

**BAINBRIDGE ISLAND METROPOLITAN PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT
PUBLIC MEETING ROTARY PARK IMPROVEMENTS, MAY 26, 2011
BAINBRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL COMMONS**

CALL TO ORDER: A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Chair Robinson.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Lee Cross, Ken DeWitt, Kirk Robinson, Tom Swolgaard. Absent: Paul Bang-Knudsen.

INTRODUCTION: Chair Robinson welcomed the public saying this is a public hearing during which Bainbridge Island Little League will present a proposal for Rotary Park improvements that it is recommending to the Park District. He said the Board is here tonight to listen to the presentation and to hear the community's response to the project.

PROJECT OVERVIEW: Park District Senior Planner Perry Barrett, serving as moderator for the meeting, provided background information on Rotary Park. It was the District's first park and was donated by the Rotary Club of Bainbridge Island to the Park District in 1966. It is a community park of approximately 10 acres, has two baseball fields, restrooms, a wetlands and conservancy area, a quarter mile trail and a tot lot. Little League and the Senior Center are the primary users of the two ballfields. Parking is insufficient, the restrooms and tot lot need improvement, and the site lacks a sewer hook-up. The District currently has money set aside to install a new tot lot, but has no other funds designated for the park at this time. Little League has approached the Park District and developed with staff involvement a preliminary proposal for park improvements. No action will be taken this evening. The intent of this meeting is to gain input from the community on the proposed project.

PROJECT PRESENTATION: Little League representative Jay Kinney presented the Rotary Park proposal following a brief review of the ball field renovation done several years ago at Strawberry Hill Park by Little League in partnership with the Park District. Following the success of this project, Little League has now turned to Rotary Park with a proposal for not only renovating the fields, but also broadening the project's scope to expand the park's usage into a multiple purpose park. His Power Point presentation showed the deteriorating conditions of Rotary Park's ball fields, restrooms, and playground structure, and pointed out safety hazards related to the current ball field orientation and inadequate fencing. He also cited concerns with restroom accessibility from the lower field, an eroding hillside, and the forested area being overrun with invasive species. The Little League proposal includes reorienting the two ballfields, removing invasive species, replacing play equipment with new playground and tot lot, building new restrooms and community meeting room with kitchen, increasing parking, and adding a picnic shelter, trail network, and terraced seating to stabilize the hillside.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

Question from Audience (Jackie Fabbri): What is the project's cost and how will it be funded?

Response from District Staff (Perry Barrett): While no official bids have been received for the project, the cost is estimated at approximately \$750,000. He confirmed this with Jay Kinney who said Little League is committed to contributing \$250,000 and hopes to receive a matching \$250,000 grant from Rotary Club with another \$250,000 hoped for from the Park District.

Comment from Audience (Jackie Fabbri): Likes the project, but is concerned with \$250,000 in public funds being spent for a park that is used for only several months each year by approximately 280 children who play ball.

Response from Audience: Think of all the children who have played ball at Rotary Park over the years and the important service Little League provides for this community.

Response from Little League (Jay Kinney): Once the ball fields are fixed up, they will be good for another 50 years. If spread out over time, the amount the Park District would be contributing is not that much, especially since it would not be funding the entire project.

Comment from Audience (Maureen McNutty): Loves baseball but is concerned with how little the park is used by others. If this project is built, she asked whether more in the more community will use this park.

Response from Little League (Jay Kinney): The ball field renovation is less than half the cost of this project. The largest expense is the community building which along with other community amenities in the plan would serve the larger community,

Question from Audience (Maureen McNutty): Asked about impact of taking two trees down at site of ball field relocation since it is a wet marshy area.

Comment from Little League (Jay Kinney): Little League has paid for a wetland survey of the park and this area is not designated a wetland. It is wet because of drainage issues.

Comment from Park District (Roger Belieu): As part of the project, a civil engineer would address this issue and design a system that would pick up the drainage coming from the developments above the park and direct it correctly into the wetlands.

Question from Audience: What is the size of the playground?

Response from District Staff (Dan Hamlin & Roger Belieu): It will be approximately the same size as the current play area. The District currently has up to \$50,000 allocated in its budget for a new play structure at Rotary Park but has postponed installing it until a decision is made regarding Little League's proposal. The proposed plan calls for two play areas, a tot lot for younger children, and a playground for older children. Because these play areas would be closer to the street than the current playground, they will serve to attract more users to the park. As use of the park increases, security concerns that tend to come up when a park is not used on a frequent basis will be addressed. Dan Hamlin also addressed an earlier question regarding use of the park by more users saying the District is well aware of the need to bring more people into the park and that this has been a motivating factor for the District to become involved with this proposal.

Comment from Audience (Sean): Is new to the island and a neighbor with children who love to play at the park. He thinks the proposed plan is fantastic, and that fixing up a park that has become run down will encourage more use. He supports the proposed trail system saying it will be great for runners and will bring more adults into the park. His main concern is that with the increased traffic to the area, the trails and park be properly maintained.

Response from District Staff (Dan Hamlin): The District has 28 miles of trails and will maintain the trails at Rotary Park as part of its overall trail system.

Comment from Audience (Roberto A. Pena): As a neighbor to the park, he loves baseball and while he does not object to specifics of the proposed plan, he is most concerned with issues related to maintenance, sustainability, and disproportionate impact. He expressed concern that those who live near the park and will most experience the impact of this proposal were not drawn into the development of this plan.

Response from Park District (Dan Hamlin): Little League brought this proposal to the Park District knowing the Park District had begun looking at replacing the play equipment. District staff looked at the proposal and discarded it a number of times until Little League came back with something the District found to be workable. The point of this meeting tonight is gain input from the community on Little League's proposal.

A general discussion was held at this point regarding the next steps. It was noted that at this time, the proposal is only a concept plan and in a very preliminary stage. No funds of the District have been committed beyond replacing the playground equipment. Public comment will continue to be taken through June 9. After June 9, the Board will decide whether it wants to proceed with the project. If it does, a formal agreement between the Park District and Little League will be made.

Comment from Audience (Robert Hollyer): Suggested an overlay plan be put together, so the public can see how the proposed changes will compare to what is currently at the park.

Comment from Audience: Asked the Park District to make dog bags available at the park (applause).

Comment from Audience (Laura Harrison): Likes the plan but expressed concerns with preserving the wetland area and with neighborhood security once trails are routed near people's homes.

Comment from Little League Vice President (Roberto Gurza): Little League is committed to putting a quarter million dollars into this project, has paid for a wetlands study, and now wants to hear from the community about the concept plan it is proposing for the park. The park borders don't change, the current use won't change, and the community facility and other proposed amenities will encourage a broader use of the park. The plan produces an improved and better configured park that will address safety issues that currently exist. In addition he spoke as a homeowner who lives next to a public trail, and outlined the many benefits he has enjoyed as a result of this and the positive impact it has had on the surrounding neighborhood.

Comment from Audience (Kasey Harrison): Said their house overlooks the wetlands and asked if the trails will be built in a way that is conscious and eco-friendly so there is the minimal disturbance to the wetlands and animal habitat.

Comment from Park Staff (Dan Hamlin): Discussed what is meant by wetlands enhancement and said the trails will be built in a sustainable manner with the least impact on the environment

Comment from Audience (Gail Christensen): She and her husband live in a Chatham Cove unit that is closest to the ballfields and enjoy hearing the voices of children as they play. They are very supportive of the plan.

Comment from Audience: A gentleman who lives in Chatham Cove enjoys the ballpark and asked the Park District to consider closing the gates in the evening since there is often trouble in the park after hours. He also said he enjoys seeing all the dogs that use the park on a year round basis and asked if the Park District could provide dog bags.

Comment from Audience (Lynn Sinclair): Lives at Chatham Cove, loves the noise from the ballgames, enjoys seeing dogs use the park, and would be pleased to see something done to the configuration of the park. She expressed interest in a possible curfew at the park or a gate since there is a lot of four wheel activity there after hours. She likes the plan and thinks it will enhance the park. Her biggest concern is security.

Question from Audience (Jackie Fabbri): How will the community facility be used?

Response from Little League (Jay Kinney): Depending on how much is raised, it will be a meeting room with kitchen that would be owned by the Park District and available to the community when not in use by Little League. The current configuration would hold about 50 people.

Comment from Audience (Virginia Kaiser): Lives on Weaver, and expressed concern with drainage into the wetlands and possible subsequent flooding.

Response from District Staff (Dan Hamlin): If there is a decision to move forward with the project, this would be addressed during the permitting process and included as a part of the project's civil engineering.

Comment from Audience: A woman expressed concerns about security and suggested a closing time for the park as well as a neighborhood security watch. She thinks these issues can be worked out and views the plan as positive.

Comment from Audience (Tifanie Mitsui): Lives nearby with a young daughter who would love the new playground equipment. She thinks this is a great plan and is all for it.


Comment from Audience (Sean): Spoke again saying he thinks this is a great plan, and would like to hear more from the Park District on maintenance and security since the biggest impact the project will have on the neighborhood is bringing more people to the park. He said these issues seem to be the neighbor's greatest concerns.

In closing, Jay Kinney emphasized that this proposed project is still in the very early stages, and Little League wants to hear the community's feedback. Chair Robinson said the Park District will continue taking public comment through June 9 and thanked everyone for coming.


MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:04 pm.

Elizabeth R. Shepherd
Terry M. Lande
BAINBRIDGE ISLAND METROPOLITAN
PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT

BY: 
Kirk B. Robinson

BY: 
Kenneth R. DeWitt

BY: 
John Thomas Swolgaard

BY: 
Lee Cross

ATTEST: _____
Paul Bang-Knudsen - Secretary