

From the Mayor's Desk...December 9, 2019 Matthiessen Park Meeting

Overview

As I announced in a previous email, the Board of Trustees ("BOT") will be holding a public meeting on December 11, 2019 at 7pm in Village Hall to discuss the possibility of removing the residents-only restriction for Matthiessen Park. The meeting will start with an overview of our Village Attorney's research into the underlying deeds for the Park. Not to give away any spoilers but the research will allow us to have the conversations that will occur the rest of the evening, namely the deeds do not prevent Matthiessen from being opened to the general public. After the Village Attorney is done, we have asked to hear feedback from our volunteer Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee ("RPAC") and our department heads. Then, we will open the floor to comments from the public.

Wednesday will be the first night that the BOT will hear from the department heads and the public. Thus, the evening is all about the BOT listening and coming up with a list of questions, including those from RPAC, the department heads and the public, that we will need answered to make an informed decision about the policy. It should be obvious, but **no decision will be made on Wednesday** and the BOT will not be providing immediate answers to questions raised that evening. We will have as many public meetings as we need to get the necessary information. As a reminder, the Park is going to be closed for renovations – for residents and non-residents – from March until September 2020. So, there is no reason to rush. However, the BOT plans to move diligently and expediently to bring this to a resolution.

Reminders

As always during our public meetings, I'll ask for comments to be directed to the BOT and kept under three minutes. Since we expect a healthy turnout, the three-minute rule will be strictly enforced. You will not be able to "yield your time" but you may have the opportunity to speak again after all those who wanted to address the BOT have spoken. I ask that the comments and questions be constructive and respectful and not intended for any members of the audience. My colleagues and I genuinely want to hear how our community feels about this topic and we would like to use our time productively, without engaging in back-and-forth banter or excessive negativity.

Although I said that we will be listening and not answering questions, there is one topic I wanted to get ahead of before the meeting. In reviewing some of the correspondence that has been sent to the BOT on this topic, I noticed that there was a suggestion that this issue should be put to a referendum. The Village would be unable to do so legally. New York State law provides for only specific reasons for which a referendum can be conducted. Examples include the adoption of a bond resolution or changing the date of the Village election. Deciding how a park is managed is not an authorized topic for a referendum.

Conclusion

I am looking forward to a healthy, intelligent conversation on Wednesday night. I am confident that there are enough issues to discuss thoughtfully and respectfully that we can avoid any division or negativity that we saw on social media earlier this year. We all love Irvington and Matthiessen Park is a very special part of the Village. It makes sense that we feel passionately about such a beautiful place on the Hudson River. One thing that being your mayor for the last eight years has taught me is that when we come together to discuss issues, we always come out with a much better result. As with most topics, your voices are crucial, and my colleagues and I look forward to hearing them.

Thanks for reading my email. I hope to see you Wednesday night. If you cannot make it but would still like to be heard, feel free to send me an email and I will share it with my colleagues.

Sincerely,

Brian C. Smith, Mayor
bsmith@irvingtonny.gov