

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE HELD ON NOVEMBER 6, 2014

At the Fischbach Room, Manhattan College School of Engineering

Attendees:

Committee Members: Bob Bender (chair), Laura Spalter (vice chair), Sylvia Alexander, Rosemary Ginty, Marvin Goodman, Michael Heller, David Kornbluh, Robert Press

Community Committee Members: Herb Barret, Tom Durham

Other CB8: Herb Young

DPR: Rakeem Taylor, Will Harris, Bryan Cantwell

Others: Christina Taylor (Friends of Van Cortlandt Part), Andrew Sandler (Councilman Cohen's office), Justin Demko (Assemblyman Dinowitz's office), Elizabeth Thompson (KHNIA), Muhammed Floyd, Jeremiah Pardo, France Benjamin, Kenny Gonzalez, Bert Correa, David Gellman, David Paulson, Jordan Stanton, Cliff Stanton, Eytan Stanton, Anthony Kesorma, Bill ?, Michael Alfano, Zach Prince, Matt Bellinger, Michael Roberts

Agenda:

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

Minutes of the October 22 meeting were unanimously approved with one abstention (Robert Press, who did not attend that meeting).

The Chair turned over the meeting to representatives of the Parks Department who were present to discuss the proposed design for the skateboard park in Van Cortlandt Park. Will Harris and Bryan Cantwell of DPR introduced themselves and began their presentation.

Van Cortlandt Park Skateboard Park Design Presentation

Mr. Harris and Mr. Cantwell presented a design for a new skate park and renovated adjacent basketball court in Van Cortlandt Park. The area in question is at the south end of the stadium, between the stadium and the Broadway sidewalk. The area designated for the skate park is currently not used for any other purpose.

The project is budgeted at \$1 million, which was provided by former Councilman Koppell. The skate park will be surrounded by a four-foot chain link fence; the basketball court will be surrounded by a twelve-foot chain link fence. The basketball court will be regulation high-school size. New trees will be planted on the south side of the skate park. A new ten-foot wide entrance will be added to the skate park on the park side; in addition there will be a four-foot wide

entrance between the basketball court and the skate park. The Parks Department will use a type of concrete on the skate park that reflects less heat than ordinary concrete and should be cooler during summer months.

Mr. Harris said that the approval process and preparation of construction drawings will last until approximately June 2015, after which the project will go out to bid.

Mr. Harris discussed the elements of the skate park in detail, during which time skateboarders in attendance asked numerous questions. Skateboarders liked the design elements with only one exception, which Mr. Harris said that he would try to accommodate.

One item of contention concerned one of the four light poles in the skate park area. That light pole is not working and DPR proposes to remove it. All in attendance felt that the pole should be repaired, not removed. This matter will be referred to the Bronx headquarters for maintenance and operations.

It was unclear whether helmets would be required, but the park will be unattended so as a practical matter protective equipment will be at the discretion of the user.

Rosemary Ginty asked why a wrought-iron fence similar to the wrought-iron fence to the south of this area was not used in the skate park. Mr. Harris said that such a fence is approximately four times more expensive than chain link. The skateboarders said that they preferred chain link because it is more forgiving when they crash into it. After further discussion, it was agreed that the committee would ask for a wrought-iron fence outside the chain link fence in order to maintain the uniformity of the perimeter that is called for in the VCP Master Plan. This fence would have to be separately funded.

The following resolution was proposed and adopted:

The Parks & Recreation Committee of Bronx Community Board 8 endorses the design of the skateboard park in Van Cortlandt Park that was presented to the committee at its November 6, 2014 meeting. The committee also urges the Department of Parks & Recreation to install a wrought-iron fence outside the skateboard park along Broadway in order to maintain a consistent perimeter design to the park as called for in the Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan.

In favor: 10; Opposed: 0; Abstained: 0

In favor: S. Alexander, B. Bender, R. Ginty, M. Goodman, M. Heller, D. Kornbluh, R. Press, L. Spalter (CB8 members); H. Barret, T. Durham (Community Committee Members)

Other Business

The Chair reported on the recent news that DEP has agreed to fund the 553 replacement trees for the trees removed at the Jerome Park Reservoir. The Chair urged committee members to help identify locations where the new trees can be planted, starting next spring. This matter will be brought to the attention of all board members.

The Chair reported on recent activity at Fort Independence Park, where the renovation is nearing completion. The completion date is now the first week of December.

The Chair then opened discussion on possible future projects, mentioning new uses for the area where the ice rink was located as one possible subject to explore.

Ms. Ginty suggested that the committee set up a spreadsheet to track the status of various parks projects. The Chair is investigating whether the new Parks Department website for tracking capital projects might already perform this function.

Mike Heller suggested that the committee try to work more closely with other community boards on capital projects. David Gellman seconded Mr. Heller's suggestion.

Laura Spalter suggested that the committee lobby more actively for more parks funding. Christina Taylor of FVCP urged the committee to advocate for increases in maintenance funding whenever there is an increase in capital funding.

Andrew Sandler said that Councilman Cohen is very supportive of parks capital funding.

Tom Durham recommended surveying lights in local parks to see which ones are not working and need to be repaired.

Elizabeth Thompson of Kingsbridge Heights Neighborhood Improvement Association shared a letter from Al Chapman, President of KHNIA, asking for restoration of the rest room in Fort Four Park. The Chair noted that this has been the #1 capital budget priority of the committee for several years and noted that he finds the absence of a rest room in the Fort Four/Washington's Walk park complex to be deplorable. He noted that Borough President Diaz has allocated over \$500,000 toward the restroom (total estimated cost is \$3 million). Assistance is needed from other sources.

Committee members discussed the date of the December meeting and agreed to move it to December 29.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Bob Bender

Chair, Parks &
Recreation Committee