



Sustainable Playland Sprints Towards Finish Line

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By Rye Record Staff

In the next six to eight weeks, the County Executive will choose the company that will renovate Playland. Sustainable Playland Inc. (SPI), the Rye-based group that is one of the three finalists in the County RFP process, is pushing hard to be the winner.

At an information session held at the Rye Free Reading Room December 12, the entire team of executives, designers, architects, and park managers presented their vision of a new Playland to a large gathering of interested citizens.

"We are the only group proposing to spend \$35 million to save Playland," said Rye's Sandhya Subbarao, President of SPI. "And we are the only group that will increase green space, create greater access to the shore, and provide more recreational opportunities with new ball fields and an indoor field house."

Dan Biederman, one of the co-founders of Bryant Park and the 34th Street Partnership, explained how SPI would partner with restaurant owners, ride park operators, and sports field managers, to renovate and recreate Playland — returning it to its former glory as a place of beauty and entertainment for families. It is expected these operators will invest \$25 million creating or renovating their facilities. An additional \$8 million will be raised in a bond offering by SPI. The other two competitors, ride park operators Central Amusements and Standard Amusements, are proposing to invest less than \$10 million in the park.

"The key to SPI, that differentiates us from the other two competitors, is that we are recreating a greener, more ecologically sensitive park that preserves the historic rides *and* will be open all year," said Doug McKean, the architect for SPI.

By an incredible coincidence, McKean wrote his college thesis on saving Playland. Some of McKean's ideas for the park are to create a landscaped sculpture garden and a Great Lawn, like Central Park's, leading to the water. "We went to great lengths to place the new field house behind existing maintenance buildings so that the Rye residents' views of the park and the water won't be obscured."

The question is whether or not SPI's revolutionary approach will win the nod of the County Executive and the Legislature — both of whom must approve any change in Playland's structure and management. The assembled team for SPI all urged the audience to contact their County Legislator or member of the County Executive's team to urge their support for SPI.

Joe Carvin, Supervisor of the Town of Rye, praised SPI's efforts and urged the team to consider how the renovation of Playland would relate to its immediate neighbor – Rye Town Park. He asked, pointedly, if SPI had considered how to convince people from Yonkers that this was a good idea. Subbarao replied: "That's in part why we have hired Thomson and Bender, Westchester's premier PR firm, to get out the word throughout the County." Indeed, SPI plans to repeat this presentation in Yonkers, Mt. Vernon, and White Plains in coming weeks.

The crowd in attendance was enthusiastic about SPI's presentation, applauding many of the ideas about greater green space, sensitivity to Edith Read Sanctuary, and lowering the intensity of usage at the park by making it a year-round facility. Only time will tell if the County Executive and the Legislature are equally enthusiastic.