

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2007
AT THE BOARD OFFICE
5676 RIVERDALE AVENUE**

PRESENT

Robert Bender
Damian McShane
Evelyn Tucker
Herb Barret
Frieda Barret
Artie Colon
Linda Colon
James A. Donaldson
Eileen Connolly
Margot Perron
Mary Carroll
Jenny Gordon
Ann Gordon
Rita R. Karig
Roger Montesano
Arelis Morillo

AFFILIATION

CB #8 Committee Chair
CB #8
CB #8

Ft. Independence Pk. Neighborhood Assoc.
Ft. Independence Pk. Neighborhood Assoc.
Friends of the Van Cortlandt Stadium
DPR
DPR
Mutual Housing
Mutual Housing
Mutual Housing
Fieldston Road Association
FDNY

Chair Bob Bender reported on meetings held over the summer on Sid Augarten Ballfield in North Riverdale. Representatives of Bronx Borough President Carrion, Councilman Koppell, North Riverdale Baseball League and CB8 Parks & Recreation Committee met with Parks Department representatives to urge the Parks Department to come up with a plan to address the drainage problem and restore the ballfield. Parks says it is developing a plan, which it has not yet disclosed. The Committee will continue to monitor the situation and coordinate with the Borough President's and the Councilman's offices, as well as NRBL.

There was some discussion about local dog-walkers using the field as well, and that this practice might have to be addressed when work on the ballfield begins.

Herb Barrett reported on the Van Cortlandt Park Memorial Grove. There will be a Veterans Day ceremony on November 12th at the Grove. Local veterans groups have been contacted about the Memorial Grove but they are unable to offer any assistance in restoring the Grove. Margot Perron, Van Cortlandt Park Administrator, reported that initial estimates for restoring the Grove are \$250,000 but could run higher. Parks Department has no funds available so funds would have to be sought from elected officials or from foundations. The site cannot be restored to its original condition, Ms.

Perron pointed out, because the trees there are now mature. Any alteration would have to undergo the Parks review process.

The committee will discuss the Grove again at the November meeting and will try to identify possible sources of funding.

The Community Board budget priorities for the FY 2009 were briefly discussed and the committee took note of the several parks items that are in the Board's budget request.

Margot Perron reported that a \$100,000 engineering study of Van Cortlandt Stadium is underway. The study will evaluate the structure as well as plumbing, heating, and electrical systems to determine the cost and feasibility of repairing the stadium. James Donaldson reported that the lights on the handball courts have been adjusted to come on before dark, and the committee thanked Ms. Perron for arranging for this. Mr. Donaldson also observed that there is a large surplus in the city budget and he believes more money is available for the parks than is currently allocated.

Several residents who use the dog run at Fort Independence Park spoke on behalf of the dog run. This matter has come before the committee in the past, and there is a division of opinion among neighbors who use the park. Some park users complain that the park gates should not be locked at night so that the police have easy access to the park, but other park users at the meeting want the gates to remain locked. Eileen Connolly, Administrator for the parks in CB8, observed that this is the only park in the community board area that is locked at night, and she said that the police have keys to the park gates. She also observed that last winter, through an oversight, the gates were not locked at night, and there were no complaints. The chair urged the Fort Independence Park Neighborhood Association to discuss both the dog run and the gates and to come before the committee with its conclusions. No changes are currently contemplated, pending further discussion.

Several park neighbors said that the restroom in the park is not wheelchair accessible. Ms. Connolly promised to investigate whether a temporary wheelchair ramp could be secured. A permanent ramp would be a capital improvement project and would take considerable time to install.

Ms. Perron reported that Manhattan College has requested the use of the VC Park parking lot near the golf course when construction begins on the college parking lot next spring. She said that the parking lot is little used during the week, and that the college would not use it on weekends. The college would provide its own security for the parking lot. Although there appears to be no reason to object to this arrangement, the chair tabled the matter pending a report to the full board or the Traffic and Transportation Committee.

A representative of the Fieldston Road Homeowners' Association (W. 253 St. to Mosholu Ave.) requested assistance in getting the Parks Department to remove

damaged street trees. Ms. Connolly offered to help find the right person in the Parks Department.

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, November 28th at **7:00 PM** in the Board office.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Bender
Chair
Parks and Recreation Committee

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