

**AMHERST PLANNING BOARD**  
**Wednesday, April 15, 2020, 6:30 PM**

Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, this meeting of the Planning Board was conducted via remote participation.

**VIRTUAL MEETING:** <https://zoom.us/s/390077788>

**MINUTES**

**Participating Remotely and Present by Roll Call:**

Michael Birtwistle, Maria Chao, Christine Gray-Mullen, Chair, Jack Jemsek,  
David Levenstein, Doug Marshall, Janet McGowan

**Absent:** None

**Staff Participating Remotely:**

Christine Brestrup, Planning Director  
Pamela Field-Sadler, Administrative Assistant  
Nate Malloy, Planner  
Alan Snow, Tree Warden

---

**6:30 pm:** Chair Christine Gray-Mullen opened the meeting. Ms. Gray-Mullen announced this is the first Planning Board (Board) meeting conducted via remote participation and that determined by roll call, all Board members are present. Ms. Gray-Mullen explained to attendees the process by which to be recognized to speak or submit a public comment. Ms. Gray-Mullen announced that the Public Comment (Agenda item II) would move to the end of the meeting after item V. in order to provide the public additional time to log into the Zoom platform and familiarize themselves with the technology.

**I. MINUTES** - None

**III. PRELIMINARY PRESENTATION**

Kendrick Park Playground Design – Preliminary presentation by Nate Malloy, Senior Planner, and Christine Brestrup, Planning Director – PARC grant and CPAC funded playground. Link to the webpage for Kendrick Park 2020:

<https://www.amherstma.gov/3527/Kendrick-Park-2020>

Mr. Nate Malloy, Amherst Senior Planner, introduced himself and explained that the Town of Amherst applied for a PARC grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and received the maximum award of \$400,000 to design a playground to be located in Kendrick Park. Along with the grant, Town Council has approved

\$260,000 of CPA funds for this project. The Planning Department, LSSE and DPW staff, with input from the public, are working together to prepare the design.

Mr. Malloy stated tonight's presentation is intended to be preliminary, and the town would submit a Site Plan Review (SPR) application to the Board for a public hearing early next month. This presentation also provides the public another opportunity to learn about the project and share comments. Mr. Malloy explained public comments can also be submitted through an online form via the town website.

Mr. Malloy shared the project overview and reviewed the timeline for the project. He said the schedule for the playground's design and construction is rigorous. Currently, the state's PARC grant program requires that the design be complete by June 2020 and that construction be complete by June 2021. At this point, the grant deadlines have not been extended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Malloy explained that through public forum discussions, the public has expressed a preference for a design that includes naturalized elements and minimizes pavement and hard top areas. The public recommends the trees and landscape be preserved to the extent possible and inclusive play for all ages and abilities be provided.

Mr. Malloy showed images of Preference Boards from the January 9, 2020 public meeting where the public had the opportunity to mark preferable playground elements. Mr. Malloy said that the design team is working to incorporate the public's ideas. The current preliminary design intends to minimize the impact on the landscape of the existing park while also considering the necessity for utilities, stormwater management and playground maintenance.

Mr. Malloy pointed out the current design is based on the 2011 Schematic Design of Kendrick Park. The proposed location for the playground is a little different because the Cecil Group had not taken existing trees and topography into consideration. Mr. Malloy showed renderings of the current design and pointed out the following features:

- A variety of accessible walkways, as well as a paved walkway that will be maintained and available for use throughout the year.
- Staff are working to determine the safest surface for the main playground area.
- A sitting area close to North Pleasant St. with a rock wall, tables and chairs. There is the possibility for displays in this area such as art installations.
- Plantings and rocks will be used to form a barrier instead of fencing.
- Plans include a natural play area without any manufactured equipment, with rocks and logs and a play area with manufactured equipment.
- Inside the walkway a stone stage, sand area with a digger and a slide would be built into the hillside.
- A pollinator garden will be located below the stage.

Mr. Malloy pointed out the plan will not include lighting within the playground; this park, like all other Amherst parks, is intended for daytime use only. There may be lights included along the east-west walkway. There will be signs with park rules and regulations. The design team is working to preserve as many existing trees as possible, as well as plant a few additional trees.

Mr. Malloy showed images of manufactured equipment, submitted by a vendor working within the guide of the schematic plan and project budget, depicting how equipment could fit in the project location. The play equipment primarily targets two age groups: 2 yrs. – 5 yrs. and 5 yrs. – 12 yrs.

Mr. Malloy reviewed project information resources for this project available on the town website. He explained there is a Public Comment form available through the website and encouraged the community to share their ideas. Ms. Brestrup explained that the public will have additional opportunities to view this project during the Design Review Board (DRB) on April 22, 2020 and the Planning Board's May 6, 2020 meeting. These meetings will be held virtually and be open to the public.

### **Board Discussion**

In answering a question from Mr. Marshall, Mr. Malloy explained the hard surface walkway going south towards North Pleasant St. works well with the topography and leads to a crosswalk.

Ms. Gray-Mullen pointed out there are 4 existing crossings along the East Pleasant Street side of Kendrick Park which are fairly close together that require a driver's close attention. Ms. Gray-Mullen suggested the Design team consider how to channel pedestrians through this section in the safest way.

Ms. Chao expressed that she liked the presentation and the project's inclusivity and variety of activities. Ms. Chao expressed the importance to consider future implications for the rest of Kendrick Park like connections to other urban spaces and utilities including public restrooms and lighting.

Mr. Birtwistle agrees this is an excellent collection of play spaces for children. Mr. Birtwistle asked Mr. Malloy to clarify where on the East Pleasant St. side the walkway ends. Mr. Malloy confirmed that the walkway comes out across from what used to be Bertucci's. This area could become a main entry point with benches and bike racks. Mr. Birtwistle suggested that when the project comes back to the Board for permitting, it would be useful to include some type of overlay that shows the proposed design over the existing area.

Ms. McGowan expressed concern for the safety of the children playing in the park and asked if a fence with a locking gate that would keep children contained while playing, as well as discourage others such as college students from being in the area at inappropriate times has been considered. Mr. Malloy responded explaining that the team continues to consider the fencing. A fence would need to be very high to keep

students out and would interfere with the aesthetics of the area and require continual maintenance. A sign will let people know the park is closed after dark; police will be able to say the park is closed and people need to leave.

Ms. McGowan also noted the high cost of the rubberized surface. Mr. Malloy agrees that per sq. ft. cost, rubberized surface is expensive, however, wood chips need continual maintenance including raking. He also noted the state is expected to prohibit the use of wood chips because they are typically inaccessible. Ms. McGowan suggested the Crocker Farm preschool playground is a good model for varying surfaces and accessibility.

Ms. McGowan asked if the sand area would be covered at night. She also noted a castle structure like one that used to exist at the Wildwood playground could be incorporated into the design. Mr. Malloy shared he is familiar with the castle structures, however, vendors report that type of structure would not meet current standards and codes.

Ms. McGowan asked about the solution for bathrooms. Mr. Malloy reported discussions are ongoing with the Bid and the Chamber. Public restrooms are outside the scope of this project.

Ms. McGowan questioned if the amphitheater space would be well utilized by children. She also noted that swings are not included in the design plan; swings can be developed with accessibility in mind. Mr. Malloy pointed out that swings need a lot of space and the fall safe zone area for swings needs to be very large. Mr. Malloy stated an accessible spinner is included in the design.

Mr. Jemsek encouraged the team to continue to think about how traffic moves through the area efficiently while children play safely. Mr. Jemsek asked if the parking would be metered in this area. Ms. Gray-Mullen added that there is a small amount of metered parking in the area, however, about 2/3 of the parking along North Pleasant St. is town issued permit parking. Ms. Gray-Mullen likes angled parking, and asked Mr. Malloy to provide a rendering of the area changed to one-way which would reduce traffic and avail more parking options. Mr. Malloy pointed out that if parking needs to be added to North Pleasant Street, the playground design won't be disrupted.

Mr. Jemsek noted that the playground off the basketball court at Crocker Farm is in rough shape. The wood chips are continually washed out and require a lot of maintenance.

Ms. Gray-Mullen suggested adding motion sensor lights in the play area that could aid in policing. Mr. Malloy said that the idea is to install lighting along the east-west walkway, and the DPW has suggested running additional conduit to allow for future light installation. Ms. Brestrup added there is a plan to light the entire park when the budget allows.

Mr. Levenstein agreed Mr. Malloy's presentation is great. Mr. Levenstein suggested including the sign plans intended to attract visitors to the north end of town with the SPR application.

Ms. McGowan shared her support to not interrupt the park to add parking. Ms. Gray-Mullen reiterated that if the street becomes one-way, space becomes available for angled parking.

Ms. Chao suggested adding additional bike racks at the connection point areas. She noted that there is a Bike Share station nearby along East Pleasant Street.

Mr. Marshall suggested that future discussion should include how the internal walkways compliment the expected circulation around the perimeter of the park.

#### **Public Comment**

Barbara Pearson, resident at 11 Paige Street, asked if the hard surface walkway will be maintained year round. Ms. Pearson shared that she crosses the park to get to the bus stop and it can be difficult to traverse the park in the winter. Ms. Pearson also stated she supports the idea of including angled parking. Mr. Malloy responded to Ms. Pearson stating the 5' hard surface walkway would be maintained year round.

The Board thanked Mr. Malloy for his presentation. Mr. Malloy reiterated the project will be reviewed by the DRB on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and is expected to come to the Board to begin the SPR permit process on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

#### **IV. PUBLIC HEARING – SCENIC ROADS – JOINT HEARING WITH TREE WARDEN - Leverett Road (Map 3A, Parcel 21) (cont. from March 18, 2020)**

Scenic Road tree removal – for a driveway cut from Leverett Road at the southeast corner – Leverett Road (Map 3A, Parcel 21)

Public Shade Trees impacted by this project include the following trees (Sizes indicate “diameter at breast height” – DBH): 6 – <6" Maple

**7:34 p.m.** Ms. Gray-Mullen read the preamble and opened the Joint Public Hearing with the Tree Warden Alan Snow. There were no Board disclosures.

Mr. Snow reported he has met with applicant Glenn Warren to discuss the development of the parcel on Leverett Road and the best driveway cut to minimize the damage to existing trees. The selected area for the driveway cut will affect five young maple trees: 2 trees = 4" DBH, 1 tree = 3" DBH, 2 trees = 2" DBH. Mr. Snow pointed out that one of the 2" DBH trees is dead at the top and does not need to be included in the request. Mr. Snow stated his recommendation is to allow the removal of the trees as requested.

**Site Visit**

Mr. Birtwistle reported that the Board attended a Site Visit on March 17, 2020. Attendees observed the site and the trees proposed for removal. The proposed trees are very small and there are a number of mature trees in the vicinity along the roadside.

**Public Comment – None**

Ms. Brestrup confirmed that no written Public Comments had been received prior to this meeting.

Ms. Gray-Mullen asked if a replacement fee is required for these trees. Mr. Snow stated under the current tree ordinance, these trees are excluded from the replacement fee requirement because they are less than 5" DBH.

**Motion:** Mr. Birtwistle made the motion to close the joint public hearing and support the Tree Warden’s recommendation to approve the removal of the trees as requested. Mr. Levenstein seconded the motion.

**Board Discussion**

Ms. McGowan asked if the town ever asks applicants to replace trees somewhere else on the parcel. Mr. Snow shared that a tree warden is not authorized by M.G.L. to require tree replacement, but in this case, the applicant has a Landscape Plan that includes planting trees further back from the road and maintaining a rural setting.

**Roll Call Vote:** 7-0-0 (Birtwistle, Chao, Gray-Mullen, Jemsek, Levenstein, Marshall, McGowan voted yes to approve the motion)

**V. TOPICS NOT ANTICIPATED 48 HOURS PRIOR TO THE MEETING – None**

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – None**

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela Field-Sadler  
Administrative Asst.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Christine Gray-Mullen  
Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_