

Minutes of the Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting
May 27, 2020 via Zoom

Attendees

Committee: Bob Bender (chair), Eric Bell, Robert Fanuzzi, David Gellman, Marvin Goodman, Rob Jacklosky, Donell Leverett, Laura Spalter, Debra Travis

Absent: Eider Garcia, Daris Jackson; Herb Barret (CCM)

Other CB8: Rosemary Ginty

DPR: Stephanie Thayer, Joseph Magneri; Christina Taylor (VCP Alliance)

Community: Rob Walsh, Anthony Vecchione, Mariann Reilly, Whitney Swab (Manhattan College); Dan Hogle, Kim Richman (The Black Institute); Pat Hill (Councilman Cohen's office); Kevin Monahan, I.C. L'Engle, Peter Janny, Dan Rannells, Kristan and Carlos Roehrs, Lisa Rosin, Marianna Miller-D'Alessandro, Mary Ellen Gibbs, Margaret Groarke

Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm.

Minutes of the March committee meeting were unanimously approved.

Naming of a Ballfield in Van Cortlandt Park

The chair began discussion of a proposal to name the ballfield recently renovated in Van Cortlandt Park after a Manhattan College alumnus named Joe Coppo by providing some background information on the field. It was for many years the home field of Manhattan's baseball team. Over time the field deteriorated and failed to meet NCAA Division I standards. Manhattan was forced to play at a minor league field in Dutchess County. In conjunction with DPR, Manhattan paid to renovate the ballfield and restore it to Division I acceptability. Manhattan would like to name the field after a former baseball team captain who was killed in the 9/11 attacks.

Rob Walsh from Manhattan College provided information about Mr. Coppo and said that Manhattan would like to conduct clinics and summer camps at the ballfield. The school hopes to maintain the field. The field is available to the community when not in use by Manhattan College's baseball team.

There was much discussion of the appropriateness of naming the field after Mr. Coppo, primarily because he does not seem to have had strong ties to the community, one of the standards that CB8 uses for street and parks namings and renamings. Those in favor suggested

that Manhattan College's community ties satisfy this requirement. The naming of field as Joe Coppo Field is supported by the Bronx Chamber of Commerce, BCEQ, and KRVC.

The following resolution was voted on:

Whereas Manhattan College's baseball team played its home games at the Stadium baseball field in Van Cortlandt Park for many years; and

Whereas Manhattan was no longer able to use the field after it gradually deteriorated and failed to meet NCAA Division I standards; and

Whereas Manhattan College had to relocate its home games to Dutchess County, a considerable distance from its campus in the Bronx; and

Whereas Manhattan College recently undertook a renovation of the Van Cortlandt Stadium ballfield in conjunction with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to restore the ballfield to meet NCAA Division I standards; and

Whereas the ballfield is permitted to Manhattan College during its spring baseball season but is available for community use when Manhattan College is not using the field; and

Whereas Manhattan College would like to name the ballfield after alumnus Joe Coppo, a former baseball team captain for Manhattan College who was killed in the 9/11 terror attack at the World Trade Center; and

Whereas community organizations including the Bronx Chamber of Commerce, Kingsbridge Riverdale Van Cortlandt Development Corporation (KRVC), and the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ) support the naming of the field for Joe Coppo; and

Whereas DPR requires the support of community institutions including the community board in order to name the ballfield as proposed; and

Whereas there are other ballfields in Van Cortlandt Park named after individuals, such as Frank Kelly Field at West 260th Street;

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Parks & Recreation Committee of Bronx Community Board 8 supports the naming of the ballfield at the Van Cortlandt Park Stadium as Joe Coppo Field.

In favor (5): Bender, Fanuzzi, Goodman, Leverett, Spalter

Opposed (2): Bell, Travis

Abstain (2): Gellman, Jacklosky

DPR Budget Cuts FY 2021

The chair reported on pending budget cuts for DPR in the FY 2021 budget. DPR's expense budget is being reduced from \$587 million in 2020 to \$509 million in 2021, a reduction of \$78 million. These decreases will result in the loss of 150 maintenance workers citywide, 23 in the Bronx. 50 Urban Parks Rangers and 80 PEP officers citywide will no longer be funded. There will be cutbacks to the Green Thumb program and to forestry and horticulture. Maintenance of local parks will undoubtedly be negatively affected by these budget cuts.

These figures come from the "Report to the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Parks and Recreation on the Fiscal 2021 Executive Plan" issued by councilmembers Corey Johnson, Daniel Dromm, and Peter Koo, May 18, 2020.

Update from DDC on the Pedestrian Bridge in Van Cortlandt Park

DDC responded by email to the conditions that the committee set on its approval of a preliminary design for the VCP pedestrian bridge at the committee's September 2019 meeting.

Trees. DDC says that 82 trees will be removed to construct the ramps to the bridge in the current design iteration. This number does not include trees of less than 4-inch caliper that may be removed. The figure of 82 trees is not final and is subject to design alterations.

Materials. The materials used in bridge construction must have an expected life of 75 years. The ramps will be constructed of impermeable material. Those portions of the ramps that are on grade and slope to the existing paths in the park will be made of permeable materials such as fill, top soil, and seeding or sodding. The total impermeable surface of paved paths connecting the ramps to the earth paths will be 4464 square feet.

In the course of construction DDC expects to remove a paved path on the eastern side of the Major Deegan Expressway adjacent to Shandler Field that contains 2200 square feet of impermeable surface.

SWPPP. The project will not disturb more than one acre of land and is located 1.5 miles from the nearest water body, Van Cortlandt Lake, so no SWPPP is required.

SHPO. SHPO review is pending.

EAS. DDC is working with DPR to produce an Environmental Assessment (EAS).

Old Business

The chair informed the committee that complaints have been received regarding improper use of the area of VCP at West 261st St. This has been a problem area for some time. Complaints include illegal barbecuing, lack of social distancing, and use of the woods as a bathroom. Similar complaints were received last year and were resolved only with the help of the 50th Precinct. The district manager has put this item on the agenda of the upcoming District Service Cabinet meeting.

The CB8-sponsored Enslaved Peoples Project curriculum guide is underway. The Project itself is ongoing and is planning for public outreach involving signage, educational outreach, and perhaps additional archeology in the vicinity of the Van Cortlandt House Museum.

Laura Spalter reported that the revised Parks Resource Guide is now online. Thanks to Laura, Rob Jacklosky, and Deb Travis for revising the guide.

The chair informed the committee that Fort Independence Park will be reopened when the city reopens playgrounds.

New Business

Dan Hogle and Kim Richman of The Black Institute spoke about the use of glyphosate (trade name Round-Up) in city parks, urging that the committee support legislation before the city council to ban the use of chemical pesticides. Glyphosate is a known carcinogen. Mr. Hogle said that minority communities are most affected by the use of these pesticides and that the 10463 zip code ranks sixth citywide in the use of glyphosate.

Parks manager Joe Magneri said that DPR uses glyphosate sparingly. He reported being turned down by DPR when requesting pesticide spraying in some parks.

VCP Deputy Administrator Stephanie Thayer said that she understands that glyphosate is not being used in Van Cortlandt Park except by the Natural Resources Group in some woodlands. Instead DPR uses clove oil in parks and greenstreets. Glyphosate is never used in playgrounds or athletic fields.

Committee member and E&S chair Bob Fanuzzi observed that this issue affects areas of the community outside of parks as well.

The chair asked Mr. Hogle to send additional information to the CB8 office for consideration.

On the occasion of his final meeting as chair of the committee, Bob Bender thanked committee members for their service and their record of accomplishment. He offered his opinion that the committee has been one of the most effective on the community board.

The meeting adjourned at 9 pm.

Submitted by Bob Bender