

Thursday, October 8th, 2015 Playground Committee Minutes.

The meeting was postponed from October 1st, as announced in the last town meeting.

In attendance: Dela Bryan, Mick Fitzharris, Jim Laurino (chair) AJ Stalloni, Katrina Streiff

Visitors: Barbara Shippy, Bill Theis, Sam Panella, David Michelson, Jeffrey Politis. Only Bill and Sam were present for the entire meeting.

Jim opened by stating the agenda of the meeting: To discuss the design of the embankment, or terrain, slide on the Arden Green. We have an adequate design to build from, and we have sufficient funds. We will describe this design. We are open to constructive suggestions. We would like to hear your concerns.

He described the mound as being 6 feet high and having a 30 degree slope on the side where the slide will be placed. On the sides of the mound it will transition to a gentler slope of 20 degrees. The slope at the back is only a few degrees. The center of the mound will be 8 feet in diameter and flat. The top of the slide will have a sit down bar and entrance platform.

The Cherry Road side of the Green is 3 feet higher than the bottom of the slide. Therefore, the top of the mound will be only 3 feet higher than the road. There will be 66 foot long, 6 foot wide, gently rising, curving path going up to the mound from the road.

The mound will be built of compacted earth, with sod on the path and much of the sides. After the sod is planted we will need a month for it to set, while watering it frequently. It should be fine after that.

We moved the location slightly southeast to achieve better water flow on the green. Several people skilled in landscaping independently confirmed the soundness of this change. I

We discussed the steps that will lead up from near the slide exit back to the top of the slide. There are concerns about fall hazards on these steps. Bill Theis asked what the step rise will be. An 8 inch rise is a standard step. We discussed the possibility of a lower rise. We will look into whether that is feasible. We are addressing the fall hazard of a long stairway by interrupting the height and direction of the wide steps with several landings. This is expected to be safe without a handrail. We can later add a handrail anytime if it seems necessary.

The contractor has proposed steps made of a Tennessee stone. We would also consider suitable local stone.

Durable, massive, rough-finished stone steps will provide a stable, firm, non-slip footing. We think that rock will prove more satisfactory in the long term than wood. Jim commented that a disadvantage of wood steps was that they could be slippery when wet.

Jim reiterated that the playground committee is committed to creating an embankment slide that is safe, fun, and appropriate to Arden.

Barb Shippy asked if we would take responsibility for the design. We all responded, "yes". She also asked if we had a specific time line. Yes, we have a plan, but it is subject to contingencies of weather and other delays.

We have not signed a contract with our selected construction contractor, Richard Cropper, yet, but we hope to soon. He has been in business for over 30 years and has done beautiful work in the Ardens. Currently he is finishing the new house on Orchard/Woodland Lane near the Petit Green. We have met with him and we think he is a good choice.

Barb Shippy requested a detailed plan, which she suggested might be 50 pages long. She explained that she worked as a project manager, and said she wanted project dates as well.

Jim Laurino asked her specifically what do you want? Barb asked what the first step was. Jim answered that it was to put up a silt fence around the site. Jim reminded her that questions about the management of the project were not the subject of the meeting. A large part of the project funding is subject to the approval of the town officers. They are overseeing the project. Questions about project management should be directed to them. Tonight we are looking for comments and questions about the design.

At this, Bill Theis reminded us that the playground committee built a mock-up in January and presented a concept proposal which was voted on and passed. The motion gave permission to build a slide when funding was obtained.

Barb repeated that she wants to see the phases of the plan.

Jim Laurino explained that a detailed, 50 page design would probably cost more than our entire budget, and would provide very little additional benefit to this project. He reminded her, again, that we were here this evening to discuss the design.

Bill Theis asked about the depth the soil would be compacted to. Jim explained the mound would be constructed in multiple layers, each layer would be compacted before going higher. Bill said that based on his own experience with compaction that this sounded right and that he is sure that Richard Cropper is good at compaction. He has been doing this for 30 years.

Barb raised a concern about compaction being done correctly, and when it would be completed.

Jim also mentioned some of the project delays. By the time enough funds were raised, the heat of the summer posed problems for planting sod, for instance. He stated that our goal is to have this done during the month of October.

Bill Theis asked about the soil being used. The plan is to use top soil and fill soil. Jim said that R Cropper estimated that we would need 16 yards of top soil in addition to the topsoil saved from the green. His proposal includes as much as 170 yards of fill material, which we think should be more than enough.

We discussed the safety issue of children running down the path into Cherry road. The entire committee agreed this is a concern. We are considering either plants or a fence to discourage this. The plan includes a flat area at the end of the sloping path. People coming down the path face oncoming traffic on the one-way road, the safest choice. We will address the need for a formal barrier once the path is constructed and we have addressed related accessibility issues. It will be important that any barrier not obscure the view of traffic.

Continuing Jim's presentation. The slide will be made of neutral-gray polycarbonate plastic. It is very tough. It is treated to prevent static build up, a well-known problem of plastic. This is the only slide material that the Natural Playgrounds Company has used for many years. It is a proven design and is up to current standards.

The slide will be facing north and in the afternoon shade of the oak, which will minimize sun effects.

We discussed the tradeoffs of metal versus plastic slides; both have advantages and disadvantages. Metal can be dented, can get very hot, and is relatively expensive. There are fewer metal slide vendors today, most playgrounds are using plastic. A plastic slide will be roughly half the cost of a metal slide.

The Natural Playground Company recommends a rock scramble on either side of the slide to prevent dirt from washing away. We discussed this at length. There was concern that too-small rocks might not provide stable footing. Next time we have a discussion with Natural Playgrounds we will ask for their advice about appropriate rock sizes

Jeff Politis commented that this will be a work in progress. The prospect that we might make a mistake is not a good reason not to start. We have a sufficiently good plan. Jim pointed out that we have set aside money to make changes if needed. Our plans include a 6-month review to reconsider issues of safety, stability and esthetics.

The issue of ADA compliance came up. Jeffrey said that DNREC representatives initially responded that slides are not a concern because they have never been accessible. The ADA compliance issue potentially affects many facilities in the town. We are actively continuing to investigate our obligations and options.