

Westmoreland Park Nature Play Advisory Committee Meeting Notes March 21, 2012

PAC Members:

Marc Boucher-Colbert, James Bowles, Kathleen Brennan-Hunter, Jenny Dempsey Stein, Chloe Derderian-Gilbert, Sydney Hallquist-Paisant, Bradley Heintz, Karen McClish, Mauricio Villarreal, Rod Wojtanik

Project Staff:

Michelle Mathis, Sandra Burtzos, Elizabeth Kennedy-Wong

I. Introductions

PAC members were given information about their role to assist the project team to design the first official "nature play" area in the Portland Parks & Recreation system. In order to support that outcome, the committee and staff agreed to an established set of groundrules and a decision-making structure based on consensus.

PAC members were asked what they would like to see that would indicate this project was a success -

- Ouality, Character, Longevity
- Provide natural materials
- Something that kids like
- Something that helps kids
- Design space for active kids
- Addressing challenges to current space, improve drainage, represent neighbors' interests
- Create access to nature in urban areas. Connections to Johnson Creek Watershed.
- Use recycled materials

II. Project Background

The Project Manager provided information on the history of the project. \$150,000 of the total \$588,000 funding for a nature-based play area came from a Metro Nature in Neighborhoods grant. The intention is to provide a play area that relies significantly on natural materials, creative interactions with nature and non-traditional features to provide children and youth with access to nature in an urban environment.

This project is part of a larger effort to restore Westmoreland Park to a more natural environment. Included in this work is the restoration of Crystal to its historic state by removing the duck pond.

There is \$588K total project budget, with approximately \$310K for construction of this play area, and the remaining covering soft (non-construction) costs.

III. Background and direction

The consultant gave a presentation on the emergence of the nature-based play movement and provided a "continuum" for what nature-based play can look and feel like. The continuum starts at nature "themed" play (traditional play structures that look like natural materials) to completely organic materials designed to solicit an experience and interaction with nature.

PP&R staff shared the draft criteria developed by staff to help frame how we are developing nature-based play areas in the city.

1. Activities indicated by the Advisory Committee

- A. Tag
- B. Hide and seek
- C. Rolling on hills
- D. Getting dirty
- E. Build forts
- F. Chances for surprise
- G. Digging
- H. Arranging
- I. Imaginative play
- J. Swinging, a sense of weightlessness
- K. Sliding
- L. Climbing
- M. Jumping down

2. Elements the committee would like to see

- A. Hills
- B. Forts
- C. Flowers for loose arranging
- D. Fairy houses
- E. Food hedge
- F. Sand

3. Committee Direction

A. Utilize creative materials that make play last longer (sand, mud, wood)

- B. Go for it and make it wild, push the envelope
- C. The <u>important of place</u> should show through all 3 designs
- D. Reintroduce adults to play
- E. Make it engaging, create 'fly paper' that draws kids from screen time
- F. What are we raising our kids to do? Work behind computers? Let's get the <u>parents playing</u> and out from behind their smart phones too.
- G. Make it fun and nicely connected/arranged
- H. Make it <u>real</u>: Kids can tell an Oregon forest from a different kind of forest.

IV. PAC Agreement:

- A. Own the outcomes and impact of the play area
- B. Own the experience of what we are providing.
- C. Challenge PPR to change the assembly line: take more time, money and training to do it correctly.