

Community Preservation Committee
c/o Alice Ingerson, Program Manager
Planning Department, City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

December 1, 2015

Dear Alice Ingerson,

I'm writing you to say I'm disappointed I'll have to miss your Open Space meeting next week at City Hall on December 10 due to an earlier commitment.

As an abutter I've been strongly in support of this funding to rebuild the park. I understand you and the park designers, Weston & Sampson, will present a request to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for \$3.3 million of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to rehabilitate the park across from my house.

Please consider this letter as a stand-in for me at next week's meeting and I look forward to hearing that construction could begin next year.

Sincerely,

Barbara Trachtenberg, Ed.D.
49 Dedham Street
Newton, MA 02461

Cc: Carol Schein
Open Space Coordinator
Newton Parks and Recreation
246 Dudley Road
Newton, MA 02459
617-796-1507 (office)

From: pete@horstmannlaw.com [mailto:pete@horstmannlaw.com]
Sent: Friday, December 04, 2015 10:56 AM
To: Alice Ingerson
Subject: Newton Highlands Playground Project

Dear Alice:

I am a Newton resident who lives within walking distance of the Highland playground and was delighted to hear that there is an upgrade planned for that space.

My kids have also been involved in both indoor and outdoor rock climbing for the last 6 years during which we have met with or become acquainted with most of the industry that is behind the fastest growing sport in the country. However, I do not work for any company involved and this industry and this is not a product driven sales pitch. In fact, in the past I have discouraged school administrators from spending money on indoor climbing walls because of the lack of product support, training and maintenance that the schools were not being told about during various sales pitches. I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about the benefits of this sport and the outdoor products available that would truly enhance the Highland's project, the community in general and set Newton apart from neighboring communities. Unlike, standard playground equipment which is only used by the 10 & under crowd, the types of structures attached below would serve residents of all ages and create a multi-generational community. Many of European cities have devoted outdoor space to manmade climbing structures which frequently host climbing demonstrations and climbing competitions. While the number of indoor climbing gyms has quadrupled in the US in the last 10 years, outdoor structures have been slower to catch on. The structures depicted below are manufactured by a Massachusetts company called Rockwerks that is located in Barre, MA. I would be happy to make introductions or act in any capacity, if this is something that truly catches your interest.

Additionally, as someone who has lived in this neighborhood for the last 15 years, I am aware that Countyside Elementry School (which is located 200 yards up Dedham Street) recently spent \$80-100K in private funds to upgrade their playground equipment to a very high level. As a result, I think it is redundant to have another high end playground for those under 10 so close. I think the community would be better served with equipment that can be used by all ages whether it is rock climbing or something else. I am not suggesting that under 10 equipment is not needed. It is definitely needed for small kids to play on while the adults play tennis, etc., but it does not have to duplicate what is at Countryside. While I understand that these are two separate budgets and City department, there is not the same level of need when a reasonable alternative is so close by. Another example of this playground redundancy already exists in Newton Center where a new City playground was built at the same time that Mason Rice upgraded its playground and they are only 100 yards away. It would have been a better use of the City space to have constructed something that a broader age range would use.

I am happy to speak with you at anytime and I appreciate your time in reading this email.

Peter Charles Horstmann, Esquire
450 Lexington Street
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Newton, MA 02466
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pete@horstmannlaw.com

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From: Little Red Wagon PlaySchool [mailto:lrwnewton@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 10, 2015 4:13 PM



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617-244-5099 (tel.) 617-244-5095 (fax) lrwnewton@gmail.com (email)
www.littleredwagonplayschool.com

Community Preservation Committee
c/o Alice Ingerson, Program Manager
Planning Department, City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, MA 02459

December 10, 2015

Dear Members of the Community Preservation Committee,

I am writing to show my strong support for the rehabilitation of the Newton Highlands Playground (Winchester & Dedham Streets). I am the Owner and Director of Little Red Wagon PlaySchool located at 50 Winchester Street. For the past 18 years the children of our school have played in the playground, run in the field and found shade underneath the field's big tree. We are disappointed that the playground equipment that was removed a few years ago due to it's poor condition has not been replaced. The children, staff and families of Little Red Wagon PlaySchool, many of whom live within walking distance to the park, look forward to a new playground in which to play and explore.

Due to a previous commitment I am not able to attend tonight's meeting and hope that you will consider this letter as a sign of the support of Little Red Wagon PlaySchool and it's families for this project.

Sincerely,

Martha Reed Donahue, M.S.W.
Owner/Director Little Red Wagon PlaySchool

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Little Red Wagon PlaySchool
lrwnewton@gmail.com
www.littleredwagonplayschool.com
617-244-5099
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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NEWTON

PO Box 610207 Newton, MA 02461 www.lwvnewton.org

617-383-4598 Email: info@lwvnewton.org

Comments read at CPC public hearing,
10 December 2015.

December 12, 2015

Alice Ingerson
Community Preservation Committee Program Manager
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

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Dear Alice:

Below are our comments that Pia Bertelli read on Thursday evening. Many thanks for the opportunity to comment on this application.

The Newton Highlands Playground is in dire need of rehabilitation after years of deferred maintenance, and LWVN readers find the new plans very attractive. The rehabbed park would serve a large number of nearby residents as well as teams and athletes from across the city. While we see the value in restoring the fields, woods, playground and tennis courts, we had a number of questions that created concern.

Our questions:

1. How will the park be kept in good condition? We would like to see a detailed maintenance plan to prevent a newly restored site from falling back into disrepair.
2. We see two letters of support from the community, but have concerns that there has not been enough outreach to the abutters and others in the vicinity. We would like to see more support, particularly from abutters and those who live on Upland Road and Wade Street.
3. Would improved lighting allow more use of the fields? Any idea how much, and of the impact on the neighborhood due to increased use? (Again, having support from abutters regarding the lighting would be important.)
4. We appreciate the thinking that Parks and Recreation has put into the topic of flooding and stormwater. The work on the soils & culverts is needed, and we encourage P&R to join progressive parks departments around the country in looking at how parks and playgrounds can double as stormwater storage.



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5. The current parking situation for the playground along the Upland Road extension is inadequate, to say the least. We are concerned that improvements for this space are not included in this plan, and that therefore the current state of parking spaces filled with abandoned vehicles and other debris will continue. This omission is likely leading to the inclusion of 27 paved parking spaces right in the middle of the park. LWVN would like to see the Upland Road extension included in the plan, complete with assurances from the City that the use of these spaces will be monitored by Parking Control.

6. Our biggest area of concern is the increased cost that the CPC is being asked to assume. We understand that a new funding source needs to be found, but are concerned that no CIP funds are being made available for this work. This would set a precedent for other neglected City-owned open spaces and playgrounds to be funded almost entirely by CPA money. We are also concerned about the \$10,000 to be raised by the neighborhood, with only two letters of support as evidence of neighborhood interest.

Recommendation: Newton's CPA funds are in high demand, and the CPC has rightly stressed the need to keep funds in reserve for one-off opportunities, some of which may be imminent as we write this. The LWVN has no objection to some CPA funds being used to upgrade and even rehab some playgrounds and parklands, yet this seems like an immense request. Further, we regularly prefer requests that leverage outside funding. To put more than 99 percent of the cost on this one source is too large a burden.

LWVN is trying to balance these concerns with the clear need to improve an important neighborhood resource that is in a pretty embarrassing state of neglect. In the end, we would like to see more effort put toward the questions we've raised before we can decide to recommend approval or not.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Flicop".

Susan Flicop
President, LWVN