

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 27TH, 2013 AT THE BOARD OFFICE

Attendees:

Committee members: Bob Bender (Committee Chair), Laura Spalter (Committee Vice Chair), Sylvia Alexander, Robert Press, Marvin Goodman, Mike Heller, Robert Fanuzzi (CB8 Chair), Christina Taylor (FVCP)

DPR: Margot Perron (VCP), Tannise Palmer (DPR Manager)

Others: Sherwin Banfield, Anne Stanner (both ASL M2M), John Young, Catherine O'Brien (both VC Nature Group), Andrew Sandler (Councilman Koppell's office), I-C L'Engel (BCEQ), Shelley Keeling, Tom Durham

Agenda

The meeting began at 7:05PM. Minutes of the January meeting were unanimously approved with an amendment by Andrew Sandler clarifying that his recommendation for tree planting is not West 240th Street west of Broadway, as noted in the minutes, but the median strip on Broadway north of West 240th Street/Van Cortlandt, which he would like to see incorporated into the Greenstreet program with the existing Greenstreet area at the junction of Broadway, West 240 St and Van Cortlandt Park South.

Ann Stanner and Sherwin Banfield of the Art Students League presented a proposed sculpture called "The Flock" that will be placed in an area that hosts public art projects immediately south of the Van Cortlandt Mansion, near the wetlands. Both presenters stressed that the project, which shows a flock of birds taking flight, is sensitive to the nearby natural area. The committee was impressed by the thoughtfulness and care that went into the sculpture and welcomed the presentation.

There was discussion of this year's budget priorities. The Chair suggested removing current capital priority #6 (CB8 priority #16) – West 232 Street walkway – because the area in question is not DPR property but belongs to DOT. This item properly belongs in the T&T capital budget priorities. It was also noted that on capital budget priority #5 (CB priority #15) – the pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway in VCP – DPR says that "DEP will try within its resources." This does not conform to DEP's position. This matter is under review at the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee meetings, where it will be pursued. The Chair recommends retaining it on the committee's list of capital budget priorities. Budget priorities will be discussed at the April meeting.

The committee discussed DPR's new plan for "It's My Park Day," which is to conduct this volunteer event throughout the spring and fall seasons on a rolling basis rather than on select dates in those seasons. The committee agreed to try for May 18, the original

date, unless this date conflicts with Bronx Week activities. If it does, then we will aim for May 11. There was agreement that Ewen Park is a good location for our "It's My Park Day" activities. We will try to coordinate with neighbors and the existing Friends of Ewen Park to use this event as a way to invigorate the Friends of Ewen Park. Mike Heller agreed to help coordinate this activity.

Laura Spalter updated the committee on the Friends of Vinmont Park. Laura and Bob Bender will meet with the PS 81 Parents' Association on March 6 to discuss the Friends and recruit volunteers. Riverdale Neighborhood House has agreed to host an organizing meeting in early April, date to be determined. Anthony Martinez, who coordinates the "It's My Park Day" and other volunteer events in the Bronx, has said that he will try to attend. Parks manager Tannise Palmer will try to attend, too.

Mike Heller discussed problems with downed tree branches and other park debris that had been left near the dog run in Ewen Park. Ms. Palmer noted that DPR had already begun some clean-up and would continue as weather conditions permit.

The Chair and others discussed the Bronx Parks Speak-Up. Several committee members attended a workshop on turning vacant property into community gardens. CB8 Chair Bob Fanuzzi observed that a non-profit called Green Thumb can assist in such effort. He mentioned Karen Washington of the NY Community Garden Coalition, who was the emcee at the Speak-Up.

There was brief discussion of the recent decision by DPR to roll back fees for recreation centers and other park activities because of declining revenue caused by the recent 100% increase in such fees. Ms. Palmer noted that there is a reduced fee of \$25 for anyone age 18 – 24.

There was also brief discussion of recent stories about philanthropy in the parks, which is largely confined to a few parks, notably Central Park. There was general agreement that the problem is not that philanthropists choose which parks to fund but that DPR (i.e., the City) does not adequately fund all the other parks.

Marvin Goodman discussed the continuing unsightly conditions at Phyllis Post Goodman Park. Ms. Palmer promised to investigate. (*The day after the meeting Ms. Palmer sent photos to Mr. Goodman and the Chair showing how the park had been cleaned, a very impressive rapid response.*)

The Chair mentioned new legislation signed by Mayor Bloomberg that directs DPR to create a manual to identify plants for storm water retention and to increase biodiversity in its landscape practices.

Christina Taylor of FVCP discussed the Friends' trail restoration program taking place this spring and asked for volunteers. She also reminded everyone of the April 27 Hike-a-Thon fundraiser.

Margot Perron noted that the VCP headquarters building/restroom is now reopened. She mentioned that there are several upcoming meetings in conjunction with the VCP Master Plan. Ms. Taylor will attend the meeting on trails on March 7 and on the Mansion and museum on March 15.

In answer to a question, Ms. Perron said that DPR will get some Hurricane Sandy relief funding, exact amount yet to be determined.

Ms. Perron also reported that VCP manager Ben Kramer will be rotating to a different park. The committee appreciates his efforts during his tenure at VCP and wishes him well.

Because of the Passover holiday, the committee will not meet in March. The next meeting will take place April 24. DPR will present its proposed design for the renovation of the basketball courts and tot lot in Ewen Park. The committee will meet at a location in the vicinity of Ewen Park.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40PM.

Bob Bender
Chairman
Parks & Recreation Committee