

**Design Review Committee Meeting
Brookline Avenue Playground
Town Hall, 5th Floor School Committee Room
Tuesday, October 28, 2014, 7:00 p.m..**

Committee Members Present: J. Bain, Clara Batchelor, Daniel Lyons, Wendy MacMillan, Dawn Oates and Erica Key.

Committee Members Absent: James Carroll

Staff Present: Jessica Zarni, Administrative Assistant, Annie Blair, Landscape Architecture.

Guests Present: see attached

C. Batchelor will be chairing the meeting tonight. C. Batchelor gave background into the makeup of the Design Review Committee. The Committee members introduced themselves to the public. This is the fourth meeting for this Design Review Committee and C. Batchelor gave a small summary about each meeting.

E. Key moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by D. Oates. All in favor.

Annie Blair introduced herself and discussed the overall process. The overall process consists of a preliminary budget and scope included in the 2012 capital improvement plans, a Park and Recreation Commission Design Review process with vote from Design Review Committee on 25%-30% complete design, a final vote on 25%-30% design from Park and Recreation Commission, construction documents for bidding including drawings, technical specifications, and an engineer's estimate, bidding, Town Meeting vote, and construction.

The potential improvements include multi-generational use, a beautiful green framework for the park to buffer it and make it an oasis, active and passive recreational opportunities, building community, maximizing opportunities for people and children of all abilities, and providing a place for them to come together.

The direction from the September meeting was discussed. It was made up of an attractive entry to the playground, make it clear the playground is part of the park, introduce the "wow factor", consider the flow of activities and the relationships among them; a central hub with 4 zones, maximize the activities available to someone in a wheelchair, without needing to be lifted out, introduce a vantage point at a higher elevation, examine the pedestrian/vehicular conflicts at the Lynch Center, provide shade and natural play, and have no sand.

The goals for tonight are to review overall improvements--ballfield, planting, and site furniture, and review more detailed design for the playground, go through the preliminary budget and provide direction on next steps.

A Blair discussed the tree plantings and site furniture. A. Blair described how the circulation/flow of the traffic works around both the Lynch Center and the park users. The

Committee discussed the traffic. A. Blair stated that this is not something that we can fix as part of the playground renovation.

A. Blair discussed the new entrances for Brookline Avenue Playground that she has in mind. D. Oates discussed how this park isn't even noticeable and she sees an opportunity to showcase the park and pointed out both that area and the idea on the slide. C. Batchelor discussed putting something bold enough on the new entrance/gateway that A. Blair pointed out as a showcase for the park. A. Blair will look at opportunities in both areas, the park entry to the playground and the field entry at the corner of Brookline Avenue and Aspinwall Street.

A. Blair discussed the ball field refurbishments, edge treatments, the planting, site furniture and the overall improvement plans.

A. Blair discussed what makes up the preliminary overall budget:

- Site prep and demo
- Fencing
- Site furniture
- Walk paving
- Utilities
- Play equipment and boulders
- Precast curbing and rubber surfacing
- Boardwalk and overlook
- Replace infield mix
- Lawns and planting, including field work
- A 10 percent contingency

D. Oates, C. Batchelor and A. Blair discussed volunteer labor for pruning.

A. Blair discussed the playground improvements and described where everything would be located within the park. In the overall design she has the new entrance, the picnic grove with two sets of picnic tables, a walkway that can also serve as a tricycle path with the play equipment in the middle, a central hub with benches with a tree in the middle, 2-5 year old play equipment, 5-12 year old play equipment, 3 additional areas within the play area, a lawn area that is smaller than the existing lawn area, additional planting and trees, gardening tables, boulders and an elevated wooden boardwalk with overlook. A. Blair discussed getting some type of elevation without using ramps that will take up a lot of space. A. Blair stated that the majority of this area is in the flood zone and discussed how that effects changing the flood storage capacity. A. Blair stated that if she does a boardwalk that is elevated on wooden structures or tiers then that would get her to an elevation of 2 feet. A. Blair discussed why she left the height at two feet. J. Bain asked if the platform was enclosed on both sides, A. Blair stated that it is something she will look into. A. Blair and D. Oates discussed the tricycle path. Benches and site furniture were discussed. D. Lyons and A. Blair discussed the gardening tables.

A. Blair discussed how the play equipment would be arranged within the park and that the current design that was shown to the Committee can be manipulated.

C. Batchelor shared her concerns with the proposed lawn area line and the amount of mulch that is called for in the current design. W. MacMillan discussed the issue the kids have at her school with mulch. C. Batchelor suggested that if you want to highlight a play circle could you take the path and make it a figure eight and you could dig out a little so the path could rise up so you could get some variations. C. Batchelor stated why not spread the boulders throughout the picnic area so they could sit on the rocks and play, this would allow the picnic area to have trees and boulders. C. Batchelor shared a few ideas that she thinks that would improve the overall design of the flow of the park. C. Batchelor discussed surfacing. C. Batchelor discussed bollards and chains that would stop the kids from running head on into the swing area. D. Lyons and J. Bain asked about the granite coming out of the Reservoir Park and if any of that is available. A. Blair discussed the granite she has used in playgrounds previously. J. Bain and C. Batchelor discussed the chain between the bollards and any injury associated with it. The Committee discussed different ideas about how to stop kids from running into the swings.

The swings in the park are made up of 4 swings, 2 bays and a seagull swing. C. Batchelor and W. MacMillan discussed how the students would enjoy the swings. A. Blair discussed the fall zones around the swings. The rocking play consists of a 4 seater and rocking tubes, for gathering play there is the Sway Fun, for gathering and spinning play there is the Piccolino, for manipulating and ground level activity there are balancing logs and the composite structures. Landscape Structures put together a scenario for the Committee and A. Blair picked them apart and moved them around, but this gives you an idea of what the 2-5 and 5-12 composite structures would be like. A. Blair stated she sees a lot of repetition and not a lot of moving pieces; she said they can be swapped for something that can provide a lot of variety. E. Key thought in the last meeting we were moving away from a giant composite structure. D. Oates asked about no handrails for the Sway Fun. J. Bain asked how a person who is physically challenged, but not in a wheel chair and needs hand to hand rails would use the Sway Fun with no rails. He gave an example of veterans who have to use metal crutches to be able to walk. D. Oates described how she thinks someone in that situation would use the piece. D. Oates discussed the limitations her daughter would have with Sway Fun design in its current design. D. Lyons and A. Blair discussed the elevation of the ramp of the Sway Fun. D. Oates J. Bain and D. Lyons discussed how fanning it out would accommodate all user groups. D. Oates discussed the ADA requirements for the play equipment. E. Key discussed incorporating color and adding a path that turns off the ramp. A. Blair and the Committee discussed how the structure works. D. Oates and A. Blair discussed the merry-go-round in Cambridge. A. Blair and C. Batchelor discussed the pod swing.

A. Blair discussed and showed on a slide the natural play, pick plants and play tables. The sloping boardwalk and overlook were discussed.

E. Key and A. Blair discussed how there is a lot of flexibility with the pieces. E. Key stated that there is a lot of climbing in the current pieces. E. Key stated that we discussed in past meetings creating areas underneath. E. Key stated that the current pieces in the example shown on the slide would only allow play for individuals that have a very good balance and don't allow for play for 2-6 year olds. The Committee discussed beginner and advanced climbing pieces. A. Blair pointed out the area where she put a lot of opportunities for the younger ages with the Lynch Center in mind. E. Key discussed an idea of a main gate with a little gate within the main gate for children. J. Bain and A. Blair discussed the surrounding fence. E. Key asked A. Blair if she

found out any information on low impact water reservoir/play into, and A. Blair stated that in a public park you cannot incorporate water play that is not treated because there are contaminants dissolved in it. E. Key is concerned with a playground that does not have both sand and water play. She is concerned that there is a major type of play missing, a type of play that keeps kids at a park the longest. She is concerned there is nothing to touch and manipulate. A. Blair discussed how water and sand play will not be an option and discussed the areas within the Brookline Community that have sand and why. E. Key stated that there needs to be a solution with this major type of play missing. C. Batchelor stated that in public spaces it's hard to cover the sand. D. Oates understands what E. Key is saying and stated that we may need to get creative with the pieces we have and beef up sensory pieces with some of the planting. E. Key stated that sand and water allow kids to play deep and long. D. Oates stated that this won't be your traditional water and sand but you can work with what's in the park. A. Blair discussed creating something with the use of boulders. D. Oates discussed an example of a garden pod she had recently purchased for her. E. Key thinks you could find it within the plants but you would have to enlarge that area. C. Batchelor discussed how kids will bring their toys to the park and will find creative play within the park. J. Bain stated that kids have their own activity, they will do their own thing and create their own fun. E. Key asked if we have seen the conveyer belt used with anything but sand. D. Oates thinks that is very interesting. A. Blair discussed how she has seen this used with flax seed and will look into examples for uses of the conveyer belt.

A. Blair stated that we need some kind of movable pieces. E. Key wants to see manipulative play and would love to see the conveyer belt piece. E. Key stated that the central theme of play in young children is cause and effect and stated it brings an essential part of play. D. Lyons stated that we can have the conveyer belt but we need to think about a material that cats and other animals would not be attracted to. J. Bain asked about any fine material this is like sand but is not sand. A. Blair stated the best idea would be to make a place that offers that kind of play with some kind of a natural component with stone.

A. Blair stated that with overall park we are pretty much set. She will look at the entrance on the corner of Brookline Avenue and Aspinwall. D. Oates described the idea that she envisions for an entrance to showcase the park. A. Blair then stated that when we get into play area she will look at for next time expanding the path around an area she pointed to and have it rise up and come back down, look at putting both the swings together, work with Landscape Structures and their local representative to fine tune the structures, look into manipulative play, come back with more detailed information on trees and shrubs and fan out the approach to the Sway Fun. D. Oates discussed using loose stone instead of a cobbled stone. A. Blair will also look at manipulating the curvatures. W. MacMillian asked about getting a gate on the left side somewhere up closer to the lawn, A. Blair will look into that.

E. Key and A. Blair discussed the number of individual play pieces. A. Blair and C. Batchelor discussed the curbing and an example of something that C. Batchelor had used on a previous project that could save money for this project. The boardwalk and an outlook/platform were discussed.

J. Bain moved to adjourn. Seconded by C. Batchelor. All in favor.