

Wee Play Community Project Update

City Council Workshop

June 10, 2019

Hello and thank you for including the Wee Play Community Project on the agenda this evening.

A brief background:

- Our group was formed over 15 years ago to support and create public play spaces for the children of Beacon and free public children's programming.
- To raise funds, the now annual Ree Play Sale started. Accepting gently used kids clothing, books, toys, and more from the community and selling it over one weekend a year at reasonable prices. In 2005, the first year of the sale we raised just over \$1k and over the next couple of years continued while separately fundraising to build the Tot Lot at Memorial Park to provide a space for the youngest children in town.
- Over the years, our group has continued the sale and increased our fundraising goal every year with this past April's sale totaling over \$23,000.
- With the funds raised, we have enhanced the tot lot and other parks in town, grant funds to the Howland Library annually for the children's programming, creating new programs like Lego Club and the Tech Club, supported Beacon Arts - specifically the Calico Ball, the new Ramps project, and other organizations who were focused on the youth in Beacon.
- In total Wee Play has raised almost \$150k that has gone back into the community.

The past five years:

- \$84k has been raised in the last 5 years alone. These funds have been used for the shade sails at the Tot Park, inclusion swings for Memorial Park and Green Street, and the expansion of the play area at Memorial Park, the Wee Woods.
- In 2016, we partnered with Bryan Quinn of One Nature who has provided his design services pro bono. We created a survey that was sent to the community to gain feedback on the play area, what was working and what was needed. With that information, Bryan designed a master plan for the park area.
- This plan has been reviewed by Mark Price and presented to the City Council at past meetings. The plan took into account the need for new surfacing in the Tot Lot area and the need to replace the older kids play space equipment.

Master Plan

The plan was broken up into phases. Phase 1 and 2 would be to expand the footprint of the play area and create a nature play area. The area was designed to include a sandbox as it was determined we needed to eliminate the sand area from the Tot Lot before resurfacing. The sand has worn down the original turf and creates a maintenance issue. Completing the new Wee Woods area initially, ensures there is a space to play for the community while the resurfacing takes place in the Tot Lot.

- Phase 1: completed 2017 to 2018 - includes entrance steps, 50 eastern cottonwood trees, live willow stakes that will grow into a shaped natural tunnel, new sand area

- Phase 2a: completed 2018 to 2019 - incorporates pieces from two trees that were scheduled to be taken down in the park, cut and designed into a unique play space to climb, balance and imagination play, while protecting the perimeter with mulch to encourage reforestation of the locusts trees
- **PHASE 2b: proposed for 2019**
 - boulder and rock climbing features leading out from the tree climbing area
 - rope bridges into the woods
 - A potential misting water feature in the tree climbing area that would be on a timer and serve to cool off kids and adults while also watering the new trees and planting in the area
 - a mural project on bathroom building (see below for more details)
- Phase 3: proposed for 2020 - resurfacing of the Tot Lot
- Phase 4: proposed for 2021 - create a pathway from alongside the tot lot to the entrance of the Wee Woods and add rope climbing structures where the old play equipment currently exists in for the older kids

MURAL PROJECT

- Wee Play has acquired approval from Mark Price of the Beacon Recreation Department, to begin work on a community mural (Summer 2019) with local artist and educator Joe Pimentel in collaboration with children in the Beacon community.
- We will be painting a large scale collaborative mural on all four sides of the bathroom building located directly next to the Wee Play Tot Park.
- Joe Pimentel's incredible mural work can be seen in various locations around Beacon and the Hudson Valley. Most recently he has worked at Sargent Elementary and Rombout Middle School, where he worked collaboratively with the students to paint large scale murals on walls inside the schools, which serve to brighten and inspire!
- This project will be entirely funded by Wee Play and work is set to begin mid August to be completed in approximately two weeks time. Joe will work with Wee Play to select a theme and create a design for approval. Children ages 7-18 in our community will then have an opportunity to sign up to help paint the mural on the building with Joe.

Conclusion

Wee Play has invested \$21,000 of the monies raised by the community to build the Wee Woods Phase 1 and 2. We will invest another \$20,000 this year to complete Phase 2 and the mural project. Our continued mission is to serve the community of Beacon, specifically the children, by providing to the public free, engaging places to play as well as interactive programming. We are grateful for our long standing collaboration with the Recreation Department with the backing of the City of Beacon. Thank you for your review of this update and your support.

Wee Play Community Project, Board Members: Heidi Kitlas, Margaux Lange, Raquel Verdesi, Lori Mehridge, Lauren McEvoy, and Michelle Fehilly