



Meeting Notes

Community Meeting #3

September 6, 2018

Improvements to Jamaica Pond Park Pathways and Entrances

Project Team in attendance

- Lauren Bryant, Project Manager, BPRD
- Margaret Dyson, Director of Historic Parks, BPRD
- Kyle Zick, Principal, Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture
- Danielle Desilets, Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture
- Tracy Hudak, Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture
- Brian Kuchar, Horsley Witten Group

The third public meeting for Jamaica Pond Park Pathway and Entrance improvements was held on September 6, 2018 at the Jamaica Plain Branch of the Boston Public Library. Below is a summary of the presentation and the issues discussed:

1. Lauren Bryant from BPRD introduced the project team and the overall project scope. Lauren also discussed the way that Park Design is accomplished at the Boston Parks and Recreation Department. The process considers the City of Boston's priorities, safety guidelines and regulatory requirements, the Department of Parks and Recreation's goals, and community input from these types of meetings.
2. Lauren reminded the attendees that the total project, which includes design fees, construction and a contingency, has a budget of 4.77 million. Of that amount, 4,060,000 is available for construction. The entire construction project has been broken into 2 phases. Phase 1 is the area in the northeast corner of the park around Pinebank and the bowls. Phase 1 has been bid out and construction will begin this fall. Phase 2 is the remainder of the park and is what this meeting focuses on. Phase 2 primarily addresses rehabilitation of the pathways adjacent to the pond, park entrances, stormwater improvements and site improvements. The project team will be taking the conceptual ideas from this presentation and working to turn them into construction details to bid out the work for Phase 2. In addition, the team will be taking Phase 2 work to the Boston Landmarks Commission and to Boston's Conservation Commission for review and approval.
3. Kyle Zick, consulting landscape architect, reviewed the current state of the park paths, which are experiencing wear, erosion, and failing edges. Worn running trails are also present along much of the path length. In assessing the path's potential, the project team has developed different schemes for the path and devised areas where a running path is parallel to the main pedestrian path, and areas where runners and pedestrians share the same path.
4. To make recommendations, the project team took a comprehensive approach, responding to the path's personality at different locations around the pond. The goal of each treatment is to improve path longevity, protect the pond (the resource) through stormwater management and support the many different types of users to the greatest extent possible.

5. Kyle reviewed representative cross-sections showing the various ways the project team expects to design the parallel and shared path conditions. In general, the design team is planning a 10' wide pedestrian asphalt path in place of the 8-10' path that exists now. Where the design team can accommodate a parallel path, the running path is expected to have a structural stone base with a finer material above. The running path is raised to ensure that even with some compaction from use, the berm would still be high enough to ensure that water moves along the path to designated points rather than flow over the running path, or directly into the pond.
6. The site also has a number of informal connection areas, which have developed as pedestrians or vehicular paths over time. The project team is studying these connections, and examining how changing habits, maintenance practices, or surfaces could minimize the negative impacts of these informal connections. The team will formalize the connections if formalizing them can improve water quality and if the paths can be made compliant from an accessibility standpoint.
7. The project scope also includes Park Entrances. The entrance at Perkins Street and Jamaica way is included in Phase 1. In Phase 2, the team is looking at the Pond Street entrance, the Eliot Street entrance and the entrance at Perkins/Chestnut Street.
8. The Pond Street entrance and boathouse area will be outfitted with continuous benches (as in Olmsted's original design), an accessible drinking water fountain/bottle filler, updated signage, and a stone basin that will be a nod to the granite fountain that was originally installed at this entrance. The wooden ramp currently at the boathouse will be replaced by a concrete ramp with handrails. Handrails will also be added to the stairs. The ramp and handrails will improve movement between the boathouse and bandstand, and promote accessibility for moving between the upper level and the lower level/dock. The current planters will be converted to rain gardens and take stormwater from the building roofs.
9. At Eliot Street, the project team plans to create a paved area that acknowledges the 'desire line' that has formed between the northern crosswalk and the pond path. Also, directional signage and pavement markings will be added to this location in response to concerns about conflicts between bicycles and pedestrians.
10. At Perkins and Chestnut Streets, the team plans to add an accessible drinking water fountain, directional signage, and a continuous bench to take advantage of the view of the pond. The continuous bench and a new shrub planting will deter pedestrians from cutting through the lawn at this location. This will protect the trees and reduce sediment flowing into the pond.
11. Along Perkins Street, the slope has become degraded due to pedestrian traffic and the steep slope from the street down to the pond path. To address this condition, a temporary fence would be used to help re-establish vegetation on the slope. At locations less vulnerable to erosion, gaps in the fence would still permit access. These gaps could be moved around, as needed, to protect the slope long-term.

12. Each of the 4 staircases were initially planned to be completed in Phase 1, but were moved to Phase 2 to ensure funding existed to complete all the desired work in Phase 2. The Perkins and Chestnut Street stairs require the most work, while the Hancock stairs only require minor shimming. The Perkins/Chestnut stairs and Pond stairs will be reset. The project team plans to install handrails along the outer edge of both of these staircases, offset from the granite stairs. The Puddingstone stairs will be reset, but not modified.
13. The current site furnishings in the Phase 2 area are not consistent. There are 5 different bench types, and some need repair. The project team is proposing to standardize the bench type that is used throughout the park and refit existing benches with new wood slats. In addition, linear continuous benches will be added to the Pond Street and Chestnut/Perkins entrances to more closely match what was historically present.
14. Regarding signage, the project team is proposing refurbishing the black park identification signs that are in a historic style and updating the other park signs so that they are standardized and current. The team is also proposing implementing directional bike/pedestrian signage to mitigate bicycle/pedestrian conflicts.
15. Kyle presented the preliminary vegetation plans. The design team mapped the invasive species and are developing a removal and management plan to eliminate them. Primary areas for restoration include areas along stairs, eroded areas, slopes where trees have fallen, and the sides of paths where there is significant compaction. All vegetation will be native and will be from the Olmsted plant list. Temporary fencing will help to change habits and allow the vegetation to get established. Educational signage is also being considered.
16. The project team is proposing an accessible fishing area just south of the Boathouse. Railings on this area will match historic railings used elsewhere at the park.
17. For phasing Phase 2 construction, the proposed strategy is to do the work in stages. Where possible, detours will be put in place. Where a safe detour can't be found, those areas of the park will be closed while work in that area is completed. Signage will provide notice of detours or closures in advance.
18. The project team took questions throughout the presentation, and due to time constraints and an unanticipated building closure, encouraged participants to submit feedback after the meeting, directly to the project manager. The following topic areas were discussed by meeting attendees, or submitted after the meeting:

Asphalt Pathway

Attendees questioned whether the 10' pathway needed to be asphalt, or whether the asphalt could be a different color. Kyle noted that while stone dust or other similar surfaces work in some applications, it is unlikely to stand up to the amount of traffic that Jamaica Pond receives, especially in heavy storms. Margaret Dyson pointed out that while asphalt can look stark when it is first installed, over time, it fades into the landscape. Coloring the asphalt makes it difficult to maintain consistency across such a large project and makes any future patching stand out more.

She also noted that asphalt is the standard across the historic parks in the city, and has been in use at Jamaica Pond since the 1920s.

Running Surface and Parallel Running Path

Attendees suggested a number of alternate running surfaces for the project team to consider. Suggestions included wood chips, artificial turf, and products such as flexi-pave and stabilized aggregate. The project team is still considering options, but has found that while wood chips are affordable and usually available, they tend to float away. Artificial turf would probably not have a long life given the heavy use of the park. The project team will continue looking at options. The goal is to provide a surface that runners will like using, while also protecting the pond and the asphalt path edges. Attendees generally supported a test area of potential runner's path materials. The project team is looking into this possibility.

Questions were raised regarding the maintainability and longevity of the vegetated strip between the running path and main path, in the parallel path situation. This is an area that the project team has been studying. While the vegetated strip does come with some maintenance concerns, having the running path directly abutting the paved path presents potential problems with compaction, exacerbating erosion and presenting a safety risk. Elevating the running path gives some assurance that even with compaction, the berm would still provide its stormwater function.

Accessibility

Comments were received noting that some park pathways are steep and difficult for those with mobility impairments to safely navigate. Deep cracks and damaged edges also create accessibility problems. All perimeter pond paths will be repaved during Phase 2. This work will repair path condition, including areas that are currently cracked or disrupted by tree roots. Where steep slopes can be moderated, re-paved pathways will be altered to make that possible. However, to make some internal pathways fully accessible would require extensive regrading and significantly change the natural topography of the historic park. In these cases, alternate accessible routes should provide access.

Commenters asked about improving the accessibility of the area they refer to as the 'beach' by Eliot Street. Unfortunately, the slopes from the Eliot Street entrance area toward the 'beach' area cannot be made accessible without significant alteration of the landscape. The gravel pathway that currently exists is not sustainable, and in Phase 2, this informal pathway will be re-vegetated.

Given that Phase 2 work will not start until Spring 2019, there was an inquiry into whether any repair work could be done in the interim. Unfortunately, at this time Boston Parks and Recreation cannot mobilize to do repair work on the perimeter path. Any short-term patching on the multi-use path would need to be addressed with DCR.

Accessibility improvements in Phase 2 will include companion spaces for a large percentage of benches, accessible drinking water fountains, accessible paths to exercise equipment, an accessible ramp for dock access, and moderated slopes, where possible.

Boathouse and Bandstand

Some attendees were concerned about the collection of material between the buildings and the railing. Lauren Bryant said that with each new project, she meets with maintenance staff to explain the changes. Margaret Dyson also pointed out that often, renovating a space can be the start of a culture change. In this case, the area in question may be thought of as 'out of view,' but is isn't. In the meantime, Lauren Bryant will raise this issue with maintenance staff, and Margaret Dyson encouraged attendees to take advantage of Boston's 311 call line or phone app.

Another issue that was raised was noise problems at the Boathouse and Bandstand area brought about by the traffic on the Jamaicaaway. There was a suggestion to add granite blocks, like those seen elsewhere in the park, to try and attenuate the sound from the car traffic. The funds for this project, as laid out in the City of Boston's budget, do not allow for managing sound problems coming from a state roadway on land managed by DCR. However, participants were encouraged to contact DCR's External Relations Office. The main office number is 617-626-1250. Another individual to contact is the State Representative for the Massachusetts 15th Suffolk/Norfolk district.

Planting and Landscape Restoration

Respondents expressed interest in preserving as much green space as possible and ensuring that plant species support wildlife. The majority of plantings in this project will be native and will be from the Olmsted plant list. A small number of ornamental plantings may deviate from this general guideline.

Bikes on the Pond Perimeter Path

Most respondents are interested in ways to reduce bike and pedestrian conflicts where the multi-use path and the pedestrian paths meet. Some respondents would like bicycles to be permitted on the pond-adjacent pedestrian path. Keeping in mind the historic intention of that path and the heavy pedestrian traffic it currently carries, bikes are not permitted on the pond-adjacent pedestrian pathway. Additional bike racks will be placed near park entrances to provide a location for bicycle visitors to lock up their bikes while they walk on the pathways. The multi-use path along the Jamaicaaway is open to both pedestrians and cyclists.

Exercise Equipment

A previous master planning process recommended phasing out the exercise equipment at the end of its life. Current equipment does not meet applicable codes and was to be removed in this phase of work. However, numerous respondents expressed an interest in maintaining, replacing or adding to the existing calisthenics equipment that is in place around the pond. As a result, the exercise equipment will not be phased out as part of this project. Existing equipment will be replaced with equipment that does meet code. The new equipment will be selected in a way to be respectful of the historic and natural park setting. The equipment selection will also need to be approved by the Landmarks Commission as part of our overall project approval.



Next Steps

- a. The presentation and meeting notes will be posted on the Boston Parks and Recreation Department project website. <https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/improvements-jamaica-pond-pathways-and-perimeter>
- b. Contact Lauren Bryant at lauren.bryant@boston.gov or 617-961-3019 with any questions.
- c. This is our final public meeting. All future updates will be done through the project website. hearings with the Boston Landmarks Commission and Conservation Commission that are additional opportunities for further public input.
- d. Participants who have signed in at any of the public meetings will receive notifications from Lauren Bryant regarding construction start dates and other important milestones.