

McKinney Playground Community Meeting #4

Date & Time: June 04, 2024, from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Location: Zoom

Attendees:

Nelle Ward, Project Manager, City of Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BRPD)

Cathy Baker-Eclipse, Director of the Capital Plan, City of Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BRPD)

Kevin L'Herrou, Allston-Brighton Liaison, City of Boston Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS)

Shanna Dixon, Social Media Coordinator, City of Boston

Megan Tomkins, Principal, CBA Landscape Architects

Michelle Johnson, Landscape Designer, CBA Landscape Architects

Luke McCoy, Principal, Kaestle Boos Associates, Sports Field Consultant

Daniela Caride, Spanish Language Interpreter

Yuanw Venezia, Mandarin Language Interpreter

Community Members, Neighbors

Nelle Ward, Boston Parks and Recreation Project Manager, introduced the meeting providing a brief project overview followed by introducing the team, then a timeline of the project and the past design process and concepts for the park. Megan Tomkins of CBA presented a summary of CBA's site analysis; a review of the community feedback from community meeting 3 and the online survey; and an overview of the proposed schematic design plan. She also presented information about the sports field layouts and site elements. Then Luke McCoy of Kaestle Boos Associates discussed the proposed drainage improvements to the sports fields that aim to improve drainage on the fields by directing stormwater away from use areas. Nelle Ward then presented the proposed lighting improvement to the park, including new sports lights at the fields, replaced sports lights at the courts, and two types of new pedestrian path lights. Finally, Megan Tomkins presented the design for the proposed play area and park entries along Faneuil Street.

The following is a summary of the questions and comments that were discussed during the meeting, organized by topic:

Athletic Fields:

- Several community members expressed gratitude that the team / BPRD listened to the community and is moving forward with natural turf.

- A representative from Allston-Brighton Little League voiced their frustration about the poor condition of the existing natural turf field. BPRD noted that the new field will have improved drainage and improved, resilient turf species.
- A youth baseball coach supported artificial turf for the sports field, citing the lack of maintenance at the existing sports fields. BPRD stated that the department will pass on the concerns with maintenance to the BPRD maintenance department.
- Another community member requested a new batting cage, noting the poor condition of the existing batting cage. BPRD took note and will consider this suggestion.
- A suggestion was made to have half the field natural turf and the other half artificial turf. BPRD noted there was opposition from most community members to include any artificial turf in the design.
- An abutter (from Goodenough Street) asked for taller perimeter fencing as baseballs land in their yard. BPRD took note and will consider this suggestion.
- A T-ball coach supported the installation of the artificial turf, due to the poor condition of the grass area on the little league field.
- Another community member voiced support for the artificial field.
- A local resident indicated that the fields should remain only permitted for youth sports and not for adult sports leagues. BPRD noted there currently, there are no plans to expand permitting to adult sports leagues.

Park Maintenance:

- Residents were concerned about the lack of maintenance at the park. They expressed worry about the longevity of the proposed improvements if the level of maintenance is not increased. BPRD noted that BPRD maintenance is in the process of expanding its maintenance capacity for ballfields City-Wide.
- More than one community member noted that the nearby little league field at the newly renovated Smith Field has been vandalized in that all the bases were loosened/pulled up. They noted that this vandalism happened months ago, and the field has not been repaired yet.
- Several community members noted that the nearby little league field at the newly renovated Smith Field has not been mowed in a timely manner. Several related statements we made, such as that all the other fields at Smith were mowed except the little league field, prior to the Harvard graduation; and that a provide citizen mowed the Smith little league field themselves recently. BPRD Parks noted that BPRD Maintenance will be notified of the need to address maintenance at Smith Field.

Lighting:

- Community members questioned how late the sports field lighting will be on. BPRD confirmed that sports lights for permitted uses could be on until 10:45PM at the latest. BPRD noted that the (BPRD-operated) sports lights will only be on during permitted use. The (Boston Street Lights-operated) pedestrian path lights will be on from dusk to dawn every day and the (BPRD security) path lights mounted on the sports poles at the athletic fields would be on from 6pm to midnight, or as requested by the community.

- Another community member wondered if there was really a need for sports lighting for youth sports. BPRD noted adding sports lights is a standard field improvements that allows kids to finish their games and that it improves safety for players.
- A community member asked how they could find out when the sports lights will be on in the evening.

Entrances & Playground:

- A meeting attendee expressed support for playground equipment for younger children in the 2-5 years age range. BPRD stated that there will be a designated 5-12 play area as well as a designated 2-5 play area.
- A meeting attendee asked what the new playground surface will be; the design team confirmed that that it will be poured-in-place rubber safety surface.
- Community members noted they would like to see colorful paving material at the splash pad area. BPRD took note and will consider this suggestion.

Dogs:

- Dog waste has been encountered across the park, mainly on the sports fields.
- One attendee asked for an area designated for dogs at the park. BPRD noted that a designated dog park area is being planned for Hardiman Playground, located at 380 Faneuil Street.

Additional Feedback:

- A meeting attendee requested that a sign be put up at the park about the park's future site improvements. BPRD took note and will consider this suggestion.
- A meeting attendee asked if the grant money received from the Boston College (BC) Neighborhood Improvements Fund could be redirected toward maintenance costs for the park. BPRD noted that redirecting construction funds for park/field maintenance is not feasible as those funding streams are separate within the City budget.

Prepared by Michelle Johnson and Megan Tomkins, CBA Landscape Architects LLC

