

Bronx Community Board No. 8
Minutes of the Environment and Sanitation Committee
Held on September 21, 2016 at the Board Office, 5676 Riverdale Avenue

Present

Committee members: Laura Spalter, chair, R. Fanuzzi, vice chair, B. Bender, Robert Spalter, community committee member

Absent committee members: Steven Froot, David Kornbluh, Amy Joy Robateau, Karen Argenti, community committee member

Community guests: Anna Dolgov, Riverdale Press, Christina Taylor, Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, I-C Ladenberg, Bronx Council for Environmental Quality, Ann Rauch, Riverdale Nature Preservancy, Jennifer Klein, Matt Turov, Deb Dolan, Suzanne Corber, Save the Putnam, M. Eremeyer

Agenda

Item 1. The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM. The minutes of May 18, 2016 were approved. The chair sadly informed the committee of the passing of Karen Argenti's father. Committee members expressed their heartfelt condolences for her loss.

Item 2. The chair reported on the status of the DEP Green Infrastructure Grant application with Riverdale Neighborhood House (RNH). A kick off meeting was held on September 15th at RNH. Attending from the E and S Water Working Group were the chair and Karen Argenti, representatives from Riverdale Neighborhood House, Riverkeeper, Storm Water Infrastructure Matters (SWIM), and the NYC Soil and Water Conservation District. RNH had responded to the questionnaire developed in 2015 by the Water Working Group to identify areas of serious flooding. Subsequently, DEP representatives made a site visit to discuss RNH's flooding issues and green infrastructure solutions.

Item 3. The chair reported on the status of the MS 4 Permit. Context: This refers to the city's Municipal Separate Storm water Sewer System. In 2015, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) issued a permit along with a mandate that the DEP develop a comprehensive Storm Water Management Plan by 2018 in accordance with the Clean Water Act.

The DEP's first task was to map the areas where polluted and untreated, storm water discharges directly into our water bodies via the MS 4, a system of drains, pipes, ditches, and other conveyances.

Last May, the DEP informed the E & S Committee that Community Board 8 was not included in their MS4 mapping process. The Water Working Group immediately sent DEP the following locations that we believe adversely impact the Hudson and Harlem Rivers and therefore should be included in their MS 4 mapping:

1. Private sewer areas that are East and West of the Henry Hudson Parkway;
2. Along the edge of the Hudson River from Edsall Ave. to W. 263rd St., and along the edge of the Harlem River from Bailey to Edsall Avenues;
3. In Van Cortlandt Park, and proposed parkland South of Van Cortlandt Park currently owned by CSX.

The DEP's response (*in italics quotes*)

1. *“Privately-owned and operated sewer systems with their own outfalls are not included in the MS4 permit and generally will not be included in the MS 4 mapping effort.”*
 2. *“The areas directly along the Hudson or Harlem Rivers are not currently included in the combined sewer area, and will be refined as part of the MS 4 mapping effort if they are city owned or operated.”*
 3. *“Mapping of other City-owned or operated sites, such as Parks, will be refined as part of the MS4 mapping effort and /or the Harlem River Long Term Control Plan.”*
- Lastly, it was noted, *“Private properties that are part of the city’s MS4 will be subject to the Construction/Post Construction and Industrial/Commercial requirements of the MS 4 Permit.”*

After discussion, the committee agreed that the DEP’s language was confusing. The chair will endeavor to clarify DEP’s position before our next meeting, and we will hold a follow up meeting with them.

Item 4. Van Cortlandt Park

Discussion ensued on excessive nitrogen and eutrophication occurring at Van Cortlandt Lake causing the green slime covering the lake.

Christina Taylor, executive director of The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, reported on the salt shed located in Van Cortlandt Park. In August, Christina, the chair, and Karen Argenti met with Tommy Agar, then District 8 Sanitation Superintendent, at the salt shed. The concern was that the salt, the size of a small mountain and used all winter, could leach into the wetlands. This was a concern of DEC, which sent the Department of Sanitation a letter regarding the need to contain the salt, according to superintendent Agar. The sanitation department has made great progress in containing the salt, and we will continue to inform the committee.

Christina Taylor reported on pollution flowing into Van Cortlandt Lake coming from a leaky sanitary sewer pipe in Yonkers. The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park notified officials in Yonkers, the DEC, DEP, and DPR. The Friends have received a grant to conduct extensive water quality testing in the lake and wetlands, and will report their findings at our next meeting.

On September 8th the chair, Karen Argenti, and Jane Sokolow (BCEQ) met in Van Cortlandt Park with Parks Commissioner Iris Rosa-Rodriguez and Arne Fareth from DEP to examine a pipe discharge near the parade grounds and John Kieran Nature Trail. Both agencies are investigating the source of the leak. Amanda Ek, manager of the Van Cortlandt Stables, also attended the meeting, and explained that unlike the system of the previous concession, horse manure cannot leach into the environment. It is contained in a dumpster and picked up 3 times a week by a composting company.

Christina Taylor reported that the DPR has hired a consultant for the Tibbets Brook daylighting project.

Item 5. Planning and Priorities for 2016-2017. Discussion included engaging with DEP on developing a Long Range Control Plan for green infrastructure to reduce local flooding, inclusion into the MS4 system, infrastructure priorities in Community Board 8, reducing combined sewer overflow (CSO), Jerome Park Reservoir multi agency issues, daylighting Tibbets Brook and improving our wetlands. Sanitation issues included expanding organic recycling, improving maintenance of our step streets, which often

falls between the cracks due to lack of coordination between DOS and DOT, which share responsibility.

New Business

The chair reported on the DOS budget consultation meeting. Both the chair and district manager requested clarification of DOS vs. DOT roles in maintenance of step streets. CB 8 has 26 step streets, more than any other community board, and there are many complaints re garbage and weeds. According to DOS commissioner Henry Ehrehart, union rules mandate that DOT is responsible for cleaning the areas outside of the step's railings. He agreed to revisit the issue. Pat Manning raised the difficulty in routing 311 complaints due to lack of addresses for step streets. She also raised the difficulty in getting lots cleaned. The response was city owned lots will take a few weeks, but private property will take months.

City Council Legislative Update

The chair reported that according to the list prepared by CB 8 Vice Chair Ginty, Local Law 48 was passed in 2015 mandating that DEP compile semi-annual catch basin clean up reports. The committee has been asking for this for years, so it is very encouraging. The chair will follow up with DEP.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by,

Laura Spalter, Chair
Environment and Sanitation Committee