

**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8**

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD APRIL 24, 2013 AT ST. GABRIELS  
3250 ARLINGTON AVENUE, WALSH HALL**

**ATTENDEES:**

*Committee members:* Bob Bender (chair), Laura Spalter (vice chair), Sylvia Alexander, Rosemary Ginty, Mike Heller, Robert Press, CB8; Christina Taylor, FVCP

*Other CB8 members:* Robert Fanuzzi, Steven Balicer

*Agency Representatives:* Eric Johnson, Grimshaw; Dennis Stanford, DEP; Tatiana Rezeanu, Rebecca Clough, DDC; Steve DesNoyer, Tannise Palmer, Hector Aponte, Margot Perron, DPR

*Others:* Tracy Shelton, KRVC; Andrew Sandler, rep. Councilman Koppell; Karen Argenti, Jane Sokolow, BCEQ; Laura Carpenter Myers, Van Cortlandt House Museum; Claudia Bonn, Wave Hill; Thomas Durham, Steve Skehill, Erik Sisenweis (?), Shaun Stanton, Tal Plotkin, John and Beth Dougherty (Friends of Ewen Park), Kathy Goldstein, Jean Tyson, Roxane Orgill, Maryanne Monte(?), Stephen Ryan, Julia Gran, Elizabeth Weiss, Diane Sargent, Shelley Keeling, Lesley Steiner, Patrick Kline, Michael Dowdy

**AGENDA:**

The meeting began at 7:10 PM. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with a modification noting that Green Thumb is not an independent non-profit but a part of the Department of Parks & Recreation, and Karen Washington is the director.

Proposed LG Headquarters on the New Jersey Palisades

Claudia Bonn, Director of Wave Hill, spoke about the importance of the proposed LG building in Englewood Cliffs, NJ, which would be the first building north of Fort Lee to rise above the treeline on the New Jersey Palisades. She observed that George Perkins, a former resident of Wave Hill, helped to preserve the scenic Palisades. If the LG building is built as presently configured, it will alter the viewscape from such New York institutions as the Cloisters and Wave Hill. The building will set a dangerous precedent that will make it all but impossible to prevent further developments that will rise above the treeline. Several organizations have sued over the matter and a mediation session ordered by a judge is scheduled to begin on May 1.

In response, the committee passed the following resolution:

**WHEREAS** the Palisades along the Hudson River are a National Historic Landmark and a National Natural Landmark; and

**WHEREAS** no building exceeds the height of the treeline on the Palisades north of Fort Lee, which includes the area directly across the Hudson from Riverdale; and

**WHEREAS** LG Electronics has requested and been granted by Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, permission to build a headquarters that would rise 143 feet, which substantially exceeds the 35-foot height limit that Englewood Cliffs and communities to the north have respected to keep buildings below the treeline; and

**WHEREAS** LG Electronics' 27-acre site will accommodate a headquarters built in a more horizontal configuration that would not exceed the treeline on the Palisades; and

**WHEREAS** Wave Hill is a valued public garden and cultural center in Riverdale, visited by 144,000 people in 2012, and with an unobstructed view of the historic Palisades that would be compromised in perpetuity by the LG Electronics headquarters if built as presently proposed; as would be the case for residents with a view of the Palisades and anyone who uses Riverdale's Hudson River parks; and

**WHEREAS** this building, if built as proposed, would undoubtedly be followed by other buildings that would destroy the scenic view of the Palisades currently enjoyed from the New York side of the Hudson; and

**WHEREAS** organizations including the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Scenic Hudson, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Federation of New Jersey State Women's Clubs, the Riverdale Nature Preservancy, and Manhattan Community Board 12 oppose the construction of the LG headquarters as presently configured;

**THEREFORE**, Bronx Community Board 8 joins with these organizations in urging LG Electronics to be a responsible corporate citizen and to re-configure its proposed headquarters building to respect the historic status of the Palisades as well as the magnificent natural view of the Palisades from such institutions as the Cloisters, Wave Hill, and locations in Riverdale that presently enjoy this treasured landscape; and we urge our state and federal elected officials to take appropriate action in support of this resolution.

Passed: 6 in favor (Alexander, Bender, Ginty, Heller, Press, Spalter), 0 opposed, 0 abstained.

#### DDC Presentation on the Mosholu Golf Course in Van Cortlandt Park

The Department of Design and Construction (DDC) presented plans for renovation of the Mosholu Golf Course club house and driving range at the Water Filtration Plant in Van Cortlandt Park. Rebecca Clough of DDC and Eric Johnson of Grimshaw Architects were the presenters.

The new driving range, club house, and parking area will be located in the same area. The driving range will sit on top of the filtration plant. The estimated cost of the project to DEP is approximately \$41 million. It is expected to take about 30 months to complete once construction begins. (DEP has allocated \$45 million to cover contingencies.) Construction will start after above-ground construction of the filtration plant has ended.

The driving range will include tee boxes with fabric roofs. There will be a recycled water system that will not discharge water into the city sewer system (described as "a wetland cell system"). The concessionaire that operates the golf course, First Tee, will use the water system to educate schoolchildren about recycling. The clubhouse will feature a green roof. There will be no body of water accessible from the clubhouse.

The design of this project has altered from earlier designs in these ways:

- The pool of recycled water will be behind a 10-12-foot security wall, which will be above grade and separate from the filtration plant;

- The parking lot has been moved farther from the playground at Jerome and Gun Hill;

- An amphitheater has been added for educational purposes;

- A new water system has been introduced, as described above.

There was considerable discussion of the design and especially of operational issues, as follows:

First and foremost – which agency will maintain the facility, DEP or DPR? Bronx Parks Commissioner Aponte suggested that the concessionaire will maintain the facility but acknowledged that there is nothing in the current concession agreement that requires this.

DEP maintains the roof of the filtration plant. Whoever performs regular maintenance on the driving range will need access and cooperation from DEP. Commissioner Aponte observed that this matter is “somewhat unresolved.” Security of the site will be a major concern for DEP.

There will be emergency egress in the event of danger.

Questions raised by the audience include what sort of chemicals will be used on the driving range and who makes this decision, the concessionaire, DPR, or DEP. What experience does First Tee have in running educational programs and are they committed to the educational component (Commissioner Aponte said that no commitment exists at present). What sort of tree replacement program is planned to compensate for loss of trees at the site (Margot Perron, VCP Administrator, said that DEP has pledged \$14 million in two locations over ten years for tree replacement).

DDC said that it is scheduled to present the design to the Public Design Commission (PDC) on May 13 and wanted the committee’s decision on the design, independent of operational concerns. Commissioner Aponte said that DPR has approved the design. He acknowledged that maintenance questions remain to be resolved but observed that these are not the sorts of issues that PDC considers in determining whether to approve the design.

After discussion, the committee voted to approve the design subject to a commitment by DPR and DEP to return to the committee in the near future with a plan for operating and maintaining the facility, including the nature of the concessionaire’s responsibilities, thus addressing the questions left unresolved at this meeting. Representatives of DPR and DEC agreed to this condition.

Approved: 6 in favor (Alexander, Bender, Ginty, Heller, Press, Spalter), 0 opposed, 0 abstained

#### Presentation by DPR on Ewen Park Renovations

Steve DesNoyer of the Parks Dept. capital projects group presented plans for a new tot lot and renovated basketball courts in Ewen Park, following up on a request from Councilman Koppell made in response to an earlier scoping meeting in Ewen Park. Councilman Koppell allocated \$1.185 million, of which \$912,000 is available for construction.

The tot lot is intended for children 2 to 5 years old. It has been located to allow access to paved pathways for strollers and to minimize the number of steps involved in accessing the site. One large tree will have to be removed; several new trees will be planted as replacements. It will include a drinking fountain, a “spray area” (sprinkler) and several benches for caregivers. The tot lot will be egg shaped and will incorporate bird motifs in the design.

The basketball courts will be renovated with new surfaces and fences. Trees will be planted in the surrounding area. New pipe rail will replace damaged railings on W. 232 St., which will also be the access point for construction equipment. Some invasive vines in the area between the basketball courts and Cambridge Avenue will be removed.

There was much discussion by residents of the area. The design of the tot lot was generally admired, though questions were raised about its proximity to the dog run. Mr. DesNoyer said that the tot lot would be surrounded by a 4-foot-high fence for security. There were concerns raised that there is no restroom in the park, which would seem to be a necessity for young children. Mr. DesNoyer and others noted that the money allocated would not allow for construction of a restroom.

There were numerous objections to the basketball courts from residents. They complained that there are late-night games at present and the police do not respond to complaints. They worry that new trees will present more opportunities for kids using the courts to relieve themselves, which the residents say is an ongoing problem. The general attitude was that the basketball courts should not be renovated but should be removed unless problems of noise and underage drinking and drug use can be remedied.

Residents of the area expressed their concern about poor general maintenance in the park, specifically deteriorating conditions in the dog run, sinkholes, poor drainage, and other quality of life problems. Mr. DesNoyer noted that the grade of the park is a constant problem; it rises 111 feet from Riverdale Avenue to Johnson Avenue, so erosion is ongoing.

It was agreed that another meeting should be held, preferably on site, with as many residents of the area as possible to determine what to do with the money that has been allocated. Andrew Sandler, representing Councilman Koppell, agreed with this strategy but also observed that there were no guarantees that the money would remain available after the Councilman's term expires.

#### It's My Park Day in Ewen Park

The committee members and residents discussed planned activities for the May 18 "It's My Park" Day activities. It was agreed that removing invasive vines, cleaning the park of debris, painting graffiti on park benches, planting, and moving wood chips would be high priorities, pending approval from DPR's liaison for this event. The hours will be 10 am to 3 pm.

#### Other Business

A group representing football players asked why football is banned on the Parade Grounds in Van Cortlandt Park. They had been told that their activity was especially harmful to the turf, but they said that they play without cleats and that they cause no more wear and tear on the field than soccer players. They have no permit but play whenever a field is available, or play in the northern, un-renovated portion of the Parade Grounds. Commissioner Aponte urged them to use the DPR website to apply for a permit. He said that the field was not intended to be used for football. Because the hour was late, it was agreed that further research will be done and this complaint will be put on the agenda of the May 22 meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:50. The Chair thanks Vice-Chair Laura Spalter for assistance with the minutes.

Bob Bender  
Chairman  
Parks & Recreation Committee