

## PRINCETON BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSIONERS

June 9, 2016

A meeting of the Princeton Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners was held on June 9, 2016 in the Princeton Recreation Department (PRD) lower level Conference Room, 380 Witherspoon Street.

**Present:** Ms. Butler, Mr. Koontz, Ms. Germaine, Dr. Nosker, Ms. Rogers, and Dr. Cahill  
**Also Present:** Mr. Stentz and Mr. Moorhead, Mr. Groeger and Mr. Marroli, Mrs. Stockton  
**Absent:** Dr. Frawley, Mr. Young, Ms. Olivares-Weber

### Old Business

#### Mary Moss Playground/Sprayground Project - Design & Layout

Mr. Stentz presented the current concept design for the planned renovation of Mary Moss Playground (MMP). Mr. Stentz explained that he was seeking approval from the Commission on the concept design, and that if approved tonight, he would be seeking approval from Princeton Mayor & Council on Monday, June 13, 2016. Mr. Stentz explained that the proposed concept includes the following:

- Three (3) primary areas including the playground area, picnic/seating area, and an aquatic area.
- Two (2) tiers, upper & lower, due to continuing to incorporate the existing slope into the design.
- Additional seating, shade, landscaping, and accessibility, all of which were preferred by many community members that provided feedback throughout the design process.
- Design concept will bring MMP into full compliance with all Health, Building, and ADA (accessibility) codes.
- The boulder climbing area, which will include a slide, was well-received by many residents that participated in the input process.
- Third entrance added at corner of John & Lytle for additional access for neighbors, an addition that received positive feedback from community members. Inside this entry way is a seating wall w/ decorative fencing, which presents an opportunity for signage, artwork or other displays and possibly a location to recognize Mary B. Moss and her role at the playground and in the community.
- Details about specific amenity choices such as color of equipment, amenity materials, ground surfacing, and other specific material/equipment choices will be made as part of the next phase of planning. Feedback collected throughout the community input phase will continue to be considered once the project moves into the next phase.

#### Questions/Comments from Commission Members

- Mr. Koontz commented that he is impressed with the design and layout and that it appears to be aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Koontz also commented that using the existing slope and designing in the slide feature will be an attractive feature that will engage children. Mr. Koontz remarked that he would prefer that the project not use chain-link fence, where possible, as it often presents a 'stay-away' message.
- Dr. Cahill asked about previous discussion regarding the desire of some residents to keep the existing wading pool in a renovated MMP, rather than have a sprayground. Mr. Stentz provided the following comments:

- Existing pool cannot stay in a renovated MMP as it does not meet current health, building and ADA code. The municipality has a responsibility to bring the entire facility up to code once a renovation of the space begins.
  - A new pool in MMP would need to meet all current codes. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations require a zero-depth entry into a wading pool, which needs to be 12 feet in length for each one (1) foot of water depth. This would require a 24 foot-long zero-depth entry, nearly double in length the size of the existing pool. This larger pool would take up significantly more space, yet only be usable for three months per year. During the nine (9) non-pool months, this space would be effectively wasted. A larger pool would also limit the ability to add more seating, shade, landscaping, play areas, etc., all of which we have heard are desired by community members.
  - Health code requires that a wading pool have a fence directly around it to restrict access during non-operational hours. This fence (4' minimum) would be in addition to the fence around the perimeter of the park.
  - Ms. Butler commented that a renovated, expanded wading pool at MMP would be duplicating what is currently in place at Community Park (CP) Pool. The desire of the Commission is to have different options, features and attractions throughout town, when possible. Mr. Stentz agrees that the town should always have an eye on providing a diverse set of recreational services and facilities.
  - Dr. Nosker commented that the daily movement of the sun should be considered when deciding on location of shade structures.
  - Dr. Cahill commented that the boulder climb/slide is a part of the plan that is attractive and that parents of other CP School students that she spoke with shared her excitement on this play element.
- *Mr. Koontz made a motion to approve the Mary Moss Playground design concept, seconded by Ms. Germaine. Dr. Nosker opened the public comment:*

### Public Comments Opened

#### **Yina Moore (19 Green Street)**

- Ms. Moore summarized a communication that had been emailed earlier in the day to Mr. Stentz, Ms. Stockton, Mayor Lempert, and Administrator Marc Dashield. (Copy of communication included in official record of Recreation Commission minutes.)
- There has been erratic operations at MMP over the years, primarily due to staffing.
- The fence is not an aesthetic issue. This is more of an issue of use and security. The fence prevents entries for non-toddler, parent & staff supervised use.
- People were concerned that there appears to be a lot of off-the-shelf playground equipment and people were horrified at the use of primary colors.
- Members of the Witherspoon-Jackson Historic District Committee (WJHDC) met with local Landscape Architect Peter Soderman.
- Ms. Moore reports that Mr. Soderman was really surprised that the (wading) pool was planned for removal, and certainly this neighborhood is dismayed that it is being removed and not being replaced.
- From a child development standpoint, including the wading pool is a very important element that the neighborhood sees as particularly significant to abet the rate of drownings at later ages of minority adults due to the lack of early water experiences.

- Ms. Moore has sent approx. 40 images of natural park settings to REC Staff (images shared by REC Staff with Commission)
- The neighborhood feels the playground should have some supervision and should have security measures in closing and keeping playground locked during non-operating hours.
- This project will need the review of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) as to its conformance with new requirements that all of the properties in the neighborhood are subjected to in order to retain the character of the neighborhood.

**Maria Evans (151 Taylor Ct.)**

- It's disheartening that it's taken this much effort to get the actual character of the neighborhood taken into consideration with how changes are going to be made.

**Bernadine Hines (200 John St.)**

- This process (MMP) is yet another example of how the powers that be in Princeton tend to take changes in our neighborhood without consulting the people of the neighborhood.
- There was not full and comprehensive notification of the community meetings.
- There was no proper vetting or obtaining of proper bids, which is usual for this town.
- Council and the powers that be do not tend to get feedback from the neighbors and then go get bids, different bids, and different concepts, and then go with one bid and backroom deals and then it is shoved down people's throats without our full consulting.
- Decisions are being made by people that don't even reside in the neighborhood.
- Maintenance was always kept up in the other playgrounds, but neglected in MMP. Other wading pools were chlorinated, but MMP was not.
- I am very disappointed that you want to remove the pool.
- (REC) should have held off on MMP process because we knew historic designation process was coming along.
- The pool has two (2) fundamental principles that the pool was designed for: Allow children of color to have access to and get acclimation to pools and water to make them feel safe.
- MMP wading pool will be the only way for a lot of the minority children in the neighborhood to get access to a pool because not all of them have access to the YM/YW or CP Pool.
- This process should be slowed down and more input should be obtained from neighbors and more bids should be pursued.
- This process needs to be halted.

**Leighton Newlin (Princeton resident but address not stated):**

- Mr. Newlin commented on the important role that Mary Moss played in the community and at the playground and expressed his desire to recognize Ms. Moss.
- Mr. Newlin reiterated the statistical data related to increased drowning risk for African Americans and Latinos.
- Our neighborhood is no longer an African-American neighborhood, while certainly there are plenty of African-American residents, the neighborhood has become a diversified neighborhood.
- Mr. Newlin commented that within the W-J neighborhood, MMP is even more important than the Paul Robeson House. Mr. Newlin commented that MMP has meant so much over the years and continue to mean so much to new generations of neighbors as a place where people of different backgrounds and ethnicities can get to know each other.
- Best of both worlds would be to have both a wading pool and a sprinkler system.

**Kip Cherry (Princeton resident but address not stated):**

- The history of neighborhood needs to be considered in design concept.
- Concerned that there has not been a narrative program related to this project.
- Safety of boulder climb for toddlers concerns her.
- Shade is important and we need real trees for shade.
- Ms. Cherry believes that MMP needs supervised activities, not necessarily supervised by adults but by teenagers who can work with the little kids.
- Ms. Cherry believes that the wading pool is critical to the people that live in the W-J neighborhood for introduction to water.
- Ms. Cherry believes Latino residents have not been well-represented in input process and that many participants in the process haven't had young children.
- Ms. Cherry suggests that REC Commission connect with HPC on the concept and also stated that HPC has to give approval of this project before the Council will be able to approve the project.

**John Heilner (Library Place):**

- Feedback Mr. Heilner received from a Landscape Architect that worked in Prospect Park about desired elements of MMP:
  - Open-ended play.
  - Space should be exploratory.
  - Should have both quiet spots and active spots.
  - Should have natural materials wherever possible.
  - If possible, main play area should be a poured-in-place surface.
- Regarding the property line between MMP and the lot for proposed affordable housing, Mr. Heilner commented that he has had discussions with Princeton Administration and Habitat For Humanity about possible adjustments to the boundaries.

**Daniel Harris (Dodds Lane):**

- Mr. Harris commented that the motion introduced earlier in the evening to approve the MMP design concept should be tabled so that REC Dept. can work with HPC, and then take HPC input to RBA (design firm) before going to Council.

**Public Comments Closed**

**Comments from Commission and Staff**

**Mr. Koontz:**

- Regarding the suggestion of changing the boundaries of the park space, the open space in question was acquired by the municipality with the contribution of open space funds from Mercer County, and that County open space funds can only be used for certain purposes and affordable housing is not one of those purposes.
- Mr. Koontz does not advise the Recreation Commission to establish a precedent that site plans for park designs go to the HPC as it isn't their jurisdiction. If a policy is to be established that Recreation projects are under the purview of HPC, such a policy should come from the Governing Body. The Recreation Commission is not answerable to the HPC. The Recreation Commission is answerable to the Council.
- Regarding comments about this project having gone out to bid, Mr. Koontz asked Mr. Stentz if the project has gone out to bid. Mr. Stentz responded that the project has not yet gone out to bid. Mr. Stentz commented that a Request For Proposals (RFP) was issued relating to the

professional design services and that 16 proposals were received. Four (4) firms were interviewed by the MMP subcommittee and that The RBA Group, Inc. was selected. Mr. Stentz also noted that all required notices regarding the RFP were issued.

**Mr. Stentz:**

- Regarding comments that the Recreation Commission should have waited to move forward on this project because of the potential Historic Neighborhood designation for W-J, Mr. Stentz noted that the MMP renovation project began in fall 2013. Mr. Stentz presented the project to Princeton Mayor & Council publically in the fall 2013. In the fall of 2014, Mr. Stentz presented the project to the Mercer County Freeholders at their public meeting held at 400 Witherspoon Street in Princeton.
- Mr. Stentz commented that there has been much positive feedback received on the design concept from residents of the W-J neighborhood and that the design concept being reviewed tonight reflects feedback received from two community meetings in spring 2016, as well as many other forums for residents to comment and provide feedback.
- Regarding the issue of the importance of early introduction to water, Mr. Stentz believes that regardless of race or ethnicity, all young people need to learn how to swim as a crucial life skill. Mr. Stentz commented that more residents are using CP Pool for swim lessons now than at any time during his 16 years with the department. Instruction begins at age two (2) and progresses up through multiple levels of instruction.
- Regarding the comments that not all residents can afford to use pool facilities such as the YM/YW pool or CP Pool, Mr. Stentz reported that there are approx. 100 resident families receiving financial assistance in 2016 and that approx. 80 of those families live in the W-J neighborhood.

**Ms. Butler:**

- Ms. Butler commented that municipal projects are not subject to review by HPC. Ms. Butler asked Mr. Stentz if he wanted to elaborate on discussions about this topic that have taken place with Princeton Administrator Marc Dashield. Mr. Stentz and Assistant Municipal Engineer Deanna Stockton have asked Administration for direction on how and when to interact with HPC on the MMP project. Administrator Dashield has suggested that when the project is approx. 60-70% complete, a no-obligations review be offered to HPC.
- Ms. Butler agrees with the direction of Mr. Dashield and believes that HPC can be helpful, but reiterated that the review is a 'no-obligation' review.
- The intention is to not have supervision at a renovated MMP as community feedback has been consistent that this space remain geared toward toddlers and younger children. Therefore, most of this younger demographic will come to the playground with parents or caregivers.
- Ms. Butler notes that the REC subcommittee and RBA believe there are multiple opportunities and locations to honor Mary Moss within the renovated space, but that the intent is not to turn the playground into a museum.
- *Mr. Koontz restated his motion to approve the Mary Moss Playground design concept, which has been seconded by Ms. Germaine. Vote was unanimous in favor of approving the design concept and moving forward to present the design concept to Princeton Mayor & Council.*

## Activities Report

In addition to activities detailed in the agenda packet, the following was reported on:

- Mr. Groeger noted that Day Camp begins on 6/21/16 and that day camp staff orientation will be held on Saturday 6/11/16.
- Mr. Marrolli reported that planning is ongoing for hosting the PASDA swim championships at CP Pool on July 25-26, 2016.
- Mr. Marrolli reported that the final Special Needs event of the school year was held on Friday 6/3/16 at CP Pool. Special Needs dances will begin again in September.
- Mr. Moorhead reported that the Men's Summer Basketball League will kick-off its 28<sup>th</sup> season on Wednesday 6/15/16.
- Mr. Moorhead reported that resident requests to use Community Park South for drop-in soccer use is growing and that wear & tear during summer months makes field conditions less than desirable for fall usage by youth sport groups and PPS teams.

## Director's Report

Mr. Stentz reported on the following:

- **Baby Pool Update:** Several delaminated areas of the baby pool have been re-plastered. The worst spots have been repaired for free by the vendor, however not all of the delaminated areas have been repaired. Staff will need to reevaluate the pool at the end of this summer and determine if the entire pool needs to be re-plastered.
- **Ellen Petrone Scholarship via Corner House:** Corner House has created two (2) annual scholarships in the amount of \$250 each to assist with registration fees for local children. Mrs. Petrone recently retired from her volunteer position as the coordinator of the AST program with Corner House. The scholarships will be designated for children using Princeton Recreation Dept. programming.
- **Sarah 'Tink' Bolster:** As detailed via email recently, Mrs. Bolster passed away on 5/19/16. Princeton Recreation Dept. has been named as a recipient of any donations in lieu of flowers. There will be a service in Mrs. Bolster's honor on 6/30/16 at Princeton University Chapel.
- **Donation from Princeton University:** PRD received a \$500 donation from P.U. to assist families in need for the 8/21/16 Kids Splash & Dash Aquathon.
- **CP Pool Update:** Memorial Day weekend saw more than 4,000 visitors to CP Pool and more than 625 new members purchased membership. The REC offices are open to the public from 10:30 am – 6 pm during the first three (3) weekends of the pool season as a service to the residents.
- **Larry Ivan Plaque Unveiling Ceremony:** The Larry Ivan plaque dedication ceremony will be held tomorrow (Friday, June 10<sup>th</sup>) at CP Pool from 6 – 8 pm. Mayor Liz Lempert will be honoring Mr. Ivan with a proclamation.

## Communications:

Included in agenda packet and in official REC Commission minutes binder.

## Public Comment

Comments detailed above regarding Mary Moss Playground project.

## Approval of Minutes

- *Ms. Butler made a motion to approve the May 2016 Commission meeting minutes, seconded by Dr. Cahill, and approved. Dr. Nosker and Mr. Koontz abstained.*

### **New Business**

Mr. Stentz requested to add the purchase of additional plastic chairs and plastic lounge chairs for CP Pool to the RT Reserve budget. The purchase includes 48 regular chairs and 16 lounge chairs.

*Mr. Koontz made a motion to approve the purchase of additional chairs for CP Pool, seconded by Dr. Cahill, and approved.*

### **Approval of Bills**

- *Ms. Butler made a motion to approve the bills, seconded by Mr. Koontz, and approved.*

### **Next Meeting Date**

July 28, 2016

### **Adjournment**