

Darien Playground Working Group
Minutes from the Special Meeting on Thursday, October 19, 2023

The meeting of the Playground Working Group took place in person and on site at the Cherry Lawn playgrounds. It was called to order at 8:50am by Chair Susan Daly. In attendance: Sarah Baldwin, Patti Bumgardner, Susan Daly, Alyssa Mahoney, Cathy Mulrow, Ruth Tomalski and Pam Gery, Director of Parks & Recreation. Absent: Curtis Butler, Pam Garrity. Special Guest: John Hollerbach, President of Creative Recreation.

Ms. Daly said the McGuane Playground Ribbon Cutting event is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, November 5th.

The Playground Working Group walked through the 2-5 year old playground at Cherry Lawn and discussed priorities with Mr. Hollerbach beyond the designs he had previously submitted and then tweaked for the last meeting. The discussion included the width and length of the pour and play surface that would be in certain spots on the younger children's playground, reviewing where each piece of equipment would go and the space needed around each area, possibly adding a few more pieces if the wooden gazebo that is inside the play area is moved outside it and positioned between both playgrounds. Discussion also included making sure to allow space for the existing picnic tables and some benches inside the playground, as well as reiterating the two new play pieces (installed in the last 3 years) would remain as well, as the two twirly seats. Every other item will be new. The swing set will include one ADA swing and one parent/baby swing along with regular swings). There will be rocking pieces, a pretend playhouse, a musical item and a new 2-5 play structure with slides and climbing items.

Next, the Playground Working Group walked through the 5-12 year old playground with tape measures to measure the height of the existing tallest item in the playground and then measured and visualized what a proposed higher item would look like which is a fully enclosed play structure.

The discussion included reviewing in detail each item proposed for both playgrounds and specific suggestions were made to add or subtract certain items. Swings, slides, climbing items, and rocking and twirling items were high on the list for both playgrounds as requests from parents, nannies and children. The existing tire swing was discussed at length and there was a request for Mr. Hollerbach to see if he could add monkey bars somewhere since they exist presently in two spots on the present 5-12 playground but are not on his proposal for the new playground. A vertical standing twirler was also suggested.

Mr. Hollerbach measured out a potential bump out area on the back of the playground our working group had previously identified where there could be room for the stand-alone climbing structure. Ms. Gery and Ms. Bumgardner both gave input that P&Z would likely need to inspect the area and give input on the bump out.

There was discussion on where the pour and play surface would be on the 5-12 as well as the 2-5 playground and where the wood chips would be. The goal of having pour and play in certain areas is to make it even more ADA accessible for certain playground items where a wheelchair could have easy access, along with strollers, etc.

A "Name a Brick" program was discussed as a fundraiser proposed by Susan Daly to expand the present walkway (akin to what is already there), up to the 5-12 playground. A discussion followed about using some of the funds from the brick program fundraiser to create a flatter

surface, like a flat patio, in between the playgrounds and abutting the big playground. It would make the area look much nicer and allow parents, nannies, kids, and grandparents to roll up with strollers, walkers, a wheelchair, etc., and sit down and more comfortably enjoy the picnic tables in the shade. This area could also have more inclusive items.

Two working group members with young kids, Ms. Mahoney and Ms. Tomalski plan a site visit with their children to Orange, CT where a similar 5-12 structure like the one Mr. Hollerbach proposed is currently installed and they will report back on their impressions along with photos.

Mr. Hollerbach said he would try and get a new draft plan to the working group before our next scheduled meeting on Thursday, Oct 26th via Zoom. This was the group can discuss on November 1st that if we order by year end we can get a 6% discount and get on the schedule for installation for the spring or summer.

The on-site meeting at Cherry Lawn was adjourned at 10:15am.

Respectfully submitted by Patti Bumgardner