

Chappaqua Man Could Play Key Role in Playland's Future

Dan Biederman and his company slated to oversee effort of Sustainable Playland to revitalized landmark county park in Rye.

By William Demarest

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As a Rye-based group moves closer to leading the revitalization of Westchester County's Playland park, the project calls for a Chappaqua resident to be at the heart of the effort.

Westchester County Executive Robert Astorino today signed a letter of intent to have the group Sustainable Playland Inc., a non-profit organization, take charge of Playland, its management, operation and the development of new facilities and attractions.

Sustainable's management structure is that of a holding company. Astorino said the group views the various activities in the park as "assets" and has assembled a nationally renowned team of operators to run them. Overseeing the operation as the "asset manager" will be Biederman Redevelopment Ventures, headed by Dan Biederman, a Chappaqua resident.

Biederman's experience includes co-founding and managing the Bryant Park Corporation, the 34th Street Partnership, the Grand Central Partnership and heading major efforts in Manhattan to bring private resources and management techniques to bear on public problems.

"This is a better business model," Biederman said. "We have multiple operators who must each stand on their own. This means Playland's future will no longer be tied to having all its eggs in one basket – a 90-day amusement park whose attendance and revenue can be dramatically altered by bad weather on a few key weekends. Operational and financial diversity will greatly enhance our chances of success by increasing our growth potential and decreasing our risk exposure."

Operational members of the Sustainable Playland team include:

- Amusement Park, Beach and Aqua Adventure: Steve Turk and the Mega Funworks Team. (Capital investment: upwards of \$7 million)
- Indoor Field House and Outdoor Fields: John Abate and Eric DeGraw of Westchester Sports Center. (Capital investment: \$12.4 million)
- Indoor and Outdoor Ice Skating: Shane Coppola of American Skating Entertainment Centers. (Capital investment: \$600,000)
- Restaurants/Multi-use Facility: Various operators. (Capital investment: \$6.6 million).