

**Meeting of the  
Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board  
WebEx  
January 20, 2022  
4:00 PM**

**PRC BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

J. Henry Neale, Jr., Chair  
Debra Clay  
Sobeida Cruz  
Richard Greco, Jr., Vice Chair  
Charlene Indelicato  
Martin Kamarck  
Martin Rogowsky  
Hon. Catherine Parker  
Joel Seligman

**MEMBERS EMERITI**

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT**

**PRC STAFF PRESENT**

Kathleen O'Connor, Commissioner  
Peter Tartaglia, First Deputy Commissioner  
Neil Squillante, Deputy Commissioner  
Judith Allen, Administrative Aide

**GUESTS**

Robert DelTorto – President of the Bronx River  
Parkway Reservation Conservancy  
William Brady – Chief Planner, Department of Planning  
Gayle Katzman, First Deputy Commissioner DPW&T  
Aviva Meyer, Westchester County Liaison  
David Tubiolo – County Legislator of District 14

**PRC BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

Pamela Dubitsky

**MEMBERS EMERITI ABSENT**

Lorraine Palais  
Larry Wilson

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT**

Norma Drummond, Commissioner  
Department of Planning  
Hugh Greechan, Commissioner DPW&T

**PRC STAFF ABSENT**

Andre Early, Deputy Commissioner

**ITEM NO. 1 – APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Upon motion by Joel Seligman and seconded by Richard Greco, The Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board unanimously approved the amended minutes of November 18, 2021.

Upon motion by Richard Greco and seconded by Catherine Parker the Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board unanimously approved the minutes of December 16, 2021.

**ITEM NO. 2 – MEMBERS REPORTS****A. Recent Park Visits**

Mr. Neale would like the members of the Board to visit a park and one nature center between meetings.

Richard Greco visited the Bronx River Reservation and saw the new signage with the map. He thought it was very nice. Many of the signs along the Reservation were sponsored by private entities. Mr. Greco wants to know what are the roles and responsibilities other than financial that a sponsor has for the signage.

Mr. Greco passed by Twin Lakes. He noticed the sign for the Nature Study Woods. On our list of parks it is listed as Twin Lakes. From the signage, it seems like the Nature Study Woods is a separate entity. If that is so, why don't we list it separately on the website?

Marty Rogowsky didn't visited any parks since the last meeting. Mr. Rogowsky received a phone call about Mohansic Golf Course needing a lot of work.

Joel Seligman visited Mountain Lakes. A beautiful place and very serene.

Charlene Indelicato did not go on any field trips but went to Ward Pound Ridge Reservation which is in walking distance from her home.

Sobeida Cruz visited her favorite park, Tibbetts Brook. She questioned the capital project that was to begin in September.

Tino Kamarck has not visited any parks.

Debra Clay is thrilled to be reappointed to the Board. Ms. Clay will be retiring next week and will have more time to go and visit the parks. Like Miss Indelicato, Ms. Clay would like to visit the parks with the other members and have a Parks guide show them around. Also, Ms. Clay is disappointed that the Board will not be able to meet at the parks for meetings.

**B. Suggestions for 2022 Park Board Activities**

Mr. Neale would like suggestions from the Board. We should have a Parks Board plan or a goal and an agenda.

Richard Greco is interested in the future of sustainability, alternative energy such as solar, wind, and greenhouses. All of those can come together as demonstration centers in the nature preserves areas through public educational programs.

Mr. Rogowsky would like to understand the planning process by which the County plans its park purchases. Is the Planning or Parks Department or County Executive Administration looking at maps to see what parkland can be acquired? He would like for the Parks Board to help the Parks Department to find land that the County can acquire.

Mr. Seligman stated the committee would benefit from the opportunity to engage in more of a planning process. How do we access the needs of Westchester community? What areas of the County are well served by the Parks system? Also, what areas of the County are least served and what are the strategies to address them over a number of years.

Ms. Indelicato suggests the Parks Board pick a park and visit it with a Parks guide. This way the members can become familiarized with the park and get to know the people who works there.

Catherine Parker stated the last time the County worked to preserve open spaces, they partnered with The Westchester Land Trust. For example, we do not know what to do with Merestead and it cost us millions of dollars to maintain. The Westchester Land Trust can offer an opportunity for partnership that will serve the Westchester residents well, allows for preservation of open space, and stewardship of the park.

Sobeida Cruz stated as a Board member she would like to give back and suggests the Parks Board members find programs that they can become ambassadors and advocates to without putting a strain on the staff.

Mr. Kamarck is very sympathetic to the points of view that Joel and Marty has raised. Mr. Kamarck agrees with Ms. Indelicato that the Board does not have the bandwidth to do anything truly effectively in terms of strategic planning of the parks without unduly burdening the staff of the Parks Department.

Ms. Clay is interested in the Parks programs. If there is any input or contributions we can give as a Board to enhance the programs. Make sure all communities can participate in them on an equal basis. Making parks more known in areas where they are least known. Ms. Clay agrees with Mr. Rogowsky to build out the County Center with expanded areas.

Mr. Neale stated even though the Board is a small group, he wants them to think about the things they can reasonably do and accomplish.

Mr. Neale asked Robert DeTorto, President of the Bronx River Parkway Reservation Conservancy what can the Board do to help them. Mr. DeTorto stated by attending the Parks Board meetings he has learned a lot and he would like The Parks Board to use them as a resource.

Mr. Neale stated The New Community Leadership and Climate Protection Act is New York State response to climate change. The municipalities and Counties will work their way to reduce the greenhouse gases and save energies. Maybe, this will start in the Parks.

### **ITEM NO. 3 – CHAIR’S REPORTS**

Chairman Neale and the PRC Board agreed to send Emeritus member, Lorraine Palais a card wishing her well for the New Year. Ms. Palais has been a long time member of the Parks Board and instrumental in the inception of Camp Morty.

Park Board Members Debra Clay, Charlene Indelicato and Martin Kamarck have been reappointed for another three year term.

Park Board Member Richard Greco has aged out of the Parks Board but will remain as Vice Chair until his successor is appointed. An election will be held to choose a new Vice Chair by the members.

### **ITEM NO. 4 – COMMISSIONER’S REPORT**

Under the tutelage of Jason Klein, Director of Conservation, our curators have provided for current educational programming and displays at the nature centers.

Commissioner O’Connor loves show and tell. Any group that we show what we do are amazed at what the park staff has accomplished. In addition to a meeting, when the weather gets better we can pick three parks and go on a field trip. At the time, the members can express their suggestions.

The County Center is again a COVID-19 vaccine boosting and testing site. When the Parks Board visits the different facilities and you have any suggestions or inquiries please contact Judith so they can be addressed.

Winer Wonderland concluded on January 3. Thirty-three thousand cars attended the program and it was opened every day. The Westchester Parks Foundation revenues from the event will help in part to purchase equipment for the Parks Department.

We are starting to discuss reaccreditation for the fifth time which is due in 2023. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) was contacted by our staff and was told to begin to plan. The good news is it is all digital.

Since we do not have the County Center, we cannot do our February staff conference. We are currently working on mini seminars that we will be offering at a couple of our indoor facilities.

Our best assets are the 244 annual and 1200 hourly employees that work at our facilities and in administration.

There are a number of Park staff retiring soon. First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia, Deputy Neil Squillante, and I are working together to fill their positions.

The capital programs are moving along. There is an amount of work that is needed at Tibbetts Brook Park. Currently, we are working on the drainage. Paving of Tibbetts will be completed at the end of the project. First Deputy Tartaglia stated the project should be finished in the fall of 2022.

We provide programming for every quadrant of the park system. We provide programs for every group and every ethnicity. We pride ourselves on trying to provide something for everybody. We agreed with Somers High School Varsity cheerleaders to put on a one day cheerleading competition event. The Westchester Parks Foundation funds Camp Morty with the Department of Social Services and it is held at Mountain Lakes Park. Ms. Clay expressed to Commissioner O'Connor that she is interested in experiencing different programs the County has to offer.

Commissioner O'Connor stated on July 3, we are scheduled the fireworks program at Kensico Dam Plaza. All the ethnic festivals are scheduled as of right now but are dependent on the pandemic.

The permit for Scott Field ended December 31, 2021. We will know shortly which direction the Administration will move. I am having ongoing conversations with Sally Veltidi, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation for Eastchester who is maintaining Scout Field until further notice.

Legislator Tubiolo thanked Commissioner O'Connor, First Deputy Commissioner and all of the members on the Parks Board for their time and help. Legislator Tubiolo stated as the Chair for Parks and Recreation Committee he will be speaking to the Administration soon to discuss Scout Field. Legislator Tubiolo feels that the County should take over the maintenance as well as the scheduling for the activities.

Scout Field, Pat Henry Field or Kingsland Point Park are IMA's. Our Administration is going to start sending our staff out to those facilities and start a process called Pride in Parks (PIP). PIP is an overall analysis of each of our facilities. Pat Henry Field runs well and there will be no lights. New signage at Pat Henry Field will state "Westchester County Parks".

Croton Gorge Fountain ran for the season and was well received. It was closed down in October and winterize. There were issues with valves and we are working with New York City so we will be ready for the spring.

Mr. Neale asked Commissioner O'Connor if the Westchester County Parks, Recreation and Conservation monthly report is distributed to other departments. Commissioner O'Connor stated the report is given to the Administration and the Board of Legislators.

Mr. Neale asked Commissioner O'Connor does the accreditors for national accreditation renewal care about the community and environment. Commissioner O'Connor stated yes. Mr. Neale stated the Parks Board should think about how they can help the accreditation process.

Mr. Neale stated the essential program notices for each weekend emailed to everyone contains a litany of things for the nature centers and he suggests the Parks Board review it when they receive it.

The Holidays on the Hill Train Show at Lasdon was phenomenal. Bob Del Torto said the show was super and improved. Jessica Schuler, Curator added an outside area. Next year Ms. Schuler would like to add a night time event to the train show.

## **ITEM NO. 5 – INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **A. Tree Removal Request – B-01-2022 (Playland)**

First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia, states this capital project is to restore the Playland mall. This tree request is in conjunction with Standard Amusements. More than 50% of the mall trees have died out and the 22 remaining trees are in decline. We have a limited canopy and far from specimen quality. Since the mall and Playland are being extensively restored, the trees will be further impaired. The plan is to plant 46 swamp white oaks which are similar in stature and the “7”-“9” trees will make an immediate impact and create a new canopy which will last for years.

Catherine Parker stated the trees she can see through the Playland gate at the mall area looks healthy and their height provides tremendous amount of shade. Since it is a flood prone area, the diameter of those trees are incredibly important when it comes to the amount of water those trees can soak up in the time of flooding. Legislator Parker is not sure what purpose it serves to replace the trees with much smaller trees. She is impressed with the way the mall looks today and would like more information before making a determination. First Deputy Tartaglia stated he will get the Parks Board more information and will have Ken Uhle at next meeting to discuss the condition of the trees.

Mr. Greco asked what happens to the trees when they are taken down. First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia will provide the Parks Board with information.

Marty Rogowsky asked if this tree maintenance program is something the Parks Department had on its list for a few years or is this something that Standard Amusement bought to your attention. First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia stated this is something we wanted to do for years and is in conjunction with their plans. Commissioner O'Connor stated a similar tree program was completed at Kensico years ago.

Ms. Indelicato asked First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia what he means when he says in conjunction with. Does it mean financially? First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia stated Standard Amusement will be paying for the trees and tree planting. In this case, conjunction means simultaneous with other current capital project work.

First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia, stated, we are still in transition with Playland and things are going smoothly. Standard Amusements took over operations on December 1, 2021. We transferred 12 employees to Standard and 10 has stayed and are currently working in our parks. Frank Carrieri, General Manager of Playland, is overseeing the capital projects with Standard Amusement and day to day transition. There was an article in the Journal News today about issues with one of the construction companies. The County terminated their contract and through emergency authorization awarded the remaining work to two contractors already on site with other projects.

Ms. Indelicato asked if the Parks will be able to meet their time table regardless of the breach. First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia stated Playland Park will be substantially completed and sufficient for the park to be operated by Standard Amusement in 2022.

Mr. Neale asked if the pool will be opened. First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia stated the pool is scheduled to open the first week of July.

Mr. Greco stated the Monfort Academy students will be ready to present the findings of the soldiers on the World War 1 Memorial and the trees.

Commissioner O'Connor was approached by someone from the historical society in White Plains who is suggesting that the trees be planted along the Bronx River going up to Kensico instead of being replanted at the County Center. His point is if the County Center became a test site the trees will have to be removed again. The trees will be replanted and plaques placed at the County Center in the exact location.

#### **ITEM NO. 6 – ACTION ITEMS**

There were none

#### **ITEM NO. 7 – OTHER BUSINESS**

A. Comments by Guests

#### **ITEM NO. 8 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Upon motion by Charlene Indelicato and seconded by Catherine Parker the Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

The Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board will meet on Thursday, February 17, 2022 at 4:00 pm. via WebEx.

Submitted by,

Judith J. Allen

