

## **Minutes of the Special Committee on the Hudson River Greenway Meeting**

**May 26, 2016 at the Riverdale YM-YWHA, 5625 Arlington Ave.**

(pending committee approval)

### **Attendees:**

Committee: Bob Bender, Laura Spalter

Absent: Philip Friedman

Other CB8: Dan Padernacht, Rosemary Ginty, Robert Press, David Gellman, Michael Heller, David Kornbluh, Lisa Daub, Amy Joy Robateau

Metro-North: Mark Mannix, Terence McCauley, Kim Smith, David Cuff

Community: Sen. Jeff Klein, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, Herb Barret, Lenore Berger, Robert Fass, Bryant Daniels (Rep. Eliot Engel's office), Andrea Castano (Assemblyman Dinowitz's office), Joshua Stephenson (Councilman Cohen's office), Tracy Shelton (KRVC), Cliff Stanton (KRVC), Mark Gothelf, Rob Spalter, Peter Kleiman, Paula Luria Caplan, Brian Fineman, Joe Kozlowski, Leslie Lannon, Jack Lehnert (Friends of the Hudson River Greenway), Gary Klingsberg (Riverdale-Spuyten Duyvil Coalition)

### **Discussion of Scope of Work Study by Metro-North Funded by Sen. Jeff Klein**

The meeting began at 5:35 pm.

Bob Bender introduced the representatives from Metro-North and then introduced Sen. Klein, who spoke about the importance of the Greenway to the community and his commitment to the Greenway. He thanked the community board for arranging the meeting and expressed his appreciation to Metro-North for meeting with the community.

Metro-North (hereafter MNR) representatives Kim Smith and David Cuff discussed the Greenway feasibility study that will be undertaken with funding provided by Sen. Klein as they showed a Power Point presentation. The study area encompasses the

Bronx from Spuyten Duyvil into Yonkers at the Ludlow Street bridge. (*Note: the presentation was subsequently sent to the CB8 office.*)

The study is divided into three tasks: Task 1, inventory, data gathering, and preliminary analysis; Task 2, assessment of opportunities and challenges; Task 3, evaluation of the feasibility of the Greenway route.

Task 1 Deliverables will map existing conditions and document photographically the potential Greenway corridor. When this is done MNR will share its findings with the community. Task 2 Deliverables will identify trail locations by segments and will map and photograph opportunities and challenges. Possible locations range from land to over riprap to piers on the water. MNR will share its findings with the community. Task 3 Deliverables will provide maps of the Greenway by segments along with comparisons of the various options for locations according to cost, feasibility, safety, and resiliency. MNR will present its findings at a public meeting and will prepare a draft report for review and comment. Then a final report will be issued. The intention is to issue the final report by June 2017.

As part of the presentation MNR responded to questions previously forwarded by the committee. Additional questions will be considered until June 10.

The actual work will be done by a consulting firm that has already been pre-approved by MNR. This will eliminate the need to issue an RFP and will expedite the process.

Following the presentation Assemblyman Dinowitz spoke. He expressed his support for the Greenway and said that it was important for the community. He thanked the community board for its efforts and thanked MNR for its presentation.

The floor was then opened for questions.

MNR was asked how this study differs from an engineering study. Kim Smith said that this *is* the engineering study. It will be followed by a more detailed (“hard”) engineering study of the route selected for the Greenway.

Asked about the significance of the segments she mentioned, Ms. Smith said that the route has been broken into segments only for purposes of the study.

Asked whether MNR could contact Amtrak about using the swing bridge at Spuyten Duyvil, Ms. Smith said that Amtrak is adamantly opposed but MNR can ask again.

Mr. Mannix noted that expanded rail service in the future is likely. Demand for rail service is increasing, not diminishing. High-speed rail access via the Spuyten Duyvil connection must remain an option.

There was a vigorous discussion of using the MNR service road for the Greenway. MNR's position is that it must have exclusive access at all times. Several people asked why access couldn't be provided for the Greenway with a warning that the road might be closed at any time without prior notice. MNR said it would not permit any use of the access road for the Greenway.

Asked about its commitment to the Greenway, Ms. Smith said that MNR was committed to identifying a feasible Greenway. She said that its commitment is consistent with the CB8 June 2014 resolution on the Greenway. Mr. Mannix added that MNR didn't build Greenways, the community must do that. Metro-North is spending no money on the study or the Greenway beyond the time of MNR personnel involved in supervising the study and communicating with the community.

Why is MNR doing the study rather than a state agency, and isn't this a conflict? Ms. Smith replied that either way it is state money that is being disbursed in the study.

The condition of the small park at the Riverdale Metro-North station will be evaluated as part of the study. It might be incorporated into the Greenway route.

Is there a safe distance from the tracks for the Greenway? Ms. Smith said that MNR's requirement is fifteen feet from the closest rail to the fence that would run between the Greenway and the tracks.

The study will not identify possible funding sources for the Greenway, however, the study results should assist in efforts to obtain funding from government agencies.

Construction of the Greenway will not be done under the supervision of MNR but must be the responsibility of a sponsoring organization or agency. MNR will monitor to ensure that its operations are not affected. MNR is currently working on a trail in conjunction with Scenic Hudson. Elsewhere it has worked with local governments on trails and greenways near its tracks.

The study that is now beginning will have MNR's approval when it is released.

Committee members and community attendees thanked the four MNR representatives for their presentation and for taking so many questions.

#### Outreach to Government Agencies

Bob Bender mentioned a meeting held on May 25 with Michael Marrella, Director of Waterfront and Open Space Planning for the Department of City Planning. Bob, Laura Spalter, Dan Padernacht, and Rosemary Ginty from CB8 and Joshua Stephenson from Councilman Cohen's office met with Mr. Marrella and Juton Horstman at DCP to discuss the Greenway. A brief report on that meeting is attached.

Committee members will continue to reach out to regulatory and governmental agencies as appropriate in the coming year while the MNR study proceeds.

Minutes of the April committee meeting were approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm. The chair wishes to thank Rob Spalter for technical assistance at the meeting.

#### **Report on Special Committee on the Hudson River Greenway meeting with NYC Department of City Planning, 120 Broadway, May 25, 2016**

Attendees:

CB8: Bob Bender, Laura Spalter (committee), Dan Padernacht (CB8 chair), Rosemary Ginty (CB8 vice chair)

DCP: Michael Marrella, Director of Waterfront and Open Space Planning, Juton Horstman

Joshua Stephenson, Councilman Cohen's office

Discussion:

Discussion began with background on the HRG. Mr. Marrella noted that he knows about the HRG and previously met with Paul Elston of Friends of the HRG.

He said that there are two major concerns in planning the Greenway. One is right of way issues; the other is environmental issues.

Environmental permits will be required from NYS DEC and from the Army Corps of Engineers. In order to obtain permits for building on the waterfront or over the river, it will be necessary to show that the Greenway cannot be built on land. Then the environmental impact will be assessed based on three criteria, which Mr. Marrella summarized as Avoid, Minimize, and Mitigate. Avoid environmental impacts; if they cannot be avoided, Minimize the impact; and Mitigate any environmental damage by providing an environmental benefit nearby.

For example, if the HRG is built over the water, perhaps a wetland nearby could be restored. The triangle at Spuyten Duyvil might be considered for remediation.

DCP will expect that any action undertaken along the waterfront in NYC must comply with the city's Waterfront Revitalization Program.

<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/applicants/wrp/wrp.page>

Asked about the width of the trail, Mr. Marrella said that while ten feet is standard, trails can be narrower in places where there are important constraints on width.

Mr. Marrella urged that the community consider building the HRG in phases. The cost of the HRG will be substantial and it is unlikely that the money to build the Bronx segment can be raised to permit building it all at once.

Mr. Marrella said that the fact that Metro-North is undertaking a study of the Greenway is a positive step. The information from that study can be used to contact the DEC and ACoE to begin discussions about obtaining permits.

