

City of Newton



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Community Preservation Committee

APPROVED MINUTES

June 14, 2022

Barney S. Heath
Director

The virtual meeting was held online on Tuesday, June 14, 2022, beginning at 7:00 P.M. Community Preservation Committee (CPC) members present included Mark Armstrong, Dan Brody, Eliza Datta, Byron Dunker, Susan Lunin, Robert Maloney, Jennifer Molinsky, Martin Smargiassi, and Judy Weber. Community Preservation Program Manager Lara Kritzer was also present and served as recorder.

Chair Dan Brody opened the Community Preservation Committee's public meeting at 7:00 P.M and introduced the CPC members present at this time. Mr. Armstrong agrees to be the reviewer for the minutes of the meeting.

Pre-Proposal Review of Gath Pool Project - Design and Construction Drawings

Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture Nicole Banks introduced the team who had been working on the first phase of the Gath Memorial Pool Restoration project for the last nine months including PRC Assistant Director Greg Mellett, Open Space Coordinator Luis Perez Demorizi, Public Buildings Project Manager Rafik Ayoub, and Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype (BH+A) lead consultant Tom Scarlata. She explained that the first phase of this project had considered the feasibility and needs for restoring and rehabilitating the 60 year old pool facility with the result that they were recommending full replacement.

Mr. Demorizi began his PowerPoint presentation on the project with a review of the project's goals and objectives. He explained that they were working to both maintain and activate the space and improve the user group experience and entry and arrival sequence. Mr. Demorizi went through the list of goals and improvements for the space including energy efficiency and meeting all the accessibility codes and requirements. He explained that the City had hired consultants BH+A to study the site. The consultants held their first meeting on the project in September 2021 and have had five meetings since then to work with the Parks and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Commission on Disabilities, and Design Review Committee on the proposed changes. In addition, they have met with interested neighborhood, LBGTQ, and disability groups and organizations. Mr. Demorizi noted that the City recognizes that there is an interest in having the potential for year round swimming and that they were looking into those options elsewhere. He reviewed the feedback that the City had received during these discussions and noted that the project was also being done in coordination with the Albemarle Fields project. The site plans for both projects were intertwined as the pool is at the core of Albemarle Park and sits 4-5 feet above the surrounding grade with a retaining wall across the front of the site and landscaped berms on either side.

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Mr. Scarlata explained that Gath Pool was a very typical 1965 pool. It is Z shaped with 6 racing lanes that vary in depth from 3 to 12 feet. The pool currently has no easy access for children or seniors and everyone must use a ladder to enter the pool. The site has a small wading pool that is separated from the main pool and bathhouse and accessible only by steps. Both pools, though, use the same filter system. The site lacks deck space and the community has been pushing for more deck space, shade and amenities. The existing bath house sits high above the ground to avoid flooding which makes it difficult to access. Over the years, the City has added ramps to the site to provide accessible entry but these enter the pool at the rear of the site.

Mr. Scarlata went on to explain that the new design reorganizes the site with entrance ramps at the front of the bathhouse. He reviewed the proposed layout and site lines for the new facility, explaining that users would now have direct access to the pool without having to enter through the locker rooms as currently designed. The new pool deck would be flush with the building which would be redesigned to have more compact spaces for restrooms and showers and more useable space overall. The new design created more staff space and would add three gender neutral facilities as well as family and disabled facilities which would be accessible directly from the pool deck. The new pool deck would also have a rinse station. Mr. Scarlata reviewed the typical amenities in the facility such as a waterproof wheelchair and noted that they would be introducing skylights into the building for more light. He also showed how the manager's office would be pushed out onto the deck to provide better overall visibility.

The applicants next reviewed the site plan for the property and explained how they would be leveling off the drive to the south and building out over the open area below. The new design had segregated deck areas for eating and shade. The new pool would have an eight lane lap pool, zero depth area, defined walking area and large open area. The pools would be linked by a slide splash down area as well. They explained how the new pool would have uniform slopes and lane widths. The redesigned space would also have a new marshalling/set up area to the side of the pool which could be used for access and as a viewing area that was level with the pool. Standing and spectator space was being added to the east side of the site

A terraced splash pad was also proposed for the north side of the pool. They were working with Weston and Sampson, the fields consultants, to create space for the splash pad and additional seating areas and were currently planning a design with a lower and upper terrace to transition between the pool and the field. The splash pad would be designed to be all inclusive with features for older and younger children. Mr. Scarlata showed examples of potential amenities and features of the site as well as a cross section of the pool and deck. He also reviewed details on the deck space, shading and fencing including the use of cantilevered canopies to allow fewer posts.

It was noted that the new uniform slope to the pool would maximize the competitive swimming options. The applicants reviewed the schematic design and features including the locations of the new ramps and explained that the new seating would be moveable to maximize space. The study had developed three options for the site which were also reviewed at this time.

Mr. Demorizi explained the project timeline. He noted that the Phase I work was nearly complete and that the consultants were drafting the final report. Phase II would build on this work to complete the

schematic design as well as the site plan approvals necessary for construction. He reviewed all of the work and steps needed for this phase and how it would also include design development and construction documents and bidding materials. Ideally, Phase II would be completed within ten months and they hoped to have the existing consultants, BH+A, extend their contract to oversee that work. Mr. Demorizi reviewed the budget for Phase II and explained that they planned to be back in the future for construction and project management funding. At present they were working on sending the recommended design to the Parks and Recreation Committee for review.

Ms. Lunin thought that this was a very important project which the City needed and will be proud of. Ms. Molinsky also thought that it was an exciting project and a beautiful design. She asked the applicants what the plan was for the field house and other areas of the property, how these plans would all mesh together, and whether there was any sustainability built into the design. She also asked if any thought had been given to extending the pool season.

Mr. Demorizi stated that the one thing that was still missing was how this project would fit into the larger plan for the park. He noted that they were planning to take out the existing tennis courts to add six new pickle ball courts and would move some tennis courts to an existing pickle ball area. The field house has been left out of this current project but would be renovated and refreshed along with the pool house. In regard to extending the season, they hoped to address this by installing the new splash pad which would allow the amenities to be open for longer. Mr. Demorizi added that sustainability was hard to address with a pool.

Ms. Molinsky asked the applicants to put this project in context with the range of other requests that they would be coming in with for Recreation funding. Mr. Demorizi stated that they would have more financial information on the park and field work at the next meeting. Mr. Brody asked the applicants to provide information on what else was on the Department's radar so that the CPC could plan for funding in the future. He asked them to consider what might be requested from the CPA fund over the next five to ten years as the CPC might want to consider bonding to spread out these costs. Mr. Demorizi thought that they were getting to the point that they could come back with some numbers for the Albemarle Park and Athletic Fields Masterplan. He noted that they might not have everything by the next meeting but would do their best to gather the information.

Mr. Smargiassi echoed the support expressed for the project and agreed that this was a much needed amenity for the City. He commended the design and the thought that had gone into it and asked how firm they could be on costs and whether they knew how much they would be saving by addressing the leaks. Mr. Scarlata stated that they thought the leaks were due to faulty valves between the wading pool and the main pool and suspected that it was 6-7 feet down. He explained that they were trying to address the problem but that it was hard to reach but that all of the systems would be replaced with the new pool. Ms. Banks added that they were tracking the water bills and explained that there had been a 20,000 gallon a day water loss pre-Covid. Last summer, the pool was losing 40,000 gallons a day which cost the program about \$60,000 more than usual to address. Mr. Demorizi stated that they were still evaluating the construction costs for the new pool. Mr. Scarlata added that the volatile construction market currently made it hard to know for sure how much things would cost and that it would be hard to know the cost until things settled down or they were ready to bid.

Ms. Datta thought that it was great to see the evaluation of the design and the information on the community meetings. She thought that the project had a good balance of reusing the existing site and installing new amenities. She asked if there were any other resources which could be used to leverage funding for this or other recreation projects. Mr. Demorizi stated that the Friends of Albemarle were doing fundraising and that they had some teams who were sponsoring the field work. He added that they would address this in the full application. Ms. Banks stated that this project was the Department's top priority and that this had been true since the work was originally proposed. She stated that the Albemarle Park work was getting a lot of interest and that they were hopeful that this would generate support. They anticipated the Albemarle Park and pool projects to take up the majority of the funding and that the other field projects would be much smaller. They were working with the Mayor on this and expected the City to provide a \$1 million match which they will have confirmed for the full proposal.

Mr. Armstrong asked if they would be meeting the full accessibility requirements for the site with this design. Mr. Demorizi answered yes and Mr. Armstrong questioned whether the second ramp on the site façade took up too much space. Mr. Armstrong also asked if the City was ready for the additional labor costs associated with a larger pool. Ms. Banks answered that they were working to develop a new staffing plan and understood that a new facility would draw in additional people. Mr. Scarlata stated that the staffing was based on the square footage of water in the facility and that they were working to improve visibility with the placement of the guard stands in the new design. He added that he was very aware of this question and were working to address the staffing needs for the slide and the new and different uses of each area. Ms. Banks stated that they had had questions raised about creating a longer season and also noted that the splash option was a nice option as it did not require a guard. She explained that staffing was one of their hardest issues to address.

Mr. Maloney thought that this was a terrific project and that a facility like this would bring people together, which was something that was more and more rare in the community. He asked about the \$60,000 in additional water costs and Mr. Demorizi confirmed that that was the additional cost for the ten week season. Mr. Maloney asked if there was anything salvageable from the pool house to the back of the site. Mr. Demorizi answered that they could only reuse the building as there was nothing else that they could still work with.

Mr. Brody asked what the timeline was for construction if everything went according to plan. Mr. Demorizi answered that they would like to start at the end of the 2023 season and have the new pool ready for use in 2024. He added that this same timeline was planned for Albemarle Park. Mr. Brody moved to invite the applicants to submit a full proposal for this project. Mr. Maloney seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

Elections for Chair and Vice Chair

Mr. Brody noted that there was an unstated expectation that the Vice Chair would take over as Chair the following year. Mr. Armstrong moved to nominate Ms. Molinsky to serve as Chair. There were no other nominations. Ms. Weber seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Datta stated that she was willing to serve as Vice Chair if nominated. Ms. Weber moved to nominate Ms. Datta to serve as Vice Chair. Ms. Lunin seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote.

Review of Current Finances

Ms. Kritzer briefly reviewed the status of the CPC's ongoing projects and current finances. Members discussed the potential Recreation projects that were expected to come in for funding over the next few years and it was noted that the CPC might want to consider bonding in the future.

Approval of April 12 and May 10 Minutes

Members had reviewed both sets of minutes prior to the meeting. Ms. Lunin moved to approve both the April 12 and May 10 minutes as submitted. Ms. Weber seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote for the April 12 minutes and with a vote of 8 to 0 with one abstention for the May 10 minutes. Ms. Datta abstained from voting on the May minutes as she had not been present at that meeting.

Other Business

Ms. Kritzer explained that when the Covid-19 Emergency Housing Assistance Program was closed in the fall, there was \$475,876.14 left in the project account. To use the funding for another project, the CPC needed to vote to return the funds to either the Housing Reserve Fund or the Unrestricted Reserve Fund. Members noted that there was no guidance in the CPA Ordinance or the project materials as to where any returned funding must go. Members agreed that they would prefer to see this funding added to the Unrestricted Reserve Account so that there would be more options for its future use. It was noted that the program had already exceeded its 10% minimum for Housing Projects this year. Members agreed that this was a decision of the Committee at this time and would not set a precedent for the allocation of other returned funds in the future. Mr. Maloney moved to recommend that the unused Covid-19 Emergency Housing Assistance Program funds be returned to the Unrestricted Reserve Fund for future use in another project. Ms. Lunin seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote. Ms. Kritzer noted that the recommendation would be docketed with the City Council for approval to reallocate the funding.

Members received a brief update on the Affordable Housing Trust and asked to have this update added to the agenda as a regular item. Members also to be copied on the agenda for future Trust meetings.

Mr. Brody moved to adjourn. Mr. Maloney seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 P.M.