

CB#9 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND LANDMARKS

Minutes of a special summer meeting held on July 25, 2006

This meeting was called through e-mail and fax notice to all members in response to DPR's request that CB#9 advise on an appropriate site in Upper Riverside Park for the location of a sports field to be contributed by the Old Blue Rugby Foundation for its use and for community use.

Present: Carolyn Kent and John Reddick, Co-Chairs; Walter South, Savona Bailey McClain, Frances Mack, Anne Whitman, Committee members; Jeff Nulle, Public member; Barbara Marshall, Co-Chair of the CB#9 Youth Committee; Pat Lewis, Board member:

K.C. Sahl, Riverside Park Administrator; Jim Dowell, President, Riverside Park Fund; Tom Holmes, Old Blue Rugby Foundation; Scott Kinder & Steven C. Mitchell, Harlem Youth Soccer.

KC Sahl opened the meeting with thanks for CB9's May resolution which reviewed the positive CB#9 Parks Committee response to the offer to fund costs for an Astroturf sports field to be located on the Upper Riverside Park infill area by the Old Blue Rugby Foundation, a field to be used by this Olympic Games affiliated Rugby team and by community sports efforts as scheduled by DPR.

A DPR prepared mapping of three alternative sites for this field was distributed for Committee study with the advice that DPR wants to advance the facilities available in the Park and utilize the Old Blue Rugby funding offer to install a new sports field in addition to the field presently available.

KC Sahl reviewed the three presented alternatives:

Choice A – the current field: this would be the easiest installation, a new turf finish for the current field that we know fits well into the infill park – but this renovation of the current field would represent no long term gain for community sports field space.

Choice B – the area between the current field and the Riverbank State Park wall: this raises questions of making room for the hiker-biker path entering the park from 145th St., of crowding out shoreline use, of co-opting the heavily used free-play area here at the park entrance, of blocking entrance view of the Hudson.

Choice C – the parking lot site plus demolition of the curbed grassy area at the highway entrance to the park which costing mature trees, some view loss and some historic character loss, is nevertheless co-adjacent, with the Choice A current field, to the bathrooms which will forseably be expanded to include team changing rooms. This choice allows for bleachers at the park's eastern rim.

KC Sahl also pointed out that now heavily-used Choice A should continue in use without downtime in sports activity while the new site is developed.

By consensus it was agreed that Choice A was eliminated as the new field site but that it must be improved. There was support voiced for keeping it grass.

Very specific discussion of sites B and C followed: B – Would we want bleachers at the edge of the water, closing the view? Would these not interrupt the bird path which had been traced by the Audubon Society? Shouldn't a Kayak launch be near the new parking lot which is to be located at the 145th St. entrance? Shouldn't the picnic use be retained here? Doesn't this squeeze too small an area?

At this point Barbara Marshall asked that the Youth Committee have a role in the decision here and this was fully agreed to by consensus.

Walter South made a motion to remove Choice A from further consideration and this was voted -- Committee 5 yes; 1 abstention; Public member yes; Board members 2 yes; Tom Holmes, Scott Kinder and Steven Mitchell indicated yes.

After further discussion, Walter South moved to choose Choice C, Savona Bailey McClain seconding: Co-Chairs Reddick noted that A nevertheless needs upgrading and DPR and DOT must at earliest possibility review details of highway connection and appropriate fit and Kent that Choice C should be considered as a first choice study area. Jim Dowell stressed careful study "by definition" in any design of Choice C. Scott Kinder called for C. Tom Holmes indicated support for C and advised that the Rugby Foundation contribution would include rebuilding the bathrooms and possible assistance to Choice A or B sites as well. Scott Kinder again stressed the choice as exploratory.

Pat Lewis' suggestion to table was overruled by a consensus call on the question:

Committee 6 yes; public member 1 yes; Board member 1 yes; Holmes, Kinder, Mitchell indicating yes.

Respectfully submitted,

