



Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Wilson and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Geoff Dolan, City Manager

FROM: Richard Gill, Director of Parks and Recreation

DATE: March 1, 2005

SUBJECT: Consideration of a Recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission to Install a Braille Trail in Polliwog Park

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission to install a Braille Trail in Polliwog Park.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

The Lions Club is proposing to pay all costs associated with this request, including long term maintenance of the pedestals.

BACKGROUND:

Staff received the attached request (attachment A) from the Manhattan Beach Lions Club requesting to install 12 pedestals in Polliwog Park. The pedestals (attachment B) will be approximately 36" tall with a flat rectangular surface describing the history of the park in Braille lettering (attachment C-history). English text will also be incorporated into the pedestals.

The pedestals will be installed between the pond and Premier Field in the northern section of Polliwog Park (attachment D – site map). City staff has scheduled the replacement of the sidewalks in this area and if this request is approved, staff will work with the Lions Club to have the pedestals installed during the sidewalk replacement in the summer.

DISCUSSION:

City Staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission and representatives of the Lions Club discussed the proposal during the Commission's January 28 meeting. In response to questions from the Commission, Lions Club representatives stated that the "Braille Trail" will be used by teachers and other agents who work with the blind or partially sighted. Club representatives stated that they will organize outings with the various agencies and hospitals that work with the blind and partially sighted.

The Commission requested that staff approach the School District to see if they had any concerns regarding the placement of the pedestals in Polliwog. Staff was referred to the P.E. department at MBMS, where the P.E. staff had no concerns regarding the placement of pedestals.

Agenda Item #: _____

After a lengthy discussion, the Parks and Recreation Commission unanimously recommended approval to the City Council for the placement of 12 pedestals in Polliwog Park describing the history of the park in Braille.

- Attachments:
- A. Lions Club Correspondence
 - B. Pedestal diagram
 - C. History
 - D. Site map

Revised copy – January 20, 2005

To: Manhattan Beach City Parks and Recreation Commission
Re: Proposed "Braille Trail"- A path for the Blind
Sponsored by the Manhattan Beach Lions Club
From: Dr. Marge Crutchfield, Project Chairperson

The Manhattan Beach Lions Club requests your approval of the following service project.

Proposed Location - Polliwog Park, triangular area at northwest end of park. (See photo enclosed.)

Description of Project – A sign would be placed at the entrance to the path. At the edge of the cement path beyond the sign, upright pedestals would be placed about twenty feet apart. Tactile tiles would be placed at the foot of each pedestal to alert visitors to the site of the station.

Each pedestal would be topped by a plate (possibly of composite material) with raised narrative in Braille as well as lettering- describing the history of the park and current activities that are held there. Pedestals would be about 36 inches high. (See details on enclosed diagram.)

34?

Maintenance: Lions Club members would check the path regularly for needed maintenance.

Possible Use by the Blind- Teachers and other agents who work with the blind and partially sighted would be invited to escort their clients along the path. Preliminary surveys of the blind and partially sighted population in the South bay indicate that there are a number of students who can benefit from a program such as this. The Lions Club chairperson conducted an interview with Dr. Cantor, Administrator for Special Education in the South Bay area of the Los Angeles County Schools who reported a sizable number in said population. In addition, it would seem beneficial to encourage teachers of regular classes in the Manhattan Beach Unified School District as well as those in surrounding districts to conduct field trips with their students to build awareness of the special problems of the blind and partially sighted. Dr. Bonnie Cohn, a member of the Lions Club and former Assistant Superintendent of the Manhattan Beach Unified School District will work with the Chairperson to create and distribute flyers to send to other school districts in the county. Every effort will be made to build awareness of the program within the community and the greater community of the South Bay,

through newspaper articles, contacts with the Braille Institute, word of mouth, and presentations to community groups.

Helen Keller, speaking at a Lions Club International Convention in 1926, challenged Lions to become Knights of the Blind. That challenge continues today. Our proposed Braille Trail can become one avenue for enriching the lives of the visually handicapped as well as other citizens in our community and the surrounding areas.

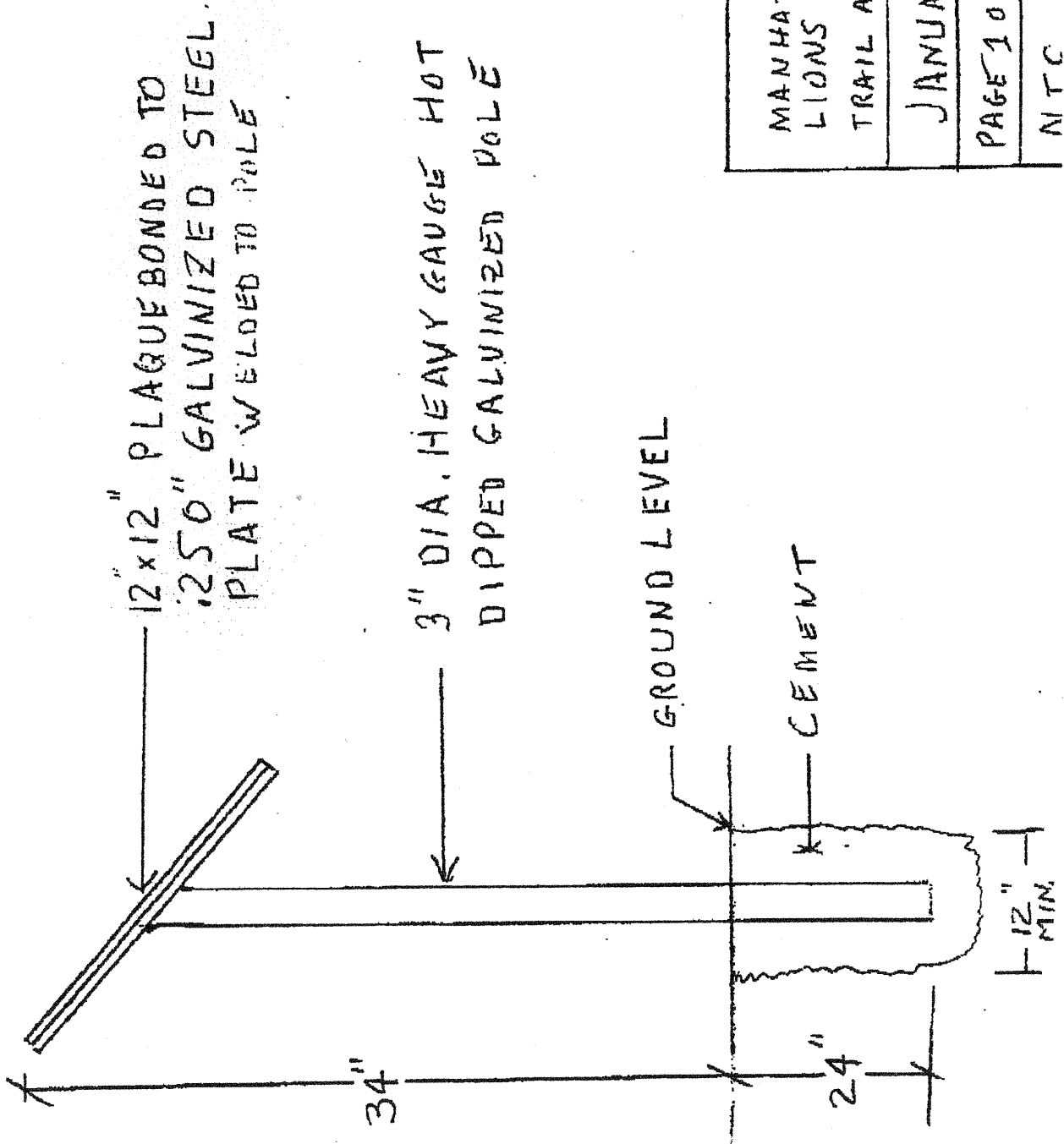
Financing –The Lions Club Budget for 2004-2005 includes an item supporting the path. In addition, fund raisers might be held; and local businesses might be solicited for donations to finance individual pedestals to include plaques identifying their contributions.

Liability –The Manhattan Beach Lions Club has liability coverage through The Association of Lions Clubs International. (See Certificate of Insurance enclosed.)

Enclosed Photos – The group of four are reproduced from a video demonstrating a variety of service projects conducted by Lions Clubs in the state of Wyoming. The site for the pictured Braille Trail is at a wilderness camp – a very different setting from that of Pollywog Park. The scene at the park is the chosen site for our Braille Trail.

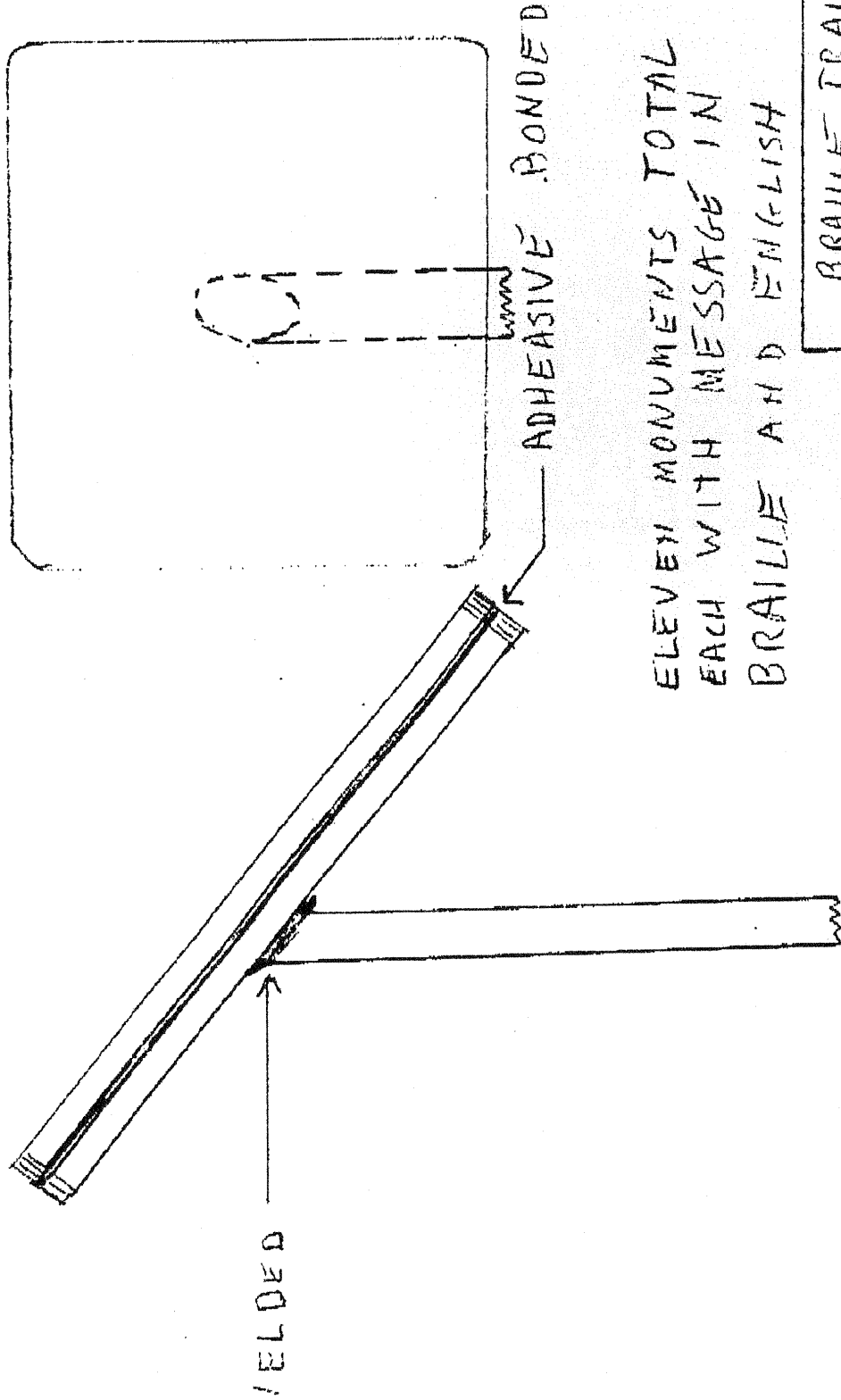
Resources Used in Planning

1. Services
2. The Braille Institute of Orange County
3. Dr. Cantor, coordinator in Special Education, Los Angeles County Schools.
4. Bonnie Beckerson, Betty Mallory, and Bill Switzer-Manhattan Beach Historical Society
5. www.santamonicabay.org/site/aboutthebay/layout/history
6. T.J. Adams Group LLC –Insurers for Lions Clubs International
333 E. Butterfield Rd. Suite 500
Lombard, Il. 60145
7. Lion Jim Forgette,- former cabinet manufacturer in charge of construction
8. Lion John DePrey- drawings
9. Lion Dr. Bonnie Cohn- assisting with narrative
10. Lions Neil Cascadden, Dan DuRoss, and Julian Christensen – site selection
11. Toji Co. –Professional Signs. Can reproduce Braille.
12. Lions Lori Herold and Chandra Shah - public relations.



MANHATTAN BEACH LIONS CLUB BRAILLE TRAIL AT POLLYWOG PARK	
JANUARY 5, 2005	
PAGE 1 OF 2	REV. N/C
N T C	

FRONT VIEW



ELEVEN MONUMENTS TOTAL
EACH WITH MESSAGE IN
BRAILLE AND ENGLISH

BRAILLE TRAIL
PAGE 2 OF 2
REV: N/C

1. Hello

You are entering Polliwog Park.

Does that sound like a funny name for a park?

Well, there is a special reason why it has this name.

If you will hold the rope, it will take you to the first part of the story.

2. This place was not always a park. It once belonged to native Indian tribes. In 1837, however, it was claimed by Spanish explorers passing from the native people to the Spanish Crown and then to settlers from the Eastern states. It was part of a very large ranch called Rancho Sausal Redondo. As years went by, the land was sold several times to different owners. One myth says that one owner dug a tunnel from high on a hill to the ocean for smuggling goods. This was not true.

Who was the last Owner? Move on to find out.

3. In 1873 Daniel Freeman leased the land which he used for sheep, horses, and orchards growing fruit, almonds, and olives.

Because of a terrible drought in 1875, Freeman lost much money from farming. He then chose barley crops which were successful. In 1882 Freeman bought the Rancho Sausal and began to sell parts of it to others who would build homes in the area. This was the man for whom the Daniel Freeman hospital was named.

Who bought this land? Move on to find out.

4. In 1943, a judge named Benjamin Brown bought some of the land to be used as his ranch.

A house and barn were already there, and the judge and his two sons soon began raising horses.

Sometimes, Jim Thorpe, the great Indian athlete, and members from different tribes met at the ranch to practice their war and rain dances. At one of these meetings, Judge Brown was adopted into the Sioux Tribe.

Where did the pond come from? Move on.

5.. During the rainy season, water would collect in the low land of the ranch, but it would dry up when the sun came out. Later, houses were built near the ranch, and city officials gave permission for water to be drained onto the ranch property. The ranch was flooded. It could no longer be used as a working ranch. The water was always there. It was dirty and filled with mosquitoes which were eaten by frogs. After heavy rains, deep water would cover the street across from the low spot. People had to drive their cars slowly, or find themselves stranded.

Frogs from Polliwogs? Move on.

6. Every year more frogs were born. Of course, as babies, they were polliwogs. Soon it became known as Polliwog Pond. School children came with jars to collect the babies and watch them grow in their classrooms. The frogs also spread out into the neighborhoods. A local plumber found many of them when he worked under the nearby houses.

Mystery on the pond - Move on.

7. For awhile there were some strange looking structures around the pond. Rising about ten feet tall with bases about three feet wide and tapering to the top they caused wild speculation among the people who passed by. What could they be? More myths were spread. Well... Finally, the townspeople learned that there was no mystery after all. They were drains built to stop flooding. At ten feet they would rise above the water in case a hundred year's rain came. We wonder what became of them.
The end of Benjamin Brown's Ranch house. Move on.

8. By 1957, there were many children in the neighborhood who needed a school close to their homes. Seeing the need, the local school district bought Judge Brown's land. The ranch house was torn down, and a school was built in its place. The part of the land they did not use was leased to the city for use as a park. Guess what?? That was the beginning of Polliwog Park.
How did the park grow? Move on.

9. Grass and trees were planted and the pond was cleaned. Soon, ducks came to visit. Other wildlife came also. An area rising up the hill from the pond became a place for people to listen to music. Now every summer there are Sunday concerts in the late afternoons. Families bring their picnic dinners and enjoy the free entertainment. At the other end of the park are picnic tables and a playground.
How do we know about the Ranch? Move on.

10. A very special place in the park is the little red house. It is a house where the history of Manhattan Beach is stored, but it has not always been there. As one of the first beach houses in Manhattan Beach, it was built sometime between 1905 and 1907. For eighty years it was unchanged. Then its turn came to be torn down. Saved by the city council, it was painted and repaired and finally moved to the park. It is decorated in the style of the year 1905 and contains many old things from that time. Next, a special garden - Move on..

11. Next to this path is the botanic garden. It rises up the hill and has many different kinds of plants. Most are those which don't need much water. Many different birds come here to nest or just to visit. Neighbors give their time to keep the garden clean and the plants healthy.
~~One more stop - Move on.~~

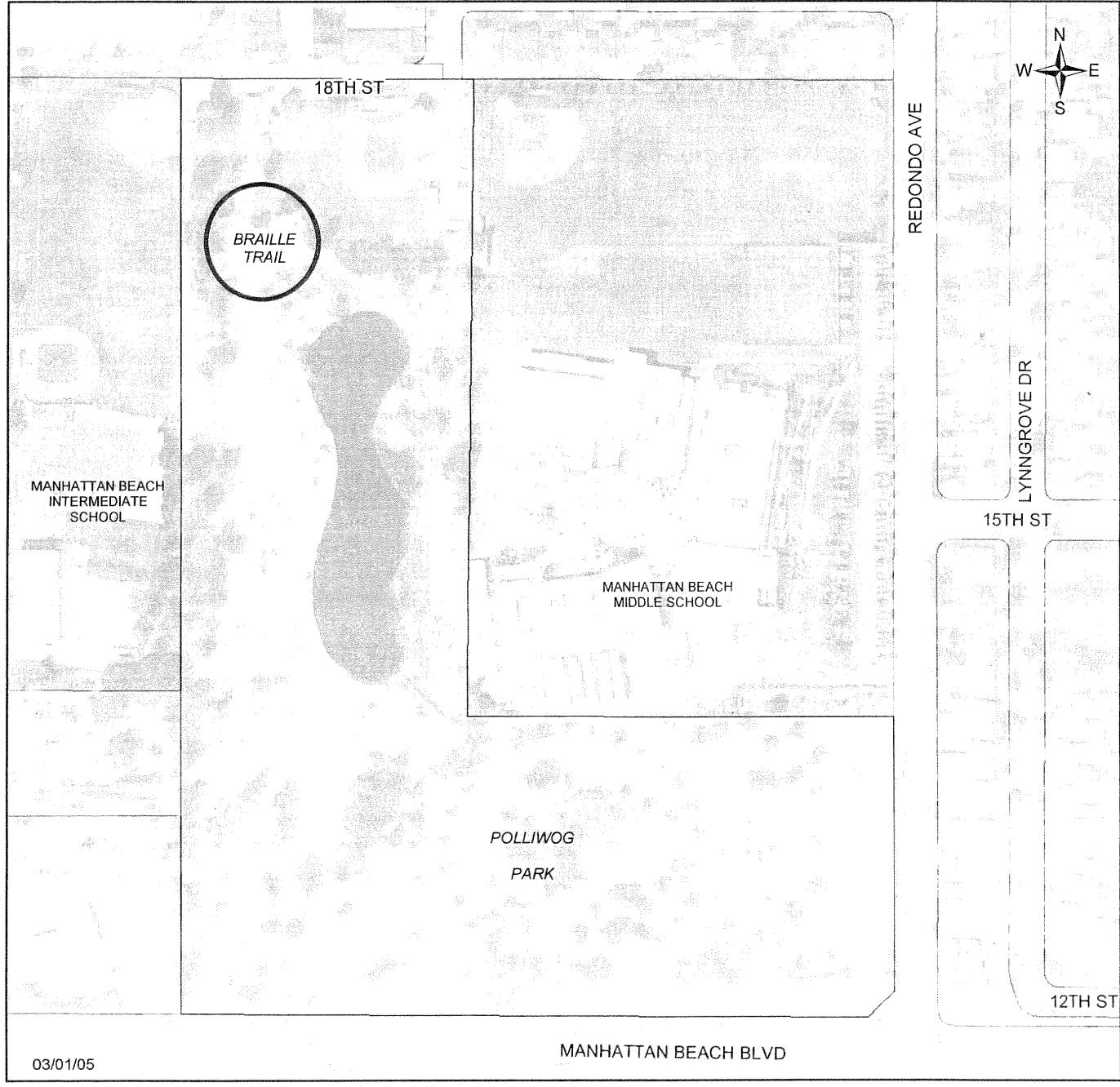
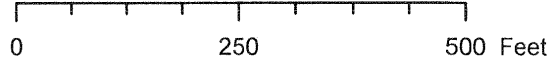
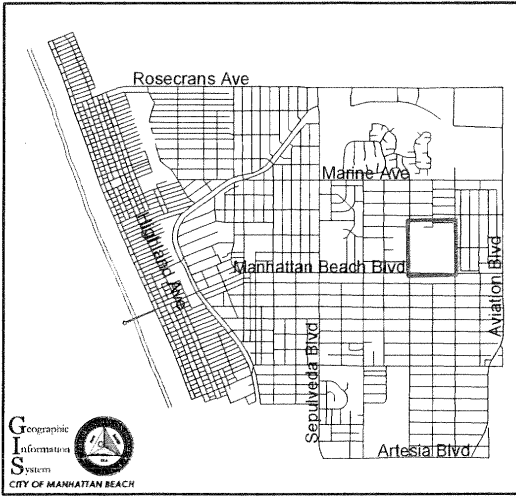
~~12.~~ ↑ This is the end of the line. Do you like our park? We are happy that you came to visit and hope you will come again.

(I'm considering adding a map of the park. Marge)

Add to
Station

11

Proposed Location of the *Braille Trail* at Polliwog Park



03/01/05

MANHATTAN BEACH BLVD