



TOWN of BROOKLINE  
Massachusetts

Department of Public Works  
PARKS AND OPEN SPACE DIVISION

*Andrew M. Pappastergion*  
Commissioner

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Director

**John E. Murphy Playground**  
**Design Review Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Webex**  
**Wednesday, June 3, 2020, 6:00 p.m.**

**Committee Members Present:** John Bain, Nancy O'Connor, Dan Lyons, Antonia Bellalta, Laura O'Brien, Mariah Nobrega and Alan Christ

**Committee Members Absent:** Laura O'Brien

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

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

**Welcome/Call Meeting to Order**

J. Bain opened the meeting.

E. Gallentine introduced herself. She welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting.

E. Gallentine gave a brief overview of what is on the agenda for tonight.

Introduction —

Goals & Priorities, Project Budget and Timeline

Existing Conditions and Site Analysis

Open Discussion

Summary and Conclusion

The project timeline was discussed.

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## **Project Goals and Priorities:**

### **Accessibility, Inclusion and Safety**

Treatment of the park's perimeter and entries to address issues of universal accessibility

Multi-generational uses within the park

Redesign for new playground to include play equipment for all ages and resilient safety surfacing

Upgrade of water play

Assess the grading and drainage to direct runoff appropriately

Assess hardcourt play areas and uses

Consideration of site furniture and destinations for seating and picnicking throughout the park

Assessment of plant health/develop planting plan

Murphy has been in the CIP for 6 years, but has been planned for about 8 years. The estimated budget was detailed.

E. Gallentine introduced the members of the Design Review Committee.

J. Waisnor introduced herself and detailed the park context and current existing conditions of Murphy Playground.

J. Waisnor detailed the current park entrances, perimeter fencing, current playground play equipment for 5-12 year olds, current play equipment for 2-5 year olds, current lawn and plantings (There are a lot of mature trees and yews.), the current hard court and water play area and site furniture.

All concept plans can be switched around. The big overriding theme is looking at accessibility and making entrances within the park ADA compliant.

#### **Landscape Concept Plan #1**

This concept takes the entrance at Bowker Street and slides it down along Bowker Street. The entrance would be gated with a double gate, one vehicular entrance that would remain locked and the other gate would be a 4 ft. pedestrian gate. She stated that there would be some bike racks to the left and as you continue along path, there is a seating area tucked away from the action of the playground. She stated that as you continue along the pathway you come to the 2-5 play area, this concept shows water play within the 2-5 year old play area. That area is fenced off. She stated that as you come out gate of the 2-5 you come to a picnic area and as you continue along the path you come to the 5-12 year old play space on one side and on other side a hard court play area. This hard court is area in this concept shows a three point layout, and as you continue along the path and exit on Brook Street. The entrance at Brook Street has been slid down and the idea behind that is to use the path to create two different sides of the park.

#### **Landscape Concept Plan #2**

This concept brings you along Bowker and keeps the entrance roughly in same location but the pathway is realigned to allow for ADA compliance. She stated that as you continue along you

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come to paved area that has water play/water fountain, then a gate into the 2-5 year old play space with picnic tables, benches and a seat wall along the back edge to help with grading from Bowker to the play space. She stated that as you continue along the pathway you will turn right and you will find a circular shape hardcourt play area, with a seating area tucked in the back corner. Then once again you have the 5- 12 year old play space. The path exits onto Brook Street at the current entrance.

### Landscape Concept Plan #3

This concept shows the Bowker entrance almost halfway into the park. She stated they you will come along the path to an open lawn on the right hand side, then you will be at the gated 2-5 year old play space, you come back out the gates on left hand side to a water play area with a retaining wall that can be used as a seat wall. She stated that in front of the water play is a paved space with the water fountain. She stated that what is different in this concept is the loop pathway around 5-12 year old play space. This will create some slope on the top edge. She stated that as you come back onto the pathway you will come to a hard court play space with a different shape.

The existing vs proposed new tree renderings were shown on the drawings

### Landscape Concept Plan #4

The last concept has you come along Bowker Street and has the double gate entry, the same as concept 3. One side of the gate is shut for vehicular and the other one is a smaller gate for a pedestrian entrance. There are bike racks on the right hand side and on left hand side is a seating area. This seating area is at the high point of the park so it gives you a nice overlook. She stated that you would continue along the pathway that has a fence on the side, there would then be a paved area to enter onto the water play or come from the gates and enter into 2-5 year old play space. The play space has a retaining wall on the back edge to help with the grade and could be a seat wall. There is an open lawn on the right side and this concept has a lopped path around 2-5 year old play space. The hard court over has slid over to tuck in right hand corner. Along the path is picnicking and benches.

Examples of furniture palettes were shown to the Committee.

### Open Discussion

J. Bain liked concept number 1 but he is concerned is that the entrance is close to Kent and Brook Street. He says it's been hit a few times by cars and he would rather see the path go up in the middle. His other concern is with 99 Kent and having senior citizens feel safe walking into the park, he wonders if there could be a flat section for seating. He stated that 99 Kent doesn't have open space within this park. He thought concept number 2 didn't have much of change from what is there now and the entrance at the end next to the house could be moved to the middle.

Antonia Bellalta stated that she likes the entrances on concept number 1. She thinks that it receives people from the public area rather than tucked in by houses, and believe it addresses the senior housing across the street. She likes the land forms of concept 1 and she thinks it feel more generous where the playground is not tucked in corner but incorporated with open space. J. Waisnor and A. Bellalta discussed the placement of the fencing near the playground in the concept. A. Bellalta thinks concept 1 to her is better with the shapes of playgrounds and land forms. She likes the shape of the basketball court. A. Bellalta and J. Waisnor discussed how concept 1 addressed sledding. They are all accessible but they will take some filling in central

space to fill up grade. In the 2-5 play area having the water feature right in it does it compromise amount of play equipment. She likes the retaining and seat wall.

Alan Christ agrees he preferred scheme 1 with the entrance closer to the corner, it seems more comfortable. He agrees that the water play and seating could potentially switch that would help with space constraint. His concern with concept 1 is the southern portion of the entrance near Bowker and Kent. The green space now is a bit closer to rectangular/square and often use for whiffle ball game or capture the flag. He worries that this portion of the curb that drags down Kent and Bowker makes the green space less functional. He does like the general gesture and he wonders if the entrance was dragged a little closer to the 2-5 play area, then you could get a little more green space in that and he thinks that would potentially help.

Mariah Borega stated that she likes the look number 1 with free flowing path, but agrees with A. Christ that it impedes the functionality of the green space as it is currently used. She is concerned about what John said about corner being hit by cars so having entrance there seems not the best use of the space. She gravitated most towards plan 3, but the worst thing about the playground now is that the water feature is not where the low area of the playground is so there is constant water. She wonders if instead of having the water feature where it is now, that maybe you put the water feature where the basketball court is and move the basketball court were the seating area and put seating area where water is in number 3. She would like to see the seating area where the water play is. She stated that there is no 12 plus anywhere or any welcoming experience for older users.

E. Gallentine stated that its small space so we need to think of a fun hang out space that is attractive to teens but during the day can be a quiet space for the folks from 99 Kent. Mariah Nobrega liked having the ability to have seating that is very accessible and making clear spots that welcomes all ages. E. Gallentine agrees and said J. Waisnor is working on that.

Dan Lyons gravitates toward plan 1. D. Lyons and A. Bellalta discussed the concept with water play within the 2-5 year old area. D. Lyons is concerned with the entrance/exit onto Brook Street and thinks maybe it can be curved to the left.

J. Waisnor discussed the drainage and grading that will take place.

J. Waisnor pointed out where current sledding takes place.

Marissa and Michael Voght addressed the committee. M. Voght asked if there is a traffic calming on Kent Street being done on the street. E., Gallentine stated that traffic calming goes through the Transportation Board. Traffic calming in the past for this area was discussed. M. Voght asked if the committee has talked to day care/preschools who use the space. E. Gallentine said that is a great suggestion, she will reach out and make sure they get a copy of the survey,

Liz Linder addressed the committee. She was curious about the fence material along the perimeter along the inside. J. Waisnor stated that it will be chain link like it currently is. L. Linder likes the first concept, the way that the path widens through and the points everyone made about moving things around were interesting.

A resident addressed the committee. He lives across the street and frequents the park quite often. He likes the loop on the path because his kids ride bikes and scooters around. He really does not like how close the entrance is to Kent in concept 1 from a safety standpoint. He likes the

aesthetics on concept 1 but one thing he noticed is that it looked because of the curvature you lost the rectangle green space. He likes now how the entrances are very far from Kent.

A resident addressed the committee. Her only comment was about site lines on Kent Street driving out from Bowker because the fence comes so close to the corner of Kent so it hard to see when you approaching the stop sign. She wants to make that corner of the fence come back in a little more so that when you are looking out from Bowker you could see cars coming from both directions. E. Gallentine stated that she would look into this.

## Play Equipment

Examples of potential furniture pallets were shown.

Examples of LSI pieces were shown to the Committee.

Examples of Berliner play pieces were shown to the Committee.

Examples of play venture pieces, spinner play pieces, movement play pieces and swings were shown.

E. Gallentine pointed out Movement pieces that could appeal older kids.

A resident stated that in the first one from LSI he likes how natural it looks, it looked like trees and woods. He likes all of them but the first one he was drawn to.

A resident stated that all the play pieces are fabulous but wonders if the structures will go in the same location, while the younger kids be next to residential house or will there be options to move things around. E. Gallentine stated that we envisioned keeping the lawn with the younger kids staying in back corner to be fully fenced off and enclosed.

Nancy O'Connor stated that she wanted to mention the fencing at Bowker as you're coming out onto Kent and the site lines. She wonders if there was a possibility of doing something on that corner similar to what it was done at Brookline Ave without an entrance but with a bench to two. She said you would have a cut back but you have benches for people at 99 Kent or people walking along Kent to take a break. She stated that we have been talking about the need for Seating for older folks who need to rest. O'Connor stated that an resident of 99 Kent asked that the basketball court be leveled off, stated she likes sitting on swings when its quiet, she would like to see seating for older residents with a café table and some type of shade.

Alan Christ stated that one thing with respect to the play equipment that is nice now is there is good diversity of different things and he hopes that would maintain. He stated that the 5-12 swings are highly used. He thinks structures and monkey bars that are a little bit more challenging for older kids would be a good thing with any manufacturers. He stated that for the younger kids we talked about the sand box pros and cons and he knows that the one nice thing about the area is that kids will bring trucks to play with in the sand box.. He stated that overall a good mix of climbing and slides seems to go over well the kids.

M. Nobrega likes LSI for 5-12, because she thinks that the park is dense so the 2-5 year olds is always in the 5-12 space. She likes that it allows the older kids to have fun while not necessarily offering an option for younger kids to hurt themselves. She didn't like first set of 2-5 year old houses. She likes when they are more open. She stated that wooden house get very smelly. She liked the spinners and likes that the movement/balance boards are great for all ages.

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E. Gallentine stated that given the budget there will be poured in place to accessible access points and transfer platforms but it will largely be fiber wood chip surfacing.

Antonia Bellalta stated that overall the comments made are helpful. She stated that she relies on what the community is longing for there. She does like the smaller pieces that are more interactive not a one child thing. She thinks the space is so limited and special and would like to see pieces that allows for more than one child at a time is better.

D. Lyons stated that it might not be a bad idea to have that loop up along Brook Street and maybe facilitate an entrance in the middle of block further away from Kent if possible. He likes the balancing play elements. He thinks there have been a lot of good comments.

J. Bain likes the first LSI. He likes that it's different and is real neat piece of equipment. He stated that there have been a lot of comments and as always J. Waisnor has done a great job. He agrees that up on Brook Street that we should bring the entrance a little closer to the middle of the park. He agrees with N. O'Connor that at the corner of Kent and Bowker that we should set back the fence to an angle and get one bench in there. He stated that he has noticed that 99 Kent has no smoking outside door so they go outside and use Murphy. He thinks that it something we need to watch out for. Mariah Nobrega stated that she has reached out to the Building management at 99 Kent regarding a smoking area. E. Gallentine has a contact and will reach and talk about that.

A resident stated that he likes the idea of pulling the Bowker corner in and create seating. He has noticed the smoking and it's good to address that. His biggest concern is the safety.

Laura likes the idea of the kick back corner for a bench but is used for smoking, but thinks we need to have 99 Kent commit to smoking area. She stated that there are great structures, but would stay away from anything too enclosed, the younger area after hours becomes a high school hang out. She would like to see an open structure. Her other concern is the height of the fence and all this growth that is pulling down her gutters. E. Gallentine stated that at the next meeting we will have a full assessment on condition and heights of the fences.

A resident stated that she understands the loop for kids to ride around. She loves the LSI green piece. She stated that it furthers the idea of green space. She stated that the idea of enclosed structures/hide out becomes an area to sleep/pee and she would shy away from. She would like to see things open and not have entrance to close to Kent Street.

E. Gallentine stated that we will be sending out a link to a survey, setting up a project page, the next meeting will be in the fall and this will incorporate all comments and turn that into a refined design. E. Gallentine wanted to thank J. Waisnor for all her work and stated that we are very fortunate to have her working on this project.

J. Bain thanked everyone and stated that there were a lot of good comments. He encourages everyone to visit the parks and hopes everyone stays safe.

Meeting Adjourned.