

**COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX
MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
HELD OCTOBER 26TH, 2011 AT SCHERVIER APARTMENTS**

Attendees:

CB8: Bob Bender (chair), Marvin Goodman, Robert Press, Andrew Cohen, Tom Durham, Laura Spalter (vice chair), Robert Fanuzzi, Maria Khury, Rita Pochter Lowe

DPR: Gal Lavid

Other committee members: Herb Barret, Memorial Grove; Christina Taylor, FVCP; I-C L'Engle, BCEQ; Councilman Oliver Koppell

Community residents: Daniel Poinson, Lawrence Moiatto (Memorial Grove), Jane House, Ken Katzman, Mike Farber, Michael Holoszyk, Mark Fleischner, Andrew Sandler, Anthony Connor, Martin Ratsiner, Will Cushing, David Fried

Agenda:

The meeting began at 7:07 pm. The minutes of the September committee meeting were approved.

Seton Park

After brief introductory remarks from the Chair, Councilman Koppell addressed the meeting. He explained that he has allocated \$900,000 for renovations to Seton Park, and that he is prepared to allocate additional money from future budget year member items if necessary and if the funds are available. He believes that installing artificial turf is the best use of this money but is open to suggestions from the community on how best to use the funds. He noted that the renovation of Seton 1 ballfield a few years ago cost \$1 million, which the Councilman provided. He urged everyone to see the Williamsbridge Oval in Norwood, recently renovated with artificial turf.

Community residents spoke about what they would like to do with this money.

Ken Katzman, affiliated with Riverdale Soccer Club and South Riverdale Baseball League, said that Seton Park is not just a soccer field but is also a community resource. He is concerned that if an artificial field is installed, use of the park could be lost to the community for the period of construction. He believes the best use of the funds would be to clean drains, install irrigation pipes, aerate and improve the fields.

Will Cushing, who coaches boys varsity soccer at RKA, said that any renovation that leaves part of the field artificial and part natural would be a mistake. It would be unattractive and could cause drainage problems where the two surfaces meet.

Mike Farber of the South Riverdale Little League made a similar point, observing that because of the size of Seton Park, renovating the entire park at once would be difficult and that drainage problems would be inevitable if only part of the field were renovated. He urged that the softball field (Seton 2) be renovated. He would not want to lose a season while ballfields were renovated, and observed that the Kappock Street ballfield (lower Henry Hudson park) was renovated during the off-season. Drainage and irrigation on that ballfield was provided by SRBL.

Tom Durham asked that the leagues provide the Community Board with their schedules so that we might advise DPR on the best timing for renovations.

Andrew Cohen observed that DPR may not agree to the irrigation that the leagues propose – and because of the unique features of Seton Park (i.e., build on the foundations of a hospital building), it may not be possible to install irrigation pipes in certain areas.

Tony Connor said that he would like to see Seton 3 renovated. The backstop to this ballfield is gone and the field badly needs re-grading.

Rita Pochter Lowe said that caring for the park or parts of it such as ballfields could be a great service project for Boy Scouts or local schools. She asked whether anyone would like to see lights installed at the fields.

Ken Katzman said that he would be in favor of lights to extend playing time.

Marvin Goodman urged that community residents and park users try to work with the Partnership for Parks to establish a local group to work on the park.

Tom Durham observed that the Kingsbridge Little League is run entirely by adult volunteers.

Bob Bender mentioned that those people attending the meeting already do extensive service work at the field for their various leagues. The goal is to find others who can help maintain the park.

Daniel Poinson said that the tennis courts badly need resurfacing. They have not been resurfaced for at least 10 years. The last resurfacing of the six courts cost \$325,000, he reported.

Mark Fleischner, another tennis player, said that maintenance of the tennis courts has recently improved, thanks to Parks Manager Gal Lavid, but that the \$200 tennis permit fee is a problem. He claimed that revenue from tennis permit fees has fallen substantially because so many tennis players could not afford the recent 100% increase in fees.

Tom Durham suggested that the committee ask DPR for an accounting of revenue from permit fees to see whether the recent increase had been counter-productive.

David Fried, another tennis player, said that replacing nets at the tennis courts is an inexpensive improvement and echoed Mr. Poinson's complaint about the need for re-surfacing courts.

A consensus emerged among the various parks users: stay with a natural grass surface; irrigate wherever possible; re-grade the ballfields; resurface the tennis courts; improve the field conditions, then when that is done, consider installing lights to extend playing time on all the fields.

Michael Holoszyc reminded everyone that natural surfaces do deteriorate over time and that there is a reason why DPR has been installing artificial turf wherever possible – it requires less maintenance and is playable after a rain.

Will Cushing said that it was his conviction that of all the options suggested, improving Seton 2 (the softball field) would provide the most improvement for the money available.

Herb Barret urged everyone to consider contacting local colleges, especially ROTC programs, as a potential source of labor for park maintenance projects.

Old Business

Herb Barret said that he was glad to see work taking place at the Memorial Grove, but it is clear that the work will not be finished for this year's Veterans Day ceremony on Sunday, Nov. 13. Although the deadline is January – and it seems unlikely that the contractor will meet it – giving the contractor an additional couple of months would not inconvenience anyone if it would help the contractor finish the work at the site.

The Chair mentioned that many people continue to discuss the planned Putnam Trail paving plan, and reported on Councilman Koppell's October 3 meeting on this subject. The Committee has approved DPR's plans and Councilman Koppell has said that he agrees.

Jane House said that Goodman Park needs caretakers, and she has been cleaning up the park. She and Marvin Goodman agreed to form a group to help maintain the park.

There was a brief discussion of where DPR maintains recycling bins and where additional recycling bins might be located. Parks Manager Gal Lavid and Committee Chair Bob Bender will pursue this discussion in time for the E&S Committee's November meeting.

The Chair thanked Mr. Lavid for his outstanding follow-up to various complaints that emerged during the September meeting.

DPR has discussed with the sponsors of the holiday marathons how to permit the marathons to continue in Van Cortlandt Park while meeting DPR requirements for use of the park.

Bob Bender and CB8 Chair Bob Fanuzzi wrote a letter in support of proposed historic designation for the Monument (officially the Bell Tower Memorial). That designation was recently approved. DPR nominated the Monument for this designation, and it is hoped that funds will be made available to assist in maintenance of the structure.

Bob Bender reported that the Oct. 22 Million Trees planting event in Van Cortlandt was an outstanding success. Hundreds of volunteers participated in planting approximately 6,000 trees.

New Business

Christina Taylor of FVCP advised about the Friends' Halloween event, "Ghoul Pool," which will take place in the swimming pool bath house on Sunday, October 30 from 4-7 pm. She also advised that FVCP will hold a celebration on Tuesday, Dec. 6, from 6-8 at the Bronx Ale House.

Old Business

Robert Press observed that CB7 has approved the VCP Skating Rink and CB12 has taken no position. He suggested arranging a meeting on the topic with all three community boards, which share VCP. Given the logistical difficulties, it was agreed instead that CB8 will invite members of those boards to our meeting on the proposed skating rink when it is scheduled.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 after committee members decided to move the date of the November meeting from Nov. 23 to Nov. 30 to avoid conflict with the Thanksgiving holiday.

Bob Bender
Chairman
Parks & Recreation Committee