

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON MARCH 24, 2010**

Community Board Attendees: Bob Bender, Steven Balicer, Rosemary Ginty, Tom Durham,
Yael Levy

Other Committee Members: Christina Taylor, FVCP; Lynn Schwarz, FIPNA; Herb Barret, Memorial Grove; Don Tannen, Memorial Grove

DPR representatives: Shirley Echevarria, Margot Perron, Macsood Hoosein

Community Attendees: Andrew Sandler, rep. Councilman Oliver Koppell; David Bush

The meeting began at 7 pm.

Minutes of the February meeting were approved.

Margot Perron introduced Parks forester Macsood Hoosein, who reported on damage to VCP from the March 12-13 storm. Four DPR employees walked the trails over 5 days to inventory damage. They reported 143 trees of at least 4 inches in diameter that had been toppled. Oaks, black locusts, black cherries, and sassafras trees were hardest hit. In addition branches from 94 trees fell across trails. Based on this survey, Parks estimates that approximately 600 additional trees were brought down in more remote parts of the park for a total loss of around 750 trees.

Thousands were damaged. The Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy is requesting more equipment to help with chipping these trees plus help in re-planting those areas where invasives might grow.

Mr. Hoosein estimates that there are around 70,000-80,000 trees of 6 inch or greater diameter in VCP.

Ms. Perron provided an update on the drainage problem in the Parade Grounds. Test pits will be dug shortly to try to find the source of the accumulating sub-surface water. The fencing now in the northern part of the park will soon be taken down and moved to the southeastern corner while soil enhancement takes place in this latter location.

Margot reported that NY State has withdrawn its \$3 million financing for the Phase II area of the Putnam Trail. This is the area south of VCP. The budget for the Putnam Trail within the park has been reduced from \$3 million to \$2.7 million. The Trail project

is in the design stage and will come back before the committee when there is a design.

DPR is planning to issue an announcement that it is asking for volunteers to help with storm clean-up.

Shirley Echevarria reported that the storm caused damage throughout the area. Especially hard hit was Riverdale Park. No playgrounds were damaged by falling trees.

Ms. Echevarria reported that Russell Lowe has had to change the date of his Boy Scout service project in Seton Park from April 24 to May 8. She is making arrangements to get the supplies he will need.

Shirley said that there are now two gates up at Ft. Independence Park. The area not configured for either basketball or handball will not be gated. Locks should be installed on the two gates soon.

Reconstruction of the sidewalk on Independence Avenue adjacent to Seton Park should be finished very soon.

There were some complaints about the walkway in Riverdale Park being closed. Shirley reported that this might have been due to the storm (DPR doesn't want hazardous sidewalks open) or to the fact that DPR personnel were unable to get to the gate in the park on schedule. The sidewalk should be open after 8 am every day.

Interior work is taking place on the Henry Hudson statue. Exterior work has been completed.

Mr. Sandler reported that Councilman Koppell would like to see a woodchip-style trail on the West 232nd Street side of Seton Park (outside the park boundary). Andrew said that he thought that \$93,000 had been previously allocated for this purpose but Shirley did not know about this. She expressed DPR's reservation about the trail possibly being washed away by storm erosion. We will discuss again at our next meeting.

Rosemary Ginty expressed concern about the staging area being used by the contractor working on the Henry Hudson Bridge renovation. She asked whether the property being used is Parks property. Shirley Echevarria said she did not know but would investigate.

Yael Levy provided an update on the preparations for Riverfest, scheduled for the Marillac Lawn at Mt. St. Vincent College on Sunday, June 13. Further information can be obtained at www.riverdaleriverfest.org or www.riverfest2010.org.

Christina Taylor reported that the Bronx Parks Speak-Up has been rescheduled for April 10.

The chair reminded everyone to contact the board with recommendations for the Community Service Award. Herb Barret and Don Tannen were thanked again for the service that brought them this award in 2008.

The chair also reminded committee members that we will draw up our annual budget priorities at our April meeting. The current priorities may be found in the committee minutes for May, 2009.

Shirley Echevarria reported that new streetlights are being installed in Brust Park in cooperation with DOT at the top and bottom of the stairway in lower Brust Park. This work is expected to be completed before the summer.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Bob Bender
Chairman
Parks & Recreations Committee