

COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
HELD MAY 26TH, 2010
AT THE BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

Attendees:

Committee Community Board Members: Bob Bender, Rosemary Ginty, Karen Pesce, Ari Goldman, Yael Levy, Steven Balicer

Committee Community Members: Lynn Schwarz (FIPNA); Christina Taylor (FVCP); Herb Barret, Don Tannen, Lawrence Moiatto (Memorial Grove); Andrew Sandler (Councilman Koppell's office)

DPR: Macsood Hoosein

The meeting began at 7:05 pm. Minutes of the April meeting were approved.

Old Business

VCP Parade Grounds. Committee chair Bob Bender read a message from VCP Administrator Margot Perron, who was unable to attend, reporting on the condition of the Parade Grounds. The northern half (Phase One) is expected to open Friday, May 28. Two areas where drainage seems to be a problem will remain fenced off until the drainage problem is resolved. 4-foot fencing will be installed around the perimeter of the Parade Grounds to control access when weather conditions require DPR to keep people off the field.

Putnam Trail. The chair advised that Margot Perron had asked for support for DPR's plan, as presented to the committee last month in a conceptual design, to install a hard surface on the trail. The Public Design Commission (PDC) objected to the hard surface and asked instead for rockdust. DPR says this alternative is more expensive and requires more maintenance. The chair expressed his opinion that the committee as a whole and he individually should not take a position in advance of the presentation of the formal design before an open meeting in the community. Steve Balicer objected that not taking a position could suggest that the committee doesn't consider the trail to be a priority. Rosemary Ginty suggested that we send a letter explaining our neutral position but affirming our commitment to the renovation of the trail. The chair said he would check with Margot to solicit her opinion on this question. *(In an e-mail exchange on May 27, Margot Perron indicated that the strong support for the paved surface by community bike riders was sufficient in the judgment of DPR, so no further action was taken after the committee members were informed of this development.)*

New Business

DPR policy on pesticide use in city parks. Macsood Hoosein from DPR, who works in VCP, explained DPR's policy on pesticide use. DPR employees who use pesticides must be licensed. New York City agencies are held to a higher standard than private citizens. Category I pesticides, which are known to be or have the potential to be carcinogenic, cannot be used in city parks. Before a pesticide is used in a park, notice must be given at least 24 hours in advance through posting of prominent signs, and the area remains closed for 3 days after the application of pesticides. This notice must indicate the type of pesticide being applied. Pesticides are not sprayed when wind conditions exceed 10 mph. DPR does not use "Round-Up" because of expense. Type of pesticide is only one factor in assessing risk; formulations of the same pesticide can have different effects because of different "carriers" (solutions) that are used to carry the pesticide. Interagency review of pesticides takes place to determine safety.

Committee members were impressed with Mr. Hoosein's presentation and thought that the policy as explained seemed reasonable and responsible. The committee thought that DPR should be able to give more than 24 hours' notice before spraying, and it thought that DPR could do a better job of communicating its policy to the public. One suggestion was to put a link to the pesticide policy on the DPR homepage. The committee thought that elected officials might be interested to know DPR policy and might encourage DPR to better communicate its policy to the public.

The committee thanked Mr. Hoosein for his careful and clear presentation.

Pedestrian bridge in VCP. The committee discussed a resolution brought before the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee (CFMC) that was passed at the CFMC May 20 meeting. The resolution is as follows:

Whereas the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee (CFMC) was created to by THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK in RESOLUTION NO. 933 to specifically advise Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on all aspects of the design and construction of the filtration plant and all mitigation measures set forth in the FEIS and this Resolution.

Whereas this same resolution called upon the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) to undertake a feasibility study on a pedestrian footbridge, crossing the Major Deegan Expressway linking the east and west portions of Van Cortlandt Park.

Whereas, the Final Report of the Van Cortlandt Park Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study was presented to the CFMC by the DEP and DPR at its April meeting, reflecting that such a Pedestrian footbridge is “technically, legally and financially feasible”,

Whereas the City Council resolution No. 993 requires that if such conditions are met, the Mayor shall introduce the necessary budget provisions to the City Council to transfer sufficient funds from DEP to DPR to design and build the pedestrian footbridge

Whereas the CFMC has received letters from Civic groups, Community Boards and concerned individuals within the community endorsing the design and construction of a pedestrian footbridge within VCP over the Major Deegan Expressway,

Be it resolved that the CFMC asks the Mayor of the City of New York to immediately introduce the necessary budget provisions in the City Council to transfer funds from the DEP to the DPR in order for the DPR to design and construct a Pedestrian Footbridge within Van Cortlandt Park across the major Deegan expressway as outlined in the Feasibility Study presented to this Committee.

And further,

Be it resolved that the funds used to design & construct the Pedestrian Footbridge shall explicitly not reduce or draw from the \$243 million already committed to improving Van Cortland Park and developing/improving parkland throughout the Bronx, pursuant to the Statement of Findings for the Siting of the Croton Water Treatment Plant.

The chair noted that Assemblyman Dinowitz and Councilman Koppell supported the resolution, as did several organizations, including FIPNA, Bronx Council on Environmental Quality, FVCP, Jerome Park Conservancy, NY-NJ Trail Conference, and Friends of the Hudson River Greenway.

The report on the pedestrian bridge is posted on the CB8 website.

The resolution was approved by the committee with 12 in favor, none opposed.

Playgrounds. The committee wants to find out which CB8 school playgrounds are open to the community and what the obstacles are to opening them for all to use. First on the list will be the playground at PS 81. Andrew Sandler of Councilman Koppell’s office will investigate the status of this playground.

Hudson River Greenway. The chair reported on the recent NYMTC study of proposed Greenway routes and objections to it that have been made by Friends of the HRG. In general, the FHRG believes that the study did not consider enough alternative routes and did not examine sufficiently the costs and logistical obstacles associated with some of these routes. CB8 Chair Damian McShane wrote a letter in support of FHRG's objections. Because of time constraints on replying to the study, it was not possible to bring this matter to the committee's attention before the letter was written.

Memorial Grove. With all approvals in hand, work should begin by this fall, perhaps sooner.

Steve Balicer suggested that the committee try to meet in different locations when matters of local interest are discussed at meetings. Everyone thought this was a good idea if proper facilities can be found.

Christina Taylor reported on recent and upcoming fundraisers by the FVCP.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40PM. There will be no June meeting unless a situation arises that requires the committee to meet.

Submitted by,

Bob Bender, Chairman
Department of Parks & Recreation

BB:db (May 28, 2010)