

**Design Review Committee Meeting  
Brookline Avenue Playground  
Town Hall, Room 103  
Thursday, July 17, 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/Planner.

**Guests Present:** see attached

**Welcome/Call Meeting to Order**

- J. Bain called the meeting to order.
- E. Key moved for approval of the minutes. Seconded by J. Bain. All in favor.

**Design Review Process and Project Background**

- Please see attachment.

**Existing Conditions and Site Analysis**

- Please see attachment.

**Potential Improvements**

- Please see attachment.

**Committee/Open Discussion**

E. Key wondered if it changes things if we think about accessibility for a certain type of play through all the ages. She shared her concerns about separating the two age groups (2-5 and 5-12 years) because there is not that much room.

D. Oates discussed how Menino Park works for all ages; she stated that if we can accomplish everything we set out to do for this park than she believes the space will work just fine. She wanted to remind everyone to think about inclusion not just to worry about accessibility. E. Key stated that she doesn't want to see the project get divided. E. Key discussed the age restraints on play equipment. She would rather see the whole space work for younger children, but she doesn't want to neglect the older children.

C. Batchelor stated that play equipment manufacturers design differently for the two different age groups and this is industry standard. They can be grouped together.

D. Oates talked about play equipment structures that are used by everyone at Menino Park. A. Blair stated that the kids are going to play where they want to play. E. Key discussed Murphy Park and how there are two separate playgrounds laid out apart from each other. She would rather see a layout with one area of play. W. MacMillian stated that the 2-5 year old play equipment is very important to her, but we have to remember we have a large housing complex that abuts the playground; the complex has over 300 units. She doesn't think it is big enough for

them to use it all the time, but she thinks it is important to keep those kids in that loop as well.

Donelle O'Neal addressed the Design Review Committee and audience. He stated that he has lived in the complex for 35 years and has seen all the changes over time. His main concern is his 9 year old; his house is the hang out spot right now. His kids can't go to the teen center because they are too young, but they love that playground and they play soccer back there. The playground is currently for an age group of 2-5 years old but here we are a lot of 9-10 years old who use that park. He stated that the area could use water play, he would love to see basketball hoops there and he discussed pretend play. He discussed bocci ball.

Karla Weathers addressed the Design Review Committee and the audience and stated that there are a lot of kids in the park. She discussed how much they cherish the green space. She discussed how much they love Clark Park. J. Bain stated that they had to take the basketball courts out because of the noise complaints they received from abutters. Donelle O'Neal asked J. Bain what can be done to get at least one hoop in the park. J. Bain discussed Murphy Park's basketball court.

J. Bain asked D. Oates what piece of equipment did D. Oates see during A. Blair's presentation that she could see her child or a child like her daughter using. D. Oates discussed the challenges that her daughter has with the group. She stated that everything A. Blair presented was amazing, and there was just one thing she looked at that her child probably couldn't use. She stated that there were so many overwhelming amazing things she showed. D. Oates stated that she has two four year olds and that it is ok that her youngest can't use certain things, but she feels that it is her responsibility as a parent to make sure there is a space her whole family can use together. She used Heath as an example and stated that her daughter can only use the tire swing. J. Bain stated that a goal is to accommodate physically challenged kids of all ages, but we have to consider the cost of one piece of equipment that might be double in cost what we can use for the general public, which is why he asked if she saw pieces that could be used in various ways by all children. D. Oates discussed where she goes now for play, including Menino Park, and what sticks out the most is the piece that had four seats and the platform in the middle that her whole family used this weekend. She stated that the round disk swings are cool for everyone and all of her kids love hiding under the structures. D. Oates discussed the different types of accessible swings. Everyone in the room agreed how amazing the sympathy swing was from the presentation. She discussed how great the tubes are for all her children.

C. Batchelor stated that sometimes the equipment that has the ramps doesn't offer much more in the way of play opportunities but makes you feel that you are part of the play. She likes the idea of the free form structure instead. She recommends something that you can go into and maybe not the ramps; the ramps take up a lot of room.

Rajeev Belakrishua has two kids at the Lynch Center, he has great memories of BEEP. He stated that his daughter broke her arm off a structure. He suggested using rubber mulch instead of the wood mulch that is currently there. He discussed the success he has had in his own yard with rubber mulch. A. Blair discussed the rubberized surfacing and tiles that are currently in the budget. R. Belakrishua is also president of Brookline Youth Baseball and he is trying to make plans to raise money to do a turf field, and one of the things he would ask the abutters is

wouldn't that be more attractive than dogs running around. J. Bain stated that he is aware of the fact that youth baseball has an interest in Brookline Avenue, however he hasn't seen enough about who is going to be paying for it, how and when it will be done and how much will be covered. J. Bain stated that this isn't on the agenda tonight, but could be entertained down the road by the Commission. J. Bain discussed the interest others in the Town have for Youth baseball. J. Bain stated that the dogs are working well and changes can be made, but the Green Dog Program was made to share the park and if the whole park is synthetic turf that is not sharing the park.

Frank Caro from the Brookline Community Aging Network addressed everyone. He is looking at this design review from a senior perspective. He would like Brookline Avenue to be an attractive destination for seniors in the neighborhood. He discussed grandparents wanting to accompany their kids to the park and he inquired about benches. He discussed the senior housing in the area. He always wants to encourage seniors to walk and he wants this space to be attractive to seniors. J. Bain stated that Murphy Park and Linden Park are destinations for seniors. W. MacMillan stated that the two adjacent buildings are connected and there is an easy walk through; she thinks that once there are benches and shade there will be a larger older community out there. She stated that right now there are no shade and benches. She discussed the carpenter bee epidemic.

Annie Blair will come back to the next meeting with different layouts.

C. Batchelor and A. Blair discussed exercise equipment.

A. Blair stated that we have a lot of success providing different types of seating arrangements in different locations throughout the park keeping shade and views in mind.

J. Carroll, A. Blair and J. Bain discussed why a full perimeter walking path would not work. It would not be long enough to provide a meaningful experience and it would be very tight between the ballfield and the MBTA.

E. Key discussed raised gardening boxes; this could be an attraction for kids with challenges and seniors. A. Blair stated that the experience she has had with neighborhood gardening is that you need a group who will be committed to taking care of it year round. She stated it is hard to sustain. A. Blair stated that an alternative is if she chooses a single location for a variety of shrubs and perennials with different heights and other characteristics, coupled with stone at differing heights, people can reach the plants but it doesn't carry a large burden of maintenance and it can be self-sustaining.

A. Blair listed ball field refurbishments.

J. Bain asked why they are losing trees by the Lynch Center; A. Blair stated that the Bradford Pear trees have a limited life span and they are approaching it. She anticipates putting in a variety of things in its place. She stated that the park does not have a tree that characterizes it; there is no signature tree. She thinks it's an opportunity to put a mix of trees in. A. Blair discussed her priority of plantings. She discussed the people who garden the area near the apartments and

discussed how too much shade in that area could be an issue.

J. Bain stated that one of the issues brought to his attention is the need for porta-potties or a comfort station to support the softball programming. D. Oates agrees that that would be great, because not everyone goes to the bathroom the same way. Stuart Silvestri stated that part of the project to upgrade the baseball field is to have a comfort station.

D. O'Neal stated that there is not a water fountain in the playground. A. Blair stated that she has in the budget two handicap accessible water fountains. D. O'Neal stated there used to be an entrance at Aspinwall Avenue in the northeast corner of the park. J. Bain stated that it was a cut through and it ruined the area. D. O'Neal asked if we could add a mural to the Lynch center wall. J. Bain discussed the approval process for something like that and discussed art in the park.

A resident of Brookline addressed everyone. She stated that if you were replacing water fountains, there is a fountain at Jamaica Pond that has an attachment for filling water bottles. She thinks it would be great for dog users and athletes.

J. Carroll stated that he is looking forward to the next meeting when A. Blair has everything laid out and configured in terms of space within the park. He stated that Menino Park is very exciting from what he heard and seen, he is just unsure on how it works within our space and budget. A. Blair stated that she will take the priorities and what the space and budget will accommodate and come up with a couple of layouts.

D. Lyons and A. Blair discussed rubberized surfacing. E. Key and A. Blair discussed why there could not be grass surfacing within the play equipment safety zones. C. Batchelor stated that grass is important and asked if there will be enough area to have space in which to run around. A. Blair responded with a yes and she will show variations the next time. A discussion took place on how the older kids like the open green space to play sports on.

J. Carroll asked about artificial turf and how it would go with the green dog.

S. Silvestri discussed how the wiring for a potential comfort station would be laid out.

E. Key and A. Blair discussed the grass location, and A. Blair will be looking into sun and shade conditions. A. Blair stated that any lawn area would need a path.

A. Blair stated that she will focus primarily about what she heard about play equipment but she stated that overall theme this should be a place where all kids of people ages, abilities, and interests come together whether it is for athletic or passive recreational uses, Lynch center use or neighborhood use, and for people with disabilities. We are looking for improved planting especially around perimeter and Brookline Avenue. We are looking for a better visual appearance achieved through plantings, and we are looking for better seating and socializing opportunities. Within the play area, because this is a special situation where kids are not necessarily defined by their age but by their abilities, A. Blair said she should make sure to remember the 2-5 and 5-12 distinction is industry language and not a goal for the equipment. She will find out more about the sympathy swing and she is better off not using the equipment

relying on ramps, but relying activities that serve kids with disabilities and kids who are not disabled. There will be a flow of kids of different ages and cross-over pieces. She stated how best to locate natural play and position it so that it is self-sustaining, something that the Parks Division can maintain and also spaces underneath the play equipment are important as well as pieces that can be manipulated. The sand station would be a big hit at Lynch and D. Oates stated that something that is raised in the sandbox to be wheelchair accessible would be great.

E. Key listed what she feels is important to add to the park. She discussed the importance of the flow of the play. Her favorite pieces involve physical play, pretend play, the conveyer belt and the sympathy swing is amazing. The sway fun with the rocking ability was discussed. E. Key discussed the rocking tubes, cement logs for balancing and the spinning basket. She went on to discuss ramps and play house structures. D. Oates discussed an example of a ramp from Menino Park that doesn't take up a lot of space and discussed the natural rolling grade. There are other ways to get height without looking like that. E. Key stated that children love height.

D. Lyons stated that along the first base line, along that fence that abuts the railroad tracks is there a way to make that more social and useable by cleaning it up, not have it be so isolated. W. MacMillan stated that the bike path is very important to the Lynch Center.

A. Blair discussed the conversation she has had with E. Gallentine regarding water play at Brookline Avenue, and that we will not be including it here.

J. Bain asked A. Blair to bring a layout for the next meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Annie Blair thanked everyone for coming out.

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