

TOWN OF ARLINGTON



Joseph Connelly
Director of Recreation

PARK COMMISSIONERS
Jen Rothenberg, Chairperson
Shirley Canniff, Vice Chair
Leslie Mayer
Donald Vitters
Elena Bartholomew
Crissy Tarantino, Associate
Peter Hedlund, Associate

Recreation Department

Park and Recreation Commission
January 26, 2016
Approved Minutes

The Park and Recreation Commission came to order at 7:00pm for its meeting in the Town Hall Annex Conference Room on Tuesday, January 26, 2016.

Members in attendance included: Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff, Leslie Mayer, Don Vitters, Elena Bartholomew and Associate Members Chrissy Tarantino and Peter Hedlund. Director of Recreation, Joseph Connelly, was also present.

Members from the public: Magnolia Field neighbors Russell Goettel, Jeanette Cummings and Laura Frost were present.

Approval of Minutes – The minutes of January 12, 2016 were tabled.

Open Forum – NA

Magnolia Park Final Design Review

Mr. Connelly invited Peter Hedlund and his design team to present the revised plans for the Magnolia Field project. The hope is that a final design will be chosen soon so that a bid can be advertised by the end of February.

Mr. Hedlund and his team presented plans labeled Plan B. The plans include several walking paths and seating areas, an elliptical path surrounding two separate age-appropriate playgrounds, a meadow/natural play area, a half-court basketball court, a “green” equipped with electricity for community events, an expanded community garden and a sectioned off storm water retention area. The plans incorporate the use of existing ground slopes and about 40 existing trees. Mr. Hedlund also shared ideas for using salvaged granite from the DPW and repurposed wooden materials from the existing park.

Henry Brush from the Arlington Soccer Club, not present, has expressed concern about the 60 foot separation between the park and the soccer field. Mr. Connelly and the Commission agreed that this shouldn't be a problem for field usage.

Mr. Hedlund stated that three trees would need to be removed to allow for the community garden expansion. The garden plans include forty 10'x15' plots, two storage sheds, two compost bins, raised beds and water hookups. Forty-two new trees will be planted in the park to assist in water drainage and to add definition to the separate areas. Mr. Vitters inquired about what types of trees and how many would be used in the plans. Mr. Hedlund stated that trees such as willows and bald cypress would be used

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in certain areas to assist in natural water drainage. Mr. Hedlund also stated that smaller, lower maintenance trees like crab apple and evergreen would be used in the meadow. Paths would be lined with larger deciduous trees like the existing honey maples and sweet gum which provide shade. Ms. Mayer expressed a preference for native species to be used.

Mr. Hedlund has been in contact with the Arlington DPW and has incorporated the use of repurposed and salvaged materials including granite and wood.

Ms. Taylor stated the ellipse will be two play areas, one for ages 2 to 5 year olds and one for 5 to 12 year olds. Ms. Rothenberg expressed that there is a need for balance for upper and lower body activities and that structures should encourage upper body activities as the natural elements of the park already encourage lower elements. A meadow off Thorndike Street would provide a natural play environment and could be created with a low-maintenance combination of native plantings and trees.

Ms. Mayer asked about path lighting, concerned that isolated areas like the meadow would become hangouts. Ms. Canniff asked about small path lighting for commuter safety. Mr. Hedlund answered that they had decided not to include additional lighting because the density of the area would allow for a sight line. Additionally, the current street lighting results in significant spill-over into the park.

Ms. Mayer asked about the purpose and probable uses of electricity within the park. Mr. Connelly explained that the hope was for community activities such as concerts, movies, etc. The use of electricity would be monitored by Mr. Connelly.

Ms. Rothenberg expressed concern regarding the “wearing down” of the grass area by commuters who will use it as a cut through. She asked if the width of the paths would accommodate trikes and ride-on toys, but not discourage walkers. Ms. Taylor stated that the paths were 5’ wide, but the elliptical path could be expanded to 6’ to allow for ride-on toys since it was more likely to be used for this purpose because of its proximity to the playground. Mr. Hedlund and his team along with the members of the Commission brainstormed the idea of re-routing the storm water path/bridge closer to the commuter entrance from Alewife. This would reduce foot traffic through the green. Ms. Bartholomew suggested the use of signage to direct walkers, although this would be an added cost to the project.

Mr. Doyle reviewed the drainage plan. Ms. Cummings, a community gardener, asked about the materials in the existing plots. Mr. Doyle explained that all existing plot materials would need to be removed in order to add gravel for drainage layers under the plots. The gravel helps control the amount of water in the area. All removed materials would be screened and replaced after drainage is installed. The garden area would be pitched toward the storm water area and perforated pipe would be installed around the garden to control the flow of the drainage. The DPW would continue to control the pump station and will

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need to clean the existing drains. Steel corners would be installed to define the plot edges and prevent overgrowth. Ms. Cummings inquired about the steel corners rusting.

Mr. Goettel asked about the proximity of the catch basin to the soccer field and whether this would cause the field and path to get soggy. Mr. Hedlund stated that the area would be re-graded which would assist in natural drainage.

Ms. Mayer asked whether the basketball court would be affected by the drainage because of the natural slope of the area. Mr. Doyle explained that the new court would be installed on graded and leveled ground over a layer of gravel. The existing catch basin along with the gravel will assist in deterring flooding to this area.

Ms. Taylor presented several options of equipment from M.E. O'Brien & Sons "Landscape Structures". These elements would incorporate handicap accessibility, inclusivity, sensory, musical and climbing elements. These elements include a sandbox, water pump and imagination station playhouse. The Commission agreed that musical elements should not be included because of proximity to neighbors and possible misuse by teenagers. The cost of the project will increase/decrease depending on the equipment that is selected. Mr. Connelly stated that the Recreation safety standard is to require a 4 inch rubber matting 4-anchored under swings.

Mr. Connelly asked the Commission for feedback regarding whether a corral should be available for ride-on toys and abandoned play vehicles. Ms. Rothenberg asked Ms. Frost, Mr. Goettel and Ms. Cummings their opinions regarding "abandoned toy vehicles". They all stated that the neighborhood families seem to anonymously cycle broken/new toys in the park. They did not feel that this practice of leaving toys at the park would stop. Ms. Mayer and Ms. Rothenberg suggested the possibility of using signage to enforce a policy of not leaving toys in the park.

Mr. Goettel suggested avoiding lighting in the park. He stated that adding lighting would encourage park use but low-level ballads are expensive

Ms. Rothenberg inquired about starting a "Friends of Magnolia Park" group and whether it was already in existence. It was stated by the neighbors that there is an informal group that already has organized community activities such as egg hunts and Halloween parades. Mr. Hedlund suggested that a garden group with a go-to person could help in governing the plots, their maintenance etc.

Mr. Hedlund stated that the first estimate for the project was \$687,000, and the second estimate was \$492,000. Mr. Connelly stated that the total budget for the project was \$526,000, \$488,000 after taking out design, survey and soil exploration costs.

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Ms. Rothenberg asked if there was room for a full-court basketball court after Mr. Connelly stated that the CDBG had given \$75,000 for the new court. Mr. Hedlund stated that it would be tight and an additional tree would need to come down to push the court closer to the road. Ms. Mayer pointed out that the budget stated that the court cost only \$25,000 and didn't show all the factors included in the construction of the court. Mr. Hedlund will break out the total budget for the construction of the courts.

Ms. Taylor suggested doing the project in phases for budgeting reasons. She gave the example of defining the meadow with paths, but leaving the planting as a community project. It was also suggested that garden costs could be reduced by scaling back the size, but it would be a mistake to cut back on drainage. Ms. Frost asked if there would be a significant cost decrease by incorporating more community involvement.

Mr. Connelly stated that the Commission could not vote on the plans until the following items were answered ; soil test results, actual basketball court numbers, garden cost comparisons and playground element options and costs.

Ms. Tarantino brought up concerns regarding future maintenance costs for playground structures and equipment. She also asked about the longevity of equipment.

Mr. Hedlund will gather the necessary information and revise the plan to then represent to the Commission at the February 11th meeting.

Special Requests – N/A

Capital Projects and CPA Update

Mr. Connelly stated that there were no changes to the ADA project and that the meeting had been rescheduled for next week.

Ms. Mayer stated that she, along with Mr. Connelly and Mr. Vitters, have started the CPA for application for the Robbins Farm Park project. Their goal is to have a completed draft to the Commission by February 8th to present at the Commission meeting on February 11th. The Commission will have the opportunity to review it at that time. Ms. Mayer also stated that letters of support for the application would come from organizations such as Arlington Soccer Club, Community Gardeners, rather than individuals.

Ms. Bartholomew stated that she believes that the Spy Pond Shoreline erosion project could not be funded by the CPA. Ms. Mayer explained that CPA funds cannot be used to rehabilitate open space land that was not purchased without CPA funds, but that it can fund open space projects focused on protection from future damage/erosion or rehabilitating recreational land. The Conservation Commission in collaboration with the Friends of Spy Pond Park are planning to submit an application for funding for this protection.

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Other

Mr. Connelly addressed an email from Arlington Public Art (APA) regarding monetary compensation for artists who display their work in public areas. The Commission agreed that being allowed to display their art in a public forum was a privilege, not a compensated arrangement.

Mr. Connelly stated that requests were submitted to CDBG for scholarships, ADA requests and \$25,000 for Thorndike ADA upgrades. Mr. Connelly stated that he did not request the jobs program, instead requesting an expansion of the scholarship program. Over \$40,000 in scholarships have been requested so far this year.

Mr. Connelly shared concerns from Erika Gray about dog related disturbances at McLennan Park. Ms. Canniff suggested the use of park rangers for ticketing policy violators. Mr. Connelly said that he would revisit the benefits of a park ranger at his next meeting with Mr. Chapdelaine

Mr. Connelly shared with the Commission concerns about the slide at Robbins Farm Park. The slide, once again, has a big hole in the bottom piece. Residents are using the slide inappropriately causing damage in the colder weather. Repairs will be made when the temperature permits and the replacement parts arrive.

Ms. Canniff motioned to adjourn at 9:55pm, seconded by Ms. Bartholomew and approved 5-0.