

COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
HELD APRIL 25TH, 2012 AT THE RIVERDALE MENTAL HEALTH
CONFERENCE ROOM

Attendees

Committee Members: Bob Bender, Robert Press, Herb Barret, Christina Taylor, Marvin Goodman, Laura Spalter, Steven Balicer, TC Durham

Other CB8 Members: Robert Fanuzzi, Herb Young

Others: Margot Perron, Ben Kramer, Mike Grattan, DPR; Frieda Barret, Memorial Grove; Gerry Bogacz, NYMTC; Paul Elston, Friends of the Hudson River Greenway; Sura Jeselsohn; Claudia Bonn, Wave Hill; Jackson Wandres, RBA; Paulette Schneider, Riverdale Review; Bette Clark, Van Cortlandt Track Club; Tracy Shelton, KRVCDC.

Agenda

Hudson River Greenway

The meeting began at 7:07 pm. Minutes of the March meeting were approved with the following corrections to the attendees: Christina Young should be Christina *Taylor*; David Berg should be David *Gellman*; and Mike Heller did not attend.

Gerry Bogacz of NYMTC (New York Metropolitan Transportation Council) introduced NYMTC and the study of the Hudson River Greenway that it has been undertaking. (A similar presentation was made to the Traffic and Transportation Committee meeting on April 17.) He presented Jackson Wandres of RBA, who narrated a power point presentation of the Greenway study with particular emphasis on how the Greenway would reach the Hudson River at West 232 Street and Palisade Avenue. Two routes were proposed: one entering Riverdale Park at West 232 and continuing down the mapped right of way to a ramp that would descend from grade level to the river level, the other entering Riverdale Park at the DEP sub-station approximately 150 yards north of West 232 Street on Palisade Avenue. The Greenway would then run north along the river on the west side of the railroad tracks. An alternative route would be for the Greenway to continue north on Palisade Avenue, enter Riverdale Park at the Spalding Lane parking lot, and continue north (along a mapped right of way in the park) on an unpaved but improved trail to West 254 Street. At West 254 Street the trail could go over the Metro-North bridge to the west side of the river. If Track Six, the westernmost track of the railroad, is removed or moved, the Greenway could continue north on the route of Track Six. According to Mr. Bogacz, Metro-North is willing to consider relocating this track. The preferred route would be direct to the river at either West 232 Street or the DEP sub-station because it would run approximately two miles along the river to the Yonkers line.

Mr. Bogacz intends to appear at Riverfest with a visual display to discuss the proposed Greenway route.

The NYMTC study is expected to conclude by December 31 with a recommended route.

Paul Elston of FHRG voiced his support for the plan because of the river access. He noted that if high-speed rail is introduced, the swing bridge at Spuyten Duyvil will be replaced and a new bridge could include a bikeway. MTA has estimated a cost of \$15 million to construct a cantilevered bikeway/running path on the west side of the lower level of the Henry Hudson Bridge. The spiral ramp to the river from Riverdale Park would cost approximately \$15 million. Relocating Track Six would cost an estimated \$15 million. The entire cost of the Greenway in the Bronx would be in the vicinity of \$60 million. Mr. Elston noted that the cost of the Greenway in Manhattan has generally been given as \$900 million.

Mr. Elston introduced Claudia Bonn, the director of Wave Hill, to discuss a proposed conservancy to manage Riverdale Park, which has been designated "forever wild" by DPR. Wave Hill supports the Greenway because it may bring bikers and walkers to Wave Hill. The new conservancy would take responsibility for managing the portion of the Greenway that will run through Riverdale Park.

Sura Jeselsohn, who lives at West 232 Street and Independence Avenue, commented on a proposed route from the Henry Hudson Bridge through Independence Avenue to West 232 Street, observing that West 232 Street has no sidewalk. She has asked DPR to install a sidewalk on the north side (Seton Park side) of West 232 Street. Mike Grattan reported that DPR is installing a wood-chip path through the trees on the north side of West 232 Street. However, this wood-chip trail would be insufficient for bikers, carriages/stroller, and other wheeled transportation and it will not go all the way to Palisade Avenue because of the steep grade.

The committee then considered a resolution passed by the Traffic & Transportation Committee endorsing the proposed Greenway plans, subject to approval by the Parks & Recreation Committee. The committee had no objection to the T&T endorsement.

Mr. Elston then asked the committee to consider the following resolution:

Draft Parks Committee Resolution concerning the Hudson River Greenway

Whereas, Senator Schumer provided \$1 million to plan the Hudson River Greenway Link between Manhattan and the Westchester Greenway in Yonkers;

Whereas, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) was designated by the State to manage the planning process and intends to complete the plan by the end of 2012;

Whereas, the NYMTC has released its preliminary choice for the preferred route that includes an approximately 2-mile stretch that is on the Hudson River waterfront in the Bronx;

Whereas, the Riverdale community has repeatedly supported “access to the waterfront” as one of its major priorities;

Whereas, NYMTC recommends that the preferred route should go from Palisades Avenue at 232nd Street through the Riverdale Park to a new bridge that will cross the railroad tracks and land on the waterfront on the west side of the tracks;

Whereas, NYMTC recommends a careful study of the Riverdale Park between 232nd Street and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) pumping station located approximate 150 yards north of 232nd Street to identify the route that would have the least damaging effect on the natural resources of the Park;

Whereas, Riverdale Park is designated a “natural resource area” and “forever wild” by the City;

Whereas, the Community Board believes that the Hudson River is one of the greatest natural resources of the community and that connecting Riverdale Park to the waterfront will materially improve the natural resources of the Park and provide public access to those natural resources;

Therefore be it resolved, that CB8

- supports the NYMTC choice of its preliminary preferred route, particularly because it provides generous public access to the waterfront;*
- supports the NYMTC recommendation that the preferred route go from Palisades Avenue at 232nd Street through the Riverdale Park to a new bridge that will cross the railroad tracks and land on the waterfront on the west side of the tracks;*
- supports the NYMTC efforts to study the area between 232nd Street and the pumping station in order to design a route that will have the least damaging effect on the natural resources of the Park;*
- urges the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to recognize natural resource enhancement of the Riverdale Park that results from the connection to the waterfront*

Mr. Press observed that this resolution overlaps somewhat with the T&T resolution. The Chair agreed and said that both resolutions will be discussed at the Executive Committee meeting, where they might be consolidated.

The committee approved the resolution by a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstained (Ms. Spalter).

Other Business

Robert Press reported on a meeting of the Harlem River Working Group at Lehman College on April 14. The HRWG proposes a river access route starting at Fresh Direct and ending at the Spuyten Duyvil Triangle. There might be improved access to

Macombs Dam Park and to Randalls Island. Pratt Institute has been working with the group and in June Pratt, HRWG and Bronx Council for Environmental Quality will offer a final proposal for a river access route. There is no funding in place for such a route.

Laura Spalter reported on the April 17 Fort Four site visit in preparation for the May 19 "It's My Park Day" event there. There will be painting and there might be planting as well (DPR has not yet approved planting plans). Mr. Press noted that there are 15 empty tree pits in the park that could be used in the event that trees are removed around Jerome Park Reservoir and replacement trees are allocated.

Ms. Spalter also reported on a successful April 22 Endor Garden clean-up that she organized.

Chair Bob Bender reported on an April 11 skateboard park site visit, which Ms. Spalter also participated in. After visiting Bailey Playground at Bailey Ave and West 234 Street and Van Cortlandt Park, the attendees at the site visit (including representatives of DPR, the Borough President's office, Councilman Koppell's office, and Christina Taylor) agreed that the Van Cortlandt site was preferable. DPR has estimated the cost of the skate park at approximately \$1.15 million. Councilman Koppell has promised some portion of the funding, the amount to be decided.

Mr. Bender also reported on the April 23 Van Cortlandt Park master plan planning session. (Dan Padernacht of CB8 also attended this meeting.) Many excellent suggestions were made. They will be consolidated, posted online, and follow-up sessions will be scheduled. When the master plan is finished, it will be presented to Community Boards 7, 8, 12. The process is expected to take one year.

Mr. Bender mentioned that the Bronx City Council delegation has tentatively scheduled a meeting to discuss the pedestrian bridge in Van Cortlandt Park, which the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee voted to endorse. The cost of the bridge is estimated at \$9 million. The committee hopes that the Bronx delegation will jointly sponsor a resolution asking the city to allocate funds to install the bridge.

Mr. Bender also mentioned that CB8 Chair Bob Fanuzzi has written to the NY State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to thank them for reviewing the plan by the MTA to remove the pedestrian walkway on the upper level of the Henry Hudson Bridge. At the April 17 T&T committee meeting, MTA disclosed that it has submitted its plan to dismantle the walkway – already in progress – to SHPO in response to requests from the community board and local activists. We hope to hear from SHPO soon.

Budget Priorities

The committee finalized its budget priorities as follows:

Expense –

1. Personnel sufficient for maintenance and enforcement in CB8 parks, especially on weekends and at times of high use.

2. Two stump grinders for Van Cortlandt Park.

Capital –

1. Construction of a new restroom and DPR maintenance area in Fort Four Park and related plumbing repairs.
2. Reconstruction of the Bailey Avenue playground.
3. Construction of a skateboard park in Van Cortlandt Park.
4. Repair of the Henry Hudson Park basketball and handball courts.
5. Construction of a restroom at Broadway and West 251 Street adjacent to the Parade Grounds.
6. Installation of a pedestrian bridge in Van Cortlandt Park. (NEW)
7. Construction of a walkway with a hard surface at the southern end of Seton Park parallel to West 232 Street.
8. Reconstruction of the pond wall at Spuyten Duyvil Park to prevent water runoff onto the roadway in the parking lot at the Metro-North station.
9. Repair of the gas line in Classic playground to allow reopening of the restroom in the winter months.
10. Resurfacing of the tennis courts in Seton Park. (NEW)
11. Renovation of Van Cortlandt Stadium.

Except for the new items and #7, DPR previously supported these expense and capital requests.

The Chair observed, as he has in past years, that some capital project might not be necessary if more resources were devoted to maintenance of the parks.

Christina Taylor reported that there will be a Million Trees tree giveaway on May 12 at the FVCP compost site on the Mosholu Avenue drive in VCP.

FVCP is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a party on May 22 at the Bronx Ale House, 6 – 8 pm. For more information: www.vancortlandt.org. The Chair congratulated FVCP on the anniversary.

Margot Perron announced that the contractor working at the Memorial Grove will begin installing pipe-rail fencing next week. That will leave only landscaping to be done to complete the work at the site.

The Chair thanks Marvin Goodman for his careful attention to the attendance sheets.

The next meeting will take place May 23 at Van Cortlandt Stadium. Planning for the ice rink will be the main agenda item.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20.

Submitted by,

Bob Bender
Chair
Parks & Recreation Committee