

URBANA PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES – BOARD STUDY SESSION
TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 2021
6:30 PM-8:00 PM
ONLINE VIA ZOOM
URBANA, ILLINOIS 61802

The study session meeting of the Urbana Park District Board of Commissioners was held Tuesday, June 1, 2021 at online via Zoom at 6:30 pm. The notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the park district administrative office and at the location of the meeting. Copies of the notice and agenda were received by each commissioner of the district and by local newspapers, radio, and television stations at least forty-eight hours before the meeting in compliance with the Open Meetings Act of the State of Illinois. A copy of the notice and agenda is attached to the minutes. Also available for inspection are all documents that were reviewed or approved at the meeting.

COMMISSIONERS	PRESENT	ABSENT
President Michael Walker	X	
Vice President Nancy Delcomyn	X	
Commissioner Meredith Blumthal	X	
Commissioner Roger Digges	X	
Commissioner Cedric Stratton	X	

Also present were Tim Bartlett, Executive Director;
Corky Emberson, Superintendent of Recreation;
Caty Roland, Superintendent of Business Services;
Derek Liebert, Superintendent of Planning and Operations;
Andy Rousseau, Project Manager;
Kara Dudek, Park Planner;
Michelle Kelly, Upland Design;
Kelsey Beccue served as Recorder.

I. Call to Order

A. Remote Attendance

President Walker called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM, and noted that the meeting was being conducted virtually with all commissioners attending remotely pursuant to Illinois Public Act 101-0640.

II. Accept Agenda

VICE PRESIDENT DELCOMYN MOVED WITH A SECOND FROM COMMISSIONER DIGGES TO ACCEPT THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN, MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IV. Discussion

A. Innovations in Play Design

Tim introduced Michelle Kelly from Upland Design and noted her work with the district on the Blair Park project. Tim also noted UPD staffs' planning for the original development of the current Prairie Play playground, and ongoing planning for its replacement.

Michelle Kelly introduced herself and provided a little information on her background, and explained that the focus of Upland Design is parks and recreation and public landscapes.

Kara gave some background on Prairie Play and the types of playgrounds that communities have turned to once they had to replace their Leathers Playgrounds. Kara noted that the new styles of playgrounds would have dollar figures to give an illustration of the cost of the play equipment, not including installation or site prep. Nancy asked if we were looking at only using the existing site footprint. Tim answered that certain site features are critical (parking, lighting, etc.), and it is important to not overload or underutilize the site, and noted budget would likely be a factor. Derek spoke about the trees at the site, which are now established and would need to be removed or worked around if we were to expand the playground footprint. Derek said there is room to expand toward the east or toward the Minimal Response sculpture. Nancy mentioned differentiating age groups, and having a distinct area for older kids to play. Nancy then asked about how necessary it is to have bus parking, and whether the current parking lot is serving our needs. Roger commented that the Meadowbrook parking lot is always full during season, and noted the crossing Windsor is an issue. Tim said that drainage would be a consideration if we were to expand the parking lot. Corky said that AMBUCS, another UPD signature park, is busy because there is room for bus parking, and we should make sure it is available for a destination park.

Kara described their visit to McHenry Park where they reused the "bones" of their Leathers playground and updated it with new wood decking, and incorporated new materials like metal and recycled plastic to update it. Nearly two-thirds were replacement parts. A cost estimate was not available at the time of presentation. Derek noted that our Leathers structure is probably the longest lasting structure in the area. Roger shared concern about the accessibility of being able to get to kids easily in the case of an emergency on the current Prairie Play, and Tim mentioned that he did not think the Leathers designs are generationally friendly.

Kara gave an overview of the rest of the site visits. She talked about Nick's Park in Monticello, which mimicked the style of the previous Leathers playground. Crystal Lake Park District replaced their Leathers structures with two different types of playgrounds gleaned from public input. The price difference in the playgrounds built by Crystal Lake were based on the level of customization.

Michelle then covered Kaper Park in Cary Park District, and the public input process that went into planning for the replacement of their Leathers playground. The process began with idea images, and meetings with staff, board, and the public. A sticker process was used to narrow down design options, from which a site plan was created after further public input. Michelle explained the concept of creating "circuits" for kids to go up, down, and around the

play equipment, at multiple levels. She said kids tend to get more exercise if there are a lot of circuits included. She spoke about putting together “off the shelf” pieces in a custom way to create something more interesting. She noted the sitting area in the middle of the park for caregivers to watch with USB ports for charging your phone and shade structures to keep out of the sun. Cary Park District included an homage to their old Leathers at the entrance of the new park.

Michelle also reviewed differing investment levels of playgrounds. Hiawatha Park in Chicago Park District came in at \$80,000, and included accessible equipment and rubber surfacing, and was designed with circuits in mind. Meredith asked about the lifespan of the rubber surfacing, which Michelle said is usually somewhere between five to ten years, but should last fifteen with repairs. Important elements also included balance, swinging, sliding, and imaginary play.

Green Lake Park in Buffalo Grove Park District, which came in at \$114,000 was themed based on the overall park master plan, which emphasized natural areas and pollinators. Interpretation was included about pollinators for an educational component. Michael asked about the extra cost associated with inlays in rubber surfacing, and Michelle estimated about \$1 extra per square foot.

Wheeler Park playground in Geneva Park District cost \$120,000, and they wanted to incorporate a rocket ship as an homage to the previous playground. Michelle noted that multiple manufacturers were used to get the final look, and there was a mix of rubber surfacing and woodchips. Custom features were also included such as some panels with information about milestones in space explorations, and some mission control panels that included a scavenger hunt.

Wolf’s Crossing Community Park in Naperville Park District came in at \$175,000, and is highly accessible. It includes a couple different structures from different manufacturers. Rubber surfacing with sea creatures was included to create some imaginary play opportunities. The shade structures are metal and will last longer than fabric shade sails, which are have a lower price point. Michelle gave some information on the public process that went into designing the park, and said the splash pad was a compromise since there was a desire for the site to have a pool.

Bison Playground in Schaumburg Park District is completely custom and cost \$2.8 million. It incorporates a lot of wood, and is very nature based. A lot of the cost is wrapped into the fact that it is custom pieces and construction. It is very interactive and incorporates water play.

Michelle also reviewed some custom Robina (type of wood) pieces from Kompan that could be great statement pieces. Tim asked about vandalism on these types of pieces, and Michelle noted that the flat surfaces make them ideal for writing vandalism with markers and such.

Miracle Field Playground in Ames Iowa (\$500,000) was designed with accessibility in mind. It incorporates rubber surfacing, spinning features, house style play structures, and the 5-12

play structure has a double-wide ramp for increased accessibility. It uses custom pieces along with off the shelf pieces.

Central Park in Maple Grove, MN (\$1 million) also combines custom and off the shelf pieces.

Pioneer Park in Mesa, AZ (\$2 million) is a completely custom park, and incorporates a bridge feature, and really striking towers.

Michelle then spoke on the benefits of play, which include academic, attention, cognitive, emotional, fine motor, gross motor, language, social, and physical development. Good play environments are crucial for development. Kids of all abilities need to have play opportunities. Barriers to play for kids include mobility, sight, learning, socializing, and sensory processing issues. Michelle then shared Upland's Criteria Based Design for Dynamic Play: Movement, Space, Diversity, Circuits, Seating, Safety, Nature, Social Inclusion, Imagination, and Community Engagement.

Andy reviewed the current budget, which is \$850,000 for the total project. That figure includes a projected \$100,000 in donations. Roger asked if we anticipate grant support, and Derek noted that OSLAD usually requires more site amenities, but will sometimes award funds to projects that demonstrate a destination quality and have a demonstrated public input process. Nancy asked about the possibility of phasing the project over multiple years. Tim said that was a possibility, but came with trade-offs logistically, and required some cost analysis. Michelle noted that incorporating a sprayground means you really need to think about increasing parking, as those parks typically see a higher level of use. Nancy asked if we could add other types of water play, and Derek mentioned a stream-type feature could be feasible, but water wastage would need to be considered. Nancy and Meredith inquired about using the creek as a water source, and Roger responded that the creek would not be a good source, since it is stormwater drainage. The idea of a recirculating water feature came up, but Derek was not sure what would be okay with public health. Michelle recommended that public health regulations should be considered with anything that you are inviting kids to play in.

Derek reviewed the maintenance struggles with different playground materials. Meredith noted that we should consider the lifespan of the next play structure, and Derek said our replacement schedule is every twenty years. Chicagoland districts use a fifteen-year cycle for playground replacement. Tim noted the equity issues that can be present in park development, and that we need to go into this planning process with some parameters in place, and Cedric agreed. Cedric said that Meadowbrook Park would demand a certain scale due to the iconic nature of the current playground, and also spoke about managing expectations and maintaining equity. Meredith talked about the efficiencies of including playground construction along with the construction of a brand new facility. Nancy mentioned that she thinks UPD does a good job with playground replacement and maintaining equity in park improvements across the district.

Meredith asked about the cost Champaign Park District incurred when they replaced the playground in Hessel Park, but staff did not have those figures. Meredith also noted that

there is a splash pad at Hessel Park, and that our communities' overlap is something to consider. Michael commented that Meadowbrook Park has been a destination playground, and not every park can support a destination playground. Nancy thinks there will be a lot of unhappiness about Prairie Play being replaced, and there needs to be a big "wow" factor to ease the transition. Derek talked about trying to discover what people value in a playground and what values are we trying to replace. Meredith asked if we would keep the name Prairie Play. Tim responded that there could be two approaches – a legacy approach, or letting the future generation name it. Nancy thought a natural water feature would be best for Meadowbrook. Tim said we need to have a good grasp on capital needs for the next five and ten years, and a pre-program statement before we go into public input.

Derek summarized that some things we would consider are a naturalized water feature (future phase), expanding the footprint, custom Kompan piece, and whether that is consistent with our budget.

Michelle gave an overview of design changes over the last ten years: introduction of more nets and climbing structures, zip lines, sensory play (water), creative design elements (rocks, sculpture).

Tim noted that staff are excited about the potential for the Prairie Play replacement.

V. Comments from Commissioners

Michael thanked Michelle for her presentation, and commented on the stimulating conversation.

Meredith asked about UPDAC recruitment and applications, and Kelsey explained the process.

VI. Adjourn

President Walker adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.

Nancy A. Delcomyn, Vice President

Timothy A. Bartlett, Secretary

(SEAL)

Date Approved: July 13, 2021