



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

Couch Park Project Advisory Committee #1 Agenda

Tuesday, October 20, 2015, 5:30 PM – 7:30PM

Pettygrove Rm, 2nd floor, City Hall, 1221 SW 4th Ave

- I. Welcome & Introductions – **Maija / All** [5:30-5:40pm]
 - a. Meeting Outcomes
 - b. Ground Rules
 - c. Name, your relationship to Couch Park, how do you like to play?

- II. What to expect– **Maija** [5:40-5:50pm]
 - a. PAC Role
 - b. PP&R Roles
 - c. Parks Replacement Bond

- III. Project Overview & Discussion – **Sandra, Ben, & PAC** [5:50-6:55pm]
 - a. Background / Where we are headed
 - b. Refresher on material shared at Open House
 - c. What did we hear at Open House / comment form summary
 - d. Discussion / feedback from PAC

- IV. PAC Vision and Goals - **Maija & PAC** [6:55- 7:15pm]

- V. Project Schedule for PAC - **Sandra** [7:15 - 7:25pm]

- VI. Public Comment - **Maija** [7:25 - 7:30pm]

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PARKS REPLACEMENT BOND

ParksReplacementBond.org



MEETING NOTES

DATE: October 20, 2015

TO: Maija Spencer, Sandra Burtzos (PP&R)

FROM: Ben Johnson

PROJECT: Couch Park

RE: **PAC Meeting #1**

ATTENDEES: PAC MEMBERS PRESENT: Carla Peters (CP), Jennifer Wilde (JW), Lauren Nathe (LN), Meryl Redisch (MR), Millie Jarvis (MJ), Max Nathe (MN), Pavlina Summers (PS), Wayne Wirta (WW)
PAC MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Vaune Albanese, Glen Levy
PP&R: Maija Spencer (MS), Sandra Burtzos (SB)
GREENWORKS: Ben Johnson (BJ)

The following are notes from PAC meeting #1. PART 1 documents the first portion of the meeting and information presented to the PAC. PART 2 documents discussion points, questions, and clarifications during the meeting.

PART 1 PRESENTATION

A: Introductions and Expectations



- 1) Maija Spencer presented the agenda for the evening and went over expectations and role of the PAC. Ground rules for this and future meetings were presented and provided as a handout.
- 2) We went around the table and everyone from the PAC, PP&R, and GreenWorks introduced themselves, stated their relationship with Couch Park, and ways in which they like to play.
- 3) Maija reiterated the role of the PAC:
 - a. Representative – PAC members represent the community.
 - b. Open Houses – The PAC's role is to be champions for the project, help steer us towards consensus at open houses, and help be hosts at open houses.
 - c. Advisory – The PAC is supposed to help by making recommendations when comment summaries are not clear. The PAC does not make final decisions.
 - d. Consensus – The PAC will strive to reach consensus in supporting the final Schematic design.
- 4) Maija presented roles of PP&R:
 - a. Facilitate meetings and provide an inclusive process
 - b. Provide timely, adequate and useful information to the PAC
 - c. Provide the opportunity for meaningful dialogue and community input
 - d. Final decisions are made by the PP & R Director
- 5) Maija discussed the role of the Parks Replacement Bond
 - a. Replacement and repair
 - b. Oversight committee

- c. Accountability to voters in spending public money
- 6) Maija presented the role of the Friends of Couch Park Playground and Harper's Playground.
 - a. Fundraising – Their goal is to raise an additional \$500K for the project with the hope to make the playground inclusive
 - b. Have representation on the PAC along with other stakeholders

B: Overview of the project

- 1) Sandra Burtzos presented the project background:
 - a. PP&R hired GreenWorks (GW) at the end of August as the lead consultant.
 - b. GW has put together a Design Team with sub consultants of other disciplines to help with specialized aspects of the project including an arborist and a civil engineer.
 - c. The Design Team has been working at analyzing the site to understand the existing conditions and the opportunities and constraints that will help guide the design.
 - d. Sandra, Maija, and members of the Design Team recently met with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The purpose of the TAC meeting was to better understand how the park operates and what works well and what does not. The TAC are individuals from various departments and organizations in the City of Portland that have a direct connection to the function of the park including maintenance staff, Urban Forestry, Transportation, and Portland Public Schools.
- 2) Sandra discussed the parameters of the project:
 - a. The Bond Scope of Work includes the repairing the plaza, renovation of the playground, and installing a new Portland Loo restroom.
 - b. The Budget includes \$2,210,000 allocation not-to-exceed, all inclusive of design team fees, staff time, permit costs, constructions, etc. This does not include the donation from Friends of Couch Playground-Harpers Playground.
 - c. Sandra presented the schedule and explained the process the project has to go through from Site Analysis, Preliminary Design, Historic Review (because the project is in the Alphabet District), Construction Documents Permitting, Bidding, and Construction.
- 3) Ben Johnson went over an abbreviated version of the presentation from Open House #1 as a refresher:
 - a. Ben presented the Site Analysis and stated that this is still a work in progress as Greenworks is still studying the existing conditions including a more detailed look at the ADA issues.
 - b. The area that included the Plaza and Playground from the 2003 Master Plan was shown. This project cannot implement the exact or full master plan design due to the parameters of the bond, but we will design based on the goals of the Master Plan which included the following: 1) The trees in the park define its character and are a precious resource to be cared for and protected 2) The park is a focal point in the community and should provide opportunities for the community to come together, 3) Activating the park with people will and programming is a key to making sure people feel safe, secure, and comfortable, 4) Make changes needed to improve surveillance and minimize undesirable activities, but do not detract from the beauty and character of the park, 5) The park is intergenerational, providing opportunities



for all ages to enjoy outdoor activities in a safe and comfortable setting, 6) Spaces should be organized to allow a variety of activities without undue conflicts, 7) Access to the park should be safe and barrier-free, 8) Modifications should be artful as well as functional, acknowledging and celebrating its history and place in the community.

- c. Ben went back over the playground portion of the presentation which included Playground terms and trends, Inclusive Playgrounds, and Nature-Based Play.

C: Review Open House #1 Comment Forms

- 1) Maija presented the summary of the comment forms received at the Open House on 10/8/15 and online between 10/8-10/15/15. *[The summaries were provided as a handout].*

D: Review PAC Vision and Goals

- 1) Maija presented a draft version of the Couch Park PAC Goals and requested feedback listed below in Part 2F. *[These goals were provided as a handout].*

E: Project Schedule for PAC

- 1) Sandra provided an outline for approximate dates and topics for all the upcoming PAC and Open House meetings.



PART 2 QUESTIONS, CLARIFICATIONS, and DISCUSSION POINTS:

The following items were discussed throughout the meeting and grouped into categories based on their respective topic. Questions and statements below are preceded by the person's initials who spoke.

A. GENERAL

LN: Requested a copy of the project schedule.

LN: Can the bond costs be provided?

MR: Ongoing maintenance – will they (PAC) get to know what options will cost more to maintain when the time comes?

SB Response: We start the process of providing maintenance estimates a little later in the process, so specific costs won't be part of the PAC's information to consider, only on a general order of magnitude basis. Operations and maintenance staff review plans and provide Operation & Maintenance (O&M) estimates at each stage from Design Development through the various percentages complete of Construction Documents. Along with the ordinance we take to City Council to award the construction contract, estimated O&M costs are included for the Council's approval and allocation of maintenance dollars.

MN: Older kids play on MLC's asphalt school yard. When the playground structure was there, younger kids played there and in the plaza.

LN: How beholden are we to 2003 Master Plan?

SB: The Master Plan is from 2003 so we have to acknowledge that the neighborhood has changed. We do have to respect the goals of the Master Plan and design it in the spirit of the Master Plan, since it is an existing guiding document for Couch Park and had extensive public involvement in its creation

BJ: The Master Plan did note that the neighborhood is evolving so the final design should evolve with the community.

B. PLAZA

LN: Why are the stairs not included in project? The stairs are MLCs direct connection to the park and playground. She would like to see PPR and PPS address accessibility from MLC.

SB Response: The price to fix is too high to be included as part of the Bond project; PPS was not able to commit to funding stairs and ramps.

CP: Asphalt school yard is also used by public, so those stairs offer more of a connection than just the kids at MLC going to the park.

LN: 1) The plaza is really separate from school with the walls and stairs. 2) Kids playing in plaza impact people sitting – soccer balls go flying into people sitting on benches. 3) I would like more seating around main space but not impede the ability for plaza play activities.

MN: 1) Pedestrian/bicycle flow is more in the morning and after work 2) area between cherry trees and bathroom is used for four square.

PS: 1) Please provide tables that can accommodate a birthday party. 2) The existing picnic tables are too small and far from playground.

LN: Lots of kids play soccer on the plaza.

C. PLAYGROUND

PS: Can nature play work without footings and impacts to trees?

SB Response: Yes, but it depends what it is. Many of the elements at Westmoreland are fixed with large footings to prevent them from moving. What type of surfacing and how it is constructed is the bigger issue for the tree root impact, due to excavation required and the depth of the surfacing and its drainage system underneath.

JW: Consider vision impairment when designing – use tactile surfaces.

D. TREES

CP: Will there be an opportunity to assess the decision for what you do with the trees?

SB: The design alternatives will likely explore options of keeping the trees in the playground and plaza, and removing some. The design alternatives will show us what it could look like, and to judge the public's reaction. We need to understand what the possibilities are before we make any decisions.

MR: is there a way to retain the trees and design around them in the play area?

SB: Central Park in NYC has been replacing playgrounds around existing trees in creative ways.

PS: Shade in playground is very important.

E. SAFETY ISSUES

WW: NWDA – Read a letter to the editor from NW Examiner article to editor. The letter stated that drug use in the park has increased dramatically and that people did not feel safe.

LN: When playground is active, less undesirable activity happens.

PS: Since playground was removed, more homeless have come to the park.

PS: The park feels unsafe at night; the asphalt school yard is dark.



F. PAC GOALS

LN: Add fundraising from Friends of Couch Playground-Harper's Playground to goal #3.

CP: Requested a copy of the Bond language.

MN: Add safety to goal #1.

MR: Include health effects as part of the goals.

HANDOUTS:

1. Draft Goals / Schedule for PAC
2. Ground Rules
3. Open House #1 Comment Summary
4. Inclusion Article





Couch Park Project Advisory Committee Ground Rules, 10/20/15

1. Arrive on time and be prepared for the meeting topics.
2. Commit to attend all PAC meetings, because consistency is important in your role.
3. Follow the topics and time set by the agenda.
4. Listen carefully and speak honestly.
5. Respect the views and opinions of others.
6. Keep an open mind.
7. Critique issues, not people or organizations.
8. Allow everyone the opportunity to speak once before speaking twice.
9. Use discussion to clarify information, not advocate for positions.
10. Consider the needs and concerns of the local community and the larger city.

Draft Project Schedule for PAC:

1. October 8, 2015: Open House #1
2. October 20, 2015: PAC meeting #1
3. Week of 11/19/15: PAC meeting #2
4. Week of 11/30/15: Open House #2
5. Week of 01/04/16: PAC meeting #3
6. February 2016: PAC meeting #4
7. February 2016: Open House #3
8. PAC #5? – If needed.
9. Construction – Start: Summer 2017, Completion: Winter 2018.





Couch Park Project Advisory Committee DRAFT Goals, 10.20.15:

1. The final schematic design for the playground and plaza at Couch Park is inclusive and appealing for all ages and abilities and adequately serves the recreational and leisure needs of nearby neighbors, nearby schools, and other park visitors.
2. The community is informed and involved in the public involvement phase of the schematic design process.
3. The final schematic design falls within the budget allocated, makes efficient use of public funds, and meets the goals of the Parks Replacement Bond, including repair and replacement of the most urgent maintenance needs in the parks system.
4. The final schematic design is consistent with the community values expressed in the 2003 Couch Park Master Plan.

