

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parks & Recreation and Environment & Sanitation Committees, April 26, 2017 at the Riverdale Y, 5625 Arlington Avenue

Attendees:

Committees: Sylvia Alexander, Eric Bell, Bob Bender (chair, Parks), Robert Fanuzzi, David Gellman, Marvin Goodman, David Kornbluh, Tao Moran, Laura Spalter (chair, E&S) (all CB8); Herb Barret, Christina Taylor (Parks community committee members); Karen Argenti, Rob Spalter (E&S community committee members)

Other CB8: Dan Padernacht

Absent: Amy Joy Robateau (Parks), Steve Froot (E&S)

DPR: Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, Bronx Commissioner; A. Michelakis, Patricia Ferguson, Dennis Burton, Margot Perron, Leenda Bonilla, Tony Rosa, Colleen Alderson, Suzan Marciona

DEP: Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, director of community affairs

Community: Matt Turov, Deb Dolan (Save the Putnam Trail), Suzanne Corber, Susan Buenner, Debra Travis, Shari Hall, John Young, Catherine O'Brien, Elaine Schaw (?), M. Eremeyev, Leslie Hogan, Dart Westphal, D.I. T. O'Toole (50th Precinct Commander), Cristina Lang (Sen. Klein's office), Joshua Stephenson (Councilman Cohen's office)

Agenda:

The meeting began at 7:15 pm. Minutes of each committee's previous meeting were approved unanimously.

The chairs began by reviewing old and new business, pending the arrival of the DEP representative.

Parks: "It's My Park" Day will take place Saturday, May 20 at Tibbett's Tail, W. 234th St & Bailey Avenue, 10 am to 3 pm. The May committee meeting will include a discussion of budget priorities, parks evaluations by committee members, and the Parks Resource Guide.

E&S: Rain barrel giveaway is Saturday, May 6 from 9 am to noon. Jerome Park Reservoir will be open to visitors on May 20 and 21. Pre-registration is required.

E&S community committee member Karen Argenti reported that on March 7 DEC accepted DEP long-term control plans for several communities. Kingsbridge and Riverdale were not included. Karen said that environmental groups believe that the DEC regulations do not provide sufficient protection for water quality.

Margot Perron advised that a rabid skunk was captured in Van Cortlandt Park. There is no evidence at present of rabies in any other mammals in the park, but park goers should be vigilant.

Christina Taylor said that the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park are holding a benefit dinner prior to the Philharmonic performance in VCP on June 13.

Discussion of Agency Jurisdiction at the Jerome Park Reservoir

Commissioner Rodriguez-Rosa and parks manager Tony Rosa addressed DPR responsibilities at JPR/Fort Independence Park, specifically which agency cuts the grass and maintains the sidewalk and trash pick-ups. Also addressed were the issues of maintaining the retaining walls, caring for plants, and where the boundaries are (DPR's boundary on Goulden Avenue ends at Bedford Park Boulevard). Karen Argenti asked about the impact of the staging area for future work at the reservoir. Bob Bender asked whether the gardens on the Sedgwick/Giles to Fort Independence St side of the reservoir could be formalized under the Green Thumb program. DEP's representative mentioned that DEP has a maintenance division that handles routine maintenance at DEP facilities.

Laura Spalter cited 2001 minutes, when she chaired the E&S committee, that indicated that DEP had hired a contractor to mow the perimeter of the reservoir.

There was agreement to consider a formal MOU between DPR and DEP. Commissioner Rodriguez-Rosa suggested a walk-through by the two agencies with CB8 representatives to go over everything, especially in preparation for upcoming work at the reservoir. Committee chairs will follow up.

CSX/Putnam South Property

Colleen Alderson, who is in charge of DPR's Putnam South efforts introduced Antonios Michelakis, who provided a briefing on the history of this property, located between Van Cortlandt Park South and W. 230th St.. DPR was authorized to acquire it by a 2011 ULURP. Negotiations between CSX and DPR reached an impasse, but have recently revived thanks to intervention by Sen. Schumer and Councilman Cohen. The property is subject to the jurisdiction of the Federal Surface Transportation Board. It is not considered abandoned property because CSX has not filed for it to be so declared. CSX has easements on the property but does not own it outright. The city can enter into an agreement that would permit the property to be used as parkland under an "interim trail use" agreement, preserving the possibility that the property might at some future time be restored as a railroad, unlikely though that might be. This is a required regulation. But before that can happen, the city and CSX must agree on a price for such an agreement. A new appraisal is underway because the city believes that CSX's appraisal was not accurate.

Laura Spalter reported that she has been in communication with CSX officials about cleaning up the property and this clean-up could begin soon, once the point of access to the property is resolved.

Colleen Alderson said that the lead agencies in the negotiations are DCAS, on behalf of the city, and CSX, but the city's corporation counsel is also participating. She will update the committees.

Laura Spalter cited minutes from the E&S committee from 2001 regarding DEP planning and initiatives in VCP and south along the Putnam railway to control CSO's.

Mr. Abdul-Matin suggested that DEP, DPR, and the E&S Water Working Group tour the park to discuss water issues. He said he would consult with Pinar Balci and Angela Licata of DEP to help arrange this. The chairs will follow up.

Highway Runoff Pollution in Van Cortlandt Lake

Christina Taylor, executive director of the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, began this discussion by reporting on pollution from local highways that has been entering Van Cortlandt Lake. In 2003 storm drains were installed on area highways – I-87, the Henry Hudson Parkway, and Mosholu Parkway – to prevent highway runoff from reaching the lake. These drains are supposed to be cleaned yearly but it appears that they have never been cleaned. Plumes of sediment have been detected entering the lake after heavy rainfall. Some have high pH levels and minor fishkills have taken place. She raised this question: which city agency is responsible for maintaining the storm drains?

Mr. Abdul-Matin said that DEP cleans the VC Lake weir annually. He wants to find out whether there is an agreement in place regarding maintaining the drains. He will consult with city DOT to see what they know. DEP and DOT have agreements regarding various city highways.

A discussion began about use of pesticide and herbicide in the park. DPR does not use some chemicals that are permitted by DEC; it holds to a higher standard. The golf course can use only chemicals approved by DEC. Christina Taylor said that the golf course is not the main source of pollution in the lake; it appears that highway runoff is primarily to blame.

The committee will follow up with DEP and DOT.

SWPPP Working Group Update

Bob Bender provided background on the creation of a SWPPP Working Group to implement a provision of the community board's February 2016 resolution endorsing DPR's plan to rehabilitate the Putnam Trail. The Working Group consists of Karen Argenti, Robert Fanuzzi, Laura Spalter, Christina Taylor, and Bob Bender. The group has met with DPR and conducted telephone conference calls and email exchanges among its members.

On March 21 DPR submitted a revised SWPPP to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). DPR shared it with the Working Group, as previously agreed. The Working Group issued a letter in response, which it would like to send to the DEC. The letter was sent to committee members prior to the meeting.

The proposed letter to DEC was discussed in substance. Karen Argenti urged DPR not to aim for the minimum standard required for a DEC storm water pollution prevention plan, but to aim for the highest standard.

At the conclusion of the discussion a vote was taken on the letter and it was approved unanimously, 13 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstained. (See attendees above for names of those who voted.)

The letter will be distributed to all board members.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.