

**Design Review Committee Meeting  
Brookline Avenue Playground  
Town Hall, Room 111  
Tuesday, September 30, 2014, 7:00 p.m.**

**Committee Members Present:** John Bain, Daniel Lyons, Clara Batchelor, James Carroll, Wendy MacMillan, Dawn Oates and Erica Key.

**Staff Present:** Jessica Zarni, Administrative Assistant, Annie Blair, Landscape Architect, Brandon Fitts, Recreation Therapist.

**Guests Present:** see attached

### **Welcome/Call Meeting to Order**

J. Bain called the meeting to order. J. Bain moved for approval of the minutes. Seconded by D. Oates. All in favor.

A. Blair went over the overall process.

A. Blair listed the project goals, which consist of multigenerational uses, a beautiful green frame for the park to buffer it and make it an oasis, active and passive opportunities, building community and maximizing opportunities for people and children of all abilities, and providing a place for them to come together.

The goals for the play equipment and surfacing followed: extended interaction in group play, features that pull a number of children in, focal points, cause and effect, shady areas, natural play, components/pieces big or small that can be manipulated, play that is directed by the child, not the equipment, imaginative play, play spaces that feel enclosed but are easily visible, such as underneath composite structures, and a tricycle route.

Four different types of swings were shown. A. Blair recommends the Berliner Cloud swings and C. Batchelor stated that they are having problems with the connecting bolts on those specific swings. C. Batchelor recommended talking to the manufacturer's representative.

Rocking structures similar to seesaws and accommodating a number of users were shown. Two examples were from Kompan and Landscape Structures. A. Blair prefers the Landscape Structures one because it provides better back support. A hammock structure and tube structure were discussed.

Example of the training structures, sliding structures, balancing structures, gathering structures, spinning structures, experimenting structures, manipulating structures, areas for pretending and natural play structures were shown to the Committee.

Ages five to twelve and two to five composite structures and sizes of these structures were discussed.

A. Blair displayed and discussed 4 alternative drawings showing overall concepts for the layout of the play equipment area:

A. Uses the existing footprint of the playground, provides equal areas for lawn and play equipment, and shows tree plantings within the play area and a picnic grove just northeast of the playground. A new tricycle path is shown to replace the existing path that doesn't work well. Boulders are used as accents. Play equipment shown includes the sand play with conveyor belt, the Seagull swing, the three rocking tubes, and one of the 4 seater spring toys. There is not a lot of space in this option for play equipment.

B. Enlarges the playground by moving the fence line to the northeast edge of the existing parking lot, maximizes the play equipment, and maintains a relatively smaller lawn area. This has two composite structures from Landscape Structures similar to what is at Menino Park. A. Blair stated that Menino Park is approximately 90 percent play equipment, and D. Oates thinks this provides the wow factor there. J. Bain, C. Batchelor and W. MacMillan discussed the conflict in vehicular and pedestrian use between the Lynch Center and the playground. A. Blair stated that we will be staying inside the park footprint in this project. A. Blair stated that this footprint will allow us to fit in two side by side Berliner double pod swings, the three rocking tubes, a four person spring toy, the Seagull swing, the super nova tilted wheel, the rotating net structure for small kids, the hammock, a 5-12 year old composite structure, a 2-5 year old composite structure, the Sway Fun and a variety of swings. E. Key asked if there would be a sand structure, and A. Blair said not but she could take something else out to insert that. D. Lyons and A. Blair discussed an entry plaza. J. Bain asked if there was any room for a passive area, and he wondered if an area where the trees are going in it could be a spot for benches. A. Blair agrees and she stated along Brookline Ave when they plant trees that will be a great opportunity for benches.

C. Uses the same footprint as in B but divides the space evenly between play equipment and lawns/trees. Planting will go around the lawn area and there will be furniture at various locations throughout the park. A picnic area was discussed. The play equipment that fits this area consists of construction sand play, Seagull swings, rotating Christmas tree net structure, a hammock, a Landscape Structure force feeder, the super nova, the double pod swings, the three tubes and the sway fun. This is a compromise between green space, exploring space and play equipment.

A. Blair talked about considering an option like C but flipping the locations of the lawn and play equipment so the lawn would be closer to the Lynch Center, but described the flaws in that arrangement.

A. Blair stated that all these options have balance beams.

J. Bain and A. Blair discussed how you need 6-9 feet around each play equipment pieces for the safety zone. J. Bain asked if there would be water play, and E. Key expressed her support for water play. A. Blair explained that water play are not an option because of the operating expense. E. Key stated that is could be such a small amount of water, gave examples of these pieces that do not use a lot of water and expressed how it would be a great asset to the park. D. Oates supports the play value of the water play. C. Batchelor suggested looking at low-tech means of

collecting water, such as a rain barrel, which can be used as part of the water play. E. Key would like to see sand and water. W. MacMillian discussed how the kids love the sand, but the teachers and staff at the Lynch Center are opposed to it because of the difficulty of keeping it clean.

B. Fitts asked if the baseball field will be regular grass or synthetic turf. A. Blair explained that at this point we are maintaining the natural turf, but if Brookline Youth Baseball is able to raise the funds for synthetic turf we will redesign for that. He stated that if this was to become synthetic turf it will be the most requested park in Brookline. B. Fitts stated that he would love to see a comfort station/accessible restroom area. D. Oates would also love to see something like this. D. Oates asked if there was space to create an outdoor bathroom facility, something attached to the building or a stand-alone pod. A. Blair stated that we don't have the budget for this, but if Youth Baseball is successful in its fund-raising a comfort station would be part of the scope. B. Fitts stated that a bathroom in some way would be pretty vital for the community. C. Batchelor discusses the idea of a porta potty. J. Bain discussed the idea of having a porta potty fee included in the permitting fee. The maintenance issues with a porta potty were discussed. D. Lyons pointed out where a logical place would be to put a porta potty. B. Fitts asked if the picnic area would be roofed, and said that having it covered would make it popular for permitting. A. Blair stated that in an earlier meeting a covered area had been discussed, but the preference was for trees would serve as shade for the picnic area.

A. Blair asked if people have a preference from one layout over another. W. MacMillan and D. Lyons prefer layout C. E. Key asked if there was a way to do something of a mix of all three, suggesting we move the fence as shown in B and C but breaking up the space and getting diagonals going, creating an X out of the layout which would create a better flow. She stated that in layout C there is nowhere for a child with sensory issues to play. If we got a crisscross you would have 2 hubs of activities. She loves where the tubes are in located in layout A. She discussed playing in proximity to green space.

A. Blair asked if this is what she was thinking, having the three tubes, hammock and log along the edge. Thee pick plants are also an opportunity for more individual activity. E. Key would love the swings pointing at a big play equipment or sand play area. The tubes can also be soothing, but serve as a hub for natural play. She suggested having a central hub for seating, two play areas diagonal to each other, and the picnic grove and lawn area diagonal to each other. B. Fitts favors having paths and open spaces that would allow for a quicker escape from and return to activities, and for stimulation. E. Key discussed the tricycle path.

C. Batchelor and A. Blair discussed a glider in this area. C. Batchelor discussed parks that don't allow people without a child allowed in the park. W. MacMillan gave her opinion on this issue. W. MacMillan loves the ideas that E. Key was stating about the play equipment, but feels that if there was too much playground she believes this would deter older people from coming into the playground area. J. Bain and W. MacMillan discussed the non-school users who use the park. C. Batchelor stated that the lawn area in layout B would be enough lawn. W. MacMillan thinks the lawn in layout C area would be great for the community.

Everyone agreed the fence needs to move out to capture more space for the playground. E. Key likes layout B, but would move the lawn over so you get a crisscross. She described where she

should move the lawn area to and shared her concerns with the lawn area being in the back. A. Blair stated that it would be like dividing the park into four quadrants so that it would be play, lawn, play and picnic grove with a hub in the middle. The seating for the hub was discussed. J. Bain, E. Key and D. Oates discussed the different types of levels of energy in various areas in the park. D. Lyons asked if we should be concerned about the hub area not having any kind of shade; A. Blair sees a big tree in the middle of it. A. Blair imagines tress throughout the playground much like Larz Anderson. B. Fitts gave examples from Sudbury playground of an example of a color line/path so it shows a general flow of traffic. E. Key and D. Oates talked about having color coated circles/sections and people using them in different ways.

J. Bain and W. MacMillan discussed the elderly community and options for them within this park. He feels strongly that the playground needs an attractive entrance that makes it clear that the playground is part of the park, and was thinking of having a second entrance associated more with the park and not with the Lynch Center. W. MacMillan agrees that it would be nice to have a smaller entrance between the field and playground, and stated that the current access from the Lynch Center needs to stay where it is.

The vehicular circulation, parking and layout of the parking area was discussed.

A. Blair stated that for the next meeting she will come with a layout that includes taking the fence out, show the idea of four quadrants and have a center hub. D. Oates discussed how transfer stations are insensitive. She asks what a kid in wheel chair could do and she sees there is not a whole lot for those who have to rely on a wheel chair. She sees that her daughter could use the Sway Fun and listed a few more, and also listed which ones would having a care giver to lift her out of her wheelchair and into the play structure. C. Batchelor stated that with composite structures there are a lot of opportunities for imaginative play that would also be accessible for someone in a wheel chair.

E. Keys discussed play house ideas and the need to experience height. A. Blair discussed the lengths of ramps required to achieve height.

J. Bain stated a lot of ideas have been put on the table and A. Blair will come up with come up with new plans for the next meeting. A. Blair would like to have the next meeting at the end of October.

A. Blair stated she is hearing that everyone wants to see a balance between green space and play equipment but we want the wow factor with play equipment. She will look into a second entrance and some kind of feature that introduces height.

Everyone thanked A. Blair for all her work for tonight.

## **Adjournment**

J. Bain moved to adjourn. Seconded by D. Lyons. All in favor.