

Park & Recreation Commission Larz Anderson Skating Rink Task Force Meeting Minutes
9/2/21

Park and Recreation Commission	Meeting Minutes
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Date: September 2, 2021, 12:00 PM

Place: Zoom Webinar

Commissioners Attending: John Bain, Nancy O’Connor, Wendy Sheridan Ames, Antonia Bellalta and Jim Carroll

Commissioners Absent: N/A

Task Force Members Attending: Jeff Thibault, Avi Urbas, Priscilla Karnovsky, Julie Jette and David Driscoll

Task Force Members Absent:

Staff: Alexandra Vecchio: Parks and Open Space Director, Jessica White: Parks and Open Space Assistant, Leigh Jackson: Recreation Director, Tyler Radicioni: Recreation Resource Manager, Jon Lewitus: Assistant Recreation Director

TOPIC	KEY POINTS/DISCUSSION	
Welcome and Introductions and approval of the minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A. Vecchio opened the meeting. W.S. Ames thanked everyone for being here and for staying committed to this process. • The members of the Task Force introduced themselves. • Staff members introduced themselves • N. O’Connor moved for approval of the July 15, 2021 Larz Anderson Skating Rink Meeting Minutes. Seconded by A. Bellalta. All in favor. A roll call vote was taken. Jim Carroll and Julie Jette abstained. • N. O’Connor moved for approval of the August 10, 2021 Larz Anderson Skating Rink Meeting Minutes. Seconded by Jeff Thibault. All in favor. A roll call vote was taken. 	
Task Force Role and Meeting Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W.S. Ames reviewed the Task Force role. • A. Vecchio stated that the consultant team presented 6 different design options at the last public meeting- tonight’s goal is to narrow that down to two design options. This is not a design review process, this is not going to determine the final design for the rink (that is a whole other process), and this is simply to determine what going to be pursued further given the limited scope and limited budget for this feasibility study. She stated that we will also be discussing a bit about the capacity needs, thinking about the support facilities and services that we need the ice rink to provide. A. Vecchio did a quick reminder of the deficiencies/opportunities that were noted by 	

	<p>this task force last year of the existing ice rink while preparing for the feasibility study. They were broken up into four categories: the rink, warming hut, facility and operations.</p>	
<p>Community Meeting Recap #2 and feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Vecchio reviewed the polling results from the public at the last public meeting for the following questions: Which option is your favorite? Which option is your least favorite? Which ice rink typology or mix do you prefer? What we should consider as we continue these studies? 	
<p>Discussion and Vote on Two Ice Rink Design Alternatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A slide of design rink alternatives options was shared with the Task Force. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nexgen- rebuild open air rink in same location and build an additional rink 2. Stars- open rink with support facilities 3. Canopy- covered rink with support facilities 4. Terrace- covered rink, with an open air rink and split by support facilities 5. Loop- Semi-enclosed hockey rink connected to open air rink 6. The Hearth- fully enclosed hockey rink with an open air rink. • A. Vecchio asked the consultant team to give an idea of what would affect the cost for any one of these rinks. The six options were shown on a slide in order and showed different square footage amongst them, the square footage for the roof, and how many elevators (if any). There are obviously additional costs that would have to be considered in terms of the operations of the rink and revenue streams that should be considered in terms of programming (depending on whether- it is year round space or not). • W.S. Ames wants to give everyone an opportunity to spend two to three minutes, with a response or discussion about the different designs that you may or may not like. W.S. Ames discussed the letter the Jamaica Hills Association submitted to the Park and Recreation Commission detailing their perspective after reviewing the options that were brought up at our last public meeting on August 19, 2021. Their main concern with option number 5 (related to the new vehicle 	

	<p>entrance and exit) as well as option number two (stars) and option number three (canopy) which has parking designed in the city of Boston</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N. O'Connor stated that she does not think an open air rink without any roof of any sort won't be helpful in any shape, way or form. She would remove Nexgen from the list. A. Urbas would like to keep it on the list. He stated that we heard a lot of feedback from the community that having as an outdoor option is highly desirable and differentiates Brookline from other communities. He is not quite there taking any options off that table• W.S. Ames stated that Options 1 and 2 do not have a cover. Option 1 leaves the facility in the same location it is now, which is known as the Italian garden, and adds a secondary, more-sporting facility on the opposite side of the building. Option 2 restores the Italian garden, has a sport facility with a side and has no cover. Option 3 has a cover and the small side ice. Option 4 has a larger pleasure ice area that's completely open and a sporting facility that has an open-size cover. Option 5 is covered, with an interestingly-shaped pleasure skate area. Option 6 is fully enclosed.• P. Karnovsky stated that options 1 and 4 are her clear favorites. She stated that Option 4 is her "if we could everything in the world" option. She stated that one thing about the loop is that it created a unique outdoor pleasure skating area, but she feels that you can incorporate 1 and 4. She stated that you utilize the essence of a facility that services two rinks (one clearly defined as sport, one clearly defined as recreational) and you preserve the beauty of what is being looked for.• Julie Jette stated that she thinks very similarly to Priscilla. She stated that one of the things she likes about Option 1 is both ice surfaces are quite large. She thinks having two large sheets gives a lot of flexibility. She thinks preserving both sheets in a fairly large size really maximizes program potential. She would also say she loves the beautiful garden, but she is not sure restoring the Italian garden should be a top priority. W.S. Ames stated that it would be an	
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	<p>open green space and what it becomes will be determined later on in this process. J. Jette stated that there are other opportunities for the underused space at top of the hill. She is very interested in year-round opportunities there. She thinks a combination of a maximized ice space with some cover would be her preference. Julie Jette discussed the concern of fog issues on the glass with a covered rink.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• D. Driscoll stated that each option has some nice components. However, for him the overall pick would be Option 4: the Terrace accomplishes everything we need. He stated that there is high demand for kids to be outdoors. He thinks second place for him would be Option 3, the Canopy. He agrees with the Jamaica folks about the loop. In his opinion the nicest piece of real estate is the parking lot that sits at top of Larz. He wonders if there is a way to reengineer the traffic component; that would allow for us to take back some of that.• Jim Carroll stated that we have one shot here for the next generation or two in terms of what will be the final facility up there, and for that reason he wants to enter in the Hearth, a fully enclosed hockey rink with an open air rink. He thinks it's worth looking at the ultimate solution, which is to have a fully enclosed rink and a passive rink that would maintain the allure of the current Larz Anderson experience skating outside. The second choice for him would be the Terrace. He understands challenges with the different elevations. He thinks that one element has to be covered.• N. O'Connor stated that this community could use an enclosed rink; she doesn't see it being realistic. She thinks we would need to find land to swap out, and this would cause delays and that she worries about that. She likes the Terrace option. She thinks we need a cover over something. She thinks it would be nice to have a pleasure rink in any size that makes sense. She thinks the garden placeholder is an important piece to it. She is liking the Terrace, but is worried about operations and construction costs, and any of the other iterations that have a covered rink with a sizeable pleasure rink would	
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	<p>be for her. She would go with Option 4, and doesn't have a second choice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• J. Bain likes Option 4. He stated that this town needs a first class skating facility and that for him that is an enclosed rink and an open air pleasure rink. He thinks the building itself in Option 6 would be a real expense, but he likes 4 and would prefer for it to be enclosed on the sports rink. In regards to the land swap, he thinks Newbury could be a possibility to do some land swap.• N. O'Connor wanted to clarify that when we talk about the hockey rink and pleasure ice, we currently have sports and pleasure all on one ice. She thinks we don't need to say this is a hockey rink, there could still be pleasure on the hockey ice. It could be a combination.• Jeff Thiabult agrees with a lot that has been said so far. He stated that we have a deficit of space for recreational activities in Town (particularly ice), and there is a challenge to find available space. He wants to push to maximize the available ice that would be there for both hockey and pleasure. He stated that BYH can't get enough ice anywhere. He stated that looking at these options, he wonders which would provide most ice. He worries about the Terrace option. It has a lot of ice but he worries about maintaining that and the challenges of multi-level. He thinks Options 1 and 5 provide the most optionality. He thinks one option at minimum has to have a cover and preferably enclosed if possible. He likes 6 and 1 for providing a lot of ice and design Option 1 with a cover or enclose a portion of it. His first choice would be Option 1, with 6 as his second choice.• A. Bellalta stated that she was looking at all the options trying to keep in mind the need for additional programming, cover and more open space as well as looking at it from a cost perspective. She stated that for her personally, the one that fits the site the best is the Terrace- it involves less moving of the land and fits with the grade. She stated that most of the others are a cut-and-fill. She finds the Hearth to be an interesting concept and likes that the building	
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	<p>takes on the quality of architecture that already exists. She thinks that whatever is done at Larz needs to integrate and respect the integrity of the historic quality of Larz Anderson. She think it will help us move forward and have some kind of architectural components. She stated that the Terrace gives both covered and open space, the Hearth gives both options and the Canopy does the same with the cut-and-fill to provide space that is needed. Her first choice is the Terrace, second choice Hearth, and third the Canopy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avi Urbas stated that our charge as the Task Force is to find ice solution and that is why he looked to the options with the most ice options available. For him that was Options 1 and 4. However, what he is hearing is that you could have some of space of the currently used for the Italian garden in option 6 for the pleasure rink. He likes an option that is covered and that the pleasure rink is full size. He stated that his choices would be Option 1 with a covered rink or Option 4 where you expand the pleasure rink to be full size. He thinks there needs to be programming year-round that generates revenue during non-ice seasons.• W.S. Ames wanted to make the agreement that we are at a shortage of ice and there is no lack of demand for programming. She wants to consider a facility that has a large pleasure ice area and a sports skating facility. Her preference is option 4- Terrace. She would like the consultants if possible to spend a moment in cost analysis to discuss ramifications of enclosing it vs just open sides, both in terms of overall costs of the facility and also the ramifications to the zoning and permitting analysis if we do enclose it vs open sided. She thinks Option 4 hugs the landscape in a way that some of the other options do not. She thinks it will give you everything you need inside the facility where the top level can walk out to the pleasure skating, and the bottom level could be hockey and dressing rooms for the sports rink. She thinks the stacking minimizes the impact of the building weight and landscape. Her first choice is Option 4, her second choice would be	
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	<p>Option number 1 if it incorporated a cover on top of the sports rink. J. Bain agrees with option 4 if it could be an enclosed sports rink, and the same with Option 1 if it could be enclosed.</p>	
<p>Discuss Capacity Needs of Ice Rink Design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. Lewitus stated that the biggest feedback that Recreation gets is that there is a huge demand for programs in general and there are not enough facilities to do it. He stated that options 1-6 will provide a great opportunity in general. He stated that Option 1 or 4, with Option 4 being the top option, would meet the demand of what Recreation needs. He stated that year-to-year Recreation struggles with renting and contracts and all of that stems from the fact that there is only one ice rink right now. He stated that if we were to have a pleasure rink it could be dedicated much more for the passive and then the sports rink could be designated for the high school and youth hockey. He stated that we can use the sports rink for passive programming. He stated that the demand is there and all time slots are filled. He stated that Options 1 and 4 are Recreation’s top choices. He stated that the coverage is very important. There are struggles with rain and sun that causes closures and late cancellation. He thinks a covered option is very important. He stated that a lot of feedback that is given to Recreation as well is the lack of privacy, locker rooms and bathrooms. There are no locker rooms and feels that we need to provide those amenities. He stated that we want to be a community space/option and concessions would be very important to have. He stated that Option 4 provides recreation and staff an opportunity for sightlines to both rinks. He stated that safety is a huge part of all programs in general. He stated that Options 1-6 will give Recreation what they need for programming, but Option 4 is Recreation’s top choice with Option 1 being a second choice. He stated that right now the rink is not used 9 months a year, and with a hard surface they could program it year-round. He stated that all these facilities could be used year-round. He would say Option 4 would be the best option for programming and the feedback. He will take closed or open. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A. Bellalta wanted to say the plan in Option 1 is a little deceiving, but if you look you have 30 foot walls around the perimeters in some areas. She stated that the whole site is lifted and there are 30 foot walls. She stated that it’s a lot of walls, it is not flat and you are building a plinth. She doesn’t think it’s the right approach for this landscape. 	
<p>Public Comment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandy Batchelor addressed the Task Force. S. Batchelor thinks the process needs to be slowed down, so the people who have expressed an interest in and use Larz Anderson Park and can have input. This way you can get a fuller reading on what people who use the park think about these alternatives. He thinks in his personal opinion, the Task force is doing a great job of laying things out and having a discussion of what is important. He stated that it needs to be clear an “enclosed” option is a closed building and a “covered” option has open sides. He stated that he has not heard any expert testimony on what that means for the use of the rink. He thinks the need is there and thinks that an enclosed building would be a good choice. He thinks both 6 and 4 would be good choices, but would need some sort of cover. He likes the idea of the garden, so he has more support for 4. He would like to get his mailing list involved in this process. • Bill O’Brien addressed the Task Force. He thanked everyone and loves everything that he is seeing. He has had 15 years’ experience with youth hockey program in Brookline and wanted to speak on behalf of some of the opinions within that community. He stated that primarily there is a real need for year-round hockey. He likes design number 4 and if it were fully enclosed we could get more use of hockey association, but a semi-enclosed option would allow for extra months of use and then would convert to different sports. He stated that there is such a need for ice. He stated that ice is so expensive and it’s getting harder and harder to find ice. • Peter Senopoulos addressed the Task Force. He stated that he appreciates the process and allowing for public input. He has lived on 	

	<p>Hopkins road for 65 years, it's his back year. His daughter played hockey for Brookline High School and he is on the Board of Directors of JHA. His wife is the Vice President of the Friends of Larz Anderson Park. He stated that from a Hockey perspective he fully understands needs for an improved hockey rink and or indoor rink. He doesn't like the loop, it will be dumping more traffic onto Avon. It's a narrow street. There is a big problem on Pond Street with traffic, it narrows out and there is a traffic jam every morning. He is very concerned with both traffic and parking issues that will come from two rinks. He stated that there will be a massive amount of traffic at the top of the hill. He stated that from a design perspective it is spot on but down the road he thinks the focus will need to be on a traffic study and alternatives for traffic flow. He wonders if there are other locations for consideration or is it definitely Larz Anderson. A. Vecchio stated that there will be a vote at the September 14th and Park and Recreation Commission meeting based off the task force vote to consider Putterham woods and surrounding areas as an alternative site location as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• P. Karnovsky thinks Options 1 and 4 are interchangeable. W.S. Ames wanted to point out that she thinks 1 and 4 are very different.• W.S. Ames moved to select design Option 4 as the primary choice but with a covered or fully enclosed sports sheet, and to ask the consultants to provide an analysis of a covered rink with open sides vs fully enclosed sports sheet in terms of cost differential and zoning/permitting ramifications. Seconded by J. Bain. All in favor <p>A. Bellalta yes J. Thibaut-Yes P. Karnovsky- yes A. Urbas – yes A. Urbas wanted to point out that people like the idea of having at least one covered or enclosed rink plus one outdoor rink option. N. O'Connor- yes J. Jette- yes J. Carroll- Yes D. Driscoll- yes</p>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> W.S. Ames Moved to select Option 1 as the second choice but with a covered or enclosed sports sheet. As in the first motion, to provide analysis of covered vs fully enclosed sports sheet in terms of cost differential and zoning/permitting ramifications. Seconded by A. Urbas. The votes passed 8-2 <p>A Bellalta- No J. Thibaut- Yes J. Bain- Yes A. Urbas- Yes P. Karnovsky- Yes N. O'Connor - No J. Jette- Yes J. Carroll – Yes D. Driscoll - Yes W.S. Ames - Yes</p>	
Adjourn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N. O'Connor moved to adjourn. Meeting adjourned 	

Next Meeting: Location: Zoom Webinar

A true record

Attest Jessica White

Date: 9/2/21