

New Castle City Playground Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes  
April 15, 2024 – 5:30 p.m.  
1 Municipal Boulevard, New Castle, DE

Members Present: Suzanne Swift, Chair  
Andre Jerry  
Judy Guttenplan  
Brian Mattaway  
Nermin Zubaca

Absent: Matthew Eide

Ms. Swift called the Playground sub-committee meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

A motion to begin the meeting was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

### **Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2024, meeting as presented was made, seconded and passed. Mr. Zubaca abstained from the vote.

### **Playground Equipment Update**

#### Battery Park Playground

- The new swing was replaced on April 11<sup>th</sup> and is back in operation.
- Bob from Kompan recommended that additional mulch be placed around the spinner and the swings. Mr. Delgado will get more mulch.
- It was reported that some adhesive signage is peeling. Ms. Swift will look into that to determine what can be done about it.

Landscaping – Ms. Swift met with Taryn Davidson, Urban Forester with the Delaware Forestry Service, and was informed of a \$5,000 grant for trees and other landscaping. It is a matching grant, and volunteer hours can be applied toward the match. Volunteer hours are computed at \$31 per hour and approximately 157 hours would be required. Mr. Zubaca suggested that the City and the Trustees be contacted about assisting with the match.

During discussion it was noted that the University of Delaware landscape architecture students will be laying out a design and making recommendations about plantings to provide more shade and draw some of the water away from the playground. Ms. Swift noted that volunteers would do the planting and Mr. Zubaca suggested that they reach out to the Trust since they maintain the park. Ms. Swift will reach out to Tom Clayton.

Ms. Guttenplan suggested that sub-committee member hours should be tracked to apply toward the matching volunteer hours. Ms. Swift stated that she thought Ms. Davidson said meeting time was included in the “in-kind” hours.

Surface – Ms. Swift passed around samples of rubberized surface colors. The rubberized surface can be 100% one color or 50%/50% using two colors. Ms. Swift visited a number of parks with

rubberized surfaces and noted that one of the rubberized surfaces installed by Burke was coming up and she was not impressed. She will inspect a park done by Kompan.

Mr. Jerry reported that he inspected Glasgow Park, which was done by Kompan, and it is having issues with different colors of the rubberized surface coming apart at the seams. While there, Mr. Jerry had a conversation with the parent of an autistic child, and she said that her son is very drawn to the yellow surfaces. She also told him that she only goes to playgrounds that are fenced and that have equipment designed for autistic children. Ms. Swift stated that the sub-committee does not have any funding for fencing at this time, but it can revisit this in the future.

Mr. Zubaca noted the pros are color and drainage, but a big negative is wear and tear. The cost over 15 years for mulch is approximately \$181,000, and the rubberized surface cost is \$375,000. Mr. Zubaca opined that for budgeting purposes they should forecast a life of seven (7) years for the rubberized surface because it is a very popular park and it does have water issues. Ms. Swift noted that the warranty covers 3-5 years.

Driftwood – Ms. Swift visited the Delaware Botanical Gardens in Lewes to see how they integrated driftwood into the park. They are not using driftwood, but they are using lumber in very innovative ways. One idea for the Battery Park playground is to cut driftwood into low discs that children could hop on.

Shade – The initial quote for shading elements was \$8-\$9,000 and installation was \$15,000. Two additional quotes are coming in. Ms. Swift suggested one cantilevered one-post umbrella shading element and some metal pergolas that can also bring shade.

Benches – Ms. Swift met with John Wik, Vice President of Eco Plastic Products, to discuss recycled benches for the playground. Their benches do not have arms or a continuous back and do not fit parameters the sub-committee wants. Ms. Swift noted that if the New Castle Community Partners gets Eco Plastic benches for the rest of Battery Park with an appropriate design the sub-committee might be able piggy-back on their order.

#### Grants

- One grant was just submitted.
- The Trust declined their grant request. Ms. Swift will ask for feedback on their application and will reapply next year.
- Ms. Swift met with Ms. Tantillo and requested funding of \$375,000 under the Bond Bill. They also talked about ARPA funds. Mr. Zubaca will forward his research of playgrounds being funded with ARPA funds to Ms. Tantillo.
- The Welfare Foundation Grant is being submitted tonight.
- In response to a question from Mr. Mattaway regarding the AARP grant, Ms. Swift opined that they would hear back in mid-May or early June. That grant must be spent by the end of the year.

Historic Area Commission – The application submitted to the Historic Area Commission for benches and shading was denied for more information. Ms. Swift will collect the necessary data and resubmit the application for the May meeting.

#### Restrooms

The restrooms in Battery Park have been repaired, but they are locked. Ms. Swift noted that because the building is locked people are using the grass area behind the restrooms, which is a health hazard. Mr. Zubaca noted that the Trust and the City have reached a plan whereby city staff can open the restrooms for special events and summer camp. Mr. Zubaca passed on information regarding other options to have facilities available every day to the Trustees. Messrs. Zubaca and Mattaway are meeting with two Trustee members next week and opening the restrooms will be one of the topics discussed. Further discussion of the need for open restrooms ensued.

#### Neighborhood Playgrounds

- Mr. Jerry reached out to Ms. King regarding the Buttonwood Playground but has not heard anything from her. He will follow-up with the city office to see if she contacted them.
- Ms. Swift noted that the sub-committee has been unsuccessful in its attempts to have anyone from the various neighborhoods attend meetings consistently; however, they will continue efforts to find volunteers.

#### Old Business

- A process and timeline for neighborhood playgrounds has not yet been drafted.
- There was no update from Mr. Eide regarding his discussion with Mr. Zeltt about updates to the city website.
- Outreach/Tourism – Ms. Swift will meet with John Reaves next week to link the sub-committee into the Outreach group's efforts. Mr. Mattaway noted that Mr. Reaves and his team made a presentation to City Council. The group has established a new city website that will promote and advertise New Castle. It was suggested that a tab be added about what people can do in New Castle. Mr. Zubaca noted that it currently is focused on museums, and opined that the more it can be built out the better visitor experiences will be. Ms. Swift noted that New Castle could be promoted as a wonderful day trip from Wilmington. Mr. Zubaca noted that the Outreach group is also looking into a study of foot traffic in the city.

#### Comments from Committee Members

Mr. Zubaca suggested adding a wheelchair accessible swing in the playground. Ms. Swift said there are a few pieces that could be added for wheelchair accessibility including a turning equipment level to the ground and a wheelchair accessible swing.

In response to a question from Mr. Mattaway, Ms. Swift clarified that the peeling signage that was reported is adhesive and not metal. She added that in Phase 2 more durable signage will be requested.

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Mr. Zubaca noted that a Kompan playground in Newark had been badly vandalized and asked about anti-graffiti materials. Ms. Swift noted that Kompan had given her information about a coating that would make graffiti easier to remove and she will report on that next month. Regarding the safety of the coating, Ms. Swift will reach out to Kompan for details.

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Swift called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion was unanimously passed, and the meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich  
City Stenographer