

New Castle City Playground Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2024 – 5:30 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard, New Castle, DE

Members Present: Suzanne Swift, Chair
Andre Jerry
Judy Guttenplan
Brian Mattaway
Matthew Eide

Absent: Nermin Zubaca

Ms. Swift called the Playground sub-committee meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

A motion to begin the meeting was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2024, meeting as amended was made, seconded and unanimously passed.

Playground Equipment Update

Leach School Visit – Ms. Virginia Schreppler, Principal of the Leach School, and a colleague visited the Battery Park Playground and offered some helpful feedback and suggestions:

- Add another path out of the playground for safety.
- Add fencing around the playground.
- Ensure ramp transitions are smooth.
- Add a wheelchair swing if possible.
- Integrate musical elements on the ramp, i.e., chimes, etc.
- Incorporate high-contrast colors.
- Incorporate pictures and symbols.
- Add shade.

Shade – Ms. Swift met with Anna Wik, University of Delaware (UD) Associate Professor of Landscape Design regarding shade at the playground, and Ms. Wik has arranged for two UD students to work on landscape ideas for the Battery Park playground.

Grants –

- UNCF – The sub-committee is applying for a UNCF grant for several thousand dollars to plant trees and landscaping to improve the shade element and to cool the area down. Ms. Swift will be meeting with a representative from UNCF in April to inspect Battery Park and to offer feedback on what needs to be there before the sub-committee applies for the grant. Mr. Mattaway opined that the sub-committee would need to make a presentation to the Trustees and to City Council.
- The AARP grant for \$50,000 for benches and shade was submitted.
- Mayor Leary and a representative of the Delaware Refinery inspected the playground regarding potential support for Phase 2 and resurfacing.

- Mayor Leary recommended that the sub-committee reach out to CRODA and Ms. Swift is asking for the name of contacts that she can speak with.
- At Ms. Souder's suggestion, the sub-committee will be submitting an Ask for the Bond Bill that will be focusing on the rubberized surfacing.

Rubberized Surfacing – Kompan submitted a competing quote for rubberized surfacing of \$376,230.31 (\$79,990 for demolition of existing stone and mulch and adding 8" stone; and \$296,240.31 for custom poured in-place surfacing). There is only a few thousand dollars' difference between the quotes from Kompan and Recreation Resources. Ms. Swift recommended that before making a decision the sub-committee members do site visits:

- Mr. Jerry – Glasgow Park for surfacing and inclusive equipment
- Ms. Guttonplan and Mr. Mattaway – visit parks recommended by Recreation Resources
- Ninja Fit Park
- Ms. Swift – Delaware Botanical Garden for ideas using driftwood

Mr. Mattaway suggested that visiting some playgrounds near water and/or playgrounds that take on water would be beneficial. Ms. Swift opined that some of the new landscaping may help with drainage.

Neighborhood Playgrounds

- Ms. Swift reached out to Mike Platt and Angel and Becky Ramos about the Van Dyke Village playground.
- Ms. Swift read an email submitted by Ms. Edith King regarding playground equipment in Buttonwood Park. Ms. Swift noted that Buttonwood is eligible for some grant funding. Mr. Jerry will reach out to Ms. King and to see if Ms. King might be interested in partnering with the sub-committee regarding improvements to the Buttonwood playground.
- Ms. Swift recommended that the sub-committee draft a process for setting up neighborhood playgrounds, which will be very helpful for the next person who leads one of the neighborhood playgrounds. She suggested that there be three individuals in each neighborhood who can work together to push the project forward with the support of the sub-committee. A discussion of next steps and matters ensued:
 - Ms. Swift will draft a process and time-line for discussion at the April meeting.
 - Mr. Jerry will draft an email addressing residents in the various neighborhoods regarding their interest in updating their playgrounds and information that is available to them.
 - Mr. Eide volunteered to speak with Mr. Zeltt about updating the city website with information on the sub-committee, planned community meetings on neighborhood playground projects, etc. Mr. Eide also spoke with the Partnership about supporting the neighborhood playgrounds projects on their website.
 - Mr. Eide volunteered to speak with Mr. Zeltt regarding the closure of the bathrooms in Battery Park, the importance of having them open.

- Mr. Eide suggested having certain recommended standards for each of the parks, i.e., rubberized surfacing, ADA accessibility, fencing, etc.
- Drafting a budget for each of the neighborhood playgrounds. Ms. Swift noted that the cost of the Battery Park playground equipment was \$160,000.

Ms. Swift recapped the discussion points and suggested that an in-person meeting for neighborhood playgrounds be scheduled. It was suggested that six weeks is a suitable time-line for neighborhood playgrounds from inception to making decisions on equipment.

Miscellaneous

Bathrooms in Battery Park – A discussion of the need to have the bathrooms in Battery Park reopened ensued. Ms. Swift suggested having this matter added to a future City Council Agenda and to reach out to the Trustees. During further discussion, whether pursuing the reopening of the bathrooms is within the purview of the sub-committee was debated. Mr. Jerry suggested that if the sub-committee does pursue actively advocating having the bathrooms reopened, that several potential solutions should be presented. Ms. Swift suggested reaching out to the City of Wilmington to see how they run their Parks Department relative to bathrooms in city parks.

City Council – Mr. Mattaway reported that a Resolution was passed by City Council requiring all Boards and Commissions to submit an annual report to Council. Mr. Mattaway responded to questions, comments and suggestions.

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Swift called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion was unanimously passed, and the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer