

NEWPORT BOROUGH PLAYGROUND COMMITTEE MEETING

September 29, 2011

Public Comment

The special playground committee meeting for public comment was called to order by President Jason Ehrhart at 7:00 PM. The following were in attendance: Jason Ehrhart, President of Council; Thomas Fitzpatrick, Vice President of Council; Andrew Blair, Councilman; Barbara Hart, Councilman; Tami Halstead, Councilman; Mary Hetrick, Mayor; Ruth Ann Linn, Newport; Frank Campbell, Playground Chairman; Sandy Comp, Playground committee; Sarah Kramer, press; Laura Campbell, NRPS; Paddi Sharar, Playground committee; Lynn Stewart, Newport; Janetta Green, Newport; Tom Margetts, Newport; Chris Keiser and Barb Kline, Newport.

SPEAKER: CHRIS KEISER WITH LARSON DESIGN GROUP: Chris met with members of the playground committee earlier this year. The members of the committee are: Frank Campbell, Chairman, Patricia Bowers, Secretary, Paddi Sharar, Sandy Comp, Thomas Fitzpatrick and Tami Halstead. Chris Kriser updated Frank Campbell concerning details of how to apply for DCNR grants. DCNR looks for community involvement in the project. DCNR wants to see a site plan. They want an area survey. These are tools that indicated to DCNR what the community wants. The survey dictates what the community wants to see happen with the project.

Power Point Presentation: Chris presented a map with the existing conditions, on a site map. Photographs were taken of the existing play area which has a mix of youth and tot equipment. Property along Front ST shows pictures of the parking areas. Photographs looking down Oliver Street show the Memorial Park entrance and ball field. On the Northern side of the park the park border ends where it meet the Water authority property line..Earlier this year the Borough of Newport purchased a portion of land that was subdivided from the adjacent White property. The new property was purchased to be a nature area in memory of Susan Connell sponsored by Orrstown Bank of Newport. Continuing with existing conditions, on the South is the Billy Cox baseball field and Norfolk Southern row. Part of the baseball field looking down Oliver Street contains the entrance to the park. All these areas were included in the survey for public comment.

Survey results: The survey revealed that the playground area for the tot lots were important. Upgraded the restrooms which have been closed was a priority. The creation of a lighted walking and jogging path was desired as well. There were requests for additional picnic

tables and benches. ADA accessible parking and ADA play equipment were suggested as well. Many people use the basketball court and would like to see it remain there and request up grading it. New fencing would be needed as well. Better lighting throughout the park was suggested as well as additional pavilions and kitchen facilities. The current facilities are in disrepair.

Master Site Plan 1: Master Site Plan 1 starts at the corner of Front ST. The plan will include a walking and jogging path. The paths will be six (6) feet wide with lighting. A new ADA accessible ramp will be built on Front Street. For additional funding the Borough maybe able to apply to Penndot for street scape improvements for lights and sidewalks because this would be improvements along a road way in the borough. It is desirable to have landscaping along the road along with ADA accessible facilities. Additionally along the ball field the plan shows having wider path for the vehicles. On the baseball field improvement will be made to the dugouts. The plan creates a more aesthetic entrance on 2nd Street. This could include rehabilitation of the existing wall. At the north side of the park by the baseball field at home plate, an addition of a gate and a path and landscaping would be integrated. Improvements would be made to the area where the railway exists. The trail would continue behind the park near the railway. Parking would stay at softball field location and improvements would be made such as curbing and paving. The purchased land from the White property would become a wooded area for a nature area with landscaping. There is a stream by the tree line that would be an additional opportunity for a natural area with the soothing sound of water that people would hear as they walked or jogged the path or sat and read a publication on a bench in this area. The Front Street parking lot has some landscaping and curbing added for a more aesthetic look and to make it safer. There are some overhead wires there to look at improving or changing. Above the parking lot would be a revised play area. The existing pavilion has been removed in the new plans. There would be a new bathroom and concession stand at a central location. The people could watch the baseball and softball games from there as well. There will still be an access road on the North side of the park but, there will be a gate and it will be locked and opened as needed to gain access. The existing basketball court would remain. One tennis court would be removed and a sand volleyball court put in that space. One tennis court would remain and need fenced on all sides with a gate. An exercise athletic facility by the volleyball court would be added. Near the new concession stand would be a tot lot. There may be a new fence added in some places. A walking path is high on the survey.

Site Plan 2: On the Front Street side the plan is to add more parking in the parking lot with an additional 14 parking spaces. The large pavilion will be kept with picnic tables added. One of the tennis courts will be removed and a sand volleyball court put in its place. Existing restrooms would be up graded to be ADA compliant. There will be a smaller play area surrounded by the walking trail. The walking trail will have exercise stations along it. Tot lot play area near the basketball court.

Chris showed us a variety of pavilions and path lighting has choices. There are choices of having high overhead lights or lower bollard lights, with solar as an option. Some lights used by the national park service are solar. There is a variety of playground equipment especially designed for handicapped children.

Chris showed us picture of a variety of exercise equipment. Some ideas for improvements to the entrance to the park were presented. Among them was a possibility of a decorative gate or brick pavers or landscaping. The objective is to make it become the showcase to the park. This would improve the entrance to the park. Comments on the area behind the baseball field east of the Norfolk Southern row were to have a gate for a new access road behind the bleachers. Added to the access road were trees at the road entrance and benches.

Front Street has a bit of a hill. The addition of trees and an ADA accessible route into the park are incorporated. Street lights that are taller 18 feet would be added to the parking lot. Also there would be new curbing and sidewalks and a planting strip to enhance the area.

The meadow/nature area will be in memory of Susan Connell sponsored by Orrstown Bank.

Trash receptacles will need to be purchased as well. Benches can be recycled plastic, metal or wood. Wood is more maintain. Chris showed us a few different styles.

Bollards are planned for in the project to provide accessibility for vehicles. They can be laid on their side and put back up.

Public comment: Ruth Ann Linn spoke concerning the proposed playground. She spoke that it is too elaborate for our town. She feels the town needs improved in other areas first. Frank Campbell said that DCNR money are to be used for recreational areas and not other places in town.

The entrance behind the bleacher at the baseball field plan is to add trees. Lynn Stewart raised the question: Is there room for the added trees behind the bleachers. Answer: Yes. There will be a paved 6 foot walking trail/sidewalk behind the baseball field.

Lynn Stewart asked: Are there walkways for handicap people to get to the play area from the handicap parking area? Yes. They can follow the path from the parking area to the play area from proposed additional parking from Oliver Street.

Public Question: In the front street parking area if more parking was added would it be ADA accessible? No. The Oliver Street parking lot would be the access for handicapped individuals.

Public question: Do we have any type of play equipment picked out? No. Not yet.

Janetta Green asked: Would existing restrooms would be ADA accessible with both site plans? Yes. Frank Campbell responded that to keep the existing bathrooms would be more costly to renovate and the space is not enough for ADA compliance.

Barb Kline asked: Would grant money be set aside for future up keep and maintaince? No. All grant funds would be used for the project and must be spent in a 3 year period of time and be completed.

Lynn Stewart asked: Any plans to get money through USDA Rural Development? Not currently but that could be checked into.

Frank Campbell commented that Newport is a fine community and if we have a nice park or playground it may foster some pride in the community to improve our town. Maybe it will create a desire in people who live here to want to make some improvements to their own property.

Tom Fitzpatrick mentioned that as the playground has been improved this year that the playground has not needed painting to cover vandalism.

Sandy Comp replied that the children have helped to do some of the improvements and helping with the work has fostered some pride and keeps vandalism down as well.

Barb Kline: Question: Would the sand volleyball pit create a problem with all our stray cats in town using it as a potential big cat litter box? Andrew Blair agreed as other did that this could be a large problem. Also the potential of other objects being buried in the sand.

Laura Campbell asked: Can people walk in the areas of the nature park? Yes. Laura commented that these site plans are a great start. She sees that the way the park currently is, portrays it in a way that is a great injustice. She thinks new development is a great start to creating an inviting area for people that would now want to come and live and raise their children here in Newport.