

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

HELD ON JUNE 22, 2016

AT THE RIVERDALE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION, 5676 RIVERDALE AVENUE

Attendees:

Committee: Bob Bender (chair), Sylvia Alexander, Eric Bell, Marvin Goodman, Tao Moran, Amy Joy Robateau, Laura Spalter (CB8); Christina Taylor (Community Committee Member)

Absent: Herb Barret, Robert Fanuzzi, David Gellman

DPR: Bryan Cantwell, Brett Schneiderman, Margot Perron, Tony Rosa, Leenda Bonilla

Guests: Andrew Cohen, Councilman; Sergey Vorobyev, Matt Turov, Suzanne Corber (Save the Putnam Trail); Daniel Ranells (TA Bronx); Phil Shen

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm.

Agenda:

Spuyten Duyvil Playground Spray Shower

Messrs. Cantwell and Schneiderman presented the design for the proposed spray shower in Spuyten Duyvil Playground. The playground is located on Douglas Avenue between W. 235 and W. 236 Sts., immediately behind P.S. 24. A scoping meeting was held on site in February. The spray shower is funded by City Council and State funds and is budgeted at \$1.2 million.

There will be two separate water play areas, replacing the current (empty) wading pool and sandbox. One area is for toddler-age children and the other is for older children. The play area will be enclosed with a two-and-a-half-foot fence. Some benches currently in disrepair will be replaced as part of the project. Two or three trees will also be replaced but there will be no net loss of trees.

Construction of the spray showers is expected to take about one year. The anticipated start date is fall 2017. The playground and swings to the north will remain open and accessible during construction but the equipment to the southeast will be closed during construction.

Councilman Cohen expressed support for the design and said that this playground comes as close as any to the ideal playground that he envisions.

Committee members were generally impressed with the design.

Messrs. Cantwell and Schneiderman requested a letter of support from the committee. The chair advised that such a letter would have to be approved by the full community board and that the board will not meet again until September. The Parks representatives said that the committee's vote on the playground would suffice in the meantime. The chair will draft a resolution authorizing a letter of support for the design that will be presented at the board's September meeting.

The committee voted to approve the design 6-0-1.

In favor: Alexander, Bender, Goodman, Robateau, Spalter, Taylor

Abstain: Moran

Following this discussion, the minutes of the May committee meeting were unanimously approved.

Discussion of Putnam Trail SWPPP Working Group

The chair explained that consistent with the resolution passed by the committee and the board approving the Putnam Trail renovation, a working group has been formed to meet with the Parks Department regarding the required Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The working group consists of five members: Karen Argenti, Bob Bender, Robert Fanuzzi, Laura Spalter, and Christina Taylor. All five members have demonstrated a strong interest in the wetlands and ecology of the park. The group is awaiting notification from the Parks Department regarding the time and place of its first meeting, which is anticipated to occur in July.

Topics for Future Discussion

The chair noted that this year committee members agreed to inspect all the neighborhood parks. Committee members turned in reports on 12 of the 22 neighborhood parks in CB8. In the coming year, the committee will inspect the other 10 parks. These reports are provided to the Parks Department to help identify areas of concern in our parks. (Thanks also to Suzanne Corber for participating.)

The chair urged committee members to use the summer months to consider parks-related topics that they would like to explore during the coming year.

Old Business

Matthew Turov asked about a new pesticide that is being used near the wetlands in the park, which he says is more toxic than glyphosate, a pesticide in current use. The chair referred to a previous email exchange involving Dennis Burton, who heads the Natural Areas Group of DPR within Van Cortlandt Park. Mr. Burton says that DPR abides by NYS DEC requirements that prohibit use of pesticides within 100 feet of wetlands in the park.

Christina Taylor said that the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park does not use pesticides, only manual labor. FVCP depends on volunteers for its work.

Margot Perron, VCP Administrator, noted that cutting plants with weed whackers, as has been proposed, works with some plants but not with others. In some cases it actually strengthens the roots of the plant. Manpower to operate weed whackers is actually a greater limitation than lack of equipment.

Laura Spalter observed that the City Council can regulate the use of pesticides in the parks beyond the DEC-mandated requirements. The chair observed that Councilman Cohen co-sponsored a bill regarding reporting of pesticide use in parks that has not been reported out of committee in the City Council.

Suzanne Corber urged that the committee register its concern about pesticides with the Parks Department. The chair commented that while everyone would like to minimize the use of pesticides in the parks, this is a complicated issue that requires further study. The chair also noted that pesticide use in the parks was the main topic of the committee's October 2015 meeting. Further discussion of this subject, particularly with regard to the wetlands area of VCP, will continue.

Mr. Turov reported the presence of a plant called *Chimaphila maculata* (common name: spotted wintergreen) near the wetlands area. It is classified by the DEC as "exploitably vulnerable."

He also noted that dirt was being added to the Cass Gallagher trail. Ms. Taylor and Ms. Perron said that broken asphalt was being removed from that trail and replaced by dirt.

New Business

Local resident Phil Shen asked about parks where model airplanes can be flown, saying that he did not know of any in the Bronx. Margot Perron said that Ferry Point Park has a model-airplane field. A \$25 permit is required.

Daniel Rannels from TA Bronx reported that the Grand Concourse will be traffic free on Sunday June 26 from noon to 4 pm between 162nd and 165th streets.

Christina Taylor reported that in observance of City of Water day on July 16, FVCP will host a volunteer event to clean the VCP wetlands. Meet at the #1 train staircase at 10 am. Other upcoming events are on the FVCP website.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Bob Bender
Chair
Parks & Recreation Committee