

Bronx Community Board No. 8

Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting of September 30, 2015 at the Frances Schervier Apartments

Attendees

Committee: Bob Bender (chair), Laura Spalter (vice chair), Sylvia Alexander, Arturo Guzman, David Gellman, Marvin Goodman, Amy Joy Robateau (CB8); Herb Barret, Christina Taylor (community committee members)

DPR: Iris Rodriguez-Rosa (Commissioner), Margot Perron, Dennis Burton, Patricia Ferguson, Andrew Penzi, David McConnell, Mike Ortiz

Community: Councilman Andrew Cohen; Cristina Lang, Sen. Klein's office; Andrew Sandler, Councilman Cohen's office; Patrick Kenny, Peter Gauss, So. Riverdale Little League; Damian McShane, Michael Holoszy, Riverdale Soccer Club; I-C, BCEQ; Suzanne Corber, Save the Putnam Trail; Brian Siper, Beth Brodsky

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm. Minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved.

The Chair introduced Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa and invited her to speak. The Commissioner explained that she has worked for DPR for thirty years and has previous experience as a community board district manager in Brooklyn. She is aware that DPR's capital process is slow and she agrees with Commissioner Mitchell Silver that it can be improved. She wants to communicate with the community and listen to concerns from the community boards in the Bronx.

Among the topics raised by the audience that she addressed were how to report recently planted street trees that have died because of drought or other conditions; a possible phase-out of heavy trucks in parks, which can cause damage, in favor of lighter trucks, which is being done now in Crotona Park; how to get DOT to change the schedule for lights in parks when seasons change [note: all street lamps in parks are the responsibility of DOT, not DPR]; locations where dumping is taking place and what to do about it; DPR policy regarding pesticides and herbicides.

On the final item, the committee plans to discuss this subject at its October meeting. Councilman Cohen also noted that he has introduced a bill into the City Council to address this subject, particularly regarding community notification.

Seton Park Presentation

Andrew Penzi and David McConnell of Parks Capital Projects presented a proposal for renovating Seton Park. Their presentation concerns only the ballfields and soccer field. A separate allocation has been made to re-surface the basketball and tennis courts.

Andrew and David noted problems in Seton Park: a collapsed drain line; deteriorating artificial turf on the baseball field (Seton 1) and a variety of problems on the softball field (Seton 2). They offered three different options for renovating the fields. In all three options, the infield of the baseball field would be replaced with new artificial turf. Option One would require a complete renovation, including digging up the soccer field, repairing the drain line, and replacing the soccer field (with natural turf). It would require one year of construction. Option Two would do the work in phases and would take two years but would allow for use of some soccer fields in phases during construction. In Option Three the softball infield would be replaced with artificial turf, as is being done with the baseball field. Some part of the soccer field would have to be closed to allow for the work to take place. In all three scenarios, staging would take place within the park. Access would be via W. 235th St. Other current access to the park would not be affected. The Parks Department recommended Option One. Option Two will be more expensive than Option One.

A discussion ensued involving mainly the soccer and little league representatives and Andrew and David. During this conversation Parks explained that the usual lifespan of an artificial turf ballfield is about seven years, depending on factors such as how extensively it is used. The soccer league representatives said that they are not unhappy with the drainage of their field at present and don't see the need to replace the drain and repair the field. They would rather see some enhanced maintenance such as aerating of the soccer field instead of a capital project.

Parks promised to work with the baseball and softball leagues to try to coordinate construction with their season. Commissioner Rodriguez-Rosa said that DPR will try to find other fields for the youth athletic leagues to use wherever possible.

There was consensus on Option Three. Parks promised to return with a schematic design and schedule for review in the spring.

Other Business

The Chair proposed a resolution thanking local elected officials for their support on the LG/Palisades issue, which helped lead to a negotiated solution. The resolution follows:

Whereas Bronx Community Board 8 in a resolution passed unanimously in May 2013 at the urging of our valued local institution Wave Hill called on LG Electronics not to build its proposed headquarters building in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey to a height of 143 feet, which would have vastly exceeded the previous 35-foot height limit for buildings near the Palisades and would have irreparably damaged the natural beauty of the Palisades; and

Whereas our local elected officials Councilman Andrew Cohen, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, Senator Jeffrey Klein, and Congressman Eliot Engel, as well as other elected officials and various non-profit organizations also urged LG Electronics not to build to a height of 143 feet; and

Whereas Bronx Community Board 8 in February 2014 further urged that residents of the community board and elsewhere not purchase products manufactured by LG and also asked

our elected officials to propose that county, city, and state governments not purchase LG products until LG agreed to reconfigure its building to an acceptable lower height; and

Whereas LG Electronics agreed early this summer with a coalition of non-profit organizations on a compromise in which LG will build its headquarters to a height of 69 feet, which is approximately the height of the treeline on the Palisades; therefore

Be It Resolved that Bronx Community Board 8 formally thanks our local elected officials Councilman Cohen, Assemblyman Dinowitz, Senator Klein, and Congressman Engel, as well as other elected officials and non-profit organizations for their steadfast opposition to the LG headquarters as originally configured, which helped to bring about this negotiated resolution to the matter, preserving the natural beauty of the Palisades for future generations.

Passed 9-0-0

In favor: Alexander, Bender, Gellman, Goodman, Guzman, Robateau, Spalter (CB8 members); Barret, Taylor (community committee members)

The Chair proposed that committee members visit all CB8 parks and playgrounds, excepting Van Cortlandt Park, by next April to assess their condition with respect to both maintenance and capital projects. A list of CB8 parks and playgrounds was passed out and committee members signed up for two parks or playgrounds each. That will still leave some parks uncovered. It is hoped that other community board members who regularly visit certain parks might also be able to help. It was suggested that we find what criteria are used to assess parks by DPR and also by non-profit parks-oriented organizations such as New Yorkers for Parks. The Chair will follow up with them. Parks manager Patricia Ferguson offered to make such information available.

The Chair reported that Treasurer Phil Friedman said that there is now money available to fund programs sponsored by CB8 and that the committee should think about programs we might want to recommend.

Copies of a list of capital projects underway in CB8 and provided by DPR at the Borough Consultation meetings were handed out. Thanks to DM Patricia Manning for providing this information.

The report on the VCP bioblitz was submitted to DPR over the summer and copies are available to committee members and anyone who wants one.

DPR is sponsoring a tree count. Anyone interested in participating can find information online at nyc.gov/parks/treecount.

The Public Design Commission approved the design for the VCP skateboard park on August 3. That project now moves to the procurement stage (i.e., finding a contractor).

Christina Taylor reported that FVCP will sponsor its annual Seven Wonders of Van Cortlandt Park on October 24 from noon to 4 pm at the VC Lake.

She also reported that there will be a fundraiser for the Bronx Parks Speak-Up on Wednesday, Oct. 28. Details are available from the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park.

Kingsbridge Heights Neighborhood Improvement Association will sponsor a clean-up in Fort Four Park on October 28 from 10 am to 3 pm. Volunteers are needed.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:40 pm.

Bob Bender, Chair
Parks & Recreation