

**Harry Downes Field Playground  
Design Review Committee Meeting  
Town Hall, 1st Floor, Room 103  
Wednesday, September 27, 2017, 7:00 p.m.**

**Committee Members Present:** John Bain, Daniel Lyons, Antonia Bellalta and Wendy Sheridan, Christopher Blessen, Phyllis O'Leary

**Committee Members Absent:** Franklin Pineda- Lopez

**Staff Present:** Jessica Zarni, Administrative Assistant, Jessie Waisnor, Landscape Designer, Erin Gallentine, Parks and Open Space Director, Alex Cassie, Park Ranger

**Guests Present:** see attached

**Welcome/Call Meeting to Order**

J, Bain opened the meeting. A. Bellalta moved for the approval of the minutes. Seconded by D. Lyons. All in favor.

E. Gallentine stated that tonight we will be doing the following:

- Introduction-Goals, Process, Design review
- Value and significance
- Opportunities and restraints
- Baseline improvements
- Preliminary Design Alternatives
- Open Discussion

E. Gallentine stated that nothing is set in stone.

E. Gallentine described the design review makeup and process. E. Gallentine discussed the estimated budget for the project. The budget includes playground, natural lawn field, entrance sand paths within these areas and money was moved forward in the CIP for the synthetic turf (organic infill) tracks, paths, fence and comfort building

The project goals and priorities are as followed: universal access into and within the park, treatment of the parks perimeter and entries to address issues of

accessibility, redesign for new the playground to include play equipment for all ages and resilient safety surfacing, consideration of site furniture and destinations for seating and picnicking throughout the park, reworking the grading and drainage to direct runoff appropriately, upgrading and renovating the athletic field, replacing synthetic turf field system and track and upgrade and improve access to restroom and storage area.

The project timeline was detailed.

J. Waisnor introduced herself.

A recap of the first Design review Committee Meeting was given. An existing conditions survey was shared with the Commission.

The significance of the park was detailed. The park has a lot of great big trees along the street, the playground in the back corner and the park is multi-use. It offers a lot of different activities for a variety of people.

The opportunities and restraints were discussed. The baseline improvements of this project are universal access, treatment of the park perimeter and entries, new playground, site furnishings and destinations within the park, drainage and grading, safety of users and game safety and natural field improvements.

The comments heard from the last meeting and the meeting at the Housing Authority are as followed; universal access into and within the park and connections of the two sides of the park, separation of the long jump from multi-use side of the park, redesign for new playground, existing trees and character of the park is important to maintain, perimeter fence should be evaluates for conditions and location, outreach to the Brookline Housing Authority and support for multi-use park including the Green Dog Program.

J. Waisnor moved into the preliminary design alternatives.

Site Circulation Alternative 1- Master Plan was shared with the Committee. The synthetic field and track will stay in its current location; we will look at all grading and the natural turf. There are a number of entrances. J. Waisnor discussed all the entrances. She stated that currently there is not much circulation throughout the path. One idea is to add a sidewalk that would continue along the track. They are looking at setting the current bleachers behind the sidewalk. There is no connection of the two parks together and J. Waisnor is proposing a sidewalk for the top edge

of the park and a gate would be added. The pathway along the edge would connect up to a seating area. It could also split off and connect to the other side of the track or you could look at a pathway that could connect the playground and provide a loop of the walk. An idea could be a nature pathway along the backside.

Site Circulation Alternative 2 Master Plan was shared with the Committee. This alternative looks at a little less of a pathway system, mainly taking out a pathway that connected all the way to the playground. It would have a fence along the sidewalk along the track. A fence with gates, a cue to open look before you walk away. She stated that we would be keeping the same top pathway connecting the two the fields. The knoll in the natural field was discussed.

Site Circulation Alternative 2/Alternative 2 was shared with the Committee.

Picnic and seating on the Knoll was discussed.

The last area J. Waisnor wanted to look at was at the track in the corner where there is an empty space. She is looking at incorporating an obstacle/ exercise area.

J. Waisnor opened this portion of the meeting up for comment.

D. Lyons asked where the area where obstacle course is going, he is wondering if it existing or conceptual. J. Waisnor stated that it's conceptual.

J. Bain and J. Waisnor discussed the two handicap accessible entrances, one at the playground and the second being at the comfort station.

Jane Gerry addressed the committee. She thinks the curbs have to be taken out for those entrances to be handicap accessible; she thinks a ramp will have to be put in. She doesn't think the knoll should be messed with because of the sledding in the winter. The kids enjoy the sledding. She doesn't think it is necessary to have a nature thing along the side, she stated you have the woods across the street for that. She wanted to stress more drinking fountains. E. Gallentine thinks seating could happen there with sledding happening very easily in the winter.

A. Bellalta and J. Waisnor discussed the area for the potential obstacle course. The pinch points for the baseball field were discussed. A. Bellalta looked for clarification on which trees are staying and wanted to point out how much we heard about trash at the first meeting.

Nancy O'Connor addressed the Committee. She has questions about the triangle up at the top where you may want to put in additional play equipment/seating. She doesn't know what that entrance looks like now and is it used a lot. It is very steep. She asked how you can you add an entrance over on that side, that is a long way from one side to another. N. O'Connor and J. Waisnor discussed the slope in this area.

Wendy Sheridan had a couple of comments. She loves the thought of adding a secondary active play area for the older kids. They currently use the end inside the track to play, so those kids are often in that end anyway. She stated that the triangle at the end you see a lot of kids jumping the fence there. She stated that happened because the one entrance was inside the Green Dog Program side, so kids would have to cut through there to get to the track. She loves the connection of the full circular path. She wonders if there is an opportunity for that loop to accommodate tricycles.

Robert Daves addressed the Committee. He goes to this park everyday with his dog. He asked if the fence will be pulled in from the sidewalk; there are a lot of issues with the plows. J. Waisnor stated that the next stop is budget. She will start looking, that will have a line item and we can decide if that is a priority. He stated that the irrigation leaves a puddle for the dogs to play in. He stated that when it its hot people come down lower under the big oak tree. He finds the path interesting. He isn't sure about the path being asphalt or stone dust.

Phyllis O'Leary is concerned about the sidewalk around the field. She stated that kids ride their bikes in the track area, she wonders about how big the sidewalk would be and maybe the kids could go on that to ride their bikes instead of the one the track area where they are not supposed to be. Jessie Waisnor stated that it is currently drawn at 5 feet but you could go 6-7 feet. E. Gallentine stated that the way J. Waisnor has drawn this even thinking about full circuit the path itself meets up with the track, so there would be a period of time that you would be in the synthetic turf and you would have to cross that track surface and there are gates there because of the Green Dog Program. P. O'Leary wants to make sure that the material used for the track will be more conducive to handling kids on a bike. E. Gallentine will find out for her.

Charlie Golay addressed the Committee. He would like to see signs in all the entrances to the Green Dog Park that say please close the gate. He would like to see a double gate. The entrance that is south, there is a double gate that opens and a bar that stabilizes it bar is missing and he would like it to be replaced. He would

like to see the fence set back to help out with snow plowing. He loves the Green Dog Program.

N. O'Connor addressed the Committee. She wanted to ask if we are setting the fence back, how much of that will impact the playing space and field. Secondly, she stated that you are talking about possibly having a fence being on the outside. She is lost in terms of locations of fencing. J. Waisnor pointed out the area where people would like to see the fence pushed back. She stated that in terms of fences located inside the park currently there is a fence that separates the synthetic from the natural and there is a desire to have a fence along the long jump as part of the synthetic. She discussed the double gates that would stay, that track and field use to bring in equipment. She stated that there is another fence inside in the park, but stated that we would propose to take it out. N. O'Connor was just concerned with fencing eating up the budget. She wanted to speak to W. Sheridan's comments regarding the High School kids coming in and jumping over the fence and she wonders if you could put a few stairs there.

Christopher Blessen had a few observations. He really likes the path going all the way around. He thinks the additional obstacle and play up in the north corner is great. He stated looking at the two playgrounds, he feels drawn to the one on the right. He thinks it makes the park look and feel better. He is too wondering about the gates and the section showing two gates, he wonders if you could get rid of the one on the road side and leave the one on the track side. He discussed the dead spot where balls end up; it is located at the south end of the track where it curves/ the space between the playground fence and Green Dog Program.

Frank Morris addressed the Committee. He discussed the retaining wall along Pond Avenue, he stated that the wall was built well but years later it is showing signs of aging.

Robert Simpson addressed the Committee. He will say that the entrance you are getting rid of is the major entrance. He stated that in the new park on Brookline Avenue where you put a new entrance in, he asked if you could do the same thing at that point. A colonial entrance with a stone welcoming you to the park, he thinks would look great. He wants to see a better playground and suggest we look at latching systems for the gates.

A. Bellalta wanted to confirm that we are placing things in the right place, the playground has been there for a long time and the kids come from all over. She

stated that visually the playground is tucked in a tiny corner at the bottom of what is athletics and wonders if there is any opportunity to rearrange some of the things. She suggested maybe having the playground at the top and in that sense it would become part of nature, rather than being in the bottom in the corner. J. Waisnor stated that the building is staying and being improved. J. Waisnor stated that moving the playground is not an option. P. O'Leary stated that where maybe the balls get lost, she stated that right next to the top part there is a beautiful row of wonderful trees that have been there her whole life and it seems to her some of that flat space is lost and she isn't sure what can be done. She has seen adults at the corner of Highland having lunches there, it's like a picnic area.

Playground Plan Alternative 1 was shared with the Committee. She wanted to point out that all the play pieces are interchangeable and are customizable. This concept looks at taking the park and adding the bike loop and a central play space. They are looking at adding a water feature. Picnic areas under the trees were pointed as well as benches for this alternative were pointed out.

A modern take on tree houses for this alternative were shown.

Playground Plan Alternative 2 was shared with the Committee. This is taking the playground and making destination spaces. The water play is in the center of the space but there is a pathway that could connect these spaces and work around the water part. The next line of equipment is traditional post and platform; they are funky in color palette and are more customizable. Pictures of examples of play equipment pieces were shown.

Playground Plan Alternative 3 was shared with the Committee. In this alternative they are looking at celebrating the tree, taking the pieces making it nature inspired and all about the tree. The water play would be up front. Examples of nature inspired playground pieces were shown. Examples of various swings were shown.

The size of the playground was discussed.

J. Bain and J. Waisnor discussed variations of water play circumferences.

A resident asked if picnic tables will be there, J. Waisnor responded with a yes.

A. Bellalta stated that #3 more has more space for playground area/square footage and the water play is bigger. A. Bellalta likes concept 2. She likes the water in the central area.

N. O'Connor stated that the triangle space would be something else and that would be for the older kids, J. Waisnor responded with a yes.

Wendy Sherdian had a few comments. She likes version three where the water park is closer to athletic fields. She can see this has having an age group shared water park if it's in that location. She would like for the water park to be designed so that it appeals to a broader range of kids. E. Gallentine stated that there is a design and science to it. W. Sheridan would like to see the water space designed so that in the off season that space can still be used. She thinks in terms of play equipment the fiddle head looked fun and creative, and she also thinks that the nature elements of the other version is a fun direction.

A resident addressed the Commission. He loves the concept of tying in with all the large trees and not being ultra-modern, he doesn't think that would fit. He stated that where you put the water area in the third drawing, it is the sunniest/hottest part of the park.

N. O'Connor asked how wide the pathway is in the third scheme. J. Waisnor stated that they are all 5 foot paths. N. O'Connor stated you would get more bang for your buck in the third scheme in terms of the amount of play you can get in there, she the first alternative looks so loving and loping, but she isn't sure if it works well.

A resident addressed the committee. He stated that people seem to like the idea of the nature path and he is wondering if you are trying to connect that. He stated that with the pathway he is concerned with a paved path and fence and that he hopes we can balance the open space/design flow. He stated that if you go with trees, you need the connecting, that w y the path connects the kids and comes back around.

Screening for lacrosse was discussed.

Wendy Sheridan stated that although she likes the layout of number three, she does think that is feels very sharp and thinks it needs to be softened. N. O'Connor agrees, she thinks it should be softer like the middle but laid out like the 3<sup>rd</sup> alternate.

Chris Blessen thinks the second and third alternates have a very strong play space. He stated that as you're considering place making he likes alternates 2 and 3. He thinks the position of water pay is important, but his kids burn instantly and he

wants us to study shadow lines. He thinks having a little bit of shade would be helpful.

N. O'Connor addressed the committee. She feels like the water play needs to be in the middle more.

Chris Blessen and J. Waisnor discussed safety surfacing.

The drinking fountain locations were discussed.

E. Gallentine stated that she heard a general consensus for nature theme and celebrating the trees. She heard ideas of incorporating the fiddle greens to celebrate the trees and bring out the green. She stated that we will go in that direction and pull in some individual pieces. She is also wondering if we look at a modern tree house and come up with another idea that is bamboo and contemporary. The idea of fiddle head and nature themed pieces mixed together was discussed. N. O'Connor is thinking we need to add a little color.

N. O'Connor loves the idea for the older kid's obstacle area. W. Sheridan agrees she thinks it's a great age progression piece.

E. Gallentine thanked everyone for coming; she has gotten great direction. Her next step is to move it into refined designs with actual play pieces. She thinks it was interesting to hear about the Highland and Jamaica Road entrances and celebrating that in a special way. She stated that this park has so much going on in it and it's loved by the neighborhood and community overall.

N. O'Connor wanted to mention having benches at the gates/entrances or on the outside on the fence. She thinks it is nice to have if you are walking along.

J. Bain moved to adjourn. Seconded by A. Bellalta. All in favor.