

Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Committee on the Hudson River Greenway, April 6, 2017

Riverdale YM-YWHA

(pending committee approval)

Attendees:

Committee: Bob Bender (chair), Michael Heller, Laura Spalter

Other CB8: Dan Padernacht, Rosemary Ginty, David Kornbluh, Lisa Daub, David Gellman, Eric Bell, Marvin Goodman, Tony Creaney

Metro-North: Terrence McCauley, David Cuff, Kim Smith

Community: Joe Kozlowski, David Bush, Robert Press, Art Weisenseel, Dale Wolff, Wendy Steinberg (Hebrew Home), Gary Klingsberg, Linda Hirlehey, Jack Lehnert, Cliff Stanton, Tracy Shelton, Holly Makin, Farrah Rubin, Ross Rubin (KRVC), Bob Heisler, Neile Weismann, Nortrud Spero, Joshua Needleman, Joshua Stephenson (Councilman Cohen's office), Jim Sandoval, John Benfatti, Michael Hinman (Riverdale Press), Rich Gans (Transportation Alternatives), Yael Levy (Riverdale Riverfest), Jose Rodriguez (Sen. Klein's office), Frederik Klein (Assemblyman Dinowitz's office), Rob Spalter

Agenda:

The meeting began at 7:10 pm. The three representatives from Metro-North (MNR) introduced themselves and gave a brief overview of the study that they would be discussing. Mr. Cuff and Ms. Smith then presented the basic facts of the study and answered questions from those present.

Mr. Cuff explained that the study was based on site examination and examination of data bases regarding the Hudson River waterfront in the Bronx. The area is well known to MNR and there were no surprises. He reviewed the waterfront from Spuyten Duyvil to Yonkers, identifying various "pinch points," such as the Yacht Club and the Westchester County sewage treatment plant.

The next step will be to analyze this information and identify "opportunities and challenges." The study is not examining fortification of the waterfront embankment because fortification is not an MNR goal. Instead the railroad is hardening its infrastructure against flooding, storm surges and salt water. A Hudson River Greenway (HRG) must be "resilient," i.e., capable of withstanding flooding and storm surges so as not to disrupt MNR operations.

Before opening the floor to questions, the chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 2016 meeting. The motion was made and the minutes were unanimously approved.

There were many questions from the community, summarized below with MNR's responses.

Is it possible to build the HRG on an elevated platform over the tracks? No, because MNR does not own the property and the air rights, but instead leases them long term.

Why not make the riverfront resilient instead of hardening infrastructure? Resiliency would be too costly; hardening is the preferred alternative. Augmentation of the riverbank could break loose.

Can we speak to a representative of the engineering firm (Matrix) at a future meeting? Yes.

Can the HRG be built in segments? Yes, but the study is required to examine the area from Spuyten Duyvil to Ludlow.

How can users access the HRG at Spuyten Duyvil? There is an existing overpass at the Spuyten Duyvil MNR station to the southbound tracks, but it would have to be extended over the Amtrak tracks to connect with the HRG along the river. This is another pinch point.

What is the minimum width required of the HRG? Ten feet – and please remember that the access points to the trail must be ADA compliant.

There is room at the sewage treatment plant for a ten-foot HRG on the river side, and even at the narrow south end on the eastern side of the plant. From there it is possible to continue up Fernbrook Street to Ludlow, so the HRG can be built close to the river in Yonkers.

Will the electrical cable towers south of W. 254th street remain? Yes.

What about signal cables? They have been buried. Thirty miles of signals are being buried.

Why can't the MNR service road be used for the HRG? That is our operations roadway and it must be available to us at all times. Also, for safety reasons we must have 15 feet of clearance from the nearest rail to the HRG.

Won't the 15-foot requirement put the HRG in the river? For some of the way, yes, most likely.

Following the questions and answers the MNR representatives said that their next report will take place in May or June. They promised to send a copy of their study map to the CB8 office.

The chair gave a report on the committee's January meeting with two Yonkers city officials. In brief, the officials do not advocate a riverfront greenway but believe the greenway should follow Riverdale Avenue. A Yonkers resident responded to the report by saying that Mayor Spano has been open to a riverfront greenway and that the political situation in Yonkers regarding the HRG "may be in flux."

The chair also reported on the committee's February meeting with Sen. Klein, NY State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey, and a representative of the governor regarding the Empire State Trail. That trail will not use the HRG or any riverfront greenway to get from Manhattan to Yonkers. It will use the Broadway Bridge and city streets to reach the Putnam Trail in Van Cortlandt Park and then the South County trail in Westchester. Details regarding the exact route remain to be determined. Most of the funding for the project will be spent upstate.

The chair noted that Councilman Cohen and co-sponsors have introduced a resolution in the City Council, Res. #994, urging Metro-North and other relevant agencies to cooperate in making the Hudson River Greenway possible. The chair thanked Councilman Cohen's representative and noted that the community board had sent a letter of support for the resolution because it conforms to the

board's June 2014 resolution in favor of the riverfront Hudson River Greenway. The chair further noted that board vice-chair had testified that morning in support of Mr. Cohen's resolution.

The chair noted that the Sheridan Expressway is being dismantled and reconfigured to enable neighborhood access to the Bronx River and Shoelace Park in the South Bronx. The cost is estimated at \$1.8 billion. It would appear that money is available for infrastructure projects that can demonstrate that they have broad community support.

Finally, the chair urged everyone to continue their efforts on behalf of the Hudson River Greenway and ended the meeting with this quote from nineteenth-century Chicago architect Daniel Burnham: "Make no small plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood."

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.