

Stearns & Pellegrini Parks Planning Meeting #2
Thursday, June 2, 2005
6:30pm
Pellegrini Gymnasium, Hawthorn Street

Many residents reconvened to further plan the future of Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park. Site visits were done in each park prior to the meetings to aid in the planning effort. Residents were asked to divide into two groups, one dealing with Stearns Park and the other with Pellegrini Park. Attendees were shown scaled maps of the parks and given scaled templates of various uses, such as basketball courts, little league fields, and typical playground spaces. The point of the exercise was to show that in finite areas, only so many uses can exist. For example, if one new use were to be added, then another use might need to be removed. The groups were also able to peruse through catalogs of park equipment to see the range of equipment available.

Marion Pressley of Pressley Associates, Inc. led the Pellegrini Park small group, aided by Hongfei Chen of Pressley Associates, Inc. and Amy Yuhasz of the City of Newton. Jay Emperor of Pressley Associates, Inc. led the Stearns Park team, aided by Danielle Bailey of the City of Newton. Parks and Recreation Department representatives were Tom Cahill and Carol Schein.

STEARNS PARK COMMENTS

- The current ball field is undersized according to regulations. A regulation little league was significantly larger and would encroach upon the current location of the playground and basketball court. Tom Cahill of Parks and Recreation stated that undersized fields can still be considered playable. The residents were supportive of keeping the field where it is and at the same size. Keeping the field small encourages more use by children and youth, though an adult wiffleball league may want to use the space. The ball field location was experimented with, especially because of the evening sun but no other position was more advantageous. The ball field should be restored and a new backstop installed.
- The residents valued the open space in the upper section of the park and did not want to place any uses in it, other than passive activities such as picnic tables and benches.
- The group would like an expanded and consolidated play area. The new play area should have the rubberized safety surfacing and be defined with a combination of fencing, berming and landscaping/shrubs. The berming and landscaping should consider safety as the play areas are close to the street. Additionally, the play area and equipment should be accessible. The new equipment should be interesting, diverse, and challenging to younger and older children. Seating should surround the play area. Some shaded sections are very important, both for seating and for the playground. The existing shade shelter is in poor shape and kids can climb on top of it. One possible solution is to use canvas canopies, as seen in the patio of the new adjacent senior apartment. The drinking fountain should be replaced- it does not work.
- The trees in the park are great but pruning and removal of dead branches are needed, especially around the walkway near the playground.
- Because the group did not want to get rid of the tennis courts, the ball field, and the open space, and desired to expand play area, there is not enough room to keep the basketball court. The group tried many different locations but none were ideal. There are a couple basketball courts, literally down the street in Forte Park. These courts are in good shape and are underutilized. Also, Pellegrini Park and Boyd Park will have basketball.
- Both sets of swings should be removed and relocated (or be replaced with new equipment) to the area where the basketball court is now located. Relocating the swings is wise because it is currently in the way of the ball field.
- All pathways should be replaced and made handicapped accessible, where possible. A new pathway should be installed around to connect to the Nonantum Village Place/Lafayette Green walkway. A better pathway needs to be created that leads to Alison Street.
- The pathway lighting should be continued along each part of the walkway, where possible. The athletic lighting should be removed.

- The group would like more and upgraded (more attractive) trash receptacles. Currently, there are too few receptacles and too far between. The lunch crowd generates a lot of trash.
- The residents would like more picnic benches, with a few tables in each cluster. The wooden benches must all be replaced with a better, more durable bench.
- Replace the border fencing with new fencing.
- Restripe front parking spots on Stearns Place. Landscape Watertown Street entrance to make more attractive and inviting. General clean up of this area.
- Need park signage that explains park rules, including park closing at dusk and dog rules.

PELLEGRINI PARK COMMENTS

- There is no path from Lothrop Street to the play areas. Residents entering the park through this entrance have to walk across the grass. Removal of the tree stumps along the fence by Lothrop Street and new plantings are recommended.
- Dog owners often do not clean-up after their dogs and leave it lying on the play fields where people playing sports may walk in it/fall in it. It was suggested that dog sleeves (special trash bags) and a designated barrel be installed, in addition to signage explaining dog regulations, including leash laws, times, etc.
- Many people spoke in favor of a water play area in place of the current sprinkler. The park on Newton Street in Waltham was mentioned as an example of a nice one.
- The paved space in the back of the building should be kept versatile so that it may be used for a variety of activities, including picnics, concerts, water play, basketball, dodge ball, etc.
- It was suggested that the two existing playgrounds be combined into one and extended toward the southwest corner of the park. All the kids' equipment should be in one area. They would like to see swings for older and younger kids. Several people spoke in favor of new rubberized play surfacing for the play areas.
- Installation of a covered storage area was suggested. It was pointed out that there is a storage area on the north side of the building, but it is not covered.
- It was suggested that a canopy or other covering/shelter be installed for part of the paved area to offer shade during the summer and protection from the rain. It was suggested that a portable shelter be installed so it could be moved around/taken down depending on the need for it at the time.
- The backstop should be moved further into the southeast corner of the park to increase the size to meet high school standards for a softball field. A new backstop and team benches are needed. Bleachers are needed for the play fields. Right now, there is no place for spectators to sit.
- More picnic tables are needed.
- Accessibility is needed throughout the park and on the playgrounds, for wheelchair and stroller use.
- The soccer field should be rehabbed, especially with respect to drainage. The field should be shortened to meet standard of high school soccer field by moving the goal at north side of the park away from the fence.
- The attendees thought that, overall, the tennis court surfaces and nets are in good condition but that the existing fence and gates should be replaced.
- The athletic lighting should be relocated for better coverage.
- The parking area should be defined with granite curbing. The basketball court should be separate from the parking and relocated elsewhere in the park. The parking lot should also be accessible.
- The installation of two bocce ball courts would be nice.
- For added open space and beautification, it was mentioned that an informal garden for contemplating and sitting would be ideal between the tennis courts and the playground.
- All fencing should be uniform in style. Evergreen trees should be planted at the back of baseball field, along the existing fence, to screen the field from the backyards.
- An evaluation of the existing tree conditions should be made, and the ones in poor health should be removed.
- Seating in the park should be studied, and placement of any new seating should avoid conflict with active park uses.

The next meeting is discussion of design options for both parks on Wednesday, June 22, at 6:30pm at Pellegrini Gymnasium.