

**Meeting of the  
Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board  
Glen Island Park  
September 30, 2021  
4:00 PM**

**PRC BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS EMERITI**

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT**

**PRC STAFF PRESENT**

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

**GUESTS**

Aviva Meyer, Liaison  
Robert DelTorto – President of the Bronx River  
Parkway Reservation Conservancy  
Rhea Mallett – Public, Resident of Mount Pleasant  
Maureen Petry – Public, Resident of Mount Pleasant

**PRC BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

**MEMBERS EMERITI ABSENT**

Lorraine Palais  
Larry Wilson

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT**

Norma Drummond, Commissioner  
Planning Department  
Hugh Greechan, Commissioner  
DPW & Transportation

**ITEM NO. 1 – APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Upon motion by Catherine Parker and seconded by Martin Rogowsky, the Parks Recreation and Conservation Board unanimously approved the amended minutes of July 15, 2021, to remove the words “Legislator Parker stated the setting of the fees for the operating budget will begin in September” and insert the words “Legislator Parker requested to start looking at the fees for the operating budget in September” which is located in the Information Items section under the subject of “Discuss Operating Budget.”

**ITEM NO. 2 – MEMBERS REPORTS****A. Recent Park Visits (After July 15th)**

Joel Seligman stated Mr. Neale gave him a tour of Scout Field. Joel also stated he was happy to be at Glen Island Park which was known for the Big Band era.

Vice Chair Richard Greco Jr., stated he participated on Bicycle Sundays. He took his family to Playland and visited Scout Field. He is very concerned about the flooding along the Bronx River Parkway. He spoke to Commissioner O’Connor and First Deputy Tartaglia about his concerns. There is a Board of Legislators Committee looking into the issues chaired by Legislator Walter.

Sobeida Cruz goes to Tibbetts Brook Park daily to walk. She asked when the repaving work will begin on the road. First Deputy Tartaglia stated the capital project began last week. They will be paving roadways, removing trees, expanding the parking lots and providing a better drainage system. Also, the park will include a fitness activities area.

Ms. Cruz stated that she visited Glen Island Park for the first time over the summer. The staff was very nice and attentive. Also, she visited Playland but thought it was overcrowded. First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia stated the restrictions were lifted and unfortunately construction is going on everywhere at Playland. The price was kept low and a few concessions were not opened. The park was opened five days a week instead of six.

Charlene Indelicato did not go on any field trips but visits her local park at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation and all is well. Mr. Seligman stated that Ward Pound Ridge has an amazing art gallery.

Pamela Dubitsky visited the Marshlands and Playland. The fireworks at Playland were wonderful.

Mr. Kamarck visits Croton Point Park regularly. This park is very impressive and lovely.

Marty Rogowsky visited Lasdon Park. His goal was to visit the Veterans Museum. He noticed there are doing a capital project at the main house.

Catherine Parker visited the Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary, Playland Amusement Park, and the 911 Memorial at Kensico Dam Plaza. She stated the catering done at the Glen Island Harbour Club for the Westchester Parks Foundation Gala was amazing. Also she purchased tickets to take her son to see Abbott and Costello meet Frankenstein at Lasdon

Debra Clay favorite place is Kensico Dam Plaza. Ms. Clay stated she walks her dog and climbed to the top of Kensico Dam. She stated her friend took her son to movie nights and they enjoyed them. Her friend also participated in Bicycle Sundays but stated they opened up the Bronx River Parkway too fast at the end of the end of the program.

Mr. Neale reported he swam in every in every County park beach and pool this summer. The staff was terrific. The facilities were clean. He was disappointed by Croton Point because it is really a kiddie pool that isn't deep enough for adult swimmers. It is a roped of area in the river. His favorite pool to swim in was Sprain Ridge pool. He observe people who utilize the parks do not appear to swim much, perhaps because they cannot swim well. He suggested a swimming program is needed.

He also visited Tibbetts Brook and Willson's Woods Park. He slid down the water slide at Tibbetts Brook which is not for the faint of heart. Mr. Neale enjoyed being in water slide races at Willson's Woods.

Mr. Neale observed some of the swimming areas were overstaffed at the end of the day. The parks should be staffed during the parks busiest time.

### **ITEM NO. 3 – CHAIR'S REPORTS**

#### **A. Subcommittee on Capital Budget Planning (Tino, Pamela, Joel, and Marty)**

Pamela Dubitsky spoke on behalf of the subcommittee. Ms. Dubitsky stated that, in accordance with Section 134.51(4) of the Westchester County NY Code of Ordinances, the Board's powers and duties include the responsibility to approve the Parks Department's annual capital projects plan before it starts moving through the county's interdepartmental budget approval process. She noted that, in connection with the 2022 capital projects plan, Board members had previously received a copy of the plan and had discussed it with First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia during monthly board meetings and subcommittee meetings, and the Board now needed to vote to approve the plan. Ms. Dubitsky also noted that, in the future, the subcommittee and First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia had agreed that, each year, the Parks Department will provide updates to the Board on the development of the following year's capital projects plan, as well as the five-year capital projects plan, in January, February and March, and will provide a draft of the following year's proposed plan to the Board in March, and the Board will review and vote to approve the plan during the April Board meeting. Thereafter, the Parks Department will keep the Board abreast of any changes to the plan as it moves through the interdepartmental approval process, and in December, will give the Board a final report on the plan as approved by the County Board of Legislators.

First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia provided an update on capital projects. He stated an escalation cost to Cranberry Lake Preserve of \$1,000,000 will include a sprinkling system and backup generator, moving Cranberry Lake site work to 2023. He also stated there will be \$4,000,000 for design of the County Center in 2022 to aid in renovating the facility after New York State vacates, that the state will pay for some of the work, that the Parks Department is asking for a multi-use floor, roof, bathrooms, and dressing room, and that there was tremendous flooding at the County Center due to Hurricane Ida. Mr. Neale asked Commissioner O'Connor about the cleanup of the parking lot, and she responded that a bid had been sent out to fix the parking lot and add trees.

Upon motion by Pamela Dubitsky and seconded by Charlene Indelicato, the Parks Recreation and Conservation Board unanimously approved the capital projects plan on September 30, 2021.

## **B. Chair's Report**

Mr. Neale invited the PRC members to join him on a tour of Lenoir Preserve on Saturday, October 23 at 10 a.m. guided by curator Sara Cavanaugh. The nature center is currently open seven days a week from dawn to dusk.

The approval of the sales surplus property of Jefferson Street in Larchmont approved price of \$20,000.00 was reduced to \$12,000.00 due to storm damage. Mr. Neale stated when the parkland sale is complete, the funds will be used for park purposes. Proceeds acquired from the sales of parkland are deposited into a special account. Commissioner O'Connor stated, the Parks Department was able to purchase a showmobile recently with funds obtained by sale of surplus land.

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

Commissioner O'Connor welcomed the PRC Board to Glen Island Park. Glen Island is a beautiful facility and Westchester County was blessed with a wonderful park system which we do not take for granted.

During Covid, Governor Cuomo picked Glen Island Park to be the only drive-thru vaccination site in Westchester County.

In response to Mr. Neale stating the Parks need a swimming program, the best defense against drowning is teaching teens and adults how to swim. The parks department has an intense swimming program.

Deputy Commissioner Early has done a wonderful job with working with the lifeguards. For the first time in County history, the Parks Department hired and trained 15-year-olds to be lifeguards. For many, this was their first job.

Hurricane Ida damaged some of the County parks. The County Center basement was filled with four to five feet of water. The soccer field at Saxon Woods Park was completely destroyed. The pool at Saxon Woods was closed for the season.

Since a new drainage system was installed at the Maple Moor Golf Course, limited damage occurred. Playland had minimal damage except for the Kiddyland Boardwalk.

We do not hire the Park Rangers. They worked directly for Department of Public Safety, who work closely with us.

The beach and pools are now closed. Attendance were high. There were few complaints, fights, and arguments.

Parks Department hosted walkathons. Since we could not have the traditional movies at the parks, we improvised with drive-in movies at Tibbetts Brooks Park, Kensico Dam Park, and Croton Point Park.

For the first time, on Wednesday, September 22, Westchester Magazine's Wine and Food Festival sponsored a brand-new Party on the Pier event at Playland Park. Also, they sponsored the Burger and Beer Blast on Thursday, September 23 and Grand Tasting Village on Saturday, September 25. To attend the events everyone had to be vaccinated and show I.D. A number of recreation programs will continue until Halloween.

Autumn Changes, a new fall exhibit and train show at Lasdon Park and Arboretum will open on Friday, October 9.

Golf courses are busy and popular. People are enjoying golf in large numbers.

Playland is closed and capital projects have ramped up and continue.

Due to Covid we had to cancel our yearly professional and development programs for the last two years. Starting in January or February of next year we are looking into starting our programs again in smaller groups which the Westchester Parks Foundation sponsors.

Preparations for Winter Wonderland have begun. County Executive, George Latimer will kick off the opening of Winter Wonderland at a press event on Friday, October 1. Also, tickets go on sale.

Bicycle Sundays will end on Sunday, October 31. Commissioner O'Connor stated she would like to eliminate Bicycles Sundays in July and August because of low attendance and the heat. This year there are 22 Sundays, maybe it can be scaled back to 14.

Playland will be operated by Standard Amusement, LLC beginning on December 1. Commissioner O'Connor tabled any discussion on Standard to October's PRC Meeting.

**ITEM NO. 5 – INFORMATION ITEMS****A. Discuss County 2022 Operating Budget**

Deputy Commissioner Neil Squillante stated there will not be any fee increases. Since we are a public entity we are very conscious of keeping our fees reasonable.

Legislator Parker asked how Standard Amusement is handling the Playland fees. First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia stated he is working with the County Attorney John Nonna and will have an answer next month.

Mr. Neale stated Westchester County is the largest seasonal employer of the Westchester County Parks. Mr. Neale also stated the Parks Board should approve and have a recorded vote on the fees.

Mr. Neale stated the operating budget of the Parks Department is in need of more money. The Parks Department has proven to be essential during the pandemic. Ms. Clay stated Commissioner O'Connor should give the Parks Board a list of what is needed to run the parks so they can go to the Board of Legislators and advocate for more funding.

Mr. Kamarck stated maybe the former Parks Commissioner Joe Stout can advocate for the parks.

Legislator Parker stated the Parks Department submit their budget on September 1 with justification of what is needed to run the parks. The County Executive team will then present and submit their budget on November 10. The Board of Legislators compares and reconciled the two budgets before it is passed.

First Deputy Commissioner Tartaglia stated there are at least three or four meetings the PRC Board can attend and speak to the Board of Legislators.

Mr. Neale read from The County Charter, Section 134.51 No. 7- Powers and Duties of the Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board. The Charter states the Board's responsibility to make recommendations related to Commissioner's estimates of receipts and proposed expenditures in preparation of the annual county budget.

The Charter states "In accordance with the provisions of this act, the commissioner shall submit to the board his estimates of receipts and proposed expenditures in connection with the preparation of the annual county budget, prior to submission of such estimates to the Budget Director, and shall set a time for a conference with the board on such estimates which may be the date for a stated monthly meeting. The commissioner shall take into consideration but shall not be bound by the recommendations of the board as to such estimates. The board may submit to the Budget Director any recommendations which the commissioner declines to accept".

Deputy Neil Squillante stated the Parks Department is following the guidelines. There is no increase in tax levy, the County Center is closed and will not be a revenue factor until it reopens. There will be a great loss of revenue due to Playland. Currently revenue is minimally based on parking.

Upon motion by Richard Greco, Jr. and seconded by Charlene Indelicato, the Parks Recreation and Conservation Board unanimously approved the fees on September 30, 2021

## **B. Status of Scout Field**

The status of Scout Field is still the same. Currently the proposal of Scout Field is being discussed among joint committees. If the PRC Board is interested, there are videos that can be viewed.

## **C. Pocantico Lake County Park**

Ms. Indelicato stated this is the wrong venue for the Pocantico Lake County Park to be discussed. Ms. Indelicato stated the County does not own the parkland in question and the issue should be put before the Planning Board.

Rhea Mallett, resident of Mount Pleasant who spoke on behalf of the public disagreed with Ms. Indelicato. She stated a 31-home subdivision proposal along the lake that is currently before the Mount Pleasant Planning Board threatens the beauty of the park, the quality of the water, and the wildlife and its habitats. The runoff from the development would pollute the lake and river. The town's people are asking the Parks Department to get involved to stop the development from moving forward.

Ms. Mallett provided several letters to the PRC Board from concerned constituents.

After listening to Ms. Mallett voice her opinion on why the parks department should get involve in Pocantico Lake Park, Mr. Neale stated the PRC Board should not intervene in the Mount Pleasant proceedings and he also recommends that the County should evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the possibility of purchasing the 36.8 acres property next to Pocantico Lake Park, perhaps including by eminent domain.

Finally, Mr. Neale thanked Pamela Dubitsky and Richard Greco, Jr., for suggesting the PRC Board meet at Glen Island Park.

## **ITEM NO. 6 – ACTION ITEMS**

There were none.

**ITEM NO. 7 – OTHER BUSINESS**

There were none.

**ITEM NO. 8 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Upon motion by Martin Rogowsky and seconded by Debra Clay the Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

The Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board will meet on Thursday, October 21, 2021 at 4:00 pm. at PRC Headquarters.

Submitted by,

Judith J. Allen