



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

April 1, 2009, Calendar No. 20

C 000120 MMR

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation pursuant to Sections 197-c and 199 of the New York City Charter for an amendment to the City Map involving:

- the establishment of park additions to Blue Heron Park, in an area generally bounded by Barclay Avenue, Amboy Road, Poillon Avenue, and Tallman Street (a record street);
- the extinguishment of several record streets;
- and any acquisition or disposition of real property related thereto,

Community District 3, Borough of Staten Island, in accordance with Map No. 4188, dated February 16, 2007, and signed by the Borough President.

The application (C 000120 MMR) for an amendment to the City Map involving the establishment of park additions to Blue Heron Park in an area generally bounded by Barclay Avenue, Amboy Road, Poillon Avenue, and Tallman Street (a record street); the extinguishment of several record streets; and any acquisition or disposition of real property related thereto, was filed by the Department of Parks and Recreation on October 8, 1999, in order to help preserve and protect the natural wetlands and woodlands which comprise the subject area, and to help maintain a buffer between the interior of Blue Heron Park and the adjacent residences.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is requesting the establishment of an addition to the existing Blue Heron Park in the Annadale neighborhood of southern Staten Island. Included with this action is the removal of six record streets, which appear on the City Map for informational purposes only. Although these record streets may have been shown on a previously-approved sub-division plan, they were never officially established on the City Map and were never built. Three of these record streets are City-owned and located entirely within the existing portion of Blue Heron Park. The other three streets are also City-owned and located within both the existing park and within the

proposed park addition.

The proposed park addition includes the three record streets located outside the existing park; approximately forty City-owned lots; and five privately-owned undeveloped lots (Block 6426, Lots 63, 65, and 69; and Block 6427, Lots 16 and 24) that will be acquired as part of this action. The park addition consists of one large area contiguous with the existing Blue Heron Park and one small parcel separated from the larger park-addition by a privately-owned street and privately owned lots with existing residences.

The purpose of this mapping action is to help preserve and protect the natural wetlands and woodlands which comprise the subject area and to help maintain a buffer between the interior of Blue Heron Park and adjacent residences. DPR is not proposing any development of the park addition, but merely seeks to maintain and protect the existing habitat through this mapping action. The existing Blue Heron Park is more than 236 acres in size, and this mapping action would provide approximately 8.7 acres of additional parkland. The proposed park addition lies within an R3X zoning district, and abuts an R1-2 zoning district to the east of Barclay Avenue. The land use surrounding the site is low-density residential, comprised mostly of 2-story detached homes.

The existing Blue Heron Park is an outstanding wildlife sanctuary and educational resource for the City of New York, consisting of peaceful walking trails, meadows, ponds, streams, and woodlands. The Visitors Center on Poillon Avenue contains exhibits, classrooms, a library, restrooms and two observation decks for bird watching and picnics. The Park's programmed offerings include nature walks, classes, and special holiday events. The Park holds six ponds, including the 1.4-acre Blue Heron Pond, crossed by a popular footbridge.

An interagency mapping conference was held on December 1, 1999. No city agency had any objections to the proposal.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This application (C 000120 MMR) was reviewed pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and the SEQRA regulations set forth in Volume 6 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations, Section 617.00 *et seq.*, and the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The designated CEQR Number is 99DPR007R. The lead agency is the Department of Parks and Recreation.

After a study of the potential environmental impact of the proposed action, a negative declaration was issued on September 28, 2000.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

This application (C 000120 MMR), was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on December 1, 2008, and was duly referred to Staten Island Community Board 3 and the Staten Island Borough President in accordance with Title 62 of the Rules of the City of New York, Section 2-02(b).

COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Community Board 3 held a public hearing on this application (C 000120 MMR) on January 27, 2009, and on that day, by a vote of 36 to 1, with 0 abstentions, adopted a resolution recommending the application be approved with conditions. The conditions, as stated in the Board's letter dated January 28, 2009, are as follows:

- That a "Play Lot" be installed within this area off Barclay Avenue, whereas there are no playgrounds for children to enjoy for miles around;
- That the Department of Parks establish "Park-and-Rides" at both Herbert Street (adjacent to Wolfe's Pond Park) and Bentley Street (adjacent to Conference House Park);
- That the Department of Parks establish an additional access road into/out of Wolfe's Pond Park.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT RECOMMENDATION

This application (C 000120 MMR) was considered by the Borough President of Staten Island, who issued a recommendation of approval on February 5, 2009.

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

On February 18, 2009 (Calendar No. 5), the City Planning Commission scheduled March 4, 2009 for a public hearing on this application (C 000120 MMR). The hearing was duly held on March 4, 2009 (Calendar No. 22).

There was one speaker on this application. The speaker, a representative of the Department of Parks and Recreation described the application to the City Planning Commission. There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The City Planning Commission believes that this amendment to the City Map is appropriate.

The proposed amendment to the City Map will assist in preserving one of Staten Island's many natural areas, and will help protect the wetlands and forested area of the subject site. Blue Heron Park is an exceptional nature-preserve, with many beneficial programs and resources for the community provided by the Department of Parks and Recreation. In a manner similar to that by which the Park has grown in size over the past several decades, this application would update the City Map to reflect DPR's current land-holdings, and would allow for the acquisition of several privately-owned lots which would create a mostly contiguous addition to the existing Blue Heron Park.

At the Commission's public hearing, the Department of Parks and Recreation's representative responded to the Community Board's conditions as follows:

- Regarding the installation of a playground off of Barclay Avenue, DPR would not be able to do so since it would require the destruction of existing woodland and wetland areas. The existing “Double Nickel” Playground is located about 1/2-mile to the east of the subject site. Nonetheless, DPR would be willing to consider the possibility of having a playground built near the existing Blue Heron Park Visitors Center off Poillon Avenue.
- Regarding the “park-and-ride” at Herbert Avenue in Wolfe’s Pond Park, DPR does not own the property adjacent to the Staten Island Railway (SIR) station. There are, however, privately-owned properties along Herbert Avenue, including some that are not developed, one of which appears to be an existing parking lot. It would not be in DPR’s interest to remove trees within a natural area under its jurisdiction to create a parking lot when existing non-DPR properties are available to create additional parking for those using the SIR station. Regarding the "park-and-ride" at Bentley Street (the Park at that location is Tottenville Shore Park, not Conference House Park as mentioned by the CB), DPR does not view a parking lot as an ideal or appropriate use of an existing waterfront Park, and establishing such would again involve the removal of numerous trees. “Park-and-ride” lots are not normally within DPR’s purview or jurisdiction, and such requests would be more appropriately submitted to MTA’s New York City Transit. DPR also notes that this condition does not involve the Park that is the subject of this application.
- Regarding an additional access road for Wolfe’s Pond Park, there are many existing access points throughout that Park, especially at the southerly end of the Park. The northerly end of the park is more heavily forested, with access-ways for pedestrians more so than for vehicles. The present design and large size of this Park otherwise appear to be serving the surrounding community well. Nonetheless, DPR would be willing to discuss with CB3 to determine which specific areas the latter feels could stand to have additional access-ways. DPR notes again, however, that this condition does not involve the Park that is the subject of this application.

The City Planning Commission finds that DPR's responses to the Community Board's conditions are reasonable and properly address the issues raised by the Community Board. The Commission understands that DPR's purview does not include the creation of park-and-ride facilities, and that Wolfe's Pond Park is not the Park that is the subject of this application. As for installing a playground within Blue Heron Park, the Commission also understands that DPR is limited by the characteristics of the land which comprises the proposed park addition, and that this location would not be appropriate for the construction of a community playground. The Commission hopes, however, that DPR will in fact give due consideration to the installation of a playground near the Park's existing Visitors Center. The purpose of this application is to preserve an existing woodland and wetland area that is mostly already under DPR's ownership by establishing the area as parkland on the City Map.

RESOLUTION

Therefore, the City Planning Commission, deeming the proposed amendment to the City Map and any related acquisition or disposition to be appropriate, adopts the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the City Planning Commission finds that the action described herein will have no significant impact on the environment; and be it further

RESOLVED, by the City Planning Commission, pursuant to Sections 197-c and 199 of the New York City Charter, that based on the environmental determination and the consideration described in this report, the application (C 000120 MMR) for the amendment to the City Map involving:

- the establishment of park additions to Blue Heron Park, in an area generally bounded by Barclay Avenue, Amboy Road, Poillon Avenue, and Tallman Street (a record street);
- the extinguishment of several record streets;
- and any acquisition or disposition of real property related thereto,

Community District 3, Borough of Staten Island, in accordance with Map No. 4188, dated February

16, 2007, and signed by the Borough President, is approved;

All such approvals being subject to the following condition:

The subject amendment to the City Map shall take effect on the day following the day on which certified counterparts of Map No. 4188 are filed with the appropriate agencies in accordance with Section 198 subsection c of the New York City Charter and Section 5-435 of the New York City Administrative Code;

The above resolution (C 000120 MMR), duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on April 1, 2009 (Calendar No. 20), is filed with the Office of the Speaker, City Council and the Borough President, in accordance with the requirements of Section 197-d of the New York City Charter.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, FAICP, Chair
KENNETH J. KNUCKLES, Esq., Vice Chairman
ANGELA M. BATTAGLIA, ANGELA R. CAVALUZZI, AIA,
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