



T O W N o f B R O O K L I N E  
*Massachusetts*

Department of Public Works  
PARKS AND OPEN SPACE DIVISION

*Andrew M. Pappastergion*  
*Commissioner*

*Erin Chute*  
*Gallentine*  
*Director*

**Margaret E. Robinson Playground  
Design Review Committee Meeting #5 Minutes  
Wednesday, August 26, 2020, 6:00 p.m.  
Zoom Webinar**

**Committee Members Present:** Wendy Sheridan, Antonia Bellalta, Kim Jennings, Michael Glover, Nancy O'Connor and Beverly Gallagher

**Committee Members Absent:** John Bain

**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**

N. O'Connor moved for approval of the May 27, 2020 minutes. Seconded by W. Sheridan. All in favor. A roll call was taken. N. O'Connor abstained.

E. Gallentine stated that this is our 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. She said the dialogue has been positive and constructive. This park is the heart and center of this neighborhood. She stated that there is a wonderful design/concept being shown tonight.

**Agenda**

Background

Site Design Concepts

Open Discussion  
Vote and Review of Priorities  
Summary and Conclusion

**E. Gallentine listed the Project Goals and Priorities:**

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

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

Upgrade of water play

Upgrade the natural athletic field and support infrastructure

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

The project timeline was detailed for the Committee.

The Existing Conditions Plan was shared with the Committee.

J. Waisnor reviewed the comments to date:

Universal access into and within the park

Separation of 2-5 year and 5-12 year play spaces

Keeping as much open space as possible desired

Existing trees and character of the park is important to maintain

Support for the multi-use park including the green dog program

Would like to preserve the sledding hill by the maintenance entry

A clean and open space that are inviting for families to gather and share

A multipurpose sustainable open space that promotes inclusion and connection to the outdoors

## Concept 1- Full Court- Preferred Concept

J. Waisnor walked the Committee through this concept. She stated that you come in off Cypress into the park, as you come along the path there is a seating area ( Adirondack chair), trees both new and existing were pointed out along the path, you then come to hardcourt play space ( full court basketball high school dimensions, pickle ball and four square, potential skate able wall element and picnic table), you come back on the pathway that gets wider to accommodate maintenance vehicles, you then enter a swing zone ( fiber surfacing/engineered mulch), then you come to a picnic table and as you go along there is a pergola with seating, you then come to bike racks and come out of the park onto High Street Place. She has been working with a Transportation Engineer to figure out the best alignment for the gate. She stated that you come up into the playground area and the water play is in the top corner.

A close up of the Basketball Court/hardcourt space-Cypress Street was shown to the Committee. The trees in this area were detailed.

An enlargement of the swing and pergola seating area was shared with the Committee. It consisted of a hammock swing, 3 bay swing set with an accessible swing on the end, net swings, 2 bay swing set (accessible and belt swings) and a peddler swing piece. J. Waisnor stated that as you move along the path in this area, you come to a pergola with café tables and or Adirondack chair with side tables and a bike rack.

A letter from abutters in favor of keeping the basketball/ hard court area where it is now on High Street Place was shared with the Committee.

J. Waisnor walked the Committee through plan 2 – that keeps the hardcourt area where is currently is on High Street Place. She stated that you could come off Cypress and come around the corner to the swing area, then a seating area, you then come to pavilion pergola with seating and you turn in to a basketball court ( it has gotten smaller to make it regulation size high school) and provide a buffer. The playground area is the same as the first plan.

Enlargement images of the hardcourt plan 2 were shown. The planting in this area was detailed.

A swing zone plan enlargement was shown. The only difference in the plan is that there is one less swing set.

Examples of a multi-use hardcourt play was shown.

A slide of example pieces pergola seating/ performance space were shown.

Site furnishings examples were shown. All three collections was shared with the Committee.

The Playground-LSI concept was shown. It has a wee saw (accessible), 5-12 and 2-5 play structures and a bay of swings. J. Waisnor detailed this play pieces.

The Water Play Concept by Votrex was shown. It would be a flat concrete pad with flushed jets.

Examples of water play alternates was shown.

A summary of probable costs was shown to the committee. It consisted of the base bid, bond and contingency and possible add alternates.

E. Gallentine stated that there was a question from the audience asking if the furniture and chairs underneath the pergola will be fixed. J. Waisnor stated that we could do movable and or fixed seating along edges. Electrical for this area was discussed.

The financial difference between moving the hard court play vs keeping it were it is was discussed. E. Gallentine stated that because the Capital Improvement Project was pushed out a year she has proposed to that Park and Recreation Commission that the budget be increase and that the request includes the pergola and full playground and swing area.

W. Sheridan thanked J. Waisnor for narrowing all the comments down to two final concepts. She thinks both are great concepts, but she tends to prefer concept 2. She prefers concept 2 for a couple of reasons. She stated in particular she prefers the location of the pergola in that plan and its proximity to the sports court. She can see community events overflowing from the pergola to that hard surface. She felt like the bank of swings in concept 1 was almost too expansive. She stated that in terms of her notes, she stated that there were 2 Adirondack chairs in the seating area, but she would like to accommodate more than 2 people to sit together and possibly add a second picnic table next to the ban of swings in concept 2. She stated that she loves the benches near the park entrance, she does see people spending time near the entrance, in addition she thinks it would be nice to have flexibility seating in the pergola, but she likes the idea of furniture built in along the edges. She stated that in terms of water play area, she would love to see us using every square footage of this area when it's not water play season. She wonders how you add play value to that space in winter/fall months. She wants to make sure that space is not limited to only water and make it a year round space.

The Clark Park hardcourt area was discussed.

A. Bellalta stated that W. Sheridan did a great job/ analysis. She stated that right now Pierce Basketball location being up front close to street and lit feels better to

her than the basketball court for example on Boylston Street. She would tend to move the basketball court up to Cypress Street, it seems like the noise would go out into the street rather than kept in the corner. She likes the possibility (if the community doesn't oppose) of having the skate wall up front, rather than hidden in the back. She thinks that hard court can go in either place, but likes the idea of having it closer to the street and lit. She thinks using texture/markings/colors on the ground of the water play is a great idea. That way this area is used not just used in the summer. She thinks doing something in the concrete itself would be nice. She would like more flexibility of seating, she sees how moveable seating has been so successful at Emerson. She would vote for more flexibility in the seating. E. Gallentine stated that the Adirondack chairs would be fixed in place, specifically because you don't want chairs dragged across athletic fields. Emerson is a flexible space and because of the programming on the field it may be more effective to have them fixed. N. O'Connor stated that there is a lot to be said about benches at the entrances, she really likes that idea.

K. Jennings wanted to echo about the benches at the entrances.

B. Gallagher wanted to agree with the seating. She stated that seating is very important. She thinks around the pergola edge some fixed seating would be a great idea. Her grandkids try to ride scooters inside the current water play, but the surface is so bumpy that it's impossible. She stated that if the water play area in the non-useable months could have a smooth surface kids would definitely ride there. She was sad to see swings taken out, all she hears is more and more swings. She knows its give and take but wanted to stress how important swings are.

M. Glover thanked J. Waisnor, E. Gallentine and the rest of the team for these thoughtful options. In terms of location of the hard court he doesn't feel strongly either way. However, he leans toward moving the basketball court up for all the reasons A. Bellalta mentioned. He stated that he is sympathetic to the noise concerns, but no matter where you put it there will be noise. He is glad to see some thought put into the skate wall, he wants to follow through working with skaters to come up with an element that that they will appreciate and get a lot of use out of. He has seen alternative water play in parks, he does not find it to be that flexible and is hesitant to do any alternative water play. He appreciates wanting a lot of swings, but wonders if we are a little over swung. He wonders if it is worth thinking about decreasing the swings to the amount in concept 2 and then thinking about that space for seating or additional green space.

W. Sheridan stated while looking at concept 2, she wanted to put a remark in that if you think about Clark Park which has a basketball court used constantly by all ages, it is at the back of park and it's not up front on Cypress Street ( it is tucked in back) and not objected to. She respects if people prefer placement plan number 1, but hopes were not making a judgment about usage to determine design of park.

N. O'Connor stated that when we talked about Clark we talked moving Basketball on Cypress for the same reasons, it's tight back there as well but it brought in a whole host of fencing. She doesn't know if we have heard any complaints, it is well used and well loved. She is inclined to number 2 and keeping the court over at High Street Place.

Peter Hoss addressed the Committee. He apologized for not attending any of the other meetings. He loves the fact of the upgrade to the park, there are lot of terrific ideas. He lives in corner where you are proposing to move the basketball from High Street to Cypress Street. He would be 100 percent against that and if that is the choice he will move. He can picture basketball balls flying into traffic onto Cypress along with noise backing up onto his property, he would be very upset and disappointed. He is not in favor of moving it at all. He discussed a picnic table that had been removed/disappeared. E. Gallentine will look into why the table was removed.

E. Gallentine and J. Waisnor discussed the field dimensions.

Meghan Rock addressed the committee. She stated that will all due respect from the previous speaker, she would like to express her support for moving the basketball court to Cypress Street. She stated that it will provide better accessibility and also creates a line of site from children who are at the playground and moving back and forth between the two. She stated that with regards to noise she has a friend that abuts the Basketball Park at Clark and they have had no problem with use or noise. She doesn't think she needs to see changes with water play, as long as it is all season use. She is open to variety in that big bank of swings. She thinks the plan looks good.

Anne Luske addressed the committee. She prefers concept 1. The 2-5 are in the little play area and 5-12 year old that will move back and forth between the low area and swings, so it does keeps kids in safer section of park. She prefers hard court to be over by Cypress. There are 12 condos along High Street Place and three others where the hard court is. She stated that there are more people along High

Street Place than the other side. She wants the water play, but she likes alternative water play as well. She thinks with the alternative play it is more integrative and can last later into the season. She prefer the rectangle pergola and not having bolted seating. She thinks it would be distracting to have basketball court behind pergola. She would like more seating and she loves all the swings. She is in favor of concept 1.

Fencing around the basketball court was discussed. J. Waisnor stated that the intent is that the fencing would stay as is on Cypress, a few more trees could be added to screen the court from the street. She stated on the other concept the existing fence would stay along High Street, but the interior fence would be taken down.

N. O'Connor stated that she prefers concept two. She likes the proximity of the pergola to the court.

B. Gallagher stated that she is mixed about it, but she believes concept one is better in terms of accessibility and visibility.

K. Jennings stated that she agrees with W. Sheridan regarding overflow and supports concept two as well.

A. Bellalta likes concept one better. She thinks the flow between the play is safer and she likes that it's more illuminated and more accessible to a larger group of people.

M. Glover prefers concept one.

W. Sheridan prefers concept two. She started that the only point that has not been brought up today but has been a big discussion early on is the need for the tweens. It is a huge need in this park. She sees connection between the playground and the swings being closer in concept one but prefers separation to swings to give a space to the tweens.

Alex addressed the Committee. He thinks either plan looks great. He had a comment about the amount of paved area. He stated that looking at either plan it looks sidewalk heavy.

E. Gallentine stated that the committee favored having this perimeter path that goes around. She stated that it is important in terms of accessibility in all elements of the park. She stated that we tried to maximize the lawn. She stated that point well taken and to the extent to try to keep space open and green spaces.

N. O'Connor discussed the paths at Warren and Amory. She stated that it does disappear, it's not opposing, and it's great exercise and has been an overwhelming request.

Jonathan Hibbard stated that they are one of the High Street Condo units and they agree with Peter Hoss in regards to not moving the hard court to Cypress for all the reasons Peter articulated.

There were comments about having the pergola area slightly raised. E. Gallentine stated that this can be explored.

A. Bellalta stated that if we were to relocate pergola closer to the basketball Court on Cypress Street and move the swings closer to the playground, so it felt like there is unifying play activity. She understand moving the hard court is picky at this point

Examples of Pergola styles were shown. E. Gallentine stated that the contemporary style seems to be more airy, light and fitting for this space, but none of these have been designed or finalized. J. Waisnor was looking for input as she moves into construction and engineering bid docs. A. Bellalta agrees with E. Gallentine the lighter ones will be much more fitting and is a contemporary look. W. Sheridan would agree with that the top left options feels light and airy, and balances the design of playgrounds structure well. B. Gallagher agrees that the top left option for all the reasons stated and thinks there will be less graffiti with a simpler option. K. Jennings agree with top left or right, something very simple. M. Glover aggress and likes the top left the best. A. Luske prefers the more historic traditional style.

N. O'Connor asked if maybe there is a way to add moveable Adirondacks to try it out. E. Gallentine replied with a yes

Collections 1, 2 and 3 of site furniture suites were shown.

W. Sheridan prefers collection number 3. She feels 2 feels a little corporate. She likes the playfulness of the line and pieces in collection 3. She likes the white but is open to different finishes. N. O'Connor does not like the double legs on the picnic tables. A. Bellalta thinks collection 2 works best and goes with pergola. W. Sheridan thinks collection two does work and goes with the pergola, but does feel squared off to her, in particular that tables and benches which might be fine but that is where she feels like it is a little more commercial. W. Sheridan wondered if the top right Chair alone in collection 3 could work with collection 2. She thinks the chair looks very comfortable. N O'Connor and A. Bellalta both prefer

collection 2, it will seem like a family with the direction of the pergola. B. Gallagher likes the chairs in collection 3 and the benches in collection 2. She is concerned about them being moveable. She likes the picnic table in Collection 1. K. Jennings liked the chairs in concept 3, but likes the picnic table in collection 1. K. Jennings asked if it could get a half bench so it can be accessible. J. Waisnor responded with a yes. M. Glover doesn't feel strongly about any of them. His only comment is he tends not to prefer single seating. He would prefer benches/picnic tables.

E. Gallentine stated that she is hearing the Committee likes the Chairs from collection 3, the benches from collection 2, and the picnic tables from collection 1.

N. O'Connor feels that since there is a split vote on the concept regarding placement of the hardcourt, one more meeting is needed before the plan is presented to the full Park and Recreation Commission. W. Sheridan and E. Gallentine discussed that the Commission would be voting on the recommendation of the design review committee. W. Sheridan stated that if both plans were presented to the Commission we could still have members of this design review Committee in attendance to state how they voted one way or another. E. Gallentine feels that either option would work.

M. Glover, B. Gallagher, K. Jennings would be available October 13<sup>th</sup> to meet before the full Commission. E. Gallentine stated that this is a hard decision and will not be perfect for everyone. She thinks bringing it to the full Commission is the appropriate next step.

N. O'Connor motioned that the design review committee for Robinson meet before the October Park and Recreation Commission meeting for a final vote on the concept plan 1 or 2 to then present the full design to the Park and Recreation Commission. W. Sheridan stated that another motion could be have the full Commission vote on concept 1 or 2, but everyone is attendance. She feels that the 7<sup>th</sup> member of this group has missed the conversation and comments and will vote on a much abbreviated discussion. N. O'Connor stated that we can provide draft minutes and have been recording and feel as though we can update J. Bain as to what the conversation was and the input received from the public and members of this committee.

E. Gallentine suggests that we follow standard protocol which is that we go to the Park and Recreation Commission with one plan and so the design Review

Committee will meet first for a final review and vote before the Commission Meeting. N. O'Connor motioned for this design review committee to reconvene one more time before the Park and Recreation Commission October Meeting. Second by W. Sheridan. All a roll call was taken. All in favor.

E. Gallentine wanted to thank both the committee and public for their time and input. She stated that no matter which design is ultimately chosen that it will be designed to highest standard.

W. Sheridan moved to adjourn. Seconded by N. O'Connor. All in favor.