

Town of Amherst Response to CPA Committee Questions Groff Park Spray Park

- **Who will make the presentation?**

The project is a collaboration of Town staff from LSSE, DPW, Conservation and Planning, and will be presented by representatives from these departments.

- **This proposal is very expensive. What exactly will be done?**

The CPA request is for funding to complete an overall design of a new spray park, pavilion and playground, remove the existing wading pool, install a spray park and accessible walkway, and fix the existing pavilion. The funding request of \$600,000 is based on actual project costs of recently constructed spray parks. The design of the park will be done as a comprehensive modernization project with phased construction in order ensure that the facilities and amenities are fully accessible, share the same aesthetics and have connections between the elements that would be difficult to achieve if designed piecemeal.

A PARC grant will be submitted in July 2016 for funds to construct new playground and pavilion. The Town's DPW will provide in-kind contribution of labor and water and electrical work, and will help oversee the project. This CPA request will be used as the required local match for the PARC grant.

- **What's the rationale for Spray Park vs. new wading pool? (Biggest concern is cost, recycling water, and will toddlers be able to use it?)**

Spray parks require less maintenance and can be safer and more sanitary than wading pools given there is no standing water. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts does not require that a lifeguard be on duty at spray parks. The hours of availability will be increased and the spray park could be operated on an expanded calendar. The ages of children using the facility would also be expanded.

- **Will any water be wasted for a spray park?**

Spray parks typically use two types of water systems: drain-away and recirculating. In a drain-away system, the water sprayed from the fixtures enters a drainage system that brings the water to a detention basin or rain garden. With this type of system there is a continuous supply of new water while the fixtures are in use. With a recirculating system, there is a network of drains that return the water to storage tank(s) before it is reused through the spray park fixtures.

Each system has advantages and disadvantages. The drain-away system displaces more water and there is a higher cost for the water usage. A filtration system uses less water but has a higher cost for system maintenance and operation (it is similar to pools).

Given the location of the proposed spray park to the Fort River and other wetland resource areas, it is envisioned that spray park would use the recirculating system. The park would also be designed so that any grey water (used water) discharged

from the system would not be wasted but enter a rain garden or would water nearby plantings.

- **What hours would it be open?**

The spray park could easily be opened in mid-June and stay open until mid-September, adding an additional 30+ days of usage. Potential hours of operation could be expanded as well, possibly from 9 am – 7:30 pm.

- **Would Town staff need to be present?**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts does not require that Spray Parks be supervised by Lifeguards. The spray parks currently operating in the area do not have lifeguards on duty or attendants, except for Look Park as the attendant also collects admission fees.

- **Please provide a more detailed budget.**

A more detailed budget is:

- Design fee:	\$50,000
- Site preparation:	\$15-20,000
- Spray park and associated amenities (seating, trash receptacles):	\$450-500,000
- Accessible walkway:	\$10-15,000
- Capital improvements to existing pavilion:	\$5-7,000

- **Are there any design elements that can be changed/adjusted to reduce costs?**

Town staff have discussed ways to reduce costs. These include using in-kind labor for some of the site preparation and demolition, electrical work and plumbing. Town-owned shade trees could also be planted to reduce this cost. Staff is also researching the design of spray parks that may be completed by the supply company and not the architect.

- **Has a PARC Grant been applied for already? When?**

The Town intends to apply for a PARC grant in July 2016, with awards typically announced in November. The Town would apply for a one-year construction grant to build the new pavilion and playground, with the expectation that CPA funds would be used to pay for the design of the new park in the summer/fall 2016.

The PARC grant program requires a Town Meeting vote allocating the full project cost during the same calendar year as the application is submitted. For instance, since the Town intends to submit a PARC grant in July 2016 (the grant program is only offered annually) we would need to have a Town Meeting vote in 2016. By applying for CPA funds now, the Town will meet this PARC grant requirement.

- **The topography of Groff Park is very hilly. Where would a spray park fit?**

The spray park would be located in the same location as the existing wading pool. This area is relatively flat and on top of the hill before it slopes toward the river. The spray park would be of a more elongated design (as opposed to a square or circle) to fit with the topography.

- What accessibility improvements are planned?**
 The goal is to make the amenities fully accessible. The spray park, pavilion and playground would be accessible and a new paved pathway would be installed that connects the parking lot and concession building with these amenities. Currently, the playground and wading pool are not accessible and there is not paved pathway.
- Please provide more specific details and alternatives.**
 There are no specific details or plans at this time.
- Can a smaller spray park and a wading pool or other feature for younger children be built?**
 The space is not adequate for two separate features. However, the spray park would be designed with fixtures and elements that could be used by younger children and older children.
- Will the surface be more slip-proof and safe than the spray park in Northampton?**
 The surface will be treated to be slip-proof. Spray parks typically use a textured concrete surface or a rubberized surface. The plan would be to use the rubberized surface because it provides better grip and is softer than concrete.
- How will all the proposed improvements fit into the natural landscape of the park?**
 The proposed improvements will be similar in design and scale to the existing concession building, pavilion and features. The new amenities would be grouped together near the current location of the playground and wading pool, remaining in the same visible location and would be on top of the hill to keep the area along the river open.
- Can caution to not overbuild/overdesign so it keeps its natural feel be considered?**
 Yes, the design will not be heavy handed. Most spray parks do not have perimeter fencing, and the one at Groff Park would also not have a fence. The new pavilion would be open and keep the existing character of the park.
- What kind of public input is envisioned?**
 Should the project move forward, it would be reviewed by town boards and committees (Planning Board, LSSE, Conservation Commission, DAAC, Public Works, Design Review Board) and the design process would involve 2-3 public meetings for input.
- How will the park continue to be funded? Will there be a charge for people using any part of the park?**
 There will be no additional charges for using the park. It will continue to be funded through public tax support.