



## Community Meeting 4

### Barrie Park Community Meeting #4

Location: Barrie Park Center

Date: May 13, 2015

Time: 7pm

### Minutes of Meeting

Ms. Jan Arnold, Executive Director of the Park District, made the introductions to the meeting.

Jan Arnold welcomed the attendees and Park District Commissioners and staff that were present. She provided a brief summary of the park planning process thus far noting the initial Focus Group sessions, the previous three Community Meetings and three associated questionnaires. This process allows us to look at many different designs for a Barrie Park Master Plan. There are two key elements of this park – the reservoir and park that are separate and important elements. She stated that the upcoming meetings for this process include the following:

- Present Recommendations and Opinion of Probable Cost to Board June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at Committee Meeting
- Park Board to consider accepting the final plan at June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015 regular Board meeting, 218 Madison St.

Ms. Arnold then mentioned the results that will come out of tonight's discussion will be presented on June 18<sup>th</sup> to the Park Board for approval and will be set as part of the Capital Improvement Plan. She then welcomed the Board members present.

She then introduced the design team and handed the meeting over to John Mac Manus of Altamanu, Inc. Mr. Mac Manus presented a PowerPoint presentation and responded to comments throughout the meeting on various discussion points.

**The PowerPoint presentation can be viewed on line at Website: <http://www.pdop.org>**

### **Summary of the Presentation**

The purpose of the meeting was to review consensus from the previous Community Meeting and Public Questionnaires; to report on results of meetings with the Village; to look at a proposed layout on the reservoir; and to examine and discuss the results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> questionnaire and reach consensus on a recommendation for the Board of the Park District.



Mr. Mac Manus reviewed the following items on which consensus had been reached:

**Barrie Center:**

Speed Table

Tot Lot expansion

New Ramp configuration at the Center

Partial roof structure over the Reservoir and potential uses

**Main Park:**

Improve the drainage

Improve Park Entryways

Flip the back stop to NE

Add picnic grove, seating and trees

Distance markers and exercise stations

Exercise stairs/course on Sled Hill

He then reviewed the responses by the public from the last Questionnaire to 4 Park design schemes for the future park.

He stated that the third Questionnaire showed 4 schemes. There were 465 total public responses and 30 pages of comments in all. He stressed the following:

- Remember this is a Questionnaire not a survey.
- It is not scientific but gives the Park District a general gage of what the community is thinking.
- There are many comments. We tallied them to see what was popular in individual schemes.

He then introduced the public comments about the Sled Hill. There are six potential recommendations to the Board for the Sled Hill that seem to have broad support:

- Add exercise stairs along the sides of the Hill
- Add a low/roll hill for smaller children to whatever scheme is chosen keeping in issues raised in mind
- Improve planting and appearance of concrete walls
- Improve SW entry into park, make more welcoming
- Repair wall, remove metal rails and replace, bolt to the surface
- Consider alternate planting (short grass native prairie)



Mr. Mac Manus also reviewed comments made by a community member in the Questionnaire calling for the hill to be made more natural looking.

#### Public Comment on Concepts for the Sled Hill

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- I have a question about the sled hill grass surface - what kind of grass are you proposing? What about a Bermuda grass? It has a tight matt and grows slower, however it does green up late. Could we add the language 'consider alternate types of grass'
- I'm not ready to leave the hill comment due to the mentioned comment (making hill more natural looking). I think we need to take more time to consider that comment on a different type of hill. Do others agree? (Others agree).
- Just to confirm – putting an extra, smaller hill in would that work with the proposed configuration of the playground and the sports fields?
- Just one comment about the wall – I think the sentiment is we have been living for years now with many design mistakes for the park. This is our one chance to get these mistakes fixed. I'm talking about the really ugly retaining wall.
- Mr. Mac Manus - In terms of item 1, I think there's consensus for an adult activity center. For item 2, I see that there is interest in a lower hill for younger kids. It may not fit in the picnic area, but maybe near the existing hill. That way parents with many kids can supervise all of their kids.

Does anyone have an opposition to beautifying the entry?

Adding exercise stations and planting can be done to any scheme, so the only item to discuss is 'keep the walls as they are' or not. We may be able to re-write this item as part of the proposal and move on.

We could also say 'investigate other solutions' at the time of final design and then move on.

However, I'd like to point out that if you remove all those walls, and try to create a completely natural slope, you will have slope up slowly at 1:3 to the top and then you will have to slope down from the hill as a sledding surface on the other face.

That will restrict the height of the hill and could impinge on the sports fields.

You may be left with a hill ½ of the existing height of the hill we have.

We also have to be mindful of safety and not create a feature with too steep of a slope.



- I don't know if this is possible, but what if we have a walk in the back of the hill? Can we have a walk with a ramp?  
We would need a switch back ramp to get up that quickly.
- I'm going to buck the trend and say that I'm fine with the hill wall. It does a good job although it doesn't look the best. The straight and high wall makes the hill the most useful.
- Mr. Mac Manus - There are a lot of the comments that request to leave the hill as it is. Can we re-word a recommendation to the Board of the Park District 'to investigate alternative uses for the hill'? As for items 1,2,3,4,5,6 - generally all seem to approve of them.
- I know the park isn't too old, but over time the wall will degrade so maybe the board can consider something different as the wall degrades. This is a Master Plan, so we have the flexibility to provide real (long term) recommendations
- Mike Grandy (PDOP) –If we change the configuration of the hill, how will we make a safe environment so a daredevil doesn't try to go down the reverse side? I think it's inevitable that someone will get adventurous.
- I don't live near the wall, but I am sympathetic to the people that live near the wall, I'd like to see a softening of the wall but I also feel that the height is important.
- I would agree with that and I don't live near the wall.
- I would just say one more thing about the grass to be used. People run up and down and whatever grass is best for that high use of that hill, it gets muddy. I don't know what is the best grass for the use.
- Mr. Mac Manus - It's also that people use it when it's sopping wet.
- I just want to reinforce what the woman in the front (said) that alternate types of grass will hold up better.
- It's a possibility to mix the two grasses of deep root and types of cushioning on top.
- This is the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting I have attended; there has been a suggestion for a Peter Pan mural on the wall. Has there been talk about mural on the hill wall? Considering that the greenery won't stay all winter and there could be a mixed component. There are many artists in the area who would be happy to help.
- This is a great opportunity to get local teens involved.
- My daughter was part of the recent mosaic project.
- I think you're close, I think maybe just item 5 'Repair wall' should be edited. We don't need a repair, just a softer structure as it is.
- Josephine Bellalta (Altamanu) – We can consider cladding the wall with different materials, it could offer a warmer look to the wall so it resembles a piece of architecture rather than a piece of concrete.
- What about suggestion of putting a walk up the back of the hill?



- Mr. Mac Manus - Switchback ramps can look very ugly and to avoid that and plant between them you would move the hill further into the park to make space for the ramps in the rear. The people might get a staircase to look at instead of a wall. But we can look at it.
- Ms. Arnold – If you change the hill slope, then you alter the available size of the fields.
- Maybe we need another sled hill like the one we had over at Ridgeland.
- Don't we get some sketches, some alternate concepts on the hill?
- Ms. Arnold – this is a Master Plan so these concepts will be developed only out of the consensus. We always revisit the details before construction, and when the project makes its way into the Capital Improvement Plan.
- Mr. Mac Manus - So we'll try and craft something (a proposal) from all your comments that suites all the interests for this hill and then the design will be reviewed again when this project goes towards construction.

#### Public Comment on the Field (Artificial Turf vs. Natural Grass):

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- I'm sorry that I wasn't at the other meetings, but I'm a little unclear on how the survey was presented. Was it a multiple choice survey?
- Mr. Mac Manus - for each scheme there was an option for voting and then an option for comments on why the responder chose that specific scheme and then a final option for (general) comments.
- When there was a questionnaire about turf vs grass, was there anything in there about the consequences about either?
- There's no official research that goes longer than a few years. And therefore we were reticent to include any.
- Mr. Mac Manus – If you review just straight voting Artificial Turf had the most votes. However, there are many different ways of tabulating the results. If you take all comments on schemes made by the public you get a different result.
- So SEOPCO (South East Oak Park Community Organization) sent out a link to the results, from what I remember we're not seeing the same results from here.
- Ms. Arnold – The first question of the survey asked you to rank your preference in the four schemes. What we believe happened is that if you didn't turn your smart phone or device sideways, you didn't see all of the schemes. A lot of people didn't rank the parks in the order that they wanted.
- So it's misleading all around. So this is plastic grass, what does it come to?
- There could be duplicative comments?



- Ms. Arnold – The votes are tabulated below in (question) number 2. Even if there was an issue with the first question the second one counts all votes. We have focused on that result.
- One last question about questionnaire – when people were allowed to rank, did that give weight to their 1,2,3,4 choices.
- Mr. Mac Manus – We are basing our understanding of the results based on the answers received for number two because that drew more responses from people and we believe it is more accurate.
- Before you began your editorial comments I would like to read a piece on the science of soils. I'd like to read about the United Nations declaration that this is the year of Soils: 'Healthy soils are the basis for healthy food production. Soils are the foundation for vegetation which is cultivated or managed for feed, fiber, fuel and medicinal products. Soils support our planet's biodiversity and they host a quarter of the total. Soils help to combat and adapt to climate change by playing a key role in the carbon cycle. Soils store and filter water, improving our resilience to floods and droughts. Soil is a non-renewable resource; its preservation is essential for food security and our sustainable future'. Critical limits are reached where areas matter.

The participant then held up a copy of the Park District brochure and stated that she had marked where there were programs that brought children into contact with nature.

- Jens Jensen was involved in many parks here and what they are proposing is critical, it is an option to take kids away to play on natural soil. I think it teaches our kids that it's okay to affect our environment.
- Mr. Mac Manus – I have no issue with Jens Jensen and I have no issue with creating natural areas. We went to a lot of trouble to introduce designs for natural areas into the park schemes. We only received two comments on natural areas. Please do not presume what we all think. What we're trying to do here is to mediate a result that responds to All of the community. It is not my personal opinion. If I had my way this park would look very different.
- How many acres of impermeable surfaces are there in Oak Park, including plastic grass?
- Mr. Mac Manus – That is not accurate. Artificial Turf is permeable. It permeates through the surface and into a basin of crushed aggregate for storage. The depth of the sub-surface is dependent on how permeable the soils are below where they eventually drain into....  
(Interruption)
- Mr. Mac Manus – Can I finish?



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- Don't let the meeting get hijacked until you finish your presentation
- Mr. Mac Manus – I want to highlight that neither the design team nor the staff wish to force an issue because this project involves the whole community.
- It wasn't specific on the survey – I have kids in soccer and baseball, but I think there should be natural grass. I have mixed feelings about playability and about health. What's the issue, what's the passion – is there any way to have another survey and get the impression that gauges what people are passionate about?
- Just to be clear – I've been to a lot of meetings and this has all been discussed in the meetings before a final decision.
- The real issue is drainage.
- Mr. Mac Manus – both surfaces can be made to drain.
- I'm assuming the layers of clay were laid down there as the EPA said this was required to keep the toxins from moving up. Do we need to maintain these depths and can we disturb this clay without impacting the toxins existing on the site?
- Ms. Arnold – I did talk to the engineer that was involved with the project. All the toxins were removed. The cap is at 10' deep. You can go down to 10' and then you will reach a barrier, but you will never have to go down 10'. Mike Grandy had to make repairs last year. There's a 1' deep layer of topsoil and then 9' of compacted clay – there is no drainage in that clay. The water doesn't move.
- So I think this proposal makes sense, we can revisit this discussion in 4-5 years when the park project is up for development.
- I am also a mom of soccer/baseball and I am also a concerned mom. I think it makes sense to reconsider in 4-5 years and we may know more about this material.
- It's funny that in 10 years you may need to remove the Artificial Turf and that material will end up in a landfill. You will not have to do that with natural turf. I think it's unfortunate that we are landlocked and every inch of space is important.
- I would like to thank the Park District for changing the Artificial Turf to the safer field surface Nike Grind. I also wonder why when the PDOP review said they only needed three fields and why are they now talking about a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> (Julian and Brooks) and now a potential 5<sup>th</sup>?
- Mr. Mac Manus – there was a community desire for Artificial Turf.
- Who wanted Artificial Turf? Soccer players?
- Mr. Mac Manus – There is support within the local community as well.
- If we assess the Park District use (of the fields) and include the middle school use you may have a completely different level of need.
- We've gone to soccer games in the Village and have noticed that most of the cars are from out of town. I'm not saying that we should not allow visitors, but I don't think that the fields are being used by our community.



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- The number of kids playing soccer in this village is very high. I bet there are more kids playing outside of the Village because the fields here are not enough – the fields are continuously getting beat up. More families are traveling out of the Village because we don't have enough space for all of the activities. And in regards to three Artificial Turf fields it was recommended that there be a smaller one (at Irving Elementary), a larger one (at Ridgeland Commons) and a proposed middle-sized one was supposed to go in during the Stevenson project but that never happened. What is proposed at the middle schools is different than what was assessed.
- Ms. Arnold – There are one thousand children at the middle schools and they all use the small patch of grass (at the school). Those projects are about encouraging physical activity. If you talk about compaction!!! It's hard to grow anything on something that takes so much compaction. Including the second middle school as another Artificial Turf field was a requirement from the Elementary School District 97.
- Obviously I am a soccer person, I am also a purist and I would love to play on natural turf. If we have an Artificial Turf here that will allow other fields to rest throughout the inventory of fields.
- There were a number of people at the Julian/Brooks Middle School meetings and many people favored Artificial Turf because it is a surface that can get played on and it is a surface that doesn't degrade. Artificial Turf is more productive because it gives more usable hours. The rain this week and Maple Park is a good example. The weather this week will put the fields out of commission for the week. The reason the Sports/Artificial Turf supporters/parents/coaches are not here is because at this very moment they are with their kids' games cheering them on.
- My name I Aaron, I helped install the field at Ridgeland and then I started to feel light-headed, I don't have a huge beef that it's rubber, but I wonder if it's a problem because they are recycled tires. It is the used tires that are the big issue, not only when you do a slide tackle. I'm not a soccer purist, but if there's toxic dirt on the field, that is an issue. Think about fracking – is it good for the long term? Fossil fuels, is it good for the long term. ( continued speaking but recorder could not keep up) Artificial Turf – when it rains and I can get back on the field immediately and that's great, but there's some information out there about soccer goalies and some kids are ingesting stuff. If we're just thinking that it's efficient, then what are we going to do?
- Mr. Mac Manus – Thank you, that is great info, but what do you recommend?  
(No response)
- For clarification, they're not using tires.
- I'm a professional researcher and a sociologist and I want to share what I have observed tonight. I think we should have a more rigorous survey especially in 4-5 years when there is more data on the material and I think that there should be an addendum to the



survey for this material when it is proposed later. I am aware of the field at University of Illinois at Chicago and I remember the smells when the field was initially installed as well as at Ridgeland and I remembered that it bothered me when I swam. I hope we have good, solid data in 4-5 years when this park project is considered.

- I am a sports person, but I think sports these days have exploded on the demands of the athlete. How many practices are enough?
- What I'm hearing is lack of open space and that won't get solved with Artificial Turf, but only with more open space. The Park District needs to acquire more property and take moves to expand into new space.
- I'm not in favor of kicking the can down the road and believing that magic information will appear. The research will not evolve in 4-5 years, but this is something that will still be studied in 25 years. I like my kids to play on the grass and prefer that as an option.
- Well the people that are concerned about Artificial Turf are vocal tonight, but that isn't a consensus. This room shouldn't be the determining vote. There are people here who didn't fill out the survey. It seems to me that only rational thing to agree is that this will not be decided until later on when this park is up for a project
- One thing that was decided was the discussion on fencing and I think that it should be noted that fencing should not be included in this project.
- For people in favor of Artificial Turf, I recommend that you walk on the grass in their bare feet on a hot summer day.
- I will come back (to artificial turf?) because there are a lot of people that support the turf and there is a sentiment that we are doing this to just get kids outside. A Center for Disease Control study talks about the raise in obesity. One thing that Artificial Turf does is it allows us to keep our kids active. We don't see those obesity numbers in kids that are active; we see it in kids that are sedentary. Obesity is a real epidemic. Please don't discount us, we understand that there are issues for using Artificial Turf, but there are also concerns about obesity.
- Irving Elementary is the only school with Artificial Turf and this park is our only green space. Many of you weren't here through the remediation and I don't want to be here when they have to do another remediation.
- There are many other activities than soccer.
- When I was a kid there wasn't an obesity epidemic, but there wasn't the same types of food, (comments about how children used to play).
- You presented a nice example in the 1960's however our children don't experience free play. Free play existed in the 1960's because our moms were home all day and we were allowed to go down the street or whatever. There is no more free play these days. I would guess that after the baseball season, you won't see a lot of pick-up baseball games. There are more organized sports because more parents are working. There is an



obesity epidemic because there are limited options for kids to play. I'm sure we can come up with an addendum that will go to the board to address the use of our fields.

- I'd like to see a more general approach on drainage and I'd like an additional addendum that will mention why some fields work well and some drain well.
- Mr. Mac Manus – We have looked into field drainage, and what it really comes to it is dollars to enable proper construction and maintenance.
- We're not just considering the dollars, but also the health of the children.
- Mr. Mac Manus – So we have your addendum (drainage), the fence addendum, the field survey addendum.
- Can we take a vote in the room and see where we're at? Who here supports Artificial Turf?
- What will you do to people who do?
- People don't agree with this method, it is divisive; let's not pursue it.
- Please just look at organic turf management. The compost will build up and the field will work.
- Mr. Mac Manus – We employ a soils scientist on all of our Park projects, and the Park District has a new specialist on staff.
- Ms. Arnold – We have an Athletic Field study that reviewed all of our resources and offered recommendations. Some recommendations were to hire a turf manager so we did that. Over the last two years people have seen an improvement in our fields. A few methods we have implemented are over-seeding, irrigation and altering the soil/sand mixture. We are taking a new methodology to improve our fields. Taking some of pressure off the fields and allowing the fields to recover. In regards to Barrie Park, nothing is draining through the clay; the paths and berms create more of a damming effect and it creates more of an issue for the fields.
- I'd like to reinforce what Ms. Arnold had said. I have to give credit for all they have done and would like to compliment you and the Park District.
- We know there are 2-3 fields with the ground-up tires; can you tell us which ones they are so we can stay away from them?
- Ms. Arnold – Oak Park River Forest High School, Irving Elementary and Ridgeland Commons have crumb rubber but you have to understand they have more sand as the infield mix than rubber. The two fields proposed at the middle school will be 'Nike Grind' base material and that is ground up tennis shoes and has more sand infill as a mix.
- There is no consensus. Can you agree to that 'the board will reinvestigate the field surface'
- How many people don't want Artificial Turf? – 17



- How many people are willing to propose an examination of what material to consider in 4-5 years from now? – 14
- It is a current national debate and there is no consensus. It is the same here with this group, in the questionnaire, and there is no consensus across the Village so no one will walk away with a solid decision. Therefore we return to the proposed recommendation that the issues will be reexamined in 4-5 years when the fields may come up as a project. We will include the additions and addenda we mentioned in the recommendation.

Closing Comments:

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- June 18<sup>th</sup> will be the Park Board meeting and comments will be made available prior to the meeting. The meeting is to be located at 218 Madison.
- What is the best use of clay, since we have it?
- Mr. Mac Manus – Making pots. (laughter)The clay in that field is as impervious as concrete.
- Mr. Grandy - Concrete is more porous than that clay
- Is there a way to get a bathroom (by the playground)?
- Mr. Mac Manus – Not a chance. Sorry for joking, this happens at every meeting. Bathrooms need a lot of maintenance and people do strange things in the bathrooms we have.
- Is there a reason why they made the clay barrier as they did?
- Mr. Mac Manus – People were so concerned that they stamped everything down so nothing would move. People say it could be the reason why there is flooding in the area.
- Is there one last comment?
- ‘Thank you John’.

At 8:50 PM Mr. Mac Manus took the final comments and thanked the attendees for their input and discussion. The meeting ended.

End of Minutes