

## BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

### MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD MAY 22<sup>ND</sup>, 2013 AT MANHATTAN COLLEGE

#### **Attendees:**

Committee Members: Bob Bender, Laura Spalter, Sylvia Alexander, Rosemary Ginty, Marvin Goodman, Michael Heller, Robert Press, CB8; Herb Barret, Tom Durham, Community Members

Other Community Board Members: Robert Fanuzzi, Joyce Pilsner, Maria Khury, Brendan Contant, Andrew Cohen, Steven Balicer, David Kornbluh

DPR: Larry Scott Blackmon, Andrew Penzi, Steve DesNoyer, Margot Perron, Charles McKinney, Lawrence Scoones

Other agencies and offices: Victor Calise, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities; Andrew Sandler, Councilman Koppell's office; Daniel Johnson, Assemblyman Dinowitz's office

Others: Jerry Bogacz, NYMTC; Paul Elston, Friends of the Hudson River Greenway; Patrick Kline; Will Sanchez, Suzanne Corber, Michael Arnstein, Sam Arnstein, Save the Putnam Trail; Teresa Grant Stoeth (Friends of VCP); Sandy Shalleck (Riverdale Nature Preservancy); Kathryn O'Brien, John Young, Matthew Turov, David Gellman, Rich Conroy, Sarah Baglio, Margarita Eremeyev, Neile Weissman, Deborah Dolan, Jay Sheffield, Rich Gans, Eric Seiff, George Hirsch, Bob Rooney, Greg Fleece, Sergei Vorobyev, Kleont Daci, Philip LeStrange, Andrew Baksh, Donnie Burns, Abby Turner, Edith Prentiss, Mary Wittenberg, Steven Faust, Ed Ravin, Thomas Bird, Daniel Ranel, Rosa L. Smith, Leonard Morgan, Robert Trick, Barbara Trick, Dart Westphal, Benigno Veraz, Michelle Matteson, Abby Turner, Arnold Gore, Jay Sheffield, Stephen Bauman, Greg Fleece, Ann DeGross, Ruth Kraus, Dana Elzenbeck, Beth & John Dougherty, Diane Meenagh, G. McGarvey, Judith Lilleston, Irwin Seltzer, Eva Mindrutiu, Amanda Castillo, Grace Garcia, Daniel Ranells, Lara Solis, Steve Skehill, Ellen Kastel, John Klavan, Cliff Stanton, Rodolfo Diaz, Lois Peck, Ed Ravin, Andrea Costaio, Paul Castillo, Matthew Castillo, Julia Gran, Mike Dowdy, Gary Spalter, Joseph Singer, Atilio Ciucii, Rita & Barry Freed, David Bush, Melisande Hollis, Tom Fuller, Paulette Schneider (*Riverdale Review*), Kate Pastor (*Riverdale Press*), Leonard Morgenstern, Dennis Burton, Damian McShane, Chris Ekstrom, Ingrid Jaen

The meeting began at 7:10 pm. The minutes of the April meeting were approved.

#### **Budget priorities.**

Capital priorities are as follows:

1. Construction of a new restroom and DPR maintenance in Fort Four Park and related plumbing repairs.
2. Repair of the Bailey Avenue playground.
3. Repair of Henry Hudson Park basketball and handball courts.
4. Construction of a restroom at Broadway and W 251 St. adjacent to the VC Parade Grounds

5. Renovation of the Marble Hill Playground (NEW)
6. Installation of a pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway in Van Cortlandt Park
7. Reconstruction of the pond wall at Spuyten Duyvil Park to prevent water runoff on the roadway of the parking lot at the Metro-North station.
8. Renovation of the Strong St. Playground (NEW)
9. Resurfacing of the Seton Park tennis courts and basketball courts and related repairs (ADDED BASKETBALL COURTS TO EXISTING PRIORITY)
10. Renovation of Van Cortlandt Park stadium

### **Expense Budget**

1. Personnel sufficient for maintenance and enforcement in CB8 parks, especially on weekends and times of high use.
2. Two stump grinders for Van Cortlandt park.
3. Purchase of an additional wood chipper to aid in removing tree debris from CB8 parks

### **Discussion of football playing in VCP**

Patrick Kline complained that touch football playing is banned from VC Parade Grounds even though he maintains that it is no more destructive to the field than soccer, which is permitted. He asked why football playing is not allowed. He also complained that permits for the field are virtually unobtainable. He says he has been told to use the field in the Stadium but most of the time it is used for soccer and is unavailable.

Margot Perron, VCP Administrator, said that the concern is to protect the 800 irrigation heads in the PG. She advised Mr. Klein about the permit procedures.

After some additional discussion Ms. Perron suggested that she and Mr. Klein meet to try to resolve the problem.

*(Subsequent to the meeting, Ms. Perron reported that flag football – i.e., touch, not tackle – will be permitted on the Parade Grounds.)*

### **Presentation of Draft Final Proposed Route for Hudson River Greenway**

Jerry Bogacz of NYMTC (New York Metropolitan Transportation Council) presented the draft report of the proposed recommended route for the Hudson River Greenway through the Bronx. This is the culmination of a process that has been underway for several years. The proposal would be phased in over short, medium, and long-term ranges of several years to much longer.

A cantilever bikeway/walkway is proposed for the west side of the Henry Hudson bridge. The engineering is not difficult; the cost would be approximately \$30 million. From the bridge, local streets Kappock and Palisade would be used with installation of “sharrows,” shared auto/bike lanes indicated by arrows. This route would lead to W. 232 St and Riverdale Park, where a spiral ramp would descend over the Metro-North tracks to the waterfront. The waterfront greenway would continue two miles to Yonkers. The Metro-North service road must be kept open exclusively for MN and cannot be used as a bikeway. Cost

of the ramp is estimated at \$30 million. The greenway would continue to Fernbrook St. in Yonkers, skirting the water-treatment plant by using the MN right of way.

Until the ramp from Riverdale Park to the river can be built, Palisade Avenue can be used. A shared bikeway/walkway could be constructed on the deteriorated sidewalk adjacent to Riverdale Park, for example. The greenway would then enter the park at Spalding Lane and exit at W. 254 St., where it could use the existing bridge over the tracks with a new ramp on the north side to continue to the waterfront and on to Yonkers.

The draft final proposal will be released in mid-June and then publicized at Riverdale RiverFest on June 30. It is expected that local communities will pursue implementation of the plan by seeking funding. Public comments will be solicited over the next few months.

In response to questions Mr. Bogacz said that street parking should be unaffected by the greenway and that Riverdale Park is not an optimal route for the greenway (as opposed to the Hudson River shorefront).

Paul Elston, who heads the Friends of the Hudson River Greenway, observed that two elements contained in earlier reports and in a previous CB 8 resolution are missing. One is an interim bike lane on the HH Bridge, using some of the space currently allocated to the breakdown lane on the lower level (which does not have the support of MTA Bridges & Tunnels) and the nature of the riverfront access north of W. 232 St. Mr. Bogacz responded that these issues will be examined. There is still opportunity for changes to the draft final report. A speaker suggested moving the Metro-North service road from west of the tracks to the east side of the tracks. Mr. Bogacz indicated that this idea deserves consideration.

Board chair Bob Fanuzzi asked whether there will be time and opportunity to discuss the matter in greater detail at a future community board meeting, and Mr. Bogacz said yes.

#### **Discussion of the proposed Putnam Trail renovation in Van Cortlandt Park**

Andrew Penzi of DPR Capital Projects Design Team presented a summary of the proposed Putnam Trail renovation. He advised that funding comes from a federal transportation grant matched by the City of New York. There will be a ten-foot path paved with asphalt that will cap toxins in the railroad ties. A permeable surface is less desirable than asphalt because it would allow toxins to leach from the ties. There will be a three-foot compacted earth jogging path on one side and a two-foot woodland flower buffer on the other side. The former VCP station on the rail line would be partially renovated. Mr. Penzi said that asphalt is durable and can be maintained for a long time; motorized dirt bikes, which have been a problem in the northern area of the park, would destroy a screened stone-dust surface. Regardless of which surface is used, the same amount of excavation would be required.

Will Sanchez from Save the Putnam Trail showed excerpts from a video that his group has made urging that the trail not be paved with asphalt and arguing that stone dust is ADA accessible and can be maintained at the same cost as asphalt.

Michael Arnstein, a cofounder of Save the Putnam Trail, said that the community board was misinformed by DPR, that stone dust will be ADA compliant. He presented a petition opposing paving that has been signed by 2100 people.

Rita Fried argued that DPR should fight for maintenance funds and should respect nature.

Larry Scott Blackmon, Deputy Commissioner for Public Outreach of DPR, introduced Victor Calisi, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, who said that stone screening can be ADA compliant but not when wet or inadequately maintained.

Margot Perron, VCP Administrator, said that cost of maintenance of stone dust surfaces is much higher than asphalt because it is labor intensive (e.g., it requires hand-tamping).

Teresa Stoeth of The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park said that FVCP has taken no position on this matter. The Chair reported that the chairwoman of the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct sent a letter stating that this group also has taken no position on the matter.

Fourteen speakers representing various points of view then spoke. Among the points made were that the wetlands will be damaged, that walkers will feel unwelcome, that the natural area will suffer, that a "heat island" effect will cause a change in the gender balance of local turtles because their gender is heat determined, that stone dust costs no more to maintain than asphalt, that birds will be less likely to nest in the area, that an EIS is required, that the trail is a valuable resource for runners – in opposition to paving with asphalt.

On the other side, supporters of paving said that the paved trail exists in Westchester with a fine canopy of trees, that runners, walkers, bikers, and birds all co-exist on the Westchester portion of the trail, that stone dust trails cannot be properly maintained, that Transportation Alternatives supports the paving. One of the bicycle groups offered a pro-paving petition with 1004 signatures.

Andrew Sandler spoke on behalf of Councilman Koppell to reiterate the Councilman's support for paving the trail.

In response to various comments, Charles McKinney, chief urban designer of DPR, said that an EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) is not required because federal law exempts pedestrian and bicycle pathways from EIS requirements.

Ms. Perron said that the Audubon Society has visited the site and that a report is expected from the group soon. She disagreed that turtles would be severely affected and said that they lay their eggs in other locations in VCP in addition to the Putnam Trail.

After nearly 1 ½ hours of discussion, committee members offered their views. Laura Spalter said she believes that the bikers and walkers cannot safely coexist, that she respects the passion that the issue has engendered, and that she opposes paving. Rosemary Ginty said that Brooklyn Bridge park uses stone dust and that it accommodates wheeled vehicles and that DPR should allocate sufficient resources to maintain a stone-dust trail. Michael Heller said that the trail should be paved to finish the route from the South County trail in Westchester, which ends at VCP. Robert Press said that he is concerned that many of the newly planted trees won't survive – DPR said that they must be replaced by the contractor if they do not survive – and that he wants a guarantee that there will not be a Bike Share program in the park, which DPR says it cannot give because Bike Share is run by DOT not DPR. Bob Bender stated that while he is reluctant to introduce paving anywhere in a park, he is persuaded that only paving will satisfy the required ADA compliance.

Community committee member Herb Barret said he opposes paving; community committee member Tom Durham is in favor.

The following resolution was proposed and rejected:

The committee supports the proposal by the Department of Parks and Recreation to pave with asphalt the Putnam Trail in Van Cortlandt Park.

In favor: B. Bender, M. Goodman, M. Heller; and community committee member Tom Durham

Opposed: L. Spalter, R. Ginty; and community committee member Herb Barret

Abstain: S. Alexander, R. Press

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10 pm.

Submitted by,

Bob Bender  
Chair  
Parks & Recreation Committee