

THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND PARKS COMMISSION OF THE VILLAGE OF MONTEBELLO WAS HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2019 AT THE VILLAGE HALL. THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:50 P.M. FOLLOWED BY THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Present:	Lisa Levin	Co-Chairperson
	Amy Rapoport	Co-Chairperson
	Bill Ellsworth	Member
	Dorice Madronero	Member
	Matt Moetzinger	Member
	Robert J. Israel	Member
	Tony Piazza	Member
	Maureen Danzig	Member
	Josh Goldstein	Ad Hoc
	Warren Berbit	Village Attorney
	Craig Long	Village Historian/HPPC Advisor
Absent:	Rosemary Mocio	Member
	Howard Hochberg	Member

Old Parks Commission Business:

Co-chair Rapoport began by discussing the approval the former Parks Commission minutes from March 7, 2019. Member Piazza made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Member Danzig. Motion was carried unanimously. Co-chair Rapoport indicated that the Parks Commission still has to approve the minutes from its final meeting in April, 2019.

Co-chair Rapoport proceeded with an update on the Gorman Ponds Park. The ponds were recently treated and Member Piazza stated that they are doing okay. Right now, a little bit of algae has been noted, however, the ponds are being monitored and will be treated on an as-needed basis. The members will keep an eye on condition so as to mitigate any further algae growth (overgrowth) as happened last year, especially since there has been so much rain thus far this year. Parks has budgeted for 10 applications (whereas one year only eight applications were made and conditions deteriorated) so it should be fine this year, as long as someone is keeping an eye on them. Co-chair Rapoport asked if members have been in the park lately and Member Danzig and Member Piazza both indicated that they had and that the bubblers in the ponds are working. Member Piazza also stated that the great white egret is back.

Co-chair Rapoport indicated that she has been in touch with the Eagle Scout who is helping out with maintaining the park for his Scout project. She indicated that he had to file insurance papers and get all of the necessary signatures to proceed with his project. He has been working with Joan Will to make sure that he gets everything signed, including a “hold harmless” agreement, which is critical because no one is allowed to work in the Village at any capacity without this agreement. All of the paperwork has apparently been completed, however, the HPPC has not yet received his final outline regarding the scope of his project, which he will have to present to the Village. Co-chair Rapoport also indicated that she is not sure how many additional scouts will be helping him with his project. Co-chair Rapoport stated that he is re-doing the Daniel Bearn Trail entry from the parking lot and putting up a trail sign. He is not going to install the map sign as that is the opinion of the commission that it has to be done professionally. Co-chair Rapoport indicated that she thought the sign maker, Hudson Valley Signs, would be installing the map. The Eagle Scout will be installing the path signs and Co-chair Rapoport thinks he should install the path signs on the trees, the way that National Parks have them, with the three terms and educate people on the trail. She stated that since we have a small park, it would be a good opportunity to educate people on how a trail is marked,

using number and directional symbols to direct people how to follow the correct trail. Member Piazza stated that we'd have to have the Scout revise his current project description to add trail markings since it is not in his original project proposal. Co-chair Rapoport indicated that the commission could do it if he has too many other projects on his plate.

Co-chair Levin asked if this would be a good time to start discussion about adding historical markers and narrative to the trails, since the trail names are historic, as Mr. Long was absent from the last meeting when this was preliminarily discussed. Co-chair Levin explained to Mr. Long that during the last meeting, the HPPC discussed installing historic markers/narrative on the trails to explain the who/what of each trail name and significance to the Village. Since Mr. Long was the one who suggested the names, the HPPC wanted to make sure that he agreed that it was a good idea. Mr. Long stated that it was a good idea to encapsulate the significance of each trail name vis a vis the Village. He indicated that he thought smaller markers along the trails would be a good idea. Member Madronero brought up the concern of past vandalism in the park where signage has been defaced. Co-chair Rapoport stated that she attended the last Village Board meeting and the police officer that monitors the park was there. The officer told her that they have increased the patrols within the park, between dusk and dawn. Co-chair Rapoport then moved onto the discussion of installing additional balusters to the park entrances. Currently, there are two installed at the road entry, which are removable in the event of an emergency where a vehicle would need access to the park. She recommended that since it has been noticed that people appear to have gone around these balusters to drive into the park, the HPPC should install additional barriers so that the park is more secure from unauthorized vehicle traffic. She stated that either additional balusters could be installed or large boulders could be placed as barriers. Member Piazza agreed and recommended placing boulders/large rocks - one on each side - to prevent any additional unauthorized vehicle access. Member Goldstein agreed that he felt that boulders are the way to go. As members are concerned that perhaps emergency vehicles might not know how to lift the balusters, Member Piazza recommended that the Village send a letter to local emergency response units as to how to manipulate the balusters to gain access in the event of an emergency.

Member Danzig then moved on to update members on Yoga in the Park. Indian Rock Yoga is willing to participate once again this year for \$100 per session. She indicated that all we need to do is let them know if we wish to offer it again this summer and how many sessions we'd be interested in. Member Danzig recommended that perhaps we could do six sessions (in 2018, the Village only offered four sessions). She also mentioned that she has a contact with a Pilates studio as well and offered to reach out to them if members agreed. Co-chair Rapoport stated that she thought it would be good to change it up a little and offer something new. Member Madronero inquired whether it would be held in the Ponds Park. Member Danzig replied that it was held in the Village Hall pavilion last year in good weather and the Community Center when it rained. Member Danzig stated that she thought that the yoga was really good last year and that maybe we could do something in addition to the yoga this year. Co-chair Rapoport indicated that she would have to discuss the budget with the Village Board and report back to the HPPC. Member Danzig replied that it would be \$600 for the yoga and that she'd need to find out how much Pilates would run. Once we know the cost, HPPC will go to Village Board for approval for both yoga and Pilates classes.

Member Piazza expressed concern that the commission doesn't have a number for how much money is left from the grant earmarked for capital improvements, in case the HPPC wishes to begin a new project that would fit into the parameters of the grant. Co-chair Rapoport indicated that any project that the HPPC would wish to propose would need to be approved and funding provided by the Village Board. Member Goldstein remarked that the former Parks Commission had once discussed bike paths when New York State began issuing state grants for creation of bike paths throughout the state, in some cases, using old, unused railroad tracks. He indicated that Westchester was awarded \$8-\$9 million dollars in funding to complete these bike paths. Co-chair Rapoport indicated that Joan Will forwards all NYS grant notifications when she becomes aware of them. She then went on to say that there is a biking map in the Village Master Plan and that a walking/biking vision was proposed and written out for the Village. The vision, however, was

met with some opposition in certain areas where it was proposed to go behind yards and on the streets. A specific stumbling block was trying to connect the bike path from the east side of Mile Road to the west side due to safety issues. Co-chair Rapoport stated that the Master Plan does discuss stenciling designated bike paths on the roads, however, most of the roads within the Village, specifically the historic ones, do not have sufficient width for that to be safely done. The roads in Montebello Pines were discussed as ones where striping could be safely done. Co-chair Rapoport indicated that the trail goes out Montebello Pines, through the back of Viola school, through Montebello West, Montebello Fields, and it crosses over Route 202 at Kakiat Park and then goes into the park. Members would like to know how much money remains in the “Money in Lieu of Land Money” account. Mr. Berbit indicated that there is not much money left in that account. Member Piazza would like to know the exact number in case there is a project that the commission would like to do. Mr. Berbit agreed. Member Piazza stated that he would still like to open up the Mile Road entrance to the Ponds Park, so that residents don’t have to go all the way around the Pines in order to enter the park. This entrance would be a pedestrian entrance only. Member Piazza stated that people are entering that way already, climbing over the fence through the stone pillars. It would make sense to make it a formal entrance for pedestrian only.

Co-Chair Rapoport moved on to ask Member Israel if he had any update on a high school fall event. He indicated that they are willing to do it but that we would need a date. He mentioned that the members of the band would be willing to do it. Co-chair Rapoport asked him to contact Joan and find out if they have scheduled a date for a fall Village event (previously “Montebello Day”) and the HPPC will discuss it.

Since there has been discussion regarding a lack of funds overall, Member Madronero questioned the need for spending on things like Yoga in the Park. She asked how many people would actually attend and if it was worth it versus putting that money towards signage, etc. Co-chair Rapoport indicated that the funding for yoga would come out of the Village budget and not the former Parks Department capital improvements account. Member Madronero mentioned that perhaps that money could be spent for something that targets a larger number of residents versus the five to eight people that attended the yoga last year. Co-chair Rapoport indicated that someone came to the Village to inquire if yoga was going to be offered again this year and that someone approached the Village to ask about a walking group. The Village asked Parks to coordinate the activities. Member Piazza stated that they used to see a lot of participation in the Village sponsored activities, such as Movie Night, camp out, etc. We don’t see that type of attendance now so the yoga class, which was popular with some, does bring people in. He sees it that at least we are doing something for residents for not a lot of money.

Old HPC Business:

Co-chair Levin began with calling for discussion and approval of the April 24, 2019 HPPC minutes. Motion was made by Member Ellsworth, seconded by Member Madronero. Motion carried on unanimous approval.

Co-chair Levin inquired whether Mr. Long had had a chance to discuss the installation of Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (W3R) signage along Viola Road with Skip Vezetti. Mr. Long indicated that he had spoken to Mr. Vezetti and that he is in favor of us proceeding with the project. He explained to the former Parks Commission members the significance of W3R and that Mahwah, NJ has the signs installed on Route 202 and that the HPC felt that it was important for Montebello to install the signage on those portions of the route that passed through the Village. The route went along Viola Road, out onto Route 202, onto Lake Road, to Memorial and then back to Route 202. Viola Road is a County road and what is required to install the signs would be for the Village to send a letter (almost an Application for use) to Skip Vezetti asking for permission to install the signs. When it comes to Route 202, it is a different process since that is a State road. Members discussed getting price information on the sign that Suffern will be installing on its portions of the route, with the addition of “Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route” to the bottom of the signs so that people will know what the acronym means. Mr. Long stated that he would price out the

signs so that we request approval from the Village Board. Member Ellsworth indicated that there is a sign shop in Suffern which might be a good option for production. Mr. Long will approach the shop for an estimate. Co-chair Levin also mentioned that the former HPC had discussed creating a larger historical marker to be installed on Viola with a more in-depth explanation about W3R. Discussion moved to how many of the W3R signs should be installed. Mr. Long indicated that usually, the signs would be placed at the entrance points of the route, which would mean one on either end of Viola Road, one on Spook Rock Road where the Village begins. Member Piazza suggested that we could do double-sided signs. Co-chair Levin recommended that we find out the cost first and then decide how many we should proceed with.

Members agreed that it would be a good idea to include a history of the W3R with a photo of the signs in the Montebello newsletter to explain what the signs are for once they are installed along Viola.

Member Piazza mentioned that he thought it would be a good idea to create a map of Montebello indicating all of the historic areas, roads, landmarks, etc. and display it in a central location, ideally in an outdoor location. Member Madronero also mentioned that such a map would be good to feature on the HPPC section of the Montebello website or in the Community Center.

Co-chair Levin mentioned that years ago, the HPC created a pamphlet featuring the historic sites within Montebello but that it hasn't been updated over the years since not much had changed from a designation standpoint. Now, however, since the passage of the Historic and Scenic Road Districts and the naming of the trails in the Ponds Park, members agreed that it would be a good idea to update the pamphlet to include the changes made within the Village over the past few years. Co-chair Levin said that she would contact Joan Will to see if there was a template for the original pamphlet that we could work off of to update it. Members will discuss what to include in an updated version at the next meeting and then we could proceed with getting an idea of cost to present to the Village Board for approval.

Discussion moved to the new HPPC section of the Montebello website. Co-chair Levin indicated that Joan Will has asked what the newly-combined commission would like to feature. She suggested that members think about what they would like to include and report back. Members agreed that for now, both former commissions' sections should be combined and we would go from there.

Co-chair Levin moved on to discuss the possibility of historic designation of 103 Montebello Road, "Blind Players Club." The house has been officially abandoned and may be auctioned off in October, 2019. She indicated that this property has been one of the HPC's most "endangered" properties over the past few years since it has been deteriorating since a fire in 2014. The HPC has discussed this many times over the years, however, when the property was privately-owned, we would not proceed with an adversarial designation without the permission of the owner. Now, since the house has been abandoned, Co-chair Levin inquired if Members thought it would be a good time to proceed with designating the property, since the house is officially abandoned. Member Madronero inquired about an eminent domain "taking," however, if the Village does not have a specific and expressed use for it, this is not an option.

Members discussed what our options would be. The next step will be to find out who is in ownership of the property. Mr. Berbit indicated that if the County now owns it (as is customary in abandonment situations), it will initiate a tax lien sale at some point and sell it at auction. Member Goldstein asked if it is historically significant and if it could be designated a landmark. Co-chair Rapoport answered by stating that if the Village were to move ahead with designation, the Village would have to address condition issues and restore it to bring it back to habitable, as it could be filled with asbestos, etc. Member Ellsworth asked what if someone purchases it and we move ahead with designation. Member Madronero stated that if no one buys it and the Village takes possession of it, the Village would have to come up with a purpose for it. Discussion moved to whether it is worthwhile to proceed with researching a designation for the property. Mr. Berbit indicated that in order to begin a designation process, we would have to hold a public hearing and then go

before the Village board for approval. Member Piazza cautioned that if the HPPC designates the property, it will probably never sell and it will sit on the property as is and never be restored and remain an eyesore. It might be a way too expensive endeavor and not worthwhile at this point to designate it. Members agreed that for now, we should find out the acreage of the property and have the building inspector and Village engineer assess the condition of the interior. There have been violations issued for the exterior, however, it is being maintained to a certain extent.

Member Madronero suggested we put committees together to make sure that we proceed with actions discussed. Joan Will has requested that we give her things for the Community Center display cases and she will organize.

Discussion moved to maintenance/preservation of the cemeteries on Route 202 and Viola Road and the progress of the “then and now” photo project that HPC has discussed.

New business:

Co-chair Rapoport mentioned that the Village needs to expand the Village Tree law to strengthen the land disturbance law. Regarding a property that she has noticed recently, when outdoor work was begun, the way in which the landfill was added to that property will significantly harm the existing trees and should be addressed by the Village. A plan for the property was approved but some changes were possibly made. Mr. Berbit cautioned that if the plan that Spence approved was followed by the homeowner there shouldn't be a problem. Mr. Berbit feels that there is enough protection in the existing statute and that the problem likely lies in enforcement. The situation will be addressed and Spence is scheduled to follow up with the homeowner.

Member Danzig brought up the fact that Parks had discussed having a Montebello 5K race as she was just contacted to inquire whether it was still a consideration. Co-chair Rapoport was unsure at this point. Co-chair Levin indicated that we'd have to get permission to use the roads from the Village, County and State and would have to close roads to hold a race. It might be beyond what we could do.

With no further discussion, Member Piazza made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. seconded by Member Madronero. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.