



TOWN of BROOKLINE
Massachusetts
Department of Public Works

Erin Chute
Commissioner

Alexandra Vecchio
Director Parks and Open Space

**Parks & Recreation Commission Monmouth Phase 1
Design Review Kick-Off Meeting
Tuesday, June 20, 2023**

Panelists: Jessie Waisnor, Alexandra Vecchio, Sean M Lynn Jones, Lindsey Ross, Clara Bachelor, Theresa Mooney, Stephanie Aucoin, Lauren Bernard (missing), Jim Carol (missing), Sam Bosworth (missing)

Attendees: Gabrielle Domb, Richard Garver, Joe White, Edi Gold

Welcome & Call Meeting to Order

A. Vecchio welcomed all to the meeting and introduced the staff and design review committee members.

Overview of Project & Scope of Work

J. Waisnor stated the review committee was made up of 7 members: 4 commissioners and 3 members of the public. She indicated the review committee would be part of the public discussions of alternative solutions. She advised the team developed a preferred concept plan, and would then make a final presentation to the Parks & Recreation Commission. She added the project would be done internally and then be put out to bid.

J. Waisnor reviewed the project timeline. Meeting 1 was held in June and would gather input from the community. Meeting 2 would occur during September and discuss the design alternatives. Meeting 3 would be held in October and focus on the preferred design with an estimated budget. Meeting 4 would be the presentation to the Parks & Recreation Commission. She added the construction documents would all be put together during the Summer and Fall, with the project going to out to bid in January/February 2024. She advised with a successful bid the playground construction would be started in Spring 2024. She added the team would work with the contractor to keep the playground and location open for as long as possible.

J. Waisnor advised the project goal was to redesign a new playground, and to include play equipment for all ages with resilient safety surfacing. She indicated if the budget allowed, the wall surrounding the playground would be repointed and repaired.

Presentation of Existing Conditions

J. Waisnor provided the town acquired the property in 1864, it was .16 acres, and was last renovated in 2006. She reviewed the existing conditions of the park and stated the current play equipment was designed for ages 2-5.

A. Vecchio stated the Brookline Arts Center abutted the park and the space was used for their programs a lot. J. Waisnor indicated the playground size would stay around the current space of 943 square feet. S. Lynn Jones noted the plan did not show where the current trees were located at the park. J. Waisnor confirmed the plan shown was from 2006 and the space would be resurveyed to show the existing greenery once work was started.

T. Mooney inquired if the stone wall around the playground would be taken down and more of the park space used, or if just the current 943 square feet was still the amount of space for the reconstructed playground. J. Waisnor advised the plan was to just use the current space available, but if there was money left in the budget, they could try to expand.

L. Ross wondered if there was already a discussion to take up lawn space for more playground. J. Waisnor indicated that had not been looked at but the project was still in the early stages. A. Vecchio added that was the kind of comment the design review process wanted to hear, as the space was intended to be used as needed by the community.

J. Waisnor explained the current play equipment was designed as a fire station. She indicated there had been pieces of the structure removed for safety reasons over time. She provided examples of play structures created by three playground equipment manufacturers. Earthscape creates wooden structures and focuses on having animals in their designs. They are now providing manufactured pieces, but have been making custom playground structures for a long time. LSI creates several different designs and has been used at a few locations in Brookline, such as Cypress Playground and Harry Downes. Berliner used plastic, metal, and also wood materials. This company had been used at Warren Elliot field. They have pieces that are play walls, which kids can crawl through and have moveable pieces on the wall for interactive play.

Community Discussion & Feedback

A. Vecchio stated the current piece at the location was a custom playground structure, and was hard to maintain and repair. She expressed it was created to speak to the history of the site, but was hard to do repair and maintenance work. She added they were not able to order replacement parts or swap out nonworking parts because it was custom made, which is why they were now leaning towards a manufactured structure. She explained this would make it a lot easier to keep the playground functioning for a longer period of time. The meeting was open to discussion and feedback.

C Bachelor inquired what type of wood was used by Earthscape. She indicated the transparent pieces should be looked into, not such a solid structure. She provided Berliner and LSI seemed very solid and not see-through, and it would be nice to see your child from one point of the park instead of needing to follow them around everywhere. J. Waisnor later confirmed they used a marine grade plywood frame and is clad in Accoya.

C Bachelor stated she liked the look of the natural wood. She recommended looking into the Robinia line from Kompan. J. Waisnor indicated that conversation was had for the Robinson playground. She recalled visiting two playground structures from that company, but there was a lot of cracking to the pieces that were wide enough to put her fingers thru. C. Bachelor indicated it was good that the research was done and added they had other lines within the company as well.

S. Lynn Jones recalled there was once a discussion if a playground was needed at the park location, and he was happy one was made. He expressed the current playground fit well in the location in proximity to the Brookline Arts Center building. He indicated the structure was popular with kids because it was unique, and that still remained the case even with several elements missing. He believed it would be good to have a structure fit into the site again and not overpower the location. He added even with the small size, the park fits the needs of several categories of users and not just kids. He provided another committee member, Sam Bosworth informed him he liked the structure over at Cypress, but that was much larger in size.

L. Ross agreed with keeping the aesthetic of the park. She stated it seemed better to have play walls instead of a boxy, big structure. She inquired if there was room to customize the structure for the components and the color, as it should not stand out too much next to the arts building. C. Bachelor questioned if a structure and the play walls could be there together and if Berliner was able to combine different structures to have more concepts. J. Waisnor indicated to both they would need to speak with the manufacturers more to see the options they provided.

T. Mooney believed a more muted structure would work in the space better. She added if the colors were too bright the structure would stand out too much from the rest of the area.

A Vecchio advised if there were any playgrounds in other towns/cities that anyone liked, the team could reach out to those towns to inquire about the companies they used.

R. Garver indicated he had young grandchildren and spent a lot of time at playgrounds. He expressed because the space was so small it should focus on a certain age range and not all ages. He explained from his perspective, kids between 2-5 years old enjoyed climbing, sliding, and hiding, which the current structure focused on. He added play walls seemed to be something used quickly and then the appeal would be gone, and the play walls would close off the section and make it hard to see the child from all angles.

E. Gold requested to see the three designs again. J. Waisnor reviewed the manufacturer options.

C. Bachelor inquired if there were enough trees at the park location or if shade structures would be added. J. Waisnor advised there was a lot of tree canopy at the park already, and they were not suggesting adding shade canopies to the play structure itself.

T. Mooney questioned if sand would cover the ground of the playground. J. Waisnor stated it was a policy to not add sand into a park if it wasn't already there. She explained there had been tests run at other parks where sand was used, and it was not the most sanitary material to use especially for the younger ages that put their hands in their mouth a lot.

T. Mooney wondered about the history of the firehouse. J. Waisnor stated the arts center used to be a firehouse several years ago. S. Lynn Jones added the location used to be the Chemical Fire Station about fifty years ago. T. Mooney questioned if there was a push to stick to the firehouse theme. J. Waisnor advised it was up to the committee and community if they wanted the theme to stay or go.

G. Domb provided she was the Executive Director of the Brookline Arts Center, and believed it was important to keep the minimalist design instead of sticking to the firehouse theme. She stated she liked the Earthscape designs the most and would like to see the abstract options they provide. She added the playground was used by their students during the full-day summer programs as well as the after-school programs.

E. Gold inquired what the proposed timeline was. J. Waisnor reviewed the timeline.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.