

Memorial Field Ribbon-Cutting

The restoration of Memorial Field is exciting news. I moved to CMV in 2012, so I have not known it as a beacon of community engagement, sport, and recreation- an actual “Jewel of Westchester”- but instead as a source of public corruption, and a sign of political dysfunction, mismanagement, and decay. But the memories shared by neighbors, activists, and public officials, help me to see that it was a place where great stuff was happening for decades. And the ribbon-cutting symbolizes that Memorial Field is ready to resume that great lineage. Excellent.

However, one thing felt off to me about the ribbon cutting, and I don’t mean to yuck anybody’s yum here.

Yes, all the muckety-mucks showed up and took turns at the mic, in front of the cameras, thanking one another for the wonderful work they have done, and acknowledging non-elected civil servants instrumental in moving the project to completion.

Yes, political rivalries were set aside at least for the day.

Yes, the project ran years behind schedule and cost a couple ten million dollars more than expected, but elected officials pulled together, despite extraordinary odds, to get the job done. (note the sarcasm creeping in there)

But during all the self-congratulating and good vibes, I did not hear one elected official say something like this:

“And most of all, I would like to thank the residents of Mount Vernon for their patience, and the taxpayers of the city, the county, and the state for allowing us to allocate your precious financial resources to fixing a problem that, if we are being honest, is largely the result of bad government decision-making, government mismanagement, and petty political power struggles. To the extent I was a part of that, I am terribly sorry, I will do better, and once again, thank you.”

If someone did say something like this, I missed it. I tuned in and out of the ceremony once I had the feeling that this ribbon cutting, like soooo many ribbon cuttings for publicly financed projects, was not about the community, it was about the politicians. It was a “look at me” prop used to bath themselves in praise for cleaning up a mess that they themselves created.

But as I said at the outset, the restoration of Memorial Field is exciting news and I’m really looking forward to my first visit. I think I’ll run around the track.