



TOWN of BROOKLINE  
Massachusetts  
Department of Public Works  
PARKS AND OPEN SPACE DIVISION

*Andrew M. Pappastergion*  
Commissioner

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Director

**Cypress Street Playground  
Design Review Committee Meeting # 2  
Meeting Minutes  
Town Hall, 1st Floor, Room 103  
Tuesday, February 27, 2019 6:00 p.m.**

**Committee Members Present:** Nany O'Connor (DRC Chair), Daniel Lyons, Wendy Sheridan, Clara Batchleor, Deborah Rivers, Helen Charlupski and Matthew Cooney

**Committee Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Jessica Zarni, Administrative Assistant, Scott Landgren, Senior Landscape Architect, Erin Gallentine, Parks and Open Space Director

**Public Present:** see attached sign in sheet

(Note: Concepts discussed below in the meeting minutes are attached for reference.)

**Welcome/Call Meeting to Order**

N. O'Connor opened the meeting and introduced herself. She acknowledged Nancy Heller in the assembled, Member of the Select Board, and Co-Chair of the High School Expansion Committee. The Committee Members introduced themselves. The Weston and Sampson (W&S) Team introduced themselves. Gene Bloinger, Vice President of W&S introduced himself, Jean Lukenda, Project Manager and Brandon Kunkel, Assistant Project Manager. He expressed how excited W&S is about this project. He expects there will be a lot of tremendous input from both the community and the in-house resources within Brookline Town Hall. He is looking forward to excellent results. W&S are focused on working in the municipal realm, specifically city and town public open space systems. He stated that Cypress is a unique property.

E. Gallentine introduced herself and S. Landgren. E. Gallentine discussed the competitive selection process and the interview process by the Design Review Committee to select Weston and Sampson as the Town's design consultant for this project.

## **General Agenda**

Recap of Meeting #1

Part 1: Site Circulation & Layout

Open Discussion

Part 2: Preliminary Design Inspiration

Open Discussion

Part 3: High School Project & Streetscape

Open Discussion

Next Steps

A picture of Cypress St. Playground from 2002 was shown to the Committee. This is the last time Cypress St. Playground was renovated.

## **Project Goals and Priorities**

### **Goals**

- Safety & Accessibility
- Multi-Use & Age-Friendly
- Neighborhood Character & Community Needs
- Long-Term Value, Operational Performance & Maintainability
- Connections to & Synergy with High School Project

### **Priorities**

- Universal access to and within the park
- Treatment of the park's perimeter and entries to address issues of accessibility, safety, circulation & beauty
- Design of a new inclusive playground to include play equipment & water play for all ages & abilities
- Consideration of site furniture and destinations for seating, picnicking, events & programming throughout the park
- Improve site grading and drainage
- Upgrade the natural athletic fields, irrigation, basketball court & lighting
- Plaza/Slow Street Connecting Cypress Playground to High School

E. Gallentine detailed the Design Review Process and Project Timeline.

## **Project Stakeholders: groups that regularly use and depend on Cypress**

- Community + Neighborhood
- High School Students, Teachers & Administration
- Commuters
- Camps, Early Education & Day Care Uses
- High School Sports, Viking Sports & Recreation Programs
- Brookline Adult & Continuing Education

## **Existing Conditions & Analysis**

G. Bolinger stated that we want to talk about things that inform the ultimate design and construction eventually at the Cypress Street playground:

- Circulation & Accessibility
- Edges & Interfaces with Neighborhood & High School
- Destinations, Amenities, Gathering Areas, & Placemaking

G. Bolinger presented a figure that identified the park, existing site circulations, and important stakeholder group and abutters. He stated that the setting for the park is the front line for Brookline High school is unique and incredibly important. The relationship between the MBTA and park was discussed. The entrances were discussed. He discussed getting into the park itself and how the park functions and relates to the immediate abutters. The figure identifies the key components as the Greenough Street corridor, the field zone, the playground zone and the connector from Dana to Brookline T station. He discussed how people move from the neighborhood to and through the park. The historical legacy of Cypress St Playground was discussed. The Tree canopy was discussed. A plan showing 61 trees on the property that were inventoried and their conditions were accessed by the town Arborist. A plan of the health conditions of the existing trees was shared with the Committee. He stated that it is prudent to plan for the future generations of trees. He stated that no one takes a removal of a tree lightly, but we do want to be sensible about it and we do want so think about planning for the future

The following park edges were detailed:

- MBTA to Dana Street Corridor
- Cypress Street @ Tappan
- Davis Avenue
- Greenough Street

G. Bolinger stated that there are numerous activities that are programmed in this area. We want to be aware of them and even try accommodating them at a higher level.

Slides of the following areas were shown:

- Fields' zones,
- Greenough Street Corridor and Children's play zone,
- mature tree canopy,
- high school graduation,
- sledding Hill,
- Tappan Street Entrance, Memorial
- Picnicking and bleachers

### **Preliminary Design Concepts**

Jeanne Lukenda stated that we will be reviewing the following items as we look at preliminary design alternatives.

- Athletic Fields
- Park & Playground Circulation
- Playground Inspiration
- Place making, Picnicking, & Seating
- Synergy with High School Project

### **Preliminary Design Alternatives- Fields Existing**

One Multi Use Field: 180' x 300' (standard soccer field)

Two Softball Fields:

60' base lines and infield (standard);

210' centerfield (women's softball);

Orientation: west field – "good"; east field – "fair"

Accommodates: <12 youth softball to girls'/women's fast pitch softball; but not women's slow pitch; not men's slow pitch

Accommodates: U6 through high school

### **Preliminary Design Alternatives**

One Multi Use Field 180' x 300' (standard soccer field)

Two Softball Fields-60' base lines and infield (standard);

210' centerfield (women's softball);

Orientation: west field – "good"; east field – "fair".

W&S commented that the fields are the largest programmed element. The Permit Data has helped W&S understand how the field is utilized now and how they can help the Town in the future with these needs. J. Lukenda discussed the relationships these fields have with Greenough Street and the existing pedestrian path that connects the MBTA area. She stated that for simplicity sake, they have continued to show the rectangular fields and the two softball fields pretty much in the same relationship and pretty close to the same orientation. She stated that those are the ideal conditions for this side. She stated that what they are comparing in image to image is a flexibility they have or don't have depending on keeping or not keeping some of the trees. It allows them to shift those collections of fields from left to right.

She stated that in Concept 1, they keep many of the existing trees and keep the position of the field tight up against the Dana Street Corridor. It allows them to have a space area along Greenough Street and the same amount of playground space on the right side of pedestrian corridor.

Concepts 2 and 3 identify opportunities possible if the edges are reconsidered. Concept 2 removes trees along Greenough Street and you are able to push the collection of fields over towards Greenough, and that buys more open space by the edge of softball field to the right and the Dana street corridor. The zone from edge of field the including the playground to Cypress can be enlarged if that is a direction that is preferred by everyone. In concept 3, the opposite is shown. This design tucks fields up against Dana street corridor; the softball field is twisted a little bit and provides opportunities along Greenough Street. She stated that there are different positions and orientations for the fields, but these are the preferred. She stated that the sizes that are shown in all these diagrams are the same with slight difference in the orientation of the softball field and sometimes between the relationship from the infield zone and edge of the rectangular field. The red line that is shown around the rectangular field indicates what it would look like if the rectangular field is increased to a more ideal size.

J. Lukenda stated to the Committee of some basic parameters that follow thorough all the concepts. She stated that access to the park isn't changing, the way people get to the park (these were detailed), the edges, circulation around the park for both vehicles and pedestrians and continued pedestrian access to the park from one edge to

another. She stated that the Greenough corridor zone, the field zone, the Dana Corridor Zone and Playground zone are the major components that carry all through all the concepts.

B. Kunkel stated that Concept 1 looks at preserving the existing tree canopy as it is today and/ or removing those trees in poor condition and supplementing with new trees. He stated that starting at Greenough Street, there is an existing line of trees, the softball remains essentially in the same location. New and efficient sports lighting would be provided, the lighting would reduce any glare and spill beyond footprint of field and the design would embrace the two gate ways into the park. The athletics zones stay consistent as it is today, but pointed out where they would be taking a more meandering approach to the walkway along the edge from Dana to the MBTA. He pointed out the areas where the concept moves out of the existing tree canopies( to preserve the trees that are there now) and provide a more natural organic feel as you into the playground area. The design still maintains the existing basketball court, and it enhances a calmer picnic area away from active field. The design keeps the playground essentially where it is, perhaps embracing hillside as play areas. The 2- 5, 5-12 and water play areas within the play space where shown.

B. Kunkel stated that in Concept 2, the design shifts toward the school and embraces this slow street/"welcome mat" to and from the high school, keeping the community/plaza area. The field has shifted a bit (some trees have been removed), the corridor is expanded and it embraces more of a public plaza feel. The basketball court as a mixed-use is shown. The playground area is along the edge and this concept shows using taking more of an advantage of the slope that is there now. The water play area and possibly expanding on water play was discussed. He stated that in Concept 3, elements are in a similar space. They have equaled out the playground vs Greenough and the rectangular field. He stated that what's unique about this concept is a formalized internal walking trail along the perimeter of the park itself.

Scott Landgren introduced himself. He stated that to further expand some of the thinking that Weston and Sampson has presented, the Town design staff has envisioned some additional concepts and images of what the park could look like including other options with moving the field orientations. The first concept maintains the preferred orientation in the west corner and also considers adding spectator seating behind softball field, and moves the other field to opposite corner. He stated that in the playground area, the concepts examine equipment with fall zones and what that equates to, in terms of space requirements, as well as considering a look at play integrated into the hillside. It has a new path that goes up along and parallels the upper sidewalk along Cypress St. An image of swings that allow for sledding was shown. He stated that above the softball field there was a discussion around creating a path to wide enough for people to jog along. Once concept shown pulls of the edge of sidewalk to be widened. He stated that the next concept looked at moving the main field to the opposite corner. He stated that one of the reasons this was considered was to think about the park in terms of the future uses with the reconfigurations at the high school, with the new freshman academy and the main school and what that pedestrian movement would look like. He stated that putting the field in that corner with bleachers and the back stop behind and associated fencing, may force the pedestrians further

down the sidewalk towards a more desired movement along the sidewalk and not through the field area of the park. This also sets up an opportunity for seating in the parks. He stated that another item for discussion some type of amphitheater element to add in in the park to the park. A performance space that would allow one to set up with a stage to look into the park. Visual examples of Playground-layout concepts for these concepts were shown. Playground design inspiration photos were shared with the committee, specifically the opportunities for the size of this space.

N. O'Connor stated that there are a lot of great ideas, She wanted to point out that the team printed out boards of site circulation. E. Gallentine would like some direction on type of circulation, layout of fields ( pros and cons), also get input on the play space and what seems exciting and interesting.

Debora Rivers stated that the existing eastern most softball field has a real dimensional problems. She stated that balls go up over the fence and up her driveway with the men's softball, and that the only scheme that addressed that issue was concept 4. She wanted to point it out because it's a safety issue for people and cars. She stated that other thing she wanted to point out is that the entrance to the MBTA station maybe different and currently, we are basing a lot on the existing pathway and that could be an issue. She stated that we need to think about the new building for the high school and the desire for students to come out into the park.

Helen Charlupski asked if anyone has spoken with the athletic people at the High School. E. Gallentine replied with a yes and gave a brief overview of that meeting. She wishes there were more kids from the high school here tonight. She stated that when you take away those trees you are moving the field over, and then in return kids no longer have the space. Jean stated that we are not taking up the whole space but it gave W&S an opportunity to redesign the space and move the field over, there is a tradeoff how much space. Debora Rivers wanted to point out that there is no opportunity for street trees on north side of Davis, they are on the field side and with climate change keeping pavement shaded is extremely important and she doesn't want that to get lost. She also serves on the Climate Action Committee in town.

A resident addressed the Committee. He stated that this is his front yard. He stated that all these ideas look great. He stated that at the December meeting he brought up the idea of having access from the Davis side mid field, he sees that in one example but it gets lost in the other ones. He would like for that idea to stick around. This resident and G. Bollinger discussed why the softball field is optimal where it is, given the space. Brandon discussed solar glare and a sports orientation field perspective. The resident threw out the idea of Tappan Street being straightened out a little bit and getting more park space.

Johnathan Small addressed the Commission. He stated the various concepts look very nice and he likes the direction. He stated that one thing that cannot be forgotten is the sledding hill. He does not want the sledding hill to be disturbed. He does not like the option where the basketball court goes to the corner of the park. He stated that balls would be flying onto Tappan Street. The option where the field closest to the high school

tis tucked into corner, he wonders if foul lines seems tight to street and he has noticed a lot of balls hitting cars and that exacerbates that problem.

Bob Goisman addressed the Committee. He stated that there was a mention made of amphitheater /performing arts space and would like for that to be explained a little more in detail, images of this will be shown in the next section of the presentation. He thinks it sound like a terrific idea.

Barry Shield addressed the Committee. He likes the idea of moving the bleachers to the high school side are a great idea and making it more non-traditional so it becomes seating for the HS would be ideal. He likes the idea of using the hillside for the playground, he is worried about creating a loop in the park because it is so challenging with the width. He thinks the notion of turning the field may or may not help. He thinks that the Tappan street corner should stay that way it is and the beaches can take advantage of corner space.

A resident addressed the Committee. She suggested a mid-park entrance and you could incorporate the sidewalks. She likes the idea of removing the trees in front of the HS. She loves the idea of when you come around the corner the park is the front lawn.

Mark Gillete addressed the Committee. He thinks the trees are really important and believes the canopy is a very important element of the park. He would want to know why the trees are in poor condition because any planting plan might run into the same problem. Is it compaction, is it soil, is it road salt? He stated that and on the Davis Street side the fence is so long before you get to an entrance to the park

Matthew Cooney thinks that incorporating the track inside seems problematic, he wonders if there is any reason the fence can't be on outside and incorporating track, so it is serving two purposes. E. Gallentine stated that there is parking on both sides. E. Gallentine stated that she thinks that we need an analysis of where we need fencing/netting and where we can have opening and have other types of treatments and maybe that sidewalk and path can be one. She stated that duplicating that for such a narrow park doesn't see to make sense. She started the idea of looking at a path has been asked to look at in other design review processes for many other parks and she thought it was important to look at. He isn't sure an angled pathway coming out of high school is the right solution.

N. O'Connor sated that she was also thinking about how the pathway could be better accomplished but on the inside using the sidewalk as part of it.

Susan Visnher addressed the committee. She disagrees with Jeannie about taking out the trees, she would have to say a number of those trees are in poor condition but she would like to see as many preserved as possible. She would like to see a better connection from Greenough to the park. She is very attached to the sledding hill. She stated that the idea of imaginative play should be explored. She would like to use part of the hill for play. She thinks the idea of a walking path in the park is not ideal, sadly there is not enough space. The amphitheater is a great idea. She would like to be using the park more, and think the amphitheater will bring herself and more people her age into the park.

Wendy Sheridan stated that on concept 1 the space to left of 3<sup>rd</sup> baseline that green space is used by students often, so to push softball diamond further out eliminates that soft green space that is used quite often during the day. She would like to see that kept. She stated that Concept 4 and 5 had an interesting pedestrian space that stepped away from the cars; she thinks though would provide great access and visitors watching kids play on the field. She stated that now as a parent it's difficult to watch a game. She agrees to keep sledding hill. She stated that Concept 2 is very interesting by turning the basketball court and found that it opened to playground space, to open up community space

Dan Lyons stated that in concept 5, it would take foot traffic away from that area and it's greatly needed. He would like to see a nice seating area beyond it.

John Dempsey addressed the Committee. He agree with not interfering with the sledding hill. He also agrees that there are a lot of people who use the pathway around park for exercise and its fine as it is, so why complicate it. He stated that his main consideration is the orientation of the new wing of the HS. There will be a dramatic change to the comer and the reason they go to left hand upper corner is because that is where the grass is. He thinks that moving that grass down in the corner and orientated to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade campus and focusing on that could be a gathering place. He thinks it's very important. He stated you need to move grassy areas and make it more inviting. He stated that there is line of desire from Greenough street neighborhood to the MBTA Station. He likes the grass area Concept 5 addresses.

C. Batchelor stated that she feels like not enough attention has been given to Greenough Street. She would like to have that looked at in detail. She sees such an important connection in this area.

The stem by stem analysis of the trees down by the Town arborists was discussed. The definitions of fair and good conditions were detailed. Deborah Rivers wanted to point out that some of these concepts show more trees than others, both the students and community need these trees.

J. Lukenda stated that the Greenough and Tappan Corner is very important. She presented 2 extremes of hardscape and softscape ideas that were considered for that corner. She knows that Greenough is closed during certain parts of the day. Examples of having a material carry through from the front of the school, across the public sidewalk, across the street and towards the park. This will provide a feeling of expansion and front door to the HS. It helps with pedestrian movement and it is safe for when vehicles are using that space.

Precedent Images of the following elements were presented:

- various curb lines
- raised tables at the intersections
- examples of place-making
- picking and seating

- examples of furnishing
- examples of performance spaces
- public art opportunities

A resident pointed out that whatever material is chosen for Greenough needs to stand up to plowing

A resident addressed the Committee. She has concerns with Greenough have already been bollards taken out already taken out. She stated that we need to think about the density of pick up and drop off when the street is open. She stated in the evening there adequate parking, parents and there are a lot of safety issues.

E. Gallentine stated that the hope with slow material is for it to be a visual and physical cue that something different is happening.

A resident pointed out that in Amsterdam the bollards go beneath the ground when not being used.

Deborah Rivers believes that the intersection with the new building on Cypress and Tappan is a point that needs to be addressed.

Wendy Sheridan stated that she would like to make an effort to be very thoughtful of the slow street design. She doesn't feel like the four photos of that area were a representative of this robust high school entrance creatively or visually. She doesn't feel like any images accurately portray this specific condition. She knows it is conceptual but when we when we get to design of that we need to be very particular . C. Batchelor sated that whole design is very important and a great opportunity. She urges everyone to look at it in much more detail. G. Bolinger agrees with that, and explained it was difficult to find precedent images. He stated that they will be taking a much deeper dive into this specific area of the design. He stated that all the comments are terrific.

S. Landgren showed a few images of the existing high school design, specifically at the MBTA new station as known to date. The movement of the MBTA entrance was recently moved by the MBTA, it is understood to be the standard entrance in terms of safety. It was moved because they do not want the kids walking out onto the tracks from the new stairs. The fencing for this area was not detailed in the materials that had been provided. The ticket kiosk location was discussed. N. O'Connor sated that all comments about the bottom side of Street should go to the BHS expansion group. She would hope that the design folks for the high school side of the Tappan are going to be collaborating with design associated with the park. E. Gallentine discussed the meetings that have taken place with the architects for the BHS expansion/looking at streetscape and think about recommendations/schematic designs that would enhance streetscape and enhance connection to park. Examples of overview plans/ schematic designs were shared with the committee for feedback.

C. Batchelor thinks the next step in the design need to be focusing on all the edges, integrating benches and seating areas. She wants to thinks about where we have seat walls/fencing /netting. She would like a much closer look at circulation. She prefers a more curvilinear approach on playground equipment and incorporated with the hill. She

stated that in terms of performance area (amphitheater) on that end (this was pointed out) she stated it will be need to be doubled as other uses. She stressed the important of the slow street. She thinks that the field orientation with the field layout from third base from home parallel to Greenough Street is nicer because it emphasizes the connection between the high school and the field and thinks that is worth pursuing. She wonders if we should be looking at ways to direct pathway traffic. She likes the field where they are as long as we can put netting in to catch fly balls.

E. Gallentine feels like she hasn't heard enough pros and cons to make a final decision about field orientation. She also thinks we need an overlay with proper dimensions on softball and have a conversation about softball.

N. O'Connor is wondering if it were girls' softball where do we need to have fencing, and what type of netting do we need to add. The sledding hill is very important to her. She loves the thought of hillside play. She is wondering about incorporating the sidewalk to address a perimeter path. She stated that in terms of the Slow Street, she thought it would be wonderful to have a plaza and overlap it into the entire campus look.

Deborah Rivers stated that a lot of furniture was shown to the Committee, but there is something nice and flexible about people bringing their own chairs. The idea of moveable vs. built in.

Dan Lyons stated that Concept 5 addresses the issue of sun in the player's eyes. He likes orientation of the field in that concept. He likes the idea mixing the perimeter path with the sidewalk.

A resident stated that the field Orientation in Concept 5 is good for men's softball. He likes the natural play space on hillside. He would like to see a one way bike trail along Davis.

D. Lyons moved to approve the December 12, 2018 Cypress Design Review Minutes. Seconded by W. Sheridan. All in favor.