

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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April 6, 2017
Start: 10:24 a.m.
Recess: 10:44 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.
16th Fl

B E F O R E: MARK LEVINE
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Darlene Mealy
Fernando Cabrera
James G. Van Bramer
Andrew Cohen
Alan N. Maisel
Mark Treyger

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Cliff Stanton, Greenway Director
Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt Dev. Corp., KRVC

Tracy Shelton, Executive Director
Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt Dev. Corp., KRVC

Rosemary Ginty, Vice Chair
Community Board 8 in Bronx

2 [sound check, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Good morning
4 everybody. We're going to get started. I'm Mark
5 Levine, Chair of the Council's Committee on Parks and
6 Recreation joined by fellow committee members Andy
7 Cohen from the Bronx and Darlene Mealy from Brooklyn.
8 We have two items of searing importance on our agenda
9 today. We are going to be renaming a street in the
10 Bronx, and we are going to be considering an
11 important resolution authored by Council Member
12 concerning the Hudson River Greenway. Briefly I'll
13 tell you that we're going to be considering the
14 official renaming of a portion of the Cross Bronx
15 Service Road North to East 177th Street. East 177th
16 Street is the historical name of the Cross Bronx
17 Expressway service roads, and this bill would restore
18 the original name of the street because several
19 addresses along the Cross Bronx Expressway service
20 road are still designated East 177 East 177th Street.
21 This legislation would clear up any confusion
22 regarding naming of the street. The street is in the
23 district of Council Member Palma who couldn't join us
24 today, but she is strongly supportive of this piece
25 of legislation. Secondly, we're considering

2 Resolution 994 sponsored by Council Member Cohen,
3 which concerns the Hudson River Greenway. Many of
4 you have enjoyed an incredible renaissance along the
5 Hudson River in Manhattan from the Battery way up to
6 the George Washington Bridge, and farther north into
7 Westchester. There's unfortunately a three-mile gap
8 leaves Riverdale and portions of the Bronx without
9 good access to this wonderful resource, and Council
10 Member Cohen has led a charge to try and fix that
11 like so many of the policy issues we deal with there
12 are complicated jurisdictional issues between various
13 state and local agencies, and Council Member Cohen
14 wants everyone to just get in the room and fix this,
15 and has offered a resolution to call for that. So,
16 I'm going to pause now, and ask him to say a few
17 words on Resolution 994.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you, Chair
19 Levine. I will be brief. Good morning, Darlene.
20 How are you?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [off mic] Okay.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: You're okay. Good
23 morning. I am Council Member Andrew Cohen.
24 Resolution 994 calls upon the Metropolitan
25 Transportation Authority and all other appropriate

2 use to support a Hudson River Greenway between
3 Spuyten Duyvil and Yonkers to provide riverfront
4 access and a continuous stretch concurrent with the
5 Metro North Line extending from Manhattan into
6 Westchester. New Yorkers today can go walk, bike or
7 just enjoy the view of the water at the Hudson River
8 Greenway that begins all the way down by City Hall
9 and to west in Battery Park. From there you can go
10 travel all the way up north to Riverside, Fort
11 Washington and Fort Tryon Park. However, once you
12 get to the top of Manhattan, you will hit an impasse
13 and cannot continue over the Henry Hudson Bridge into
14 the Bronx. The Hudson River Greenway and the
15 [coughs] wonderful riverfront access to forage all
16 Manhattanites is non-existent to the residents of the
17 Bronx. Many years ago the Greenway was envisioned.
18 The plan for it was a public pedestrian access
19 connecting Manhattan to Westchester. However, since
20 that time there remains a gap between Spuyten Duyvil
21 and Yonkers, which has never been developed, and
22 there is no cohesive future plan to do so. Admittedly
23 [coughs] it would be complex as any plan would need
24 to include [coughs] all of the affected entities in
25 New York State, MTA, Metro North, various New York

2 City agencies as well as our local colleges and
3 private property owners. Acknowledging these issues,
4 I am committed to advocating for Hudson River
5 Greenway Link and the Riverfront Access Bronxites
6 deserve. My community is strongly in favor of the
7 Greenway [coughs]. Bronx Community Board 8, which
8 oversees the entire stretch of land at issue, has
9 passed multiple resolutions in favor over the years,
10 most recently in 2014, which has been submitted here
11 for the record. I am proud to support this
12 resolution at the New York City Council and strongly
13 support a continuous Hudson River Greenway. [coughs]
14 I want to thank chair Levine for co-sponsorship of
15 Resolution 994. He represents Washington Heights, a
16 Greenway neighborhood in Manhattan, and I want to
17 thank you for providing leadership and an opportunity
18 to hear this resolution. I think just on a personal
19 note my colleagues do know how often I use the
20 Manhattan portion of the Greenway with my bike. So
21 it would be great if I could actually go from
22 Riverdale straight down to City Hall. So I look
23 forward to the hearing, and I know that I have a
24 number of constituents here to testify this morning.
25 So we've got it. So thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright. Thank you
3 Council Member Cohen. We're going to call up our
4 first panel including Cliff Stanton as well Rosemary
5 Ginty. [background comments, pause] Good morning to
6 you both. You want to start us off Cliff?

7 CLIFF STANTON: [off mic] I certainly
8 can.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright.

10 CLIFF STANTON: [pause] Is that working.
11 Test this. Alright, [coughs] members of the
12 Committee, Chairman Levine, my name is Cliff Stanton.
13 I'm the Greenway Director of the Kingsbridge-
14 Riverdale-Van Cortlandt Development Corp. I'm here
15 today to voice our unequivocal support of Council
16 Resolution 994. KRVC is a not for profit that aims
17 to encourage and support local initiatives that will
18 build and enrich the communities of the Northwest
19 Bronx. I'm here today with our Executive Director
20 Tracy Shelton. Bolstered by widespread public
21 support in 2014, KRVC launched a campaign under the
22 banner Build It Now with the goals of educating our
23 community about the proposed Hudson River Greenway,
24 organizing the grassroots advocacy effort, and
25 supporting the efforts of our local elected officials

2 and community board. Since then, KRVC has collected
3 over 2,000 individual signatures and over 50 local
4 business and institutions support the Greenway. One
5 of KRVC's most effective means of promoting the
6 creation of the Greenway is through events such as
7 our now iconic waterfront festival, Riverdale
8 Riverfest, which will take place on June 11th at the
9 College of Mount Saint Vincent. I encourage all of
10 you to attend. Riverfest now in its eighth year,
11 gives thousands of local residents and visitors each
12 year a rare opportunity to recreate along the along
13 the banks of the majestic Hudson River, a waterfront
14 that Riverdaleans and Bronxites have effectively been
15 denied access to for over a century. This is a sad
16 and ironic reality for a community that—that derives
17 its name from the Hudson River, and it's the same
18 reality that we seek to rectify with the creation of
19 the Hudson River Greenway in the Bronx. The
20 reclamation of the public land along our waterways is
21 a movement that has transformed waterfront
22 communities across our nation for decades, and has
23 accelerated in New York City and State over the last
24 one. There are greenway projects across our five
25 boroughs that are in varied—varied states of planning

2 and completion, but all stand to bring about a
3 cultural economic and recreational renaissance to
4 their adjacent communities. A recent New York State
5 Report concluded that the existing 130 million of the
6 50% complete Hudson River Valley Greenway generates
7 \$20 million--\$21 million annually an economic impact
8 to the communities along its trails. In January,
9 Governor Cuomo announced the creation of the Empire
10 State Trail. Our community was disappointed to learn
11 that the plan calls for connecting existing greenways
12 in Manhattan and Westchester by using the heavily
13 trafficked Broadway Bridge and already congested city
14 streets. While we applaud the Governor's vision,
15 Riverdale and the communities of the Northwest Bronx
16 remain without a plan for expanded riverfront access.
17 Thanks to funding from State Senator Jeff Klein the
18 MTA is currently gaged--engaged in an engineering
19 study that we sincerely hope will result in an
20 achievable greenway plan. Later this evening,
21 Community Board--Community Board 8 will have
22 representatives of the MTA report on their progress.
23 This makes the timing this year with the content of
24 the resolution you are delivering today auspicious.
25 Passage of this reso--resolution would send a clear

2 message to the MTA that New York City is serious
3 about the Hudson River Greenway, and hears loud and
4 clear the desires of the residents of the Northwest
5 Bronx. KRVC urges this committee to support this
6 resolution and pass it to the full council for a yes
7 vote. We stand committed to do we can to support
8 you. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright, thank you,
10 Cliff and Rosemary.

11 ROSEMARY GINTY: Good morning, Mr. Chair
12 and Committee Members. My name is Rosemary Ginty.
13 I'm the Vice Chair of Community Board in Bronx, and
14 I'm here to speak in favor of Resolution 994,
15 sponsored by our Council Member Andy Cohen,
16 supporting the Hudson River Greenway. A greenway,
17 this issue has been an issue in community for many
18 years. It has generated significant community
19 involvement and discussion. Community Board 8
20 wholeheartedly supports and All-River Hudson River
21 Greenway. We even established a special greenway
22 committee as part of the community board to work
23 through the many issues so that we can get to an all-
24 river greenway. This is an active committee on the
25 board. It brings together community, Metro North,

2 elected officials. It is a very hard working
3 committee and it is devoted to getting the ball over
4 the goal line. I'd just like to read a portion of a
5 letter that was sent to the Council Member from the
6 Chair of our community board Dan Padernacht, just a
7 portion of it. He notes that the entire Bronx
8 segment of the Hudson River Greenway between Spuyten
9 Duyvil and Yonkers is entirely within Community Board
10 8. At our June 2014 monthly board meeting, the
11 community approved a resolution in support of the
12 Greenway similar to what is proposed in Resolution
13 994. It was attached to the letter, and he wants to
14 note that it was approved by a vote of 37 in favor,
15 no opposed and two abstentions. He thanks you,
16 Council Member especially for your support of the
17 Hudson River Greenway in the Bronx, which will
18 provide the link between the popular greenway in
19 Manhattan and Westchester, and will be a wonderful
20 amenity for our community and neighboring
21 communities, and I thank you for listening.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: A pleasure. Could
23 either one of you explain the jurisdictional issues?
24 Who actually owns the land where this would be built?

25 CLIFF STANTON: The MTA.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Yeah.

3 ROSEMARY GINTY: Actually, it's-

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: [interposing] I have
5 it's the Metro North Track, right.

6 CLIFF STANTON: Yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Is that correct?

8 CLIFF STANTON: Yes, that is correct.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, and-you-go
10 ahead, Rosemary.

11 ROSEMARY GINTY: Yeah, what-what the
12 committee is studying, it-- goes beyond the Metro
13 North ownership because there is the ability at
14 different places along where there is private
15 ownership, private institutional ownership. So for-I
16 will just use an example: College of Mount Saint
17 Vincent owns a-I don't know if you call it a
18 peninsula, but a piece of land that juts into the
19 Hudson. So there is the ability to piece together
20 different pieces, not just Metro North property.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And have the private
22 land-landowners agreed?

23 ROSEMARY GINTY: This-this committee it's
24 a-it's a long process.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it.

2 ROSEMARY GINTY: This committee had met
3 with everyone. We've met with the--the heads of all
4 the institutions, the boards of directors of the
5 institutions of the Hudson have been--have been
6 informed of it. We are in contact with them, and I--
7 I--this moves along, as it moves along. They are
8 fully aware of it, and want to participate. They
9 haven't signed their land over to anybody, but the
10 clearly want to participate.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. I'm going to
12 pass it over to our sponsor Council Member Cohen for
13 questions.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: [coughs] Obviously,
15 I'm fully aware of a lot of the issues. I guess the--
16 even the differentiation in--in your answers is sort
17 of like--I guess the issues of access to the Greenway
18 as well as the--as the actual Greenway?

19 CLIFF STANTON: That's right. We've both
20 right.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: So, those--yes, I--I
22 understand, but I just want to make sure that my
23 colleagues do as well--

24 ROSEMARY GINTY: [interposing] Usually.
25 [laughs]

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: --that the-that
3 there are--could you just maybe sort of broadly sort
4 of just discuss some of the-the challenges that we
5 face in trying to get this done and-and a little bit
6 of, you know, the stakeholders involved?

7 ROSEMARY GINTY: You want to go first?

8 CLIFF STANTON: Well, you know, the MTA
9 you would think after Super Storm Sandy would be more
10 inclined to-to consider resiliency measures along the
11 shoreline, and they are, but their primary concern is
12 having infrastructure of the Greenway wash up onto
13 their-their infrastructure in the event of another
14 storm. They also are concerned about issues of the-
15 you know, expanding high speed rail in the future,
16 and there are other considerations. So it's, you
17 know, they-in the past the MTA has been I would at
18 best call it uneven in their-in their support and the
19 willingness to support the project. I-I think we're
20 at a point where I think they understand that this
21 something that the community really wants, and
22 they're more willing to sign onto it, and as Rosemary
23 indicated, the-some of the local institutions along
24 the shoreline, such as the Hebrew Home of Riverdale
25 and the College of Mount Saint Vincent and Rivulet

2 (sic) Sherway as well have already expressed a
3 sincere desire to see this thing built.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I want to
5 acknowledge we've been joined by fellow Parks
6 Committee Member Alan Maisel as well as our Majority
7 Leader Jimmy Van Bramer who—who had to step out
8 momentarily. Could either one of you explain the
9 projected price for the capital work and—and perhaps
10 explain where there those resources will be directed?

11 ROSEMARY GINTY: I think at this point
12 it's—it's next to impossible to put a firm price tag
13 because the actual programmatic by us has not—has yet
14 to be determined. There is a study I think, Cliff,
15 you—you mentioned in your testimony that there is a
16 study, a consultant's study going on in—within Metro
17 North with funding provided by Senator Klein, and
18 they are looking into options, possibilities. We
19 believe that part of that consultant study will be an
20 attempt to address costs also. So, I—your question
21 is very important. I don't think we're there yet to
22 give you an answer that would have any meaning.

23 CLIFF STANTON: If I could just add one—
24 one thing to that. I think that's generally true.
25 The—the study I believe will bring the costs more

2 into focus in the coming months, but in very general
3 terms if you build this thing—the more that you build
4 of the greenway out over the river, the longer it
5 will take and more expensive the proposition will
6 become and, in fact, we in conversations that the—
7 that the community board has had with the MTA that
8 seems to be the direction for the most part that they
9 want to go to. The—the community is more interested
10 in having as much as this as possible on land, and
11 that would reduce the cost, and the time that it
12 would take to build it.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Colleagues,
14 do you have any other questions? Yes, go ahead
15 Council Member Mealy.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I know that
17 Senator Jeff Klein is going to put in the funds for
18 that study.

19 ROSEMARY GINTY: Yes, correct.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Did the Governor—
21 did the Governor have anything put away to help you
22 all in this project with MTA? No.

23 CLIFF STANTON: No, not specifically. In
24 fact—the—the—the budget this year included \$53
25 million for the first phase of the construction of

2 the Empire State Trail, which again we had hoped
3 would be--this would be part of it, but it is not.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] In
5 the proposal, but it's not.

6 CLIFF STANTON: Yeah, so we are--yeah,
7 there is nothing right now so aside from--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] But
9 you all are asking?

10 CLIFF STANTON: We are--we are--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] You
12 have nothing to encourage you.

13 CLIFF STANTON: We certainly will be.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay.

15 CLIFF STANTON: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you so much.

17 CLIFF STANTON: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, that Council
19 Cohen has a comment.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: [coughs] I just
21 wanted to acknowledge also the--the work of our Policy
22 Analyst Levy, our own Tracy Shelton, who's hiding
23 here in the audience [laughter] and as well Community
24 Board 8's Bob Bender has really been a stalwart
25

2 advocate for this. So I just wanted to go on the
3 record and say that. Thank you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Very good news. I
5 see we've been joined by our colleague Parks
6 Committee Member Mark Treyger and in his honor, I'm
7 going to ask you a question about resiliency and
8 Super Storm Sandy. So could you clarify whether the--
9 the tracks or that the edge of edge of the water has
10 ever flooded? Is it seen as a high risk due to its
11 elevation?

12 ROSEMARY GINTY: It certainly has
13 flooded.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: It flooded.

15 ROSEMARY GINTY: It has flooded over the
16 years. It's--it's--it's my understanding once again not
17 an engineer and I think we will see things in the
18 study that will describe this more, but any money
19 that the MTA has gotten and Metro North has gotten
20 to--to prevent that storm surge has been spent taking
21 the valuable equipment and raising it. You know,
22 the--the substation--

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right.

24 ROSEMARY GINTY: --well raising it rather
25 than thinking of building a wall--

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: [interposing] Right.

3 ROSEMARY GINTY: --to protect against a
4 water surge. It seems as though that's not the--the
5 popular way or the way that things like the Army
6 Corps of Engineers would--would be in favor of. It's
7 a very, very complicated issue and, as I say, I'm not
8 an engineer but as--as I understand the approaches
9 they're taking is to take the very, very important
10 substations sort of and raise them, and if there's a
11 flood, we're--I will come out again, but save those
12 things that--that the system can back into operation
13 as soon as the waters receded.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right, but was the
15 plan that we're expecting in the next few months also
16 include provisions for resiliency, or is it mostly
17 just the recreational aspects.

18 CLIFF STANTON: We hope so. I think--

19 ROSEMARY GINTY: [interposing] I think
20 it will be good.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: --they're hand in
22 hand and, you know, I mean we've all seen the
23 reports, and then the--they're expecting, you know,
24 depending on which projection sea levels to rise up
25 to seven feet over the next century. If that

2 happens, you know, we're all looking at beach front
3 property [laughter] there, but, you know, so—you know,
4 you've—you know, from what they did in Brooklyn
5 heights, you know, the—the enormous berm that was
6 built there. If something a fraction of that size
7 was built along the Hudson River in—in Riverdale, you
8 know, it would go a long way. We could kill two
9 birds with one stone here by giving the—the MTA what
10 they need, and the community what it needs.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, and we've been
12 joined by our Parks Committee colleague from the
13 Bronx, Fernando Cabrera. I'm got pause to see if my
14 colleagues have any questions or comments? Alright.
15 Well, thank you very much. Thank you panel.

16 ROSEMARY GINTY: Thank you.

17 CLIFF STANTON: And thank you very much,
18 Councilman Cohen and the entire committee. Thank you
19 very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, this concludes
21 our hearing. Thank you. [gavel]

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23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 29, 2017