

**COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX  
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE  
HELD FEBRUARY 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2011 AT RIVERDALE MENTAL HEALTH**

**Attendees:**

Bob Bender, Chair; Damian McShane, Steve Balicer, Tom Durham, Philip Friedman, Brendan Contant, Rosemary Ginty, Amy Moore, Robert Press, Community Board 8; Herb Barret, Don Tannen, Lillian Tannen, Lawrence Moiatto, Memorial Grove; Christina Taylor, FVCP; Andrew Sandler, Councilman Koppell's office; Tony Cassino, L. Deeker, VCPConservancy; Michael Michalek, Jim Mituzas, John Mattera, Davita Mabourakh, Christopher Farnum, DPR; Brendan McHugh, Riverdale Review; Carla Candia, Riverdale Press; I-C L'Engel, Karen Argenti, BCEQ; Bette Clark, President, Kevin Shelton-Smith, Arnold Gorf, Kyle M. Hall, Jill Staats, VC Track Club; Dave Lutz, Neighborhood Open Space Coalition; Hank Schiffman, NYCC; Mark Garrahan, Leonora Merkel, Westchester CC; Sharon Behnke, Maggie Clarke, Michael Moses, Richard Brause, 5 Boro CC; Steven Faust, AICP; Dart Westphal, Stephen Bauman, David Bush, Bill Dennison, M. Noyola, Anthony Savarese, Ken Coughlin, unaffiliated

**Agenda:**

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

The Chair mentioned that Assemblyman Dinowitz has sent the Board a proposal for several new Greenstreets. The Chair said that he would forward the email to committee members and would ask them each to choose a location and report back at the March meeting, when we will discuss the proposal further.

The Chair updated the committee on the situation at the Memorial Grove and Sid Augarten. It appears that work at the Memorial Grove may begin this spring. The low bidder contesting his disqualification on the Sid Augarten project has withdrawn. DPR is now evaluating the second bidder. It seems unlikely that work will begin before the summer. NRBL is being notified to consider using the field for the 2011 season.

**Putnam Trail Presentation.**

Michael Michalek presented DPR's design (done by Mark Morrison Associates) for the renovated Putnam Trail. There is \$2.3 million available, of which slightly under \$2 million will go toward construction.

The proposed trail will be asphalt, ten feet wide, with a 3-foot buffer on either side. The buffer will be of an aggregate material to assist in drainage. It will be the surface available to runners who do not wish to run on asphalt. There will be a wood edging to the trail.

At three points along the trail the asphalt portion will shrink to a width of 8 feet to accommodate existing mature trees.

The project will involve cleaning up the area under the overpass at Van Cortlandt Park South, which has become a dumping ground, and fencing off the area.

The remnant iron structure of the old Van Cortlandt Park train station will be developed with concrete precast pavers and benches. Bicycle racks will be installed.

Wherever possible along the trail, chain link fencing will be replaced with split-rail fencing. (This will not be the case wherever the golf course abuts the trail.)

There will be a new spur trail to the Parade Grounds in the vicinity of the test pylons.

A few locations along the trail that have become impromptu resting spots will be turned into actual locations to rest with small scenic improvements.

Bollards will be added at the northern boundary with Westchester to prevent motorized vehicles from accessing the trail.

At some later point, DPR hopes to be able to plan for extension of the trail to W. 230<sup>th</sup> St.

Below is a summary of some of the questions and answers that followed the presentation:

The major concern expressed during the Q and A session was how the asphalt will affect drainage on the trail. One questioner said that the wooden edging could worsen the drainage.

Another observed that the South County trail in Westchester (which connects to the Putnam Trail) has a gravel drainage bed alongside the paved area.

DPR responded that drainage is a concern that will be carefully examined during construction. No additional runoff is expected because of the asphalt paving.

The Van Cortlandt Track Club observed that there are more runners than cyclists and therefore the trail should be at least half paved half unpaved. DPR replied that the mandate for the funding requires paving and determines the width of the paving. A buffer will be needed at the sides in any case. Another runner expressed concern that the buffer area won't be wide enough for runners to run side by side.

One questioner observed that the area near the south end of the lake is twenty feet wide and wondered whether the new plan will narrow a popular heavily used portion of the trail. DPR replied that there is no plan to narrow this portion of the trail. It should continue to function as it does now.

In answer to another question, DPR said it would remove the railroad ties except where they do not interfere with the paved portion of the trail and can be left for historic purposes, e.g., under the Mosholu Parkway overpass. Wherever trees have grown through the ties, they will be left in place, as well. An effort will be made to save trees wherever possible.

One questioner asked whether the paving will increase the summertime temperature along the trail. DPR responded that because most trees will remain, the temperature should increase only minimally.

Construction drawings will be prepared over the summer. NY State DOT and DEC must approve the project; these approvals could take 4 to 6 months. The project will be put out to bid.

Construction will take about one year. There will be some use of one of the golf course parking lots for a staging area. Every effort will be made not to take away parking spaces during times when the golf course parking lot is in heavy demand.

The Chair notes that VC Track Club provided numerous letters from individuals opposing the paving of the Putnam Trail.

### **Ice Skating Rink Presentation**

Tony Cassino of VCPC with Davita Maboutakh and Chris Farnum of DPR described plans for the VC skating rink.

Mr. Cassino began by saying that the Conservancy approves of the Putnam Trail design. He then offered some information about the Conservancy and observed that every borough except the Bronx has a skating rink. The proposed rink will be a temporary structure that will be located on top of the currently disused tennis courts along Broadway just south of W. 242 Street. The rink will be operated by a private concessionaire, similar to the golf course. This project has nothing to do with other parks projects such as the Sid Augarten ballfield or the Memorial Grove, Mr. Cassino observed.

The rink will probably operate from late October to early March. It will be a 15-year concession. The concessionaire must leave the space as he finds it when the rink is removed each year.

Ms. Maboutakh said she expects the fees to be reasonable. There will most likely be a separate skate rental fee. DPR rates RFPs according to five categories, such as what fees are charged, how much free access there is, and other considerations.

Chris Farnum said that DPR wants community input on the rink.

In response to numerous questions from committee members, the presenters said that there would be a substantial power upgrade, done by the city but paid from private sources. (The power upgrade would probably cost \$100,000-\$150,000.) There would be a temporary food facility, lockers, clubhouse as part of the rink. A Zamboni machine would have to be stored in the immediate vicinity. There could be a "holiday market" for 30 days, similar to one that operates in Bryant Park.

Design details are not available because they must be worked out with the concessionaire. The area could accommodate a rink as large as 16,000 square feet, but the actual proposal might be smaller. (In response to requests from the committee, the presenters subsequently sent a schematic showing "maximum" coverage area, which was shared with committee members via email.) It is anticipated that most fencing in the tennis court area will remain. The northernmost one or two handball courts could become part of the service area for the skating rink. Real ice, not synthetic, will be used.

The area is adjacent to public transportation (subway, local and express buses); automobiles could be accommodated in the golf course parking lot. It's possible that additional parking facilities in the immediate vicinity might be found.

The rink will be open to everyone in the Bronx and throughout the city.

Portable rest rooms will have to be installed. The rest rooms in the stadium are too far away, down some stairs and unheated.

In response to a question Mr. Cassino said that revenues from the concession go to the city's general fund, but if the Community Board wants to see the money remain in VCP, it should insist on this in its response to the RFP.

Mr. Cassino emphasized that the area in question is not used in the winter and that the rink will bring people to an unused part of the park and will provide a public amenity.

Ms. Maboutakh requested that the Board respond to the RFP in approximately one week. She observed that 24-hour security would be required to safeguard the equipment and said that the safety of people using the rink would be a responsibility of the concessionaire as well as the 50<sup>th</sup> Precinct.

**Budget Request Process**

Budget committee chair Phil Friedman suggested that at least one committee member research the committee's budget requests online at the city website.

He said that our budget requests are stronger when we explain the community need for the items we request.

Nonprofits can apply for city money but they should appear before the committee first to explain their need for the money and how they would use it.

The committee has historically had good cooperation from DPR on its budget requests. DPR representatives assist committee members in identifying parks needs.

The committee chair asked that all committee members examine the most recent requests by the committee and try to identify parks needs throughout the community in anticipation of a more thorough discussion of the subject at the March meeting.

Next meeting will be March 23. The meeting adjourned at 9:25.

Submitted by,

Bob Bender  
Chair  
Parks & Recreation Committee