

MEMORANDUM

TO: B Chatfield, BPRD

FROM: Billings Field Project Team

MEETING DATE: 02.01.2023

SUBJECT: Virtual Community Meeting #2 – Meeting Minutes

Panelists:

- *B Chatfield, BPRD*
- *Christine Brandao, BPRD*
- *Brandon Kunkel, W&S*
- *Matthew Soule, W&S*
- *Melissa Green W&S*

Meeting Goals:

Boston Parks and Recreation will be renovating Billings Field. This meeting was organized by BPRD and the design team to present two design concepts for the site. The concepts were informed by the first community meeting feedback on October 13, 2022, and an online survey from October 2022. The goal of the meeting was to hear from the community about what aspects of the design concepts they liked and did not like and if there was anything else they would like to see in the park design.

Attendance:

58 total attendees including 5 team members.

Virtual Discussion (Including Zoom Chat Comments):

Comments on Drainage:

- Would a splash pad in corner by the YMCA flood the sports fields?
 - *The splash pad will not flood. It will be graded as a bowl shape, all water will be drained into the splash pad and captured.*
- There was general concern about drainage in the park and interest in making sure the fields drain in the design.
 - *The design team is working to address all the drainage issues on the site, this is a large part of the project. We are working with civil engineers to solve these issues. We will look at ways to incorporate underdrains and improve infiltration of the soils to drain the fields.*

Comments on Organized Field Sports:

- There were several concerns about the size of the softball fields being too small. The men's softball league requires at least a 300' softball field, and the older girls softball teams require 200' fields.
 - o *We will evaluate the appropriate field sizes and see what we can do to make them fit.*
- Concern about softball fields overlapping. And concern about ball fields overlapping with the multi-use field.
- Baseball field should stay where it is. Even with backstops, unless you are adding netting, there is a larger likelihood that foul balls would be hit into the playground.
- Some residents were concerned that the hockey rink and dog run are encroaching on playable field space.
- Will there be netting to catch foul balls?
 - o *Yes, there will be netting.*
- What was the motivation for adding a soccer field? There are 20+ soccer fields at Millennium, can this area be open green space?
- Some people like the softball fields closer to the playground so one child can play in a game, and another can play in the playground.

Comments on Playground Use:

- Playground users tend to be younger children, has there been research into the usage demographics of the existing playground?
 - o *The design team requests if anyone can provide direction on this. (Feedback from the community members is that many kids are younger, not many older kids using the playground.)*
 - o *Design team will assess the quality of the existing play equipment to determine what can be maintained, repaired, or replaced.*
- Existing playground swings are very loud and squeaky.
- What is the motivation for updating the playground? The rubber occasionally needs patching, but the equipment is still in good working order.
- There is concern that tearing the playground down would make it unusable for entire playing season.
- Current playground has some great structures. Every inch of the playground is being used, unlike Fallon Playground where there are few usable play structures.
- Can the drainage in the playground be addressed? There are always drainage issues at the water table.
 - o *Yes the playground drainage will be reassessed.*
- Support for classic playground equipment like swings. Slides, swings, and climbing structures are all good.
- Equipment should focus on fun and safety.
- Support for ADA accessible playground equipment, with picnic tables that have wheelchair access.
- Remove the boulders in the middle of the playground.
- Kids love the playground and there are structures for all ages.

Comments on Splash Pad:

- Splash pad near the YMCA would be advantageous for Y camps.
- There was some interest for keeping the splash pad and playground separate, and some interest in putting them adjacent to one another.

Comments on Circulation:

- Will the loop around the park be graded or at least have sign posting showing the total distance for runners and fitness enthusiasts
 - o *This is a great idea, and the design team can provide distance markers.*
- The walking loop has support from several residents.
- Would the walking loop allow for bikes?

Comments on Amenities for Dogs:

- Some residents were happy to see a dog park, especially for smaller dogs, others did not think it was necessary, think it would be too small, and that users would still bring their dogs to the open fields.
 - o *The Parks Department does not have the capacity to monitor off leash hours, but they can provide an enclosed dog area. Otherwise, off-leash usage is considered an "unofficial use" and folks are technically not supposed to let their dogs off leash in public parks.*
- Would there be an opportunity to add dog waste bags?
 - o Yes
- Would the dog park have operating hours?
 - o *A dog park would have the same operating hours as the rest of the park – sunrise to sunset.*
- One resident mentioned that he is supportive of the dog run, and said that many people who are not here, would also support a dog park. A small dog park is better than no dog park.

Comments on Street Hockey:

- There is a lot of interest in Street Hockey, though there were not a ton of representatives who attended the meeting. The annual Shamrock Shootout Street Hockey tournament sees over 600 kids from West Roxbury and Roslindale, this points to the interest. And there is large enrollment in the Coppinger street hockey league.
- There was support for the hockey rink near Sturges and the other courts.

Comments on Bellevue Stairs:

- The Bellevue stairs need to be repaired, could the entrance be nicer and more welcoming?
- Could the Bellevue stairs allow for fitness users to run up and down the steps?
 - o *The design team will investigate this.*
- Could there be a bike runnel up the stairs?
- Will the stairs be lit?
 - o *Parks does not provide lighting in parks at night for pedestrian use, as the idea is that our parks are closed from sun-down to sunrise. We light for athletic use only. Given that these stairs are used frequently, we will investigate whether we can add*

lighting at the Bellevue steps.

Miscellaneous Comments:

- Overall, there was a lot of support for the renovation and for the design team listening to the requests from the initial meeting and survey responses.
- Residents were curious about lighting of the park.
 - o *Lighting will come in the next phase of the project. BPRD will improve and replace sports lighting however they will not light the pathways at night, as the parks are closed at night.*
- Billings open areas are useful for tent rentals like pop-up tents, Road Race or community fun festivals. Would the event plaza entry space allow for loading and unloading for these events?
 - o *Yes, the entry would accommodate events as well as unloading. The open space in the center of Billings will remain and can be used for events. The design team will also connect with the organizers of the Corrib Road Race to get their feedback on the entry plaza to see if it will accommodate their needs for the event.*
- Could bike parking be included in the park?
 - o *Yes, the project will include bike racks.*
- Partnerships with the YMCA are encouraged.
 - o *Project is working with the YMCA to see where we can be supportive in our renovation.*
- There is very little shade in the park, tree plantings are appreciated. What else can be done for shade in the summer?
 - o *We are also looking at shade structures, and shaded dugouts.*
- A shade structure would be nice with the hammocks.
- Parkman Park has a good shade structure with picnic tables.
- A large entry plaza may be more valuable than a dog run.
- Can engineers look at the existing stone wall at Bellevue? There are sections that seem to be leaning.
- Recommendation to ask the “youth” at the YMCA to submit their ideas.
- Is there a way to avoid long closure due to supply chain problems?
 - o *Unfortunately, we cannot avoid this because of storage space, timing, and cost. Luckily, we are not seeing many delays on shipping anymore.*
- Is there a possibility to add a pollinator garden in the woodland area?
 - o *Unfortunately, the maintenance team is so busy with things like trash pickup that a pollinator garden would not be maintained.*