

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD NOVEMBER 28, 2007
AT THE COMMUNITY BOARD 8 OFFICE
5676 RIVERDALE AVENUE**

PRESENT

Robert Bender
Ray Acosta
Eileen Connolly
Margot Perron
Margaret Groarke
Terry Stoeth

AFFILIATION

CB #8 Committee Chair
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Ft. Ind. Pk. Neighborhood Assoc.
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Minutes of the meeting of October 24 were approved.

Sid Augarten Field. Committee Chair Bob Bender reported that the Parks Department's Capital Projects Group has provided a preliminary estimate of the cost of the work. Bob Nolan in the Borough President's office is attempting to arrange a meeting of interested parties to review the estimate and discuss how to proceed on the renovation of the field.

Van Cortlandt Park Memorial Grove. Committee members recognized the outstanding work of Herb Barret and Don Tannen in publicizing the condition of the Memorial Grove and helping (with the assistance of the Parks Dept) to arrange the Veterans Day observances there. Chair Bob Bender volunteered to try to identify possible sources of funding for restoration of the Memorial Grove.

Old Business. Eileen Connolly reported that it is not possible to arrange for a temporary wheelchair ramp for the bathroom in Fort Independence Park. Even if a ramp were possible, the bathroom itself is not wheelchair accessible because the stalls, sinks, etc. do not meet federal ADA requirements. Ray Acosta reported that in a citywide study of Parks Dept bathrooms, most were found not to be wheelchair accessible. *Van Cortlandt Park has no wheelchair accessible bathrooms.* Margot Perron raised the question whether it might be possible to retrofit one or more bathrooms as part of the Parade Grounds renovation project. The cost of constructing a bathroom that meets federal ADA standards is in excess of \$1 million, possibly as high as \$3 million.

There was some discussion of the condition and accessibility of the bathrooms in Van Cortlandt Stadium. Ray Acosta reported that there is a regular attendant on duty from 6:30 A.M. to 3 P.M. Tuesday through Saturday, and someone else on the other days. The park relies on the JTP (job training) program; that workforce was cut from 20

in 2006 to 7 in 2007. The bathroom is closed when the temperature goes below 30 degrees. In the summer there is supposed to be a Parks Department employee available in the stadium every day until 7 P.M.

Margot Perron said that the engineering study of the stadium is still in the bidding process; the actual study is not yet underway.

New Business. Van Cortlandt Park stables. Margot Perron reported that the stable license runs until 2015. The stables owners have made capital improvements in return for their license. There is at least one person on the premises at all hours. Parks Dept. Bronx PEP horses are stabled there (Manhattan PEP horses are also temporarily stabled there but that situation is expected to change next spring). The stables cannot expand without Parks Department approval. Lessons are offered; horses are boarded by riders; riders may walk their horses on the cross-country trails in the cross country off-season.

Councilman Koppell provided \$300,000 in funding for the repair of the Henry Hudson monument in Henry Hudson Park. Because that money is not available until July 2008, no substantial work has been done on this project yet. The Parks Department architectural and historic preservation units are discussing the situation. They are aware that September 2009 is the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's "discovery" of the river named after him and they are coordinating to see what can be done for the monument and the park for the anniversary.

Eileen Connolly discussed PlaNYC. It calls for the opening of new parks in the Bronx and throughout the city (though none are contemplated for the CB8 area at present). Some asphalt surfaces in southwestern Van Cortlandt Park may be converted to artificial turf. There will be more street trees planted (including in the CB8 area) and zoning changes have been proposed to permit more planting of street trees and greenery citywide. Replacement of street trees will now be automatic. The size of forestry crews has doubled as has the Parks Department budget for pruning of trees.

Two representatives of the Fort Independence Park Neighborhood Association provided the committee with a letter in which they report that at an October 13 meeting of their association, there was an overwhelming consensus that the park should *not* be locked at night. Eileen Connolly said that she would respect this decision and not lock the park. She asked that the full board be advised of this decision and Chair Bob Bender said he would report this information in the minutes and call it to the attention of Community Board Chair Tony Cassino and District Manager Nicole Stent. A copy of the letter, which also contains a list of improvements to the park that the association would like to see, is being forwarded to the board by the chair.

Parks representatives announced that the Parks Dept.'s annual MulchFest for Christmas trees will be held on January 5 and 6, 2008, from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. Indian Fields on E. 233rd St. in VCP will be the closest drop-off location and there will be mulch and chips available at (appropriately) the VCP golf house. (You must bring your own

containers.) Residents may also leave their trees curbside for composting pick-up by the Dept. of Sanitation from Jan. 3 to 16. Trees must be free of all ornaments and trimming in order to be composted.

The committee will not meet in December. The next meeting will be **January 23, 2008 at 7:00 PM.**

Happy holidays to all.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Bender
Chairman
Parks & Recreation

BB:db