

Nearly finished, park can't open

By Alejandro Lazo

A wrought iron fence is in place, and river stones line the perimeter of a paved path along the Hudson River at the Riverdale train station. Six sets of seats face the Palisades.

But although Riverdale's newest park, offering access to the Hudson shore for the first time, is nearly ready, it will remain closed to the public until at least Tuesday, April 19.

That is when Bronx Parks Commissioner Hector Aponte has agreed to sit down with representatives of Metro-North at Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion Jr.'s office, in an attempt to hash out an agreement over which agency will be responsible for the Bronx's first park on the river.

The Parks Department has agreed to maintain the park, although Mr. Aponte has said he does not have the resources to lock and unlock its gate every night. But

the issue of who would be liable in case of a mishap — the city, which is in charge of the park, or the railroad, which owns the land, remains unresolved.

"We are more than willing to take on maintenance of the park," Mr. Aponte told *The Press* in late February. "We do not feel it would be appropriate for the city to assume liability for land that does not fall under the jurisdiction of the people of the City of New York."

While Mr. Aponte said on Monday, through a spokeswoman, that his position had not changed, both state agencies in negotiation with him said they were optimistic that an agreement would be reached.

"I'm of the opinion that it will have a favorable outcome," said Barbara Fra-tianni, the special assistant at the state Department of Environmental Conservation's Estuary Program, who oversaw the design and building of the park.

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Photo by Mekea Z. Hurwitz

MAINTENANCE and security issues continue to delay the opening of the new riverfront park at the Riverdale train station.

Nearly finished, park at riverfront can't open

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"Of course we are optimistic," said Marjorie Anders, a spokeswoman for Metro-North. "We're always optimistic. It's a beautiful facility and it's spring."

Local advocates and officials were more cautious, and criticized the Parks Department for backing out of an agreement to lock and unlock the gates to protect the park from late-night carousing.

The gate should be installed this week, where orange netting is now in place on the southbound platform, said Ms. Fratianni. That and the planting of wildflower seeds are all that remains to be done.

The Riverdale Nature Preservancy urged the Parks Department to take responsibility for the gate. Saying in

a letter to Mr. Aponte, "This park represents an important step toward opening the Bronx waterfront of the Hudson River to New Yorkers," it asked him "to keep an agreement made and accepted by your agency, the people of this borough, our elected officials, and the State Department of Environmental Conservation, who are all faced with a new park that cannot open."

"I'm always concerned because we had meetings, several meetings, years ago and I thought we had an agreement from the Parks Department about maintenance, care and security and now they seemed to be renegeing," Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz said.

"I would hope that we would all come to a meeting of the minds," Mr. Dinowitz continued, "and the Parks

Department would live up to its agreement on that little piece of land."

Ari Hoffnung, the chairman of Community Board 8's parks and recreation committee, said he was "cautiously optimistic" about an agreement being reached at next week's meeting. "I'm a little troubled that this is taking so long," Mr. Hoffnung said. "I would like to think it would be resolved."

North of Riverdale, "There are lots of stations that double as a park," Mr. Hoffnung continued. Ms. Anders cited the park at the Greystone train station in Yonkers, which that city has enthusiastically agreed to be responsible for.

"It's really unfortunate that we don't have this," Mr. Hoffnung said.