

MEMORANDUM

TO: B Chatfield, BPRD

FROM: Billings Field Project Team

MEETING DATE: 01.25.2024

SUBJECT: Virtual Community Meeting #4 – Meeting Minutes

Panelists:

- *B Chatfield, BPRD*
- *Cathy Baker-Eclipse, BPRD*
- *Matthew Soule, W&S*
- *Josh Millonig, W&S*
- *Gracie Swansburg, 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 updates to the schematic design for the site. The original 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 inform the community about changes to the design since the last meeting and hear from the community about what aspects of the design were top priorities to ensure the proposed budget and bid documents reflect those needs.

Attendance:

75 total attendees and 6 team members.

Virtual Discussion

Summary of Verbal Comments from Local and State Representatives:

- Ben Weber, Councilor
 - o In full support of the in-line hockey rink
 - o Requests to be a part of this process to ensure the community's needs are met
- Bill McGregor, State House
 - o Echoes Councilor Weber's support for the in-line hockey rink and community preferences
 - o Will work with the city to get the rink built
 - o Made note of the importance of the Matthew Foley memorial tree

- Response from the city: the existing memorial tree is dead, but the city will ensure it is replaced with a suitable tree during park improvements
- Response from Sharon Foley: "I am here tonight! Thank you so much Bill!"

Summary of Verbal Comments from Community Members:

- Offer Mark Loewen
 - o in favor of the in-line rink
- Jonathan Stratton
 - o in favor of the in-line rink
 - o Eliminate the entry plaza – stage and movies don't need the plaza
 - o Maintain access for equipment for those events
- Bill Taube, visually impaired
 - o Noted the importance of yellow stripes on stair edges for visually impaired users
- Chris Boccuzzi
 - o Representative for Parkway Youth Hockey
 - o Suggests removing tennis/basketball courts due to nearby facilities
 - Response from the city: Tenacity uses these courts regularly, but could look at removing one court
- Brian Clougherty and Conal Barbuto
 - o Representatives for Parkway Youth Hockey
 - o Both strongly in favor of the in-line rink to support the youth league
- Jessica Purdy
 - o Sturges Resident
 - o In support of the in-line rink
 - o Disagrees with removing the courts, there are no basketball courts at the Y
 - o Tenacity is an important program that needs the park facilities
 - o Suggests removing the splash pad, there is a splash pad at Hynes and turtle pond parkway
 - o Concerned with existing parking issues, and the future influx of park users and cars after park improvements are complete
 - Where will the increased traffic go?
 - Response from the city: the park does not provide parking, sports organizations need to encourage carpooling and drop offs
- Peter Hanson
 - o Maxfield St. Resident
 - o Questions about the access ramp
 - o Concerned that the woods are the only significant wildlife area west of Stoney Brook and that they provide a critical ecosystem worth protecting
 - o Advocate for wildlife first
 - o Notes that the Bellevue St. drop off has limited access and is on a narrow road, this area will not be able to serve a large influx of users when the ramp is built
 - o Concerned that a new concrete path/walls will increase heat in the park
- Mallory Rohrig

- Local resident
- Splash pad will be a huge draw for her family
- Wondering why the splash pad is separate from the playground
- Asked if the city will be adding bathrooms, advocates for these facilities
- Asked for more information about the playground updates
- Chris Bishop
 - Representative for Parkway Youth Hockey
 - Suggests cutting the splash pad, it can only be used a couple months out of the year
 - Response from the city: there is a significant and rising risk of kids overheating, and the splash pad will ensure safe play in the summer months
 - Response from Chris: consider right-sizing the splash pad, or replacing it with misting posts
 - In favor of the in-line rink
- Richard Berger
 - Representative for Parkway Youth Hockey
 - In favor of the in-line rink
- Sarah Parker
 - Appreciates the public process so far
 - Supporter of Pathway Youth Hockey
 - Emphasized the need for a rink in West Roxbury – there are 14 others across the city, but none in this neighborhood
 - Advocating for the rink on behalf of her 14 year old son
- Jennifer Nevin
 - In favor of the in-line rink
 - Emphasized that the rink will create a space kids can visit on their own, great for independence
 - Mentioned popularity of the Shamrock Shootout

Summary of Zoom Chat Comments

Comments on Accessibility, Circulation, and Park Access:

- “Love the accessible ramp up to Bellevue! <3”
- “Most of the space where the ramp would be is invasive species today, lots of bittersweet and swallowwort.”
- “Seems like an inefficient use of funds for the ramp from Bellevue down to park. A better use of funds would be to make the accessible access point at the end of Quinn Way.”
- “Are we preserving the WPA work?”
 - “Or at least pressuring the WPA plaque?”
- “This sounds great that there are changes to make it more accessible. I imagine this increases the project cost. Did the budget for the project also increase?”
- “I like the ramp. It allows better access from a larger street vs access from Quinn or Sturges that are small streets that already carry a lot of the burden. It also takes some of the woods away from the Friday night teen hangout and partying in the woods.”

- "Having the ramp makes walking or parking up on the hill a lot more workable"
- "Parking is a problem on Quinn Way"
- "With the road diet parking is a problem everywhere in WR now"
- "Designate 2 parking spots on Bellevue at the crosswalk as dropoff only."
- "You can have an accessible route along the steep part of Quinn Way. The ADA and AAB regulations allow the accessible route to match the slope of the street, if it is adjacent to it."
- "Suggest the enormous ramp structure be reconsidered. I assume you have a rough idea of the cost at this point and expect it is high. Think about the skateboard use and how a large concrete structure will be marked by graffiti."

Comments on the Splash Pad:

- "The summer camp at the Y has a pool" [that can keep kids cool instead of a splash pad if the budget cannot support a splash pad and a hockey rink]
- "Get rid of the splash pad." [If we need to eliminate programming to stay on budget]"
- "WR has a splash pad at another park. Keep the rink instead."
- "The splash pad is in an already very busy quadrant."
- "Are the splash pads utilized at other parks? I see it empty the majority of the time at Hynes, and they are not very engaging for all child levels, they seem like they are for toddlers"
- "Am all for street hockey (as clearly evidenced in this call), but would hate to see the splash pad removed or over simplified. Parents really enjoy having the option for water play! Will the splash pad or playground have any added coverage? Also, the mounds add a lot of interest and creative play - if they are removed, will new ones be put in in safer locations? I'd also like to advocate for the balance beam to be removed - it's so low to the ground where kids running and playing tag don't even notice it and then fall and trip."
 - o Response from the city: "balance beam has been flagged by many and is coming out"

Comments on the Playground:

- "the [existing] water feature is dinky—not like a splash pad"
- "Are you removing the rocks from the play area?"

Comments on Courts:

- "As a quinn way resident. noise from the pickle ball court is absolutely an issue that I have raised."
- "Basketball courts and tennis courts are too well used to eliminate any"

Comments on Trees, Plantings, and Habitat:

- "There has been a pair of nesting hawks (and their descendants) for decades, next to Sturges Rd. They are a highlight of the park"
- "The hawks are awesome"

Comments on Drainage and the Fields:

- "The softball community is excited about the new drainage and upgrades to the field as well."

Comments on the Plaza Space:

- "I don't think we need the event plaza"
- "I think an accessible path without a graded plaza is more reasonable at Lagrange"
- "lose the pavilion - Billings has had plenty of great events with no formal pavilion - it's not a must have"

Comments on the In-line Rink:

- "The street hockey court is the best addition to the park."
- "Please keep the rink in the plans."
- "No it is not okay at all" [to list the in-line rink as an ad. Alternate in the budget]
- "Absolutely do not go forward with project without street hockey rink."
- "I think the street hockey addition is a huge benefit"
- "You asked what people wanted and it was immediately evident people wanted the rink"
- "The West Roxbury hockey community wants the street hockey rink for youth recreation"
- "the rink is the most impactful addition BECAUSE it is new"
- "West Roxbury is the only neighborhood in Boston without a street hockey rink"
- "The rink has to stay in the plans!!!!!!!!!"
- "The rink absolutely should stay in the plan. Eliminate two of the four tennis courts or a basketball court."
- "The rink will see far more use than three tennis courts"
- "My 9yo son loves the roller rink. Please Please keep it!"
- "Why bother do this project without rink."
- "Take out one or two tennis and keep hockey rink which will be used. The tennis historically sees minimal use. No hockey rink would be a travesty."
- "We don't want our kids playing in the street anymore. please keep the rink It's the only thing in this plan that makes sense for a community filled with hockey players."
- "Please keep the hockey rink. Hockey is a hugely popular sport in WR and ice time is not cheap or always available. It is also a growing sport with girls and women, as we saw with 10,000 people at the women's Beanpot. Taking the rink out would be a huge miss"
- "A street hockey rink would be used far more than 3 tennis courts, also would be used almost year round!!!!!"
- "Rink is the gold. Tennis courts are everywhere."
- "The rink would be a vital part of this park and is important to the community. I don't think it is equitable to have 3 tennis courts and cut the one hockey court."
- "We want the rink. We had kids from our community petition for this. They did a great job and represented the community on this. You heard them clearly + had it in the plan. It would be great for our kids"
- "There are tennis courts and basketball courts everywhere. Keep the hockey rink"
- "Please take a holistic approach and consider we already have five basketball courts, three tennis courts, three pools/splash pads in the neighborhood. We have ZERO street hockey courts."
- "Thank you for your support on the rink Councilor Weber"
- "there are 14 rinks city wide and not one in WR. Dot has 4!"
- "WR has a splash pad at another park. Keep the rink instead."

- "I have to bring my son to tennis courts for roller hockey. Because tennis courts are it well used. And roller rink is very rare!!"
- "Promised a rink forever make it happen"
- "If the rink becomes an add/alternate it should be listed as the first alternate so that it has a high chance of being added"
- "Street Hockey is an affordable way to introduce all kids to the great sport of hockey. We need to make sure the rink stays in the plans."
- "Street Hockey is an affordable way to introduce all kids to the great sport of hockey. We need to make sure the rink stays in the plans. Well said. Rink is the priority!"
- "The court would get a TON of use. maybe even more than other courts. Southie has THREE courts. we have SO MANY hockey players that would use this in this part of the city."
- "Parkway LL Board member representing Parkway Little League - We represent over 700 kids and agrees with Brian, Chris and Conal that our kids overwhelmingly want a street hockey court. None exist in the neighborhood and our kids are counting on this being included."
- "Good points, street hockey is something that is long overdue for the kids that have been asking for. Many kids rollerblade or bike all the way over to Fallon."
- "PYH is the best town hockey program! PHY deserves its own roller rink. Thank you all for your opinion and voices."
- "Hockey is huge in Parkway. I believe hockey is probably at the top of the list of all sports. So that being said it would only make sense to build this. 3 tennis courts is unnecessary. Roxbury Latin has 16 courts that the community can use as well."
- "Currently skating/rollerblading isn't allowed on the path at Billings. Hopefully with the renovations rollerblading will be allowed on the path so kids can be active in the park, especially on the way to the rink."
- "My son started this petition [for a rink] when he was a sophomore in high school. He is now a sophomore in college, still playing hockey!"
- "Thank you for understanding how important a street hockey court would be to the community. We appreciate you hearing us out!"

General Comments on the Park Budget:

- "Tennis courts should stay, spend less on the entrance, keep the rink, splash pad and put the switch back ramp as an add/alt"
- "The Add Alternates should be the enormous ramp structure, the splash pad and the rink."
- "Could local nurseries, garden clubs, farms, etc. possibly be engaged to donate trees, shrubs, bushes, and other plants so that the funds going towards these items could instead be used for other structures?"
- "Thank you Bill and Ben for your support on the street hockey rink . The rink should not be negotiable. It's amazing with all the money the city has to not do this project right the first time. This is a great opportunity to make a generational upgrade to Billings Field. Do it right the first time. It doesn't appear that Garvey park or Savin hill park had too many items cut out of the design phase?"
- "Would there be any option to do community fundraising if there was a shortfall between the budget and the best bid?"

- “Eliminate the new event area by Lagrange. It isn't needed and it would be much more expensive than the street hockey. Skip the minor upgrades on courts, but don't get rid of them. Would also get rid of splash pad if looking for another item to cut.”