



City of New Rochelle New York

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Through: Charles B. Strome, City Manager
From: William V. Zimmermann, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation
Subject: Ward Acres Park Improvements
Date: October 2, 2006

Now that the Ward Acres Parks master planning process has been completed with the formal presentation in July by our consultants Vollmer Associates, the Council is requested to consider and decide upon those of the consultants' recommendations supported for action and implementation in 2007.

The Department of Parks and Recreation recommends that the following park enhancements recommended in the report should be undertaken at this time:

(1) trail system, environmental and site improvements as recommended;

(2) establishment of an off-leash dog area as recommended. However, the Department recommends that the area be located within the southwest corner of the park, adjacent to the west side of the barn. This area is recommended because it has the advantage of easy access by an off-leash entrance from Broadfield Road where most visiting dog-walkers park their cars and its location within the park is appropriate for a dedicated area for the specialized purpose. It is recommended that the area be equipped with water, shade and benches in accordance with current standards for dog parks and enclosed within a 6' high fence adjacent to existing and restored stone meadow walls. This area was not considered by the consultants who designed it as a possible parking area for barn uses which are not being recommended at this time. There will be an added benefit to moving the fenced dog park area to the west side of the barn in the opportunity to reestablish turf in place of very compacted soil in the rolling meadow which cannot support vegetation and requires aeration, seeding and fertilization to reestablish this valuable and unique area;

(3) determine general year-round park operating hours for patron access from dawn to dusk 12 months per year;

(4) determine year-round hours for off-leash dog access throughout the park, adopting the consultants' recommendations as follows: Weekdays: dawn to 11 am and 5 pm to dusk; Weekends/Holidays: dawn to 10 am **only** and off-leash fenced area daily from dawn to dusk; and

(5) rehabilitate the Farm House with a first floor environmental studies classrooms and interpretative /exhibit space, and a second floor caretaker's apartment through a combined partnership with City DPW engineering & buildings/grounds staff **and** Habitat for Humanity volunteers.

(6) investigate means to preserve and restore the 100 year-old Horse Barn predicated on securing outside funds through private and public grants, gifts and endowments.

Presently, the 2007 Capital Projects list submitted earlier this month, includes an order of magnitude cost for these recommended park site improvements cited above (numbers 1 & 2), totaling \$1,200,000. The preliminary debt service calculation on that capital investment is attached with numerous options.

Additionally, the 2007 Parks and Recreation budget will include recommendations for expanded and prioritized park operation maintenance levels, staffing, usage requirements and applicable fees.

Further, I am pleased to announce that the Colonial Greenway portion of this project (600' ft. of catwalk design, construction and installation) is anticipated to be funded from one of three means: (1) a Westchester County CDBG Project for ADA accessibility coordinated by the Town of Mamaroneck; (2) a legacy application through Westchester County and (3) a NYS Shared Municipal Services Grant application.