

**CLARENDON TOT LOT**  
**PUBLIC MEETING #2**  
Meeting Summary Notes

**DATE:** February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 @ 6:00 to 7:30pm

**LOCATION:** ZOOM

**PRESENTERS:** Nathan Frazee (NF) | Boston Parks & Recreation Department (BPRD)  
Cheri Ruane (CR) | Weston & Sampson  
Cassie Bethoney (CB) | Weston & Sampson

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**PRESENTATION:**

- NF opened the meeting with informing the public that this will be recorded and will be available on the city website the following week.
- NF introduced Christine (BPRD Outreach Coordinator) and Weston & Sampson team members. He discussed general schedule and capital funding for the project (\$1,530,000). Schedule was debated of concern at the last meeting, so more conversation with the local schools using the park and the Friends group will take place in the near term.
- NF acknowledges the importance of sensory play for children development; however, as a department, BPRD is working to remove sand at playgrounds city-wide due to health-related issues. These conceptual plans presented tonight explore other opportunities for sensory play features.
- Next, CR shares what we heard at the first public meeting.
- Next, CB runs through the overall considerations for the concepts. There are a few elements that are overarching and will be continuous in all the concepts: the edge planting, natural-feeling synthetic grass, a variety of seating options, poured-in-place rubber to fit in seamlessly with the neighborhood and have a natural feel, and preserving all existing trees.
- CB describes three concept plan alternatives for consideration. As these are reviewed, she notes that elements from each can be mixed and matched to form a preferred plan, which will be presented at the third and final community meeting.
  - Concept A highlights a loop where children can have room to run continuously without barriers. Play will be built into the embankment where amphitheater seating sits currently. Traditional play structures and non-traditional play elements and textures make up the playground design.
  - Concept B highlights an amphitheater accessed by ramps that also act as terraced seat walls, linear water play that runs through the space, and undulating poured-in-place surfacing.
  - Concept C highlights a raised deck central to the playground. This concept is inspired by Boston's indigenous history and the Fish Weir Project. While not

overtly designing a physical fish weir, elements are represented through the colors of the poured-in-place rubber, the timber seating, and natural wood features throughout.

- Nate opens the floor for a first round of questions.
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### General Comments:

- Can the schools and Friends groups weigh in on the concepts?
  - NF – Yes, we can set up a meeting with the schools and Friends groups to discuss the various ideas.
- NF – At the next meeting, we will share a preferred plan that considers the input we are hearing tonight, in our next meeting (typically in 4 to 5 weeks). This meeting tonight is being recorded. Written notes, the presentation and the video recording will all be posted on the project website.

### Park Use and Operations:

- Would like lighting in the early evenings, especially in the winter months
  - NF – Lighting came up in the first meeting with comments in favor and against.
  - CF described soft and low lighting (on bollards) with timers or sensors that could elongate the play in the darker months while not being a nuisance to neighbors.
  - NF – the sensor is solar-based and not triggered by walkers in the evening.
  - The lighting should also be aesthetically pleasing.
- The fence is older and wider in a few areas (kids can fit through). As for water and electricity – what will it be used for, live music? As a neighbor and taxpayer, should the cost estimate associated with the concepts be provided to the neighborhood so they can have more context of the option prices?
  - NF – Our goal is to cover construction costs within the capital budget provided for improvements. We can have alternates in the bidding process where alternative decisions can be made in the future based on the construction costs. The city goes in and measures the width of the fence and will weld a pole in place to meet the safety standards and width requirements.
- Incorporate a community bulletin board into the final plan.
- We have had conversations about having only adults/caregivers have access to the back gate in case of emergencies.
  - NF – It is important to maintain visual access across the park. At the last meeting, there was conversation about having a panic button on the back gate, however those are not typically successful outside in New England's climate. Another option is making the latch higher so only an adult could access it. (Folks were agreeable to this idea).
- What can we expect with the drainage from the poured rubber in the open play area?
  - CB – We are considering synthetic turf for the open play area. For this and all poured-in-place rubber play areas, underdrainage would run below grade and resolve the drainage issues the open play area currently experiences.

- Would appreciate a sign for the back gate to say emergency exit only.
  - NF – We will investigate how we can ensure that the back gate is secure while still accessible for emergencies.
- Consider stroller parking near the younger age zone as some people have babies in the strollers while other kids roam.
- Strollers are usually parked in front of the benches. Could they be more centralized?
  - NF – Noting that the pink play area on the concepts is an accessible surfacing so strollers could theoretically park anywhere in these spaces.
  - CB – we are looking to have the stroller parking not near the entrance (near the shed or near the arched bridge)

### **Play Elements:**

#### *General Comments -*

- Appreciate keeping the tree canopy, the elevation separation of younger kids from open play (and ball games), and the self-draining water play.
- Could you elaborate on the swings? What is being considered and how many?
  - NF – There are many options – belts, buckles, baskets. We would like to hear what you think would be most loved by the kids using the park.
- It would be good to keep the kids of different age ranges separate as age can determine the ranges of physical engagement/ability.
- How much thought have you put into how robust the equipment will be?
  - CB – We have a short list of play manufacturers that we use because they are tried and true; we stand behind the quality of those products.

#### *Open Play -*

- How much of the field is lost in these designs?
  - We are maintaining generally the same dimensions; however, we are hearing how critically important open play is to this park, so we will maximize that space.
- It would be great if the open play is a comparable size.
- Containing balls in the open play area was noted several times. Comments included questions like:
  - Will there be a raised wall in the open play area to contain balls?
  - What is the elevation imagined for Concept A's loop? is there a way to contain the ball playing area?
- The open play is used a lot and there is a lot of ball throwing and kicking against the wall, so wondering what the residences opinions are.
- While the older kids are ball playing in the open play, it could sometimes be dangerous for the toddlers when they are there at the same time.
- If the open play were anywhere near the fence, balls are more likely to fly over frequently because at its current location (farthest from the fence) it still happens.

#### *Water and Music -*

- Loves the idea of the music area and water play.
  - CB – If folks are interested in music, we could explore what that could look like in more detail.

- Staff from John Winthrop School love the possibility of water play.
- A few children spoke up to say they loved the water river play area and the bridge.
- How do other parks transition the water play areas during the winter?
- Would the water be drained at night? We would not want mosquitos from standing water.
  - NF – The water will be turned on by activator for a short duration of time and travel through a runnel to a drain. There will not be standing water.
- The musical elements might not be welcome by the neighbors.
  - NF – The musical chimes that are in other parks are not loud enough to reverberate throughout the neighborhood.
    - There are a lot of children that run in this park and the residences' backyards are very close by.
- Not a huge fan of the water feature because of the seasonality and that it takes up space, once we get more information about how much space it could take up then we can better gage its value. We don't want to fill the entire space up as we all value the open play area; we would like to make sure there will be space left over for community events and for parents to hang out. How much of this space will be the poured rubber/ turf versus natural soil?
  - CB – Concept A and C have mulch and Concept B is rubber and turf and they all are surrounded by vegetation along the edge.
- Director at John Winthrop School – We are keeping an ear out for the water play; we pulled up some photos of water play tables (from Cambridge Commons) that could be used seasonally (water in the summer and snow in the winter). We are also interested in utilizing the incline for toddler play (the embankment from Concept A).
  - NF – Yes, we should acknowledge that the water play is a seasonal element and need to explore transition options. In Concept B, there is water play but no mulch, so as not to mix the two and create difficulties in maintenance.
  - CB – There is room to place various elements along an embankment; Concept A's embankment includes boulders, climbing rope, granite block seating, and slides. There are many ways to go up and down. Gross motor skill activities are highly valued, and we have great opportunity here with the existing elevation change within the park.

### **Trees and Vegetation:**

- What is the landscaping going to look like? Will it be in a raised planter or at grade? The trees near the alley are in a mulch bed; if the water play concept is chosen, how would that part of the maintenance be handled?
  - CB – We want hardy planting; we will dive into more detailed thinking on planting and interaction with play elements in our next iteration.
  - NF – We will build on the knowledge given here and rely on the experience you all have on the vegetation of the playground. It seems like there is a strong

desire for water play, so the design team will look further into what those could look like.

- We would like to keep as much natural material as we can and as much open space as we can; are the edge trees going to be preserved?
  - CB – We plan to protect all the existing trees.

End of Notes. SK