

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2007
AT THE BOARD OFFICE
5676 RIVERDALE AVENUE**

PRESENT

Nicole Stent
Robert Bender
James Plaza
Alec Diacou
Manny Grossman
Christina Taylor
Bill Johnson
James A. Donaldson
Neil Iodice
Mohamed Alhamedi
Tim Wenskus
Anne Marie Garti
Margot Perron
Ray Acosta
Eileen Connolly
Tommy Hallissey
Leon Fendley
Dennis Burns

AFFILIATION

Chairperson, Parks Committee
CB#8
CB#8
CB#8
CB#8
FVCP
Committee Member

Parks
Jerome Park Conservancy
Administrator, Van Cortlandt Park
Parks
Parks
Riverdale Press
Parks
FVCP

Reconstruction of Van Cortlandt Park Parade Grounds Scope Meeting

A brief review and clarification by the Parks Department explained the eleven projects that are funded from the Croton mitigation funds. These projects were approved by the local elected officials and are primarily capital projects with one forestry project. The funding to the Bronx totaled approximately \$240 million.

Public Speakers on Van Cortlandt Stadium

Mr Alhamedi expressed his concern about the maintenance of the soccer field and stadium facilities at Van Cortlandt. His children (and many other children) play in nearly year round soccer games and use the facilities and locker rooms at the stadium. He suggested astro turf on the field which while expensive has low maintenance needs. He was dismayed that the stadium has been in a run down condition for some time. The bathroom facilities need repairs and smell bad. The locker rooms need renovation as well. He expressed concern about the lighting at night as well, to extend the time for the children to practice and play.

The Parks Department stated that they are maintaining the area as best as possible. The staffing is limited at the stadium and the staff person assigned is responsible for 100 acres of land. Currently there is an exiting sewer infrastructure problem at the bathroom facilities as well. An astro turf costs over 1 million dollars, the funding of which is not available.

Two other public speakers, Mr. Iodice and Mr. Donaldson expressed their dismay at the condition of the paddleball and handball courts. They stated that the courts need major repairs. The walls and floors are badly cracked. The lighting is set to 8:00 pm and should be extended to midnight. They commented that keeping the courts well maintained keeps the area active and the crime rates low. They provided a list of needed repairs including winterizing the bathrooms, sandblasting the nine wall, new concrete floor, upgrading the stadium lights, new benches & checker table.

The Parks Department responded that the lights are now turning off at 10:00 pm due to the many requests from the neighborhood residents to have them turned off earlier. The courts will receive a spring cleaning. The masonry will be power washed, scraped, cracks repaired and painted. However, there is no funding for the additional work which would total over \$65,000.

The Parks Department and the Chair suggested that these concerned individuals work together and approach the local elected officials for funding to renovate the stadium. Also the Parks Committee will place this in the budget request for fiscal year 2008.

Additional suggestions were discussed such as the Adopt-a-Park program and requesting private funding from the new Pathmark store that is coming within the next 2 years. The public speakers were encouraged to write their local elected officials and send signed petitions of those concerned about the condition of the stadium.

The Chair recognized the Riverdale Press – Tommy Hallisey, for writing a series of articles focusing on the needs of Van Cortlandt Park. These articles have introduced and explained to the community the needs of the Park and what is currently occurring.

Jerome Park Conservancy

Ms Garti explained that the situation around the Jerome Park Conservancy developed a plan for a park at the reservoir about 12 years ago. The key feature of the plan was a "waterside promenade" at the edge of the water. A \$5 million dollar running track at Jerome Park was funded through the MOA for the filtration plant in 2004. The Conservancy assumed the track would be around the edge of the water, but have heard that it will be next to the sidewalks. The Conservancy is concerned and would like to support keeping the original idea in place.

The Parks Department informed the Committee attendees that this is not Park land but DEP land and they did not have any say in the process. However, there would be a Scope meeting to discuss this project coming up in February and she was welcome to attend and express her concerns.

North Riverdale Baseball League

Bob Bender discussed the Leagues concerns about Kelly field and Caryl field and the conversion of the back field to baseball dimensions. The Parks Department will look at the dimensions and see if this is feasible but there would still need to be funding allocated for this project.

NYC Parks & Recreation Natural Resources Group (NRG)

The NRG informed the Committee that it proposes to restore a native oak hickory forest and reduce non-point pollution to the Hudson River by conserving and enhancing the Hudson Valleys natural resources. The park is currently dominated by invasive exotic plants that threaten the existing native forest and have created a denuded understory, leading to significant sedimentation and non-point pollution in the Hudson River. The project will remove invasive vegetation, stabilize the upland slopes and replant native forest vegetation. The funding will be paid for by the City of New York without state or federal funds.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 28, 2007 at 7:30 PM in the Board office.

Nicole Stent
Chairperson
Parks & Recreation Committee

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