

VEB Minutes
May 13, 2013

Visual Environment Board (VEB) Minutes

Tuesday, May 14, 2013

Present: Doug Wherle, Seana O'Callaghan, Tom Smith

Invited: Abe Zambrano

The VEB invited the Village Manager, Abe Zambrano, to attend the regular meeting:

... to discuss ways in which we can work with your office to improve the visual quality of the Village. Topics for discussion would include Silver Lake Signage, Con Edison and Verizon infrastructure repairs, code enforcement, maintenance of Village facilities and street trees.

The discussion centered on visual elements in the Village that can be improved.

Prominent issues included property owned and operated by utilities, State agencies and de facto agencies, such as NYS Highway Department, Verizon and Con Ed.

Damaged utility poles throughout the village

Several dangerous and unsightly utility poles and jury-rigged utility lines were cited as dangerous and unsightly. This includes a number of "double poles" in the village, where an existing, dangerous pole was cut and lashed to a new pole, rather than being removed. Manager Zambrano informed the board that the cut poles usually remain because the utility with the lowest wire on the pole is responsible for its care, and this is generally Verizon. Some contact has been made with Verizon regarding this issue, but it has not been a successful strategy for removing those cut poles.

In other cases, there have been poles that were lashed to trees, often with yellow rope that should be removed. Dangerous and unsightly poles were mentioned

1. on the East side of the Duck pond, where the Village can remove a non-functioning metal support
2. on the West side of the Duck Pond
3. on the North side of lower Brook Street, where utility lines are tied with yellow rope
4. on Cleveland Drive

5. At the Library, where there is yellow plastic tape and rope hanging where a utility pole has been lashed to a tree.

The Visual environment board asks the Village Manager to address these issues with the relevant agencies and utilities and have these temporary measures removed and replaced with proper, functioning poles.

Gateway Areas and unsightly conditions

Many holes in the fence along the border area between Route 9 and S. Riverside Avenue are an unsightly feature in this gateway area, and the VEB asked the Village Manager to contact the State highway department for repairs, since they are responsible. The Manager informed the VEB that this has been done, but the State will not take action.

The shopping center property owner on S. Riverside has been erecting temporary signs held by rough timber that were never cleared with the VEB, and that become abandoned and unsightly, particularly at the corner of Croton Point Ave. and S. Riverside Ave., but also within the parking lot, across from Pronto Pizza. The owner should be notified that these are not compliant with code, and that they should be removed.

The Village has a parking lot at the end of lower Brook street that it has left unpaved, and un-mown, and where trash frequently collects. The Village should pave this parking lot and mow vegetation and remove trash as needed on a regular basis.

Also on lower Brook Street, there are several properties with exteriors that do not conform to Village code: a broken, facade on the Chromascan building, unpainted porches and rusting, non-functional downspouts on two apartment buildings, and unpainted porches were cited. Landlords, especially those providing HUD-financed housing, should be contacted by the building inspector and informed that they should bring their buildings to code.

Signs erected by the Village

The Village recently had parking signs for the lot behind the Catholic Church that do not conform to the guidelines provided by the VEB. In addition, the Silver Lake signs designed in collaboration with the VEB were not erected according to design specifications (notably, the posts extended beyond the sign, and caps were installed on top of the posts that were not included in the design. The VEB requests that design specifications be followed when provided, and that a member of the VEB should be present for sighting of signs.

Brook St Route 9 Overpass

The VEB mentioned that there are artists in the community who are interested in erecting temporary banners and artwork on the bridge across the highway as has been done in other communities, to beautify this unattractive element in the Gateway to the Village. The Manager thought this was a good idea, and said he would work with the group to seek State highway department approval.

Additional Signs

The VEB suggested including yield to pedestrian signs in the middle of the roadway at crosswalks in front of the library, at the upper village crosswalk, and in other locations. Use of the “Slow Down Croton” design was suggested, and there was a discussion of previous attempts to cite such signs in the middle of Village roads – this may not be feasible, but other solutions will be sought. Raised crosswalks may be a better solution, and the Manager’s office will be exploring this.

The VEB and Manager agreed that well-designed signs citing the entrance to the village, welcoming on entrance and saying “thank you for visiting” at exit could be beneficial for making the limits of the Village and its visual environment, and this will be explored further.

Other topics

The VEB asked if there were a way to negotiate tree trimming plans with Con Edison, to avoid additional unsightly trimming of the beautiful trees in the village.

The VEB asked that the Manager’s office tell employees that Village automobiles should not be allowed to idle – which has been seen consistently happening with vehicles operated by multiple departments.

Idling cars

The VEB will send the Slow Down Croton email to Abe for reading at next meeting as correspondence, and posting on the Village website.

The Village Manager will begin holding community forums again, in the fall, where these types of issues can be raised.