

Park and Recreation Commission
Corey Hill Playground
Design Review Committee

Thursday, April 7, 2016
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Town Hall
School Committee Room – 5th Floor
333 Washington Street

Committee Members Present: John Bain, Daniel Lyons, Antonia Bellalta and Jean Stameris

Committee Members Absent:

Staff Present: Erin Gallentine, Parks and Open Space Director, Jessie Waisnor, Landscape Designer, Jessica Zarni, Administrative Assistant

Guests Present: see attached

J. Bain welcomed everyone to the kick off meeting. He introduced J. Wasinor and E. Gallentine and the Commissioners.

E. Gallentine introduced herself. She thanked everyone for coming tonight. She loves the design review process and the opportunity it provides to work with the neighborhood to improve these places and spaces that are so near and dear to all of you. She wants everyone tonight to feel like it's a safe place to express your ideas about the park. This is a great opportunity to work collaboratively. She stated that tonight is to talk about existing conditions. E. Gallentine stated that want to inspire people to connect; we want people to be able to connect to self through our parks and through personal wellness. We want people to be able to connect to their community and their environment. We want to be respectful of the natural environment and to work to preserve and protect that as part of our design and renovation.

E. Gallentine stated that Corey Hill playground is unique. It is one the highest point in Town and when you are in that park you feel that you are perched up and have this grand view of the sky. It is a wonderful place to be and it is clear to everyone here tonight that this park is due for renovation.

E. Gallentine described how and when a park is determined that it is due for renovation. She stated that we have about 40 parks and playgrounds/school grounds that are active destinations with a multitude of amenities within in them. We strive to do a major renovation of these parks and playgrounds every 18-20 years, but we can't always get to

them in that amount time. This playground has not been renovated since 1994. She discussed the maintenance and management program for all the parks.

The goal for tonight is to solicit input and ideas from the community that will help define these improvements. She went over some bullets from the agenda. Some of the bullet points are to discuss the background of the park, existing conditions and site analysis, potential improvements and having an open discussion.

E. Gallentine described the design review process and the makeup of the design review committee. She stated that if you would like to serve on the design review committee, you can submit a letter and she provided that information. She described what information she would like to see in that letter. The Chair will appoint the members from the public at the next Park and Recreation Commission Meeting, which will be April 12, 2016. E. Gallentine. E. Gallentine stated that everyone has an equal voice whether you are on the design review committee or not.

E. Gallentine went through future meeting dates and what would be discussed at those meetings.

Currently we have a budget of 700,000 that is in the CIP. She described where the conceptual budget comes from and how we allocate the funds. She stated that our priorities for this park renovation are, accessibility to all ages and abilities, to strive to have parks that multigenerational, make everyone to feel welcome and be to provide safety.

She stated that we want everyone to feel they have a voice and to feel welcome, it is critical that everyone is respectful to one another in terms of you ideas for the park. Ideas might be different and we have to urge everyone to be respectful to one another.

J. Waisnor introduced herself. She went through the park/neighborhood. Corey Hill is on a hill top and it has a north parcel and a south parcel to the park. The north parcel has an overlook that offers the great views that E. Gallentine touched upon. The park is divided by Summit Avenue in the middle. The northern side is the more passive side (overlook, sun dial) and the southern side is where the play equipment is. Both of the sides have every steep slopes. A resident pointed out that there is a bump out that is not shown on these slides.

A park survey was shown to the committee and audience.

J. Wasinor went through the park entrances, fences (lack thereof) and circulation in the park. The perimeter of the park was discussed. She described where there are fences and the types of fences.

She described the walls and sundial. There are 2 stone walls, one is along the playground and the second is on the other side of the park where the overlook is. S

The play equipment was shown to the commission. There is 2-5 year old area and an area adjacent for the 5-12 year olds. There is a hard court area play next to the pay area.

She went through the lawns and the plantings. The park is filled with maple and large oaks. Part of her assessment will be to look at the trees their and come up with a maintenance plan for the trees. There is quite a bit of lawn in the park.

The existing site furniture consist of; existing trash receptacle, existing bollard, existing drinking fountains, existing stone bench and existing wooden bench.

The rock outcropping was discussed.

J. Bain thanked J. Waisnor and opened this portion of the meeting to public comment.

Nancy Corrin addressed the committee. She has a question about parking. Is the parking determined by other entities. E. Gallentine stated that there is no parking within the park it is only street parking. E. Gallentine stated that the street parking is under the jurisdiction of Engineering and the Transportation Division. She thinks if there was a particular comment about it as it related to the park we would be happy to work with them to share that.

Lisa Wilkins addressed the committee. She stated that we live in an urban area and she likes to bring her kids up there to be close to nature. Her kids play in the shrubs and climb on the rocks. The natural aspect is very nice for her family. Her kids hide things in the knots in the tree, they go back with a neighborhood friend hiding thing.

David Lescohier addressed the committee. He is a Town Meeting member. He walks through that park a lot and described his route. One weak point is the access from Lancaster Terrace. It is almost like rock climbing for him. There is an area off to the side he pointed out with shrubs and vegetation in a place where children can go and be in nature. It can be for imaginative play. That area is not doing anything right now and can be developed for young adolescent kids that are not into playgrounds.

Sarah Granel addressed the committee. She recently moved to Brookline and is excited to be part of this process. She is a landscape designer specifically a play designer. She has been working on serval studies that look at nature play and risky play within the landscape. Studies have shown that play is associated less with equipment and more with the landscape that support gross motor skills and provide a variety of play opportunities that all sorts of different kids and age groups can enjoy. This play is more versatile and has more orientation to nature and exploration. She hopes to see this for Corey Hill and would love to bring to this kind of knowledge to the Committee. E. Gallentine wanted to point out the 2-5 and 5-12 play area is an industry standard, it doesn't mean kids don't use both but it is a design standard for consideration when looking at height, fall zones and openings.

Gale Wolfe addressed the Committee. Her children played at this playground and now her grandchildren play there. She is very vested in redoing this area, maintaining it and would hope to marry the natural aspects of it to the redesign. She would love to see a picnic space.

Jeff Greenburg addressed the Committee. He stated that the strongest and weakest's points are the hills. The views are beautiful, but other than being there and being natural we are not doing much with the hills. He wonders if there is a way respect natural beauty of them but finding ways to use them more.

Victor Kusmin addressed the Committee. He stated that when it snows the kids use the hills to sled. As a parent he has learned the first run down he goes with them and stay at bottom and tackle them. He would like to encourage maybe safer sledding in this area.

Paul Wagnill addressed the committee. He wanted to state the nature of the tree and long limbs is so valuable and unique about this park. He discussed dog of leashes. He doesn't know how to make it an open free space and control the dogs off leash, it is a problem up there. They discussed off leash dog problems at all hours.

Muriel Vautrin addressed the Committee. She wanted to talk about use of the north side on Friday mornings at Corey Hill. She talked about the November project (a running/exercise group). She was wondering if some exercise structures that would respect the nature could be incorporated. E. Gallentine discussed the people that train on Summit Ave.

Lisa Wilkins stated that we should keep in mind those who run up summit Ave. She thinks to respect to those people trying to be healthy by maybe having water there on hot summer days for those who are getting all the way to the top. She stated that her kids would love to have water there to play in. It is the closest park to her and there is no shade. E. Gallentine stated that as we look at what these concepts might be maybe there could be some naturalistic water play. E. Gallentine stated that as we move forward with all park renovations we include water bottle refill stations.

A resident stated that when he sees slopes like that one obviously thing he thinks of was maybe theater seating. He is curious if you build it, will people come, maybe if you put a stage and seats there could be community use of it. It seems like there is so much room on those slopes and thinks something should be done there. J. Bain discussed the new overlook at Fisher Hill.

A resident stated that he wanted to add to the comments on the water. He has spoken to other parents who are interested in having water play up at Corey Hill. He discussed the current drinking fountain at Corey. He really enjoys the water play at Clark playground.

Rebecca Blouwolff addressed the Committee. She has 2 school aged children. Her family moved three years ago from Rose Park to Summit Park and her kids feel it was a step down. She notices the times that we go there is a certain activities we can't do at this park that we can do at other parks. She would be interested in having any type of circuit for the kids to

ride their bikes. She sees kids learning to bike ride and scooter on the black top area at Corey Hill which is rather small. She likes sitting on the bench and watching her kids play and she would enjoy more seating for the passive parents.

J. Bain wanted to ask if anyone had any safety concerns

Lawrence Rothman addressed the Committee. He stated that bump out that was not shown on the map of the playground is a big concern for him. It is a huge drop

Jake Horne addressed the Committee. He thought that maybe there could be steps to easier access the hill on the south side. He stated that the south western side is very rugged.

A resident stated that a huge safety issue is the lack of gates on Summit Ave where there is play equipment. As a parent she worries about her kids darting out onto the street. She stated that the kids gravitate toward the rock outcropping, but there is always a lot of broken glass there.

A resident brought up maybe adding a speed bump to slow down the cars, crossing Summit Ave is a big deal. David Lescohier suggested painting a pattern on the road that you are entering a recreational area. He stated that this would be cheaper than adding a speed bump.

A resident stated that the two sides of the park feel very separate and maybe when redesigning the park we can try to incorporate a connection so that it reads as one park.

Nancy Corrin addressed the Committee. She asked whether or not it was intentional to make one side of the park passive and the other active.

David Lescohier stated that he feels that the Bulletin Board that is up there now is a great strength to the park, and he would like to see that stay. E. Gallentine thinks that would be fine and we can do a new bulletin board. E. Gallentine listed a few parks that the bulletin Board works in, but also discussed a few other where it was not working and the community wanted it removed because it was always filled with junk. He thinks this board works in this area and is a great way for the community to communicate with one another.

Muriel Vautrin addressed the Committee. She stated that right now there are two types of play equipment there right now right next to one another. She thinks what if we change/update the play equipment she would like to see them spaced out a bit more. She would like to see a little more landscaping with trees. There is currently no shading over the play equipment. She would also love to see a picnic area up a Corey Hill.

J. Bain asked if there is a need for a shelter up there. Social events on that sun dial area were discussed. The audience agrees there are a good amount of birthday parties up there not having any shade makes it difficult.

J. Bain asked if there were play equipment people like from other parks that we good get ideas from to inoculate in this area. Lisa Wilkins discussed a cave rock structure at Dean Road that she loves. A resident discussed the play structure at the Franklin Park Zoo that she enjoys. The water play at this location was discussed. A resident sated that she loves Billy Ward. She loves everything about that park and the work that Town did on that site was amazing. E. Gallentine discussed the challenges they have with the wall in that area.

J. Bain discussed maybe taking a site visit.

Mike Lindstrom stated that he would like to see less plastic and more natural wood. E. Gallentine and M. Lindstrom discussed sculptor Mitch Ryerson the work he has done for the Town. She described his pieces that are on the esplanade. E. Gallentine needs to consider as the Director is maintainability. E. Gallentine stated that we have choose custom designs in a few parks. She wants to be able to manage and maintain the pieces that we choose something that will provide longevity for the park overall.

A resident stated that she likes the natural feel that Lawton Park has. She would like to work the play amongst the trees.

There was discussion around the basketball nets that were removed from the hard court area up at Corey Hill due to noise.

Ralph Spears addressed the Committee. He would like to see the trees removed along the bank. You had a view all year long that is now gone. The roots are exposed on the Jordan road, all the dirt is washing down.

There was a request to have a restroom up there.

A resident stated that his four year old wanted him to request a big, tall, long twisty side. He would like to see the natural landscape incorporated with the play equipment. E. Gallentine discussed the Pierce playground renovation beloved hill, and how they incorporated a slide onto the side on that. His child would also like to see more swings and creating some sort of circuit for bicycles.

L. Wilkons thinks maybe a log cabin structure would work there.

Mike Lindstrom addressed the Committee. He feels that some of the comments about the infrastructure pieces that need to be addressed (the erosion, pruning) could be a big help. He thinks potentially it's a great overall landscape, he thinks play part is quarantined into the flat part, it would be nice to be integrated to the whole hill and find way to take advantage of the hill. The sledding in the winter is dangerous at the bottom and he doesn't know how you tweak that. The slope works for looking at the great view. He stated that the York terrace side is rough around the edges and hard to maneuver. E. Gallentine discussed using tall meadow grass that could frame the park year round with color.

J. Bain stated that we are required to provide equipment that is handicap accessible and that might be an issue if you want to incorporate equipment onto the slope. E. Gallentine stated that we have an obligation to meet ADA, and we exceed ADA in every one of our design. We are currently working on an inclusive playground that goes far beyond that and looks at a whole different level of inclusion and access to play this is for all abilities. We will just need to balance that.

There was discussion about quieter place for people on the autistic spectrum to go.

A resident stated the he has concerns about overbuilding; if we try to do everything everyone is suggesting it would be too much. E. Gallentine stated we will get there and it takes time. We will come up with a master plan and we will prioritize. Things will fall off and we will phase in over time. It is nice to have a big vision and set priorities accordingly.

There was discussion about incorporating a community garden area at Corey Hill. E. Gallentine described the hard work that goes into maintaining/organizing a community garden. She discussed the concept they are working on now for a community garden at Lawton playground. A resident suggested maybe not doing a community garden but having edibles or herbs.

The hill attracts a lot of people with telescope and what nots.

The preschoolers who play in this area were discussed.

Permit requirements were discussed.

E. Gallentine stated that we have heard great input tonight and there is a lot of enthusiasm about this park and she is excited to work with everyone. She stated that we have set the next two meeting dates and they are on the agenda. There was talk about an onsite meeting and that was to happen it would need to be before the May 18th meeting.

The time frame of this project was discussed.

J. Bain thanked everyone for coming and looks forward to seeing everyone at the next meeting.