

# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** B Chatfield, BPRD

**FROM:** Billings Field Project Team

**MEETING DATE:** 04.25.2023

**SUBJECT:** Virtual Community Meeting #3 – Meeting Minutes

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## Panelists:

- *B Chatfield, BPRD*
- *Shanna Dixon, BPRD*
- *Matthew Soule, W&S*
- *Melissa Green W&S*
- *Yuanbin Wang, 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 the schematic design for the site. The schematic design was informed by the first community meeting feedback on October 13, 2022, an online survey from October 2022, and the second community meeting feedback on February 2, 2023. The goal of the meeting was to hear from the community about what aspects of the design they liked and did not like and if there was anything else they would like to see in the park design.

## Attendance:

53 total attendees including 5 team members.

## Virtual Discussion *(Including Zoom Chat Comments)*:

### Comments on Facilities:

- Will there be public bathrooms?
- Will there be access to the existing building?
  - o *BPRD is working on improving access to the building. We are looking into installing remote sensors for locking and unlocking the building.*
  - o *The Parks Department does 30-39M projects and can only work in the horizontal realm. We must go through the Public Facilities Department to work on buildings.*
- Will there be any storage containers put on site for recreational sports? Like what is at Garvey.
  - o *There is some storage in the field house currently.*
  - o *We can investigate finding a location for storage that makes sense.*

- The existing wall by the courts does not have the greatest railing and the wall on Bellevue wall is very old. Has there been an investigation into the walls and their condition?
  - o *We have looked at the walls but have not hired a structural engineer to assess them yet. They seem to be in okay condition. But we can get a second set of eyes on them if necessary.*

Comments on Accessibility, Circulation, and Park Access:

- You mention making the park more accessible, does that include improvements to Quinn Way to make it easier for park and Y traffic enter Centre St?
  - o *Our project will focus on the park - although we understand that improvements are needed in many places!*
- The concepts looks great! Will there be access to Sturges Road? This came up in previous meetings. There was also discussion of formalized paths/another entrance to Bellevue Street in the forested area.
  - o *We are proposing a street hockey rink along the Sturges Rd property. If there is an entrance on Sturges, there might be an increase in vehicular traffic on the road to access the hockey rink. We looked at an entrance there but ultimately decided it would significantly impact the residents on Sturges. We are improving all other existing entrances to the park to distribute access more easily.*
- Bellevue bike ramp is hard to see on plan, what is going on?
  - o *The bike ramp will run the length of the stairs to provide access up and down the stairs by rolling a bike.*
  - o *We will be replacing the whole stair because it is not in good condition. We can build a new bike ramp there since we are redoing the whole thing.*
- Would there be bike parking included on site?
  - o *Yes, we will be providing bike parking within the park.*
- Is there any thought of GoBoston2030 mobility goals in shaping the way access to the park is thought about?
  - o *We are improving all entrances and all walkways will be ADA accessible. The only non-accessible entrance is the staircase on Bellevue.*

Comments on Drainage:

- Is the improved drainage only for the park or does it include neighborhood level improvement (storm retention/infiltration)?
  - o *Our project will focus on the park - although we understand that improvements are needed in many places!*
- Is there an issue with water runoff into the street hockey court because of it being set down lower and thereby making them less usable?
  - o *The design team will be improving the drainage on site in its entirety including fields - the new hockey court will be designed with functional drainage.*

Comments on Lighting:

- Will there be consideration about light pollution?

- *We are replacing the sports field lights that are already there. The existing lights are old and no longer compliant. We will be using LED lights, which are angled down and reduce light pollution.*
- *We are also adding lighting at the Bellevue stairs to increase safety at night.*
- *We are not adding lighting through the park along the walking path.*
- Would all fields be usable at night with sports field lighting? Will there be lights for nighttime game play?
  - *We have not gotten as far as locating the sports lighting, we will be in contact with Parkway Softball and other Billings field sports leagues for their review when we place our lighting.*
  - *Lighting would enable evening sports play.*

Comments on Trees and Planting:

- Can you speak more about the tree removal? Is the focus mainly on removing dead and hazardous trees? You mentioned removing a few pines, but otherwise will there be much removal? I also see there would be additional planting at the Lagrange entrance, is the plan for these to be native species?
- Any thoughts with what we would be doing with space in areas that we remove trees? What will be done with the trees that we remove?
  - *We will be taking out the trees that the tree assessment revealed as dead or in very poor health, that might fall and cause a problem. Any trees that we remove from the woodland area will be laid on the slope to reduce erosion.*
  - *We are working with the BPRD urban wilds team and city arborist to maximize natural benefit of this area.*
  - *We are not opening woodland up for formal human use.*
- Are we removing invasive trees in woodland? Will that area be cleared out at all?
  - *We can do invasive species removals in the woodland. As part of the tree assessment, we found that there were not as many invasive trees there.*
- General Tree Removal comments:
  - *We are removing two pine trees (near the YMCA) to make room for level picnic areas that are accessible. These areas will provide shelter for gathering, outdoor workout, picnicking etc.*
  - *If we maintain the two pine trees, what we can develop in that space is extremely limited.*
  - *The design team can look balancing the desire for the gathering space and for keeping the pine trees. We will look to explore keeping one of the picnic areas and keeping one of the pine trees.*
- There is desire from several community members to keep the pine trees and several community members who would rather have the gathering spaces with shelters and picnic opportunities.
  - *The design team will look to balance these concerns.*
  - *The Parks Arborist will review and make a determination on the condition of these pines and the other trees flagged by the consulting arborist for removal.*

Comments on Dog Park:

- Was separated, enclosed dog space eliminated?
- Dog run still wanted. Can we have our dogs off leash? Will the entire park be enclosed to protect dogs running into the street? Are there plans to put a dog run somewhere else instead in other neighborhoods?
  - o *Boston laws do not allow dogs off leash in a park. We cannot say that BPRD is okay with off leash dogs in parks, however we recognize that this does happen. At this moment in time the only kind of dog run that BPRD can provide is an enclosed dog run (10,000 sf).*
  - o *In previous meetings and in the survey, we had a few people speak up supporting it, but ultimately it wasn't enough support compared to competing interests. Many reached out via email and said they would not use an enclosed dog run. It did not feel like the support we were getting for dog run was enough to merit including it in the design.*
  - o *The perimeter of the park will not be fully enclosed.*
  - o *There are no dog runs going into Millennium or Hynes.*

Comments on Sports Fields:

- I like the shaded dugouts and batting cage.
  - o *The dugouts proposed are enclosed at the back and top but not on the sides. They will have players benches. They are like the dugouts installed at Hynes.*
- Did you check that the girls' softball dimensions are accurate for 21st century? That was discussed last time.
  - o *After consulting the Recreation Department at Parks, and Parkway Softball, we are proposing one field that is 275' and one is 300. Both accommodate youth play and the 300' accommodates adult play.*
- Will there be a scoreboard for street hockey rink and/or softball?
  - o *We can investigate this and include scoreboards.*

Comments on the Plaza Space:

- What kind of equipment can be brought in?
  - o *We are working with Corrib Race organizers and other potential users to see what they need for their events.*
  - o *The paths have wide widths that can allow for a variety of access.*
- Will the event space have electrical connection?
  - o *We will provide a power source.*

Comments on the Playground:

- What is the plan for playground? How is the renovation going to work? How long can we expect the park to be closed?
  - o *We hired a playground safety consultant to review the condition and safety of the existing playground. Based on that assessment we determined that we would need to replace the decking on 5-12 year play structure, resurface the whole playground, and get rid of mounds. Community members have requested that we remove boulders between the two spaces. We will be rehabbing equipment that is there and resurfacing the area. This is not a comprehensive renovation and will require minimal work.*

- o *The playground is located in a discrete part of the park so it might be possible to renovate this separately from the rest of the park. However, we have not discussed construction phasing yet. This is not possible without having a contractor yet for the project. We can work with contractor once we have them on board. However, we cannot specify phasing when a project goes out to bid because this affects the bid costs and will drive the costs up.*

Positive Overall Comments:

- Like the gathering spaces
- I really think you've done a wonderful job with this plan. I feel very well "listened to" and this design manages to attend to a lot of different needs.
- Like the mist station for those on the field!
- Appreciate the shaded dugouts and the space for batting cage!
- I agree with Lindsey, this design looks great and incorporates a lot of the feedback from the multiple listening and feedback sessions. I also feel "listened to" in this design. Thank you!
- I appreciate the lighting of the back stairs, especially since we often go to YMCA classes in winter.
- Thank you very much for all the thought and feedback put into these designs. Thank you for listening to the community. Absolutely huge that the street hockey rink is coming to fruition this has been a pipe dream up until now. The Garvey Park street hockey rink is amazing and the rink is used all the time.