

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 27, 2010

Attendees

Community Board Members of the Committee: Bob Bender, Tom Durham
Rosemary Ginty, Ari Goldman, Yael Levy, Damian McShane, Karen Pesce

Community Members of the Committee: Herb Barret, Memorial Grove; Lynn
Schwarz, FIPNA; Michael Gary, rep. Senator Espada's Office; Christina Taylor, FVCP

Other Community Board Members: Tony P. Cassino

Other Community Attendees: Lawrence Moiatto, Memorial Grove; Karla Ward,
Horace Mann School; Aliza Appelbaum, Riverdale Press; Heather Butts, HEALTH for Youth;
Michael Holoszyc, Riverdale Soccer Club; Bruce Silverman, Riverdale Soccer Club

DPR Representatives: Margot Perron, Steve DesNoyer, Shirley Echevarria,
Emilio Llopiz

Agenda

The meeting began at 7 pm.

Minutes of the November 25, 2009 committee meeting were approved.

Heather Butts of HEALTH for Youth presented a proposal for renovating the dog run at Ewen Park. Ms. Butts is a lawyer at Columbia University Medical Center and a neighborhood resident. Her group works with young people to help them improve various social skills such as career planning. Because she felt that the Ewen Park dog run was less developed than other dog runs, she wanted to improve it. The students with whom she works have various summer internship projects to do; this could be one of them. She is holding a fundraiser this March and has contacted DPR, Councilman Koppell, and various pet store chains in her search for funding for this project. Renovation of the dog run would consist of adding benches, raising the height of the fence, planting bushes, perhaps installing a water fountain.

Shirley Echevarria, the Parks representative with jurisdiction over Ewen Park, said that the Bronx parks commissioner would have to approve the project. Raising the height of the fences would require approval. There is no plumbing at the dog run, so installing a fountain would be a major project that would be unlikely to occur. Ms. Echevarria asked about maintenance of the dog run, and Ms. Butts said her group would assume responsibility for maintenance.

Ms. Butts agreed to remain in touch with the committee as her fundraising endeavor continues. Chair Bob Bender will forward Ms. Butts' proposal to other committee members.

Van Cortlandt Park Parade Grounds. As has been widely reported, the renovated Parade Grounds fields will not open as hoped this spring. A wet winter has been a factor in the conditions on the Parade Ground according to Margot Perron, VCP Administrator. Steve DesNoyer of Parks Capital Group reported that the sod is knitting but that DPR would like to keep the fields closed "for as long as possible." More specifically he would like the grass to go through one full growing season. The sod was installed in September, grew vigorously through November. DPR plans to open sometime in the spring, date not specified. There is a "wet condition" along the Broadway side of the Parade Grounds, which may be due to a water leak on Broadway. DPR wants to check the condition of the water underneath the renovated

fields. If the leak on Broadway is not the source of the water, then there may be a subsurface compaction problem. The southwest baseball field and soccer fields seem to be most affected by the water condition, which extends approximately 200 feet to the east from the western (Broadway) side of the Parade Grounds. It may be that additional drainage under the soccer fields is required. Test pits can be dug very soon to better determine the source of the problem. If additional work is required, that may not be possible until the spring. Most of the northern half (renovated area) of the Parade Grounds should be able to open in early May, but the area affected by the water problem may have to be closed for remediation. Approximately 2 or 3 acres out of 30 are at issue.

Tony Cassino, speaking as a representative of the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy, suggested a site visit with DPR to identify and discuss the problem. Ms. Perron and Mr. DesNoyer agreed that this would be appropriate. Rosemary Ginty suggested including the design consultant in the site visit.

Athletic leagues and teams will not be able to use the fields before May 1 and may not be able to use some fields after that.

Bruce Silverman of Riverdale Soccer Club discussed his league's various teams that will be affected. The spring recreational league will be hit the hardest. 60-70 peewees and 150 3rd-9th grade girls will be most affected. Ordinarily his teams play on Saturdays beginning early in the day and continuing throughout the day. The season is usually 10 weeks, starting in early April and continuing to mid-June.

Margot Perron observed that each sport now has fewer fields than before the renovation, and that fields may be rotated so that no field is overused and damaged.

Mr. Silverman said he has been searching for space for his league since he first learned about the problem with the Parade Grounds, so far with little success.

Bob Bender reported that the Community Board office has been reaching out to the private schools to see whether they might be able to provide playing fields on Saturdays. The office has reported some encouraging news, but it is too early yet to know which fields might be available for how long on Saturdays. Discussions will continue to try to assist Riverdale Soccer Club.

Ms. Ward of Horace Mann observed that the private schools' soccer schedules haven't been fixed yet so it is difficult to say when playing fields might be available.

Mr. Bender suggested that Mr. Silverman contact the Board office so that they can discuss needs and availability.

Shirley Echevarria reported that it should be possible to lock the basketball courts at Ft. Independence Park. DPR is looking to purchase materials necessary to fabricate a gate and locks for the courts. She expects that the courts will be locked at night by DPR personnel. She promised to report back at the February meeting, by which time she hopes the locks will be in place.

Ms. Echevarria recapitulated DPR's position on the West 232 Street sidewalk, which was recently requested again. DPR opposes installing a sidewalk because it lacks funding, would have to remove trees, and worries that drainage at the site would be negatively impacted.

Erosion is already a concern at this location. There is some question whether a pathway might have to meet ADA standards, i.e., whether anything other than a hard-surface sidewalk could be installed. DPR's current priority is renovating the sidewalk on the Independence Avenue side of Seton Park.

Yael Levy reported on a proposed Riverfest that would take place in early June. The purpose of the Riverfest is to celebrate the Hudson River, to raise awareness of the Hudson River Greenway, and to bring the community together. Currently there is no funding in place for the Bronx portion of the Greenway. A planning meeting for the Riverfest was held in January. Ms. Levy, Mr. Bender, and Mr. Cassino attended. Mr. Cassino reported that the College of Mount Saint Vincent has indicated its willingness to host the Riverfest. Seton Park has also been proposed as a location, and Ms. Echevarria indicated that it is available on the date proposed, June 6.

The committee voted on a resolution recommending that the Community Board endorse the Riverfest. The resolution was unanimously approved, 12-0. In favor:

Community Board committee members: B. Bender, T. Durham, R. Ginty, Y. Levy, A. Goldman, and K. Pesce, D. McShane

Other community board members: A. Cassino

Community committee members: L. Schwarz, M. Gary, H. Barret, C. Taylor.

Resolution

Whereas the Hudson River defines our community and is a potentially important recreational resource; and

Whereas there is a study of the Hudson River Greenway currently underway that would locate the Bronx portion of the Greenway in Riverdale; and

Whereas a coalition of community groups has assembled to sponsor a Riverfest celebrating the Hudson River as a community resource, raising awareness of the Greenway proposal, and offering an afternoon of entertainment, environmental education, and fun to the community, said Riverfest to take place on the afternoon of June 6, 2010 at a location to be determined in Riverdale;

Resolved that Bronx Community Board 8 join other local organizations, such as the Friends of the Hudson River Greenway, the Riverdale YM-YWHA, the Riverdale Nature Preservancy, PS 24 Parents' Association, Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, and others in endorsing the proposed Riverfest.

Christina Taylor reminded the committee about the upcoming Bronx Parks Speak-Up on Saturday, Feb. 27. She mentioned that FVCP will sponsor a Hike-a-thon in VCP on May 1.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40. The next meeting will be held on February 24.

The Chair thanks Rosemary Ginty and Ari Goldman for their assistance with the minutes.

Bob Bender
Chairman
Parks & Recreation Committee