

COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT & SANITATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 18, 2009 AT THE BOARD OFFICE, 5676 RIVERDALE AVENUE

Board Members of the Committee present:

Saul Scheinbach, Committee Chairman
Bradford Trebach, Committee Vice Chairman
James Plaza
Thomas Giallorenzi
Herb Young

Other Board Members present:

none

Community Members of the Committee present:

none

Also in attendance:

Zachary Feder (from the Department of Parks & Recreation)
Anne Marie Garti (from the Jerome Park Conservancy)
I-C Levenberg-Engel (from the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality)
Laura Fieber (resident)

The Committee met at 7:30 p.m. – S. Scheinbach in the Chair.

1. It was agreed that the Minutes of the Committee's meeting of November 13, 2008 be adopted.
2. Update on the Facility Monitoring Committee for the Croton Water Filter Plant project.
The Chairman said, in response to public comments, the Design Commission asked the DEP and the Parks Department to reconfigure the Van Cortlandt Park (VCP) golf course parking area so that it fit into the old footprint. Also, a special committee formed by the DEP to review public access to the Jerome Park Reservoir (JPR) should make its recommendation by June 2009. As part of the process he was interviewed by Peter Szabo, Bloomingdale Management Advisors, a consultant for DEP. He told Mr. Szabo that the Board, in its 197a plan, recommended that JPR become a 125-acre park with public access, and sent him a copy of the plan. When asked about the special security needs for the JPR, he said all the upstate Croton reservoirs had public access, and they were equally vulnerable to sabotage. He said any of the security concerns the DEP has for JPR hold for upstate reservoirs as well, and questioned the DEP's assertion that an adulterant would enter the system more rapidly if dropped in the JPR. He said that existing monitoring systems could not possibly detect any and all chemicals that might be dumped into upstate reservoirs before they too entered the

distribution system, and the public should have access to the water's edge at the JPR. When asked about alleviating DEP's security concerns, he said if access were granted, a compromise concerning the type of fence could be worked out.

The Chairman said \$4.5M in Croton mitigation money is being used by the Parks Department to prepare a design for improvements to Ft. Independence Park and a running track part-way around the JPR, excluding Goulden and Reservoir Aves. Although he had misgivings, he felt that the community consensus was to go ahead with the partial track but to continue to advocate for public access.

Ms. Garti responded that in her view mitigation funds were for a path around the reservoir itself, not improvements to the outside sidewalk and that only a few people were for the partial track. She reminded the committee that the Board's 197a plan supports the Conservancy's plan, which advocates for "walking, jogging, skating, and/or bicycling trails around the reservoir" at the water's edge.

The Chairman said that because of two chlorine gas leaks at Gatehouse no. 5 in the past year, he expects that emergency evacuation procedures will be discussed at the next FMC meeting, held tomorrow at 3660 Jerome Ave., at 7pm, and representatives from the schools along Goulden Ave. will be present so they understand what needs to be done in an emergency.

3. Illegally posted signs.

The Chairman said there has been an increase in signs attached to utility poles, and he has been reporting offenders to the Board office. He has also reported several stores that continually place A-frame signs on the sidewalk, which are also illegal. In an effort to move forward a City Council bill to close a loophole that currently allows unscrupulous real estate brokers to post open house signs in public spaces, the Chairman wrote to Speaker Quinn and called Rob Newman, legislative aid to Ms. Quinn. After being apprised of the problem, Mr. Newman was optimistic the bill would have a hearing soon.

4. Gas drilling by hydraulic fracturing.

The Chairman said the state Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC) had finished its scoping for the SEIS it would produce this summer. Despite the fact that this process uses millions of gallons of water and has the potential to pollute water supplies, he thought the NYDEC would approve it. He urged members to write the Governor. Ms. Garti likened the environmental consequences of drilling to "bringing Appalachia to New York". She agreed that public pressure against drilling could sway the Governor.

5. Graffiti vandalism

Mr. Trebach reported that many “clean up after your dog signs” have been defaced by graffiti vandals. He suggested replacing the signs and said he would write the Mayor. He said the City currently offers free graffiti removal services. Property owners must submit a waiver to the City to allow authorized personnel to clean graffiti from first or second-story facades. Anyone can report graffiti by calling 311.

6. Any other business

Mr. Trebach pointed out that the Mayor recently signed a bill limiting motor vehicle idling time to just 1 minute in a school zone. The new law is aimed at school buses and buttresses the current law limiting idling to 3 minutes. That law remains in effect everywhere else, but, to the consternation of environmentalists, has been poorly enforced. The new law also seeks to increase enforcement by requiring an annual report on the number of violations. The Mayor will also begin a public awareness campaign about idling this year.

The Chairman noted that in response to our expense budget request, the DEP will “try” to clean, maintain and control rodents along the JPR perimeter.

He presented a mission statement for the E&S Committee that was used by former Chairman Trebach for discussion by the members.

At 8:48 p.m., the Committee was adjourned to a day and time to be fixed by the Chairman.

Respectfully submitted,

Saul Scheinbach
Chairman,
Environment and Sanitation Committee