of the process for issuing permits for VCP cross country events. Meet organizers along with the 50th Precinct and PEP officers are briefed in a conference call regarding parking regulations. A map showing the designated parking area for school buses adjacent to the Major Deegan (I-87) service road north of Jerome Avenue is given to the meet organizers. At the events, maps are given to bus drivers as well. They and parents who double-park for longer than it takes to discharge and pick up passengers are told to move their vehicles. This year because of the reconfiguration of Broadway, buses are being asked to use the bus stops at W. 246 and W. 251 Sts.

Two local residents, B.J. Velez and Toni Butler, said that the instructions are not being followed and there is a lack of enforcement. PEP officer Cruz explained that there are four PEP officers available in the entire Bronx at any one time. In addition, the shift change occurs at 3:30 pm so there are no officers available between 3 and 4 pm, which is a time when weekday meets often begin. D.I. O'Toole said that he is devoting all the resources he can to helping with the situation, but he has 6 patrol cars available at any one time and other calls can take priority over the traffic situation at the Parade Grounds.

A couple of coaches who serve as meet organizers said that they have instructed the schools to follow the directives of DPR. They want to be informed if schools or bus companies are not cooperating. They said that parents are among the worst offenders and are difficult to control.

There was a suggestion that the names of bus companies and their ID numbers be noted when drivers double-park or refuse to move. In the case of repeat offenders, schools should be notified, and meet organizers should be told if bus companies are uncooperative and that if schools continue to use these companies, meet permits could be jeopardized.

The meet organizers in attendance said that they had no objection to this method of enforcement. Margot Perron observed that DPR's legal department would have to be consulted.

There will be follow-up discussions with residents, DPR, and others to try to minimize the disruption caused by the VCP cross-country meets. However, it was noted that this is a longstanding problem and it will not be easily or quickly ameliorated.

Update on the Putnam Greenway Renovation

Chris Syrett of DPR provided an update on the Putnam Trail project. He said that a contractor has been selected, Grace Industries. They have worked on other DPR projects to DPR's satisfaction. Grace is currently undergoing review by NYS DOT, which administers the funding for the project (it is federally funded through US DOT). He expects this review to take two to three months longer.

DPR will have an ecologist at the site on a regular basis, Ellen Hartig, who is a wetlands specialist. There will also be a resident engineer. DPR is aware of its requirements under the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and will, as promised, allow the CB8 SWPPP Working Group access to the site. In addition Friends of Van Cortlandt Park (FVCP) will have access to its water monitoring sites.

If approved in time, the contractor will start work in December or January by doing clearing and grading. Work will begin at the south end of the trail. The staging area will be at the south end as well. The entire trail to the city line with Westchester will be closed once work begins.

The Natural Resource Group is examining the trees and will do tree removals of invasives such as Norway maples and re-planting of native species.

Mr. Syrett said that DPR will come back to the committee once approvals are in place and work is to begin.

A quorum being present, the minutes of the May 2018 meeting were unanimously approved.

Discussion of Summer Maintenance Problems

The chair noted a higher than usual number of complaints about lack of mowing and other summer maintenance problems. Joe Magneri, local parks manager, said that equipment breakdowns were to blame and that they were worse than usual because DPR's equipment is old and inadequate. There is one tractor for mowing in districts 7 and 8 (same as CB's 7 and 8). He noted that some repair jobs are done in house while others require outside maintenance. He did note a bright spot, that DCAS has allocated DPR \$80 million next year for equipment purchases citywide. It is unclear how much

equipment district 8 will be allocated. Mr. Magneri noted that there is need for a new Parks garbage truck, estimated to cost around \$100,000. He hopes that CB8 can ask local elected officials to allocate funds to help with the maintenance problem.

New/ Old Business

The chair updated everyone on the Putnam South CSX situation, and noted that there has been a positive response to CB8 requests from Sen. Schumer's office. It is hoped that there may soon be a resolution of CSX's unwillingness to accept the independent appraisal.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.