

COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX
MINUTES OF THE
PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
HELD SEPTEMBER 23RD, 2009
AT THE BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 8 OFFICE

Attendees:

Community Board Members: Bob Bender, Karen Pesce, Tom Durham, Rosemary Ginty, Yael Levy, Steve Balicer

Committee members: Shirley Echevarria, Margot Perron, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR); Herb Barret, Memorial Grove; Kenneth Miller, Bronx HS Science; Lynn Schwarz, FIPNA; Moshe Karten; Loretta Carey; Rebecca Patt, Roger Montesano, Mutual Housing (3850 Sedgwick Ave.)

The meeting began at 7 pm. The minutes of the June meeting were unanimously approved.

Old Business

Van Cortlandt Park

The headquarters building is being renovated in the fall and the bathrooms will be closed. The staff is moving to the stadium and those bathrooms may remain open to the public during the winter. The tennis court bathrooms will be open. If necessary, DPR may open the bathrooms in the pool.

Parade Grounds work continues. The northern half will reopen in the spring, exact date to be determined by turf conditions.

The Putnam Trail - In July, Margot Perron, Bob Bender, and representatives of Parks Capital and State DOT inspected the trail to determine whether side-by-side paved and unpaved trails would be possible. Because the funding for the trail comes from the State DOT, there must be some paved surface, minimum eight feet wide. The surface must be "capped" because of soil contamination caused by the railroad (creosote, heavy metals, etc.) In addition state wetlands requirements will come into play. Design work will commence and is expected to take one year, after which there will be a scope meeting for public review. A semi-permeable test patch was recently installed on the trail near the golf house to see how it holds up in winter weather. It might serve as a paved surface on the trail.

Tibbet wetland boardwalk repair is underway and the trail through the wetland will soon be accessible again.

There was discussion of the stable (Riverdale Equestrian Center). The pony rides were discontinued last spring. There is a Saturday morning program that provides rides to children

with disabilities, two sessions with about 9 children in each session. The stable has inquired about expanding, but DPR wants it to improve the bridle trails in the park first. Margot Perron reported that the stable has a 17-year lease and she believes there are approximately 7 years to go. She will provide the lease to the committee at a future meeting. Committee members expressed some concern that the stable provides a disproportionate benefit to a relatively small number of well-to-do people while occupying a substantial portion of public land. Memorial Grove - Veterans' Day ceremonies will take place on November 11 starting at 12:30. The gates on the mansion road will be open to permit the ceremonies.

Mosholu Golf Course - Because there was no Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee meeting in September, there is no update.

VCP Conservancy is working on its website and has no news to report.

Other parks:

Ft. Independence Park - Chair Bob Bender reported that DPR is taking the Jerome Park/Ft. Independence Park redesign to the Design Commission's October meeting. The committee previously expressed its approval of the redesign with the caveat that the dog run could be further reduced in size and partly relocated to an area elsewhere in the park that is not currently in use. Commissioner Aponte said that because of erosion problems in the park, he is not sure that the location recommended by the committee will work, but that he will look it over again. In a separate discussion later in the meeting, Roger Montesano asked whether the park can be locked, and Bob Bender briefly recapitulated previous discussions of this issue, which has divided the nearby community. Roger asked whether it would be possible at least to lock the basketball courts. Parks representative Shirley Echevarria said that it should be possible for the park attendant to lock and unlock gates to the courts, and the committee thought this was a good idea. Shirley said she would inform DPR about the request.

Henry Hudson monument - Work has begun and is about 20% complete according to DPR. It is anticipated that the restoration work will end next spring, depending on weather and the condition of the monument.

Ewen Park - Councilman Koppell announced that he was providing \$700,000 for repair of the basketball courts and new fences. DPR will look into the matter and then prepare a design. There will be a scope meeting so that neighbors of the park will have a chance to comment on the design.

Kingsbridge Little League (KLL) - The KLL had expressed frustration at being unable to repair lights. DPR did repair the lights, even though it is not obligated to do so under the lease that KLL has for the field.

Vinmont ballfield (Sid Augarten field) - Over the summer DPR reported that repair of the field was behind schedule and recommended that it begin next summer after completion of the 2010 Little League season. A meeting is scheduled for Sept. 25 at the field. *(Update: the*

meeting was attended by Damian McShane, Nicole Stent, and Bob Bender on behalf of CB8; Councilman Koppell and an assistant; a representative of Borough President Diaz; several board members of the North Riverdale Baseball League; and Commissioner Aponte and members of the Capital and Operations groups of DPR. Details to be discussed at the October committee meeting.)

New Business

October 24, "It's My Park" day. Groups that want to work in the parks should contact Anthony Martinez from Partnership for Parks at 718-430-1861 or Anthony.Martinez@parks.nyc.gov. There will be Million Trees plantings that day. Shirley Echevarria is checking to see whether any plantings are scheduled for the CB8 parks. *(Update: Christina Taylor of Friends of Van Cortlandt reported after the meeting that the Friends are doing their activities on Saturday, Oct. 17 at the John Kieran nature trail. Meet at Broadway and 242 St. at 10 am. On Oct. 24 & 25 there will be Family Forestry Fun. For more information contact the Friends at www.vancortlandt.org)*

Neighborhood resident Loretta Carey complained about the recent use of herbicide in Seton Park that left her dog seriously ill. She said that although one sign warning of pesticide use had been posted, there were other entrances to the dog run in Seton Park and so she did not see the sign. She expressed concern that pets and small children are at risk when the public is not adequately informed. There was some discussion of why DPR uses herbicides (lack of maintenance personnel and union regulations about handling poisonous weeds). There was agreement that signage and notification to the community could be improved. Herbicides are generally applied in the spring and at other times as needed. Shirley Echevarria will recommend more signs at parks when herbicide use is going to take place. The committee urged that DPR post information on its websites advising communities in advance when herbicides or other poisonous chemicals will be used, something analogous to the information that is disseminated by the Health Department when West Nile virus mosquito spraying takes place.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 pm.

The chair thanks Rosemary Ginty for assisting with the minutes of the meeting. The next meeting will be on October 28 at 7 pm.

Submitted by,

Bob Bender
Chairman
Parks and Recreation Committee

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