

WILSON/ DEERFIELD ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(WDAC)
VIRTUAL MEETING
January 28, 2021
Regular Meeting

APPROVED MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Alvin Bingham called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. Present were committee members Kim McCloud, Kathleen Woodward, Karen Zak, Charles Jackson and Lakisha Hyatt.

Staff: Peter Souza, Town Manager; Jim Burke, Economic Development Director; Flavia Rey de Castro, Community Development Specialist; Todd Sealy, Assistant Town Planner;

2. PUBLIC COMMENT – Attendee Sam Savelli indicated that he had received the both conceptual plans for the redevelopment parcel and he was in favor of either option. He indicated that he is in favor of keeping the space open and of not increasing the population in the neighborhood.

3. INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Burke introduced Kathleen Woodward indicating that she is a life-long resident of the neighborhood. She was welcomed by committee members.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Park Conceptual Design Discussion

Sealy presented two designs to the committee. He stressed that these are not final designs and that the discussion to be had on the meeting would frame the park in the context of the surrounding neighborhoods, in the community, within surrounding parks and regionally. Sealy indicated he would help committee members envision what the space could be. He explained that the concept development process had been a group effort, indicating he had input from staff in departments including Engineering, Planning, Community Development, Economic Development and the Fire Marshall's Office. In his presentation he introduced the design process indicating that this particular project is at early stages - pre-design ("Setting the Vision") and conceptual design ("Generating Ideas"). He explained that conceptual design is about putting ideas on the table and refining them based on feedback, cost, budget, etc. Sealy provided background information on the parcel, briefly explaining the history of the site, its previous uses, zoning in surrounding areas, and accessibility to the site. He identified the site's developable areas and explained constraints including

property lines, vegetation overgrow, underground utility lines, and site topography. Sealy provided an overview of participant input on the 2020 Wilson Survey identifying the most popular requests. He explained that using the survey information, and considering the site's developable areas, the staff laid out different elements on the site and analyzed how these components work together.

Sealy introduced the first concept named "Community Park". This concept included a parking lot rain garden, community gardens, food truck parking, restrooms, a picnic patio, playgrounds, a pavilion, an amphitheater lawn and amphitheater. He discussed different programming options this concept would provide, including performances, concerts, festivals, movie nights, a space for children to play, educational activities, gardening, etc.

Sealy then introduced the second concept named "Garden Park". This concept included parking lot rain gardens, food truck parking, picnic pavilions, sculpture/play stations, a central plaza, spray fountains, a streetscape mural, expanded community gardens, garden mini plaza, and Deckers Brook Habitat Restoration. He highlighted some components such as the community gardens and formal gardens. He discussed different programming options for the concept such as gardening, educational activities, space for play, and festivals.

Sealy discussed the idea of a park network. He invited members to think how the parks in the area complement each other and how they could serve different populations in the neighborhood. He pointed out the proximity of Sharshon park and the Redevelopment parcel and indicated these two parks could work together to meet different needs and serve as a park network. He indicated that an active park (i.e soccer fields, basketball courts) would complement a passive park.

Sealy listed all the parks in the Wilson Deerfield park system (Stroh Park, Sharshon Park, Windsor Meadow, Colton Park, Keney Park, and Riverfront Recapture) and invited committee members to think about how to connect these parks, how these complement each other and how do they serve the needs of the neighborhood.

Woodward indicated that she likes the idea of an amphitheater and of having concerts somewhere other than the town green. She also likes the park idea. She explained that she has two small children and that she would appreciate a new park as the ones they currently frequent are neglected. She explained that parks in neighboring towns provide a different experience and that she would be in favor of having a more up-to-date option in town.

McCloud mentioned that she liked both designs but that she favored the first one. She indicated that the food truck idea would be beneficial to the community and that she was particularly drawn to the rain gardens and natural elements in the designs. She mentioned Charter Oak Landing park in Manchester and indicated

that elements such as the hardscape pieces with musical elements would be a great addition.

Hyatt expressed her appreciation for the invitation to think about a park system in the neighborhood. She was particularly interested in the idea of having an active and passive park complement each other. She indicated that she liked both conceptual plans and that either one would be a great improvement to what the site is at the moment. She indicated that, at a later meeting, it would be important to discuss how the park would be maintained.

Jackson indicated he was always interested in having an event space, that he liked both designs, but that he preferred the first one. In regards to the community gardens, he indicated that having them closer to the parking lot would be a better idea since it would be more accessible to the members of the garden club, given their age. He stressed his preference for having an event space.

Zak indicated she liked both options.

Bingham indicated he liked both designs and that he would follow up with town staff with more information in order to provide further feedback.

Sealy reminded the group that the designs shown were conceptual and that they would probably change once other factors, such as the budget, come into play.

Jackson reminded the group of the Sustainability Project at Keney Park. He highlighting its educational opportunities and recommended to use this as a resource. Sealy indicated that later on, it will be important to identify potential partners and key community members to make sure the park is a success.

Souza encouraged the committee members to share their thoughts with other community members and reach out to town staff if there was any additional feedback on the park design. He explained that, as a next step, he would be sharing the designs, and information on WDAC (Wilson Deerfield Advisory Committee) member feedback, with the Town Council. This would be either on February 16 or early March. He explained that he hopes that the Council would then provide design money either in the spring or in the new budget season, which starts in July. Afterwards, he indicated, the town would refine the design and seek additional neighborhood input. He explained that this project will be done in phases. He indicated the town will keep committee members informed on when the discussion with Town Council will take place.

Souza informed WDAC members that the town had recently received a \$500,000 grant from the State to partner with Riverfront Recapture to build a segment of the riverfront trail that would ultimately connect Windsor and Hartford.

5. ITEMS FROM THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jackson indicated that a resident in Barber Street is concerned about flooded backyards in the street. He requested guidance on who to contact. Burke recommended that he contacts the Engineering Department at Town Hall.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Rey de Castro presented the idea of providing a one-pager communication piece to WDAC members on the month the group isn't meeting. She requested input for topics of interest. Jackson indicated he was interested in learning more about how the town can help with rehabilitation of housing (i.e. roofing, windows, etc.). Hyatt, requested to be updated in the redevelopment park project. She is also hoping to be updated about vaccination efforts and COVID testing resources in our area, when they are available. She suggested a vaccination promotion campaign that would consist of highlighting neighborhood members as they get vaccinated. Hyatt indicated that she was thinking about how to promote participation in the work WDAC is doing and how to inform people on the work that WDAC is doing. She suggested that a newsletter could be shared broadly for this purpose. Burke indicated that the town could post this information on their website, and use social media. Rey de Castro suggested that this discussion be added as an agenda item for the upcoming meeting. She indicated that it is important that staff and WDAC members collaborate in this effort. Zak requested to be updated in regards to the Riverfront Recapture Project progress. Woodward asked Souza if the area from the boat launch towards Loomis Chaffe (behind Deerfield) is included in the riverfront connectivity efforts. Souza explained that most of that property is owned by the state but that in the long term the goal is to connect the boat launch with town center.

Rey de Castro informed WDAC members of the town's Health Department vaccination efforts, the Police Department's overnight parking enforcement activity and the Wilson Branch Library's activities.

Bingham indicated that he's requested more detailed Police Department's overnight parking enforcement information to determine if they are ticketing at night. Rey de Castro indicated she would follow up with him to get that information.

6. APPROVAL OF 12/3/20 MINUTES

Jackson moved to accept the 12/3/20 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Zak.

Motion passed 6-0-0

7. ADJOURNMENT

Jackson moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:32PM.