

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION AND PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEES HELD ON APRIL 29, 2009

Attendees:

CB8 Tom Durham, Bob Bender, Evelyn Tucker, James Plaza, Tony Perez Cassino, Saul Scheinbach, Bill Stone, Warren S. Dolny, Robert Fanuzzi

Community Christina Taylor, Friends of Van Cortlandt Park; Stephen Wilkinson; James A. Donaldson, Friends of Van Cortlandt Stadium; Herb Barret, Van Cortlandt Park Memorial Grove; M. Munez, Mutual Housing; C. Guglalm, Mutual Housing; Jos. Cohen, Mutual Housing; Rebecca Patt, Mutual Housing; Travis Epes, FPOA; Charles Reich; Diana Cecil, FVCP; Karen Argenti, FIPNA; Terry Grant Stoeth, FVCP; Hilary Kitasei; Lynn Schwarz, FIPNA; Michael Gary, Sen. Pedro Espada's office; Anne Marie Garti, Jerome Park Conservancy; I.C.L'Engel, BCEQ; LaShawn Wiggins, DPR; Shirley Echevarria, DPR; Angie Pipinos, Residence Parking; Elliott Feigenbaum; Victoria Ohare; Steve DesNoyer, Parks Capital; Jordan Moss; Leon Fendley, DPR; Zachary Feder, DPR; Aya Keefe, Councilman Oliver Koppell's office; Eric A. Seiff; Abraham Zamcheck, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz's office.

Jerome Park Reservoir/Ft. Independence Park

The meeting commenced shortly after 7 pm with the introduction of Allen Juba from MKW Associates, the design team responsible for the Jerome Park Reservoir/ Ft. Independence Park project. Mr. Juba focused on the revisions to the plan that was originally presented to the Parks & Recreation committee in January. He noted that the area at the corner of Goulden and Sedgwick avenues, near Gatehouse 7, has been added to Phase One of the project. The jogging trail now runs along one side of the paved walkway in Ft. Independence Park, not both sides as before. There will be one basketball court, full-sized, instead of two half-courts. The exercise equipment in the park is intended for smaller children; it is static equipment that will not generate noise.

The fence between the park and the building at 3850 Sedgwick will be 16' instead of 12'. Cobblestones in the park will be re-set. The dog run has been downsized and moved to a corner near the DEP fence, where a buffer of trees and shrubs has been added. The loop in the jogging trail in the park has been eliminated. Adult exercise equipment will be located in the park and in the Goulden Avenue area.

Lynn Schwarz, FIPNA, asked for more direct input into the process. Steve Denoyer from Parks Capital said such input must come through the community board. Ms. Schwarz suggested moving the dog run deeper into the park. Ann Marie Garti, JPC, repeated her previous objection to a running track located anywhere other than around the reservoir itself. She seconded Ms. Schwarz's suggestion about re-locating the dog run. She urged that views of the reservoir be made accessible to park users. She would like benches where the exercise equipment is to be relocated. Mr. Juba said that this was possible.

Rebecca Patt, Mutual Housing (3850 Sedgwick), said that the dog run is illegal, that it is too big and that it should not "abut" the residential buildings. She objected to the exercise equipment being located opposite the buildings. Margaret Groarke, FIPNA, said that the dog

run is heavily used and should be included in the park. Michael Gary, representing Sen. Pedro Espada, asked for files of the design from Parks (Parks said that this can be done and made limited hard copies available at the meeting). In response to his question, Parks said that the project should begin in early 2010 and that construction will cost \$2.7 million of a total budget of \$4.5 million.

Karen Argenti, FIPNA, said that the jogging path and its effect on water runoff is a concern, but observed that there was always a path in Ft. Independence Park. Dogs are always in the park.

In response to a question from Joseph Cohen of Mutual Housing, Mr. Juba said that the new lighting in the park will not affect the neighboring buildings. Also in response to a question from Mr. Cohen, Leon Fendley of the Parks Dept said that parks are closed at night as announced on signs at the park entrance. He said that so-called flash cameras, which Mr. Cohen would like to see installed in the park, are expensive and require maintenance that is not available. Shirley Echevarria of Parks said that these cameras would have to be separately funded and are only in trial use in parks in Manhattan and Brooklyn.

Terry Stoeth, FIPNA, recommended two basketball courts, not one, and expressed her wish that the exercise equipment be sturdy enough to withstand repeated use. She said that the equipment planned for Goulden Avenue will be vandalized because this is an isolated location. She urged that the dog run be located in the area adjacent to the trees deeper in the park, beyond where the current dog run is located. Ann Marie Garti repeated her objection to any jogging trail not inside the DEP security fence and said she was prepared to go to court over this.

Steve DesNoyer of Parks said that the design will be modified again in light of these comments and that a final design will be brought before the community board.

Henry Hudson Parkway

Hilary Kitasei of the Henry Hudson Parkway Task Force explained the recent designation of the parkway as a historic highway by the NY State Historic Preservation Office, which says that the highway is eligible for national landmark designation. The State Department of Parks and Historic Preservation must approve any project on the highway using state or federal funds. The highway runs through Riverdale, and the highway boundaries include the service roads as far as the curbs and sidewalks to the east and west. Also included are Henry Hudson Park, Phyllis Post Goodman Park, Hackett Park, Vinmont Park, and portions of Van Cortlandt Park. Any projects in affected areas must be reviewed. Ms. Kitasei explained that because signs can be replaced "in kind," Riverdale runs the risk of continuing with large signs that obscure the most attractive aspects of the highway, such as the stone facing on overpasses.

Ms. Kitasei said she is speaking before four different community boards and is urging them to pass a resolution that she brought before the committee. The committee agreed to the following resolution:

Whereas the proposed re-signing of the parkway by New York State DOT is an opportunity to replace its injurious earlier signage with sensitivity to the context and aspirations of this densely populated green corridor; and

Whereas New York State DOT has developed parkway design guidelines for the Palisades, Taconic, Long Island and other state parkways; and

Whereas the State and City departments of transportation have collaborated in the design and implementation of signage along Rte. 9A in Manhattan to enhance the linear park and residential development;

Community Board 8 calls on the NYS DOT to apply similar design guidelines to the Henry Hudson Parkway, and to work with the NYS Office of Parks and Historic Preservation, NYC Parks Department, NYC DOT, and MTA on a comprehensive Corridor Management Plan before undertaking this re-signing project.

The resolution was passed 9-0. In favor: B. Bender, A. Cassino, W. Dolny, T. Durham, R. Fanuzzi, J. Plaza, S. Scheinbach, W. Stone, E. Tucker.

T&T Chair Tony Cassino said that this resolution will be used to ask the NYS DOT to collaborate with other relevant agencies to give Riverdale signage on the Henry Hudson Parkway that is more appropriate than the current large signs.

New Bike Path

A new bike path connecting Van Cortlandt Park with the Broadway bridge via Manhattan College, Tibbett Avenue and a loop in Spuyten Duyvil was discussed. Travis Epes of the East Coast Greenway Alliance announced that he had ridden this bike path and found it satisfactory. Tom Durham asked why Tibbett Avenue was chosen over Irwin Avenue, and recommended the latter street as a better alternative. Tony Cassino said he would find out why this route was chosen.

Jasper's Pizza

The owner asked for the committee's approval to add sidewalk tables to his store, located at 3550 Riverdale Avenue. The store is open from approximately 10 am to 10 pm. After a brief discussion all were in favor of approving his application.

The minutes of the March 25 Parks & Recreation Committee were unanimously approved.

Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy

Margot Perron, VCPark Administrator, and Tony Cassino led a discussion of the new Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy (VCPC). Mr. Cassino chairs the conservancy board. One of the chief objectives of the conservancy is to increase the stakeholders in the park. There are other park conservancies in NYC, and they have been created for a spectrum of reasons. Ms. Perron said that the operational budget for VCP is \$4 million but there are maintenance needs that are difficult to accomplish on this budget. A 501 (c) 3 has been set up to receive funds. A dedicated turf crew is Ms. Perron's #1 priority. A revised master plan for the park (the current

one is 20 years old) will be drawn up and there will be discussions about it with various park stakeholders. A community council of advisors to the conservancy will be established.

Robert Fanuzzi asked what role the Friends of VCP will play. Margot said they will be part of the community council; Tony Cassino said that every stakeholder has a role to play. There was a brief discussion of how the city itself will act as the fiscal conduit for the conservancy. Jane Sokolow asked whether based on the models that have been cited the conservancy might take over operations of the park. Both speakers said this would not be the case. Karen Argenti said that because the Parks Department has a direct role in the conservancy, other groups would be at a disadvantage. Margot said that sometimes she will be wearing her Parks hat and other times her conservancy hat. Tony Cassino said that different organizations will play different roles. Saul Scheinbach observed that the resources provided through the conservancy would be good for VCP. Ann Marie Garti said that she worries that conservancies have the potential to privatize parks and that she does not want to see VCP lose its public nature. Both speakers said that different voices would come together and different groups would play a role. Parks Committee Chair Bob Bender commented that the Community Board and the Parks Committee will continue to provide a public forum for discussion of VCP and other parks.

Michael Gary asked whether the conservancy can flourish. Margot observed that it could fail. Eric Seiff of FVCP objected that two of the conservancy board members are from out of town and he worried that people with a tenuous connection to the park might make decisions such as which groups get to use athletic fields. Margot said that among other things the conservancy hopes to raise funds for a coordinator to provide for the movement of various groups of park users in a fair and sensible way. These decisions are being made now anyway. Mr. Seiff said that the conservancy could be providing funding to change how the Parade Grounds are used. Robert Fanuzzi asked who will set the VCP priorities when the conservancy becomes operational. Margot said that the new master plan will set the priorities. Tony Cassino said that the master plan will come before CB8 and will be discussed with the VCPC council of advisors. Margot Perron said she wanted to emphasize that there would be no special privileges for anyone under the plan. Ann Marie Garti said that she hoped the VCPC would acknowledge that it is engaged in a complicated business because a city agency is creating this partnership. Both speakers emphasized the independent role that the VCPC council of advisors would play.

The meeting adjourned shortly before 10 PM.

Submitted by,

Bob Bender, Chair
Parks & Recreation Committee

BB:pm
5/4/09