

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE HELD ON MARCH 25TH, 2015 AT THE RIVERDALE JEWISH CENTER

Attendees:

Committee Members: Bob Bender (chair), Laura Spalter (vice chair), Sylvia Alexander, Rosemary Ginty, Marvin Goodman, Michael Heller, Robert Press, (all CB8); Herb Barret, David Gellman, Christina Taylor (community committee members)

Other CB8: Robert Fanuzzi

DPR: Margot Perron, Dennis Burton, Patricia Ferguson, Paulina Mohamed, Helen Forgione (Natural Areas Conservancy)

Community: Karen Argenti, IC L'Engel, BCEQ; John Butler, FVCP; Debbi Dolan, Matt Turov, Suzanne Corber, Save the Putnam Trail; Catherine O'Brien, John Young, Nature Group of VCP; Juanli Carrion, CALL; Parker Gambino, Field Associate, American Museum of Natural History; Loretta Ryan, AmPark Eco-Group; Sergei Vorobyev, Margarita Eremeyev

Agenda:

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:15 pm. Minutes of the February meeting were unanimously approved.

The chair introduced Helen Forgione of the Natural Areas Conservancy of DPR.

Ecological Assessment of Van Cortlandt Park

Ms. Forgione explained that the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC) is a three-year-old not-for-profit conservancy that functions like other conservancies in Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx River, Central Park, etc. In VCP the NAC focuses on ecosystem management, particularly the health of the forest.

The NAC has produced an ecological coverage map of New York City that shows that 13% of the city is in a natural state and 27% more is landscaped.

The NAC recently conducted ecological assessments of VCP's natural or wild areas in order to help guide future actions in these sections of the park. It assessed forests, wetlands, and did breeding bird surveys.

In VCP the assessment of the forest was conducted over six months starting in 2013 and examined 670 acres. It found that the forest contains 102 different tree species, predominantly oak-tulip, north central hardwood, and conifer. The three top species are black cherry, red oak,

and tulip. The tree canopy is 97% native, which is excellent, but the seedlings are 77% native, which is a condition that requires attention if we are to preserve the native forest and protect against invasives. The three top seedling species are sassafras, sugar maple, and black cherry. The understory in the forest is 67% native.

The NAC recommends conservation and monitoring in VCP because of the favorable condition of the forest. The NAC is making this information available to DPR and to the VCP Conservancy.

NAC is working with the Natural Resources Group of DPR to assess the wetlands in VCP. This project began in 2014. NAC hopes to have its assessment completed in 2015. Again, it will not make recommendations but will provide data for others in DPR to act on.

Ms. Forgione's presentation was copied onto the CB8 laptop.

VCP Bioblitz Preparations

The committee reviewed the status of the preparations for the bioblitz in VCP. All of the local schools have been reported to have been contacted with the exception of Horace Mann. The chair will follow up with the committee member who is contacting Horace Mann.

Sylvia Alexander noted that several teachers have asked about a curriculum to use with their students. Bob Bender said he would contact his advisers at Macaulay Honors College at CUNY for their curriculum and would forward it.

Parker Gambino from the American Museum of Natural History said that he had participated in previous bioblitzes in Central Park and elsewhere and suggested some ways in which the sampling of the flora and fauna by scientists might be conducted. Dennis Burton of DPR offered suggestions about the research permits and offered to arrange for an on-site inspection to be conducted. A proposal was made to use the Nature Center as a location for scientific examination of specimens. Margot Perron said she would ask the rangers at the Nature Center about availability of the facility on the day of the bioblitz.

The chair suggested that further discussions among committee members would follow.

Old Business

Rosemary Ginty discussed the legislative review document that she prepared for all committees. A bill requiring DPR to develop a tree removal protocol with Con Edison for storm-damaged trees was signed by the mayor in March. A bill requiring DPR to report all non-governmental sources of funding and how these funds are spent was signed into law in February.

The legislative update will be reviewed periodically at committee meetings.

The chair mentioned a recent report (thanks to Rosemary Ginty again) that felony crime in the biggest city parks declined by 11% last year. There was no breakdown for individual parks except for Central Park.

Laura Spalter mentioned some of the stressors in VCP identified in the VCP Master Plan and asked what is happening with them, e.g., the salt dome in the park and the use of herbicides and pesticides by the golf courses. The salt dome would have to be relocated elsewhere in CB8 and no site has been identified. There was discussion of the herbicide and pesticide matter (as well as fertilizers used by the golf courses) that ended with general agreement that the subject deserves more thorough exploration at a future meeting. In the meantime the chair will investigate whether the DPR Franchise and Concessions group would permit new restrictions on pesticide and herbicide use in existing concession contracts.

New Business

Margot Perron said that work will soon begin on the Mosholu Parkway extension overpass over the Putnam Trail. The work will be done by NYC DOT. It will require moving heavy equipment from the golf course parking lot up the Putnam Trail. The trail is to remain open for runners and bikers while work takes place.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9 pm.

Bob Bender, Chairman
Chair, Parks & Recreation Committee