

**Playground/Recreational Facility of the Utilization Committee**

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Playground/Recreational Facility of the Utilization Committee met in Special Session on Tuesday, February 4, 2020 at 6:00 PM in the Main Office Conference Room at Memorial School, Middlefield, Connecticut.

Committee members present: Mrs. Booth and Mr. Yamartino

Community members present: Mrs. Johansen, Mrs. Canning, Mrs. Casillo, Mrs. Dubuc, Mrs. Kahnke and Ms. Malcolm

Mr. Yamartino called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Approval of Agenda**

*Mrs. Booth made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Johansen, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Canning, Mrs. Castillo, Mrs. Dubuc, Mrs. Johansen, Mrs. Kahnke, Ms. Malcolm, and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Welcome and Introductions**

Hannah Malcolm is the Director of Middlefield Park and Recreation and is a certified health and physical education teacher who teaches in New Haven.

Kim Johansen is a mother of district students and a social worker for the Housing Authority of New Haven.

Jennifer Canning is a kindergarten teacher at Brewster School, but first worked as a third/fourth grade teacher at John Lyman School. Her daughter is a first grader at Brewster and has some special needs.

Missy Booth explained that she is on the Board of Education, is a physical therapist and a mom of two.

Adrienne Dubuc has a son in second grade at John Lyman and she is a high school teacher in Guilford.

Jen Casillo has three children in the district and is also a teacher. She designed a playground for a private school previously and is also in the process of obtaining grants for a playground at her current school.

Emily Kahnke has a son at Brewster and stated that she has concerns about the third graders going to Memorial.

Bob Yamartino stated that he has been on the Board of Education for four years and is co-chair of the Utilization Committee. For several years, he has been advocating for improving the tennis courts at Memorial.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed the ground rules for the committee and explained that they are an official ad hoc committee and therefore subject to FOI.

### **Background and scope of the sub-committee's work**

#### **A. Lyman School Playground**

Mr. Yamartino felt that everyone was familiar with the fact that there had been an inspection earlier in the year and the inspector condemned the playground equipment at Lyman. It became a liability and was therefore removed over the Christmas break. Mrs. Booth explained that there are currently nine swings and two basketball hoops. There is an area for four square as well. They do have some hula hoops and balls. The classroom senators will be providing input about what they would like to see on the playground. Mrs. Booth did receive some preliminary input and the students would like climbing things, monkey bars, tether ball and a balance beam. They would also like a slide for the little kids. Mr. Yamartino asked if the senators would possibly come to the next meeting and share their ideas. Mrs. Booth will follow up on that.

Mrs. Booth also explained that the board would like any new equipment to be movable as Lyman will tentatively close in two years.

#### **B. Memorial School Courts and Playground**

Given the proposed changes in grade levels, the current facilities and the condition of the tennis courts, Mr. Yamartino explained that there is a definite need for upgrades. He noted that the gym is used for basketball leagues during the year and Middlefield Park and Rec uses the facilities for their summer camp. Coginchaug Soccer Club has also made an investment in maintaining and developing the soccer fields behind the school.

Mr. Yamartino also noted that he would like to see pickleball courts in Middlefield and noted that the largest growing demographics are ages 8 to 15 and 55 and older. They had looked at various locations for the courts and decided that Memorial would be the best place. At last night's Board of Selectmen meeting, Ed Bailey stated that he believed that Middlefield should put some money towards the project in addition to any money from the school district. Mr. Yamartino felt that the community should take on the project of installing lighting at the courts.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed that the committee will need to give a recommendation to the full board by the end of February if they want to have anything available for this Spring.

A member of the committee stated that the Brewster PTO is going to reach out to the Boy Scouts to see if a gaga pit could be done as an Eagle Scout project. There was then a discussion about gaga pits and Mrs. Booth stated that Dr. Serino has reached out to Home Depot for donation of materials. It was also noted that Laura Francis has stated that they will be installing a gaga pit at Allyn Brook Park.

**C. Strong, Brewster and Coginchaug Facilities**

Mr. Yamartino reviewed that he would like to see the committee take a broad look at the facilities at all of the schools. He noted that the playscape at Peckham Park was almost \$100,000 and that the district should start putting money away now to plan for replacements.

**Financing the project(s)****A. Current SY20 budget**

Mr. Yamartino stated that there was no money allocated in the current budget for playground equipment at any schools. There may be money available in other line items, but he would prefer not to transfer money though he did feel this is an extraordinary situation. Mrs. Booth added that she thought the parents were more upset than the kids. Mr. Yamartino agreed, but felt that taking away playground equipment for half a year is not right.

Mr. Yamartino also noted that, under state statute, the district is not allowed to have a contingency fund. He felt that they may need to look for donations for the Lyman project.

**B. SY21 Budget process and deadlines**

Mr. Yamartino explained that this budget is currently being developed by the superintendent and will be presented next week. It is being proposed to budget \$50,000 for the Memorial tennis court repairs, \$100,000 for the Memorial playground and \$50,000 for the Lyman playground. There will also be money budgeted for repairs and supplies.

A committee member suggested asking Durham for a contribution toward the tennis/pickleball courts as well since it will be available to people from both towns.

**C. Current capital plan**

Mr. Yamartino explained that, in the current capital plan, there is \$7,500 for the baseball warning track at CRHS, \$130,500 for track maintenance at CRHS and \$330,000 for turf replacement at the football field. The total turf replacement cost is actually \$550,000. The total estimate for the baseball warning track is \$15,000. There is no allocation for replacement of the Brewster playground which was installed in 2010. The life expectancy for playground equipment is about 15 years but they will work to get an accurate assessment of the Brewster playground equipment. Mrs. Booth explained that part of the problem with the Lyman playscape was that it was wood.

**Open discussion on organization and timelines**

Mr. Yamartino distributed information, including a site overview of each of the schools. Beginning with Memorial, he reviewed that you can see the cracks in the tennis courts from a satellite view. Some cracks are wide enough for a person's foot to fit in. He also showed a proposal for a multi-court configuration and explained that four pickleball courts can be installed on one tennis court with portable nets. He noted that the court area could be used for various purposes, including basketball and parking. Mr. Yamartino and another committee member had both spoken to Mrs. Stone about where recess would be held. Using the area for tennis, pickleball, four square and basketball, 56 students could be participating at the same time.

Mr. Yamartino also had an aerial view of the area and showed the three basketball hoops, but explained that they are not really a full court and the pavement is very uneven. There are also three four square areas. He also reviewed the parking spaces in the area. Mrs. Booth commented that she had heard that the fire chief was not happy with the parking at Memorial.

A committee member asked how the tennis courts are currently being used and Mr. Yamartino stated that he sees someone playing tennis every once in a while. It is basically not being used by the community or the school at this point. Mr. Yamartino is proposing that the area be used by the school students. Mrs. Johansen stated that there are currently four staff on duty during recess and Mrs. Stone had stated that the staff could be split between the two areas but that she may need three staff members in each area. There was then discussion about the tennis courts in Durham and how the substrate would actually have to be repaired.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed the layout that he proposes, with a bus lane that allows the students to enter the school through the gym. He has reached out to Torrison Stone today and they may want to install some benches. He would not want to propose relocating the courts.

Mr. Yamartino had sent a request to Flex Court for a quote. He explained that Flex Court installs a series of interlocking tiles with drainage underneath. The company feels that these tiles are safer than asphalt because they give and several colleges and universities use this product for the tennis programs. This would also prevent lines from having to be repainted because they are through the depth of the tiles. The complete quote from Flex Court is for \$104,000, including nets and posts. There is an additional charge of \$900 for a custom logo. There is also a possibility to do the installation as a community project which would reduce the cost by \$13,500. Questions about warranties would need to be asked if the community was to do the installation. The quote of \$104,000 includes crack repair and full installation.

Mr. Yamartino added that the Building committee will meet this Thursday and Mrs. Booth stated that she will bring this proposal to them. Mr. Yamartino explained that the parking would be part of the building reconfiguration bonding. Mrs. Canning wondered where the survey results went when they asked the students what they like to do at recess and should they do that survey again. Mrs. Johansen felt that they need to give the students some ideas as well. Ideas like a life-sized checkerboard and corn hole have been suggested.

Mrs. Booth commented that the kids only get about 20 minutes of recess and she has asked Dr. Serino to reassess that, especially with the third graders coming to Memorial. She is concerned about how much the court area would actually get used. Mrs. Johansen described the equipment that was at Korn School. Mrs. Booth did feel that there needs to be some type of playscape at Memorial and suggested that maybe the district puts \$150,000 towards that. Another committee member felt that the courts would be utilized more by the community than by the students.

Mr. Yamartino stated that he had a discussion with Mr. Moore on Saturday and he would like everything this committee proposes to be inclusive of the community as well as the students. Mrs. Stone would also like to see gym classes moved outside and the courts would provide for that. Another committee member felt that non-sports kids and special needs kids would not use the courts at all. Mr. Yamartino stated that he felt that both the courts and a playscape were needed. The fort area at Lyman that is used for creative play was described as well.

Mr. Yamartino went on to explain that there is a second quote for \$180,000 and also includes a quote for \$100,000 to do half of the court. The problem is what would be done with the other half of the court. Mrs. Booth suggested that maybe the playscape could be put in that area. Mr. Yamartino stated that they are checking into using the lower area, but it may be protected wetlands or part of the leaching field. Mrs. Booth described the location of the well and the septic system. She also noted that the Cuginchaug Soccer Club has put about \$80,000 into the soccer field.

Mr. Yamartino added that if they propose to move the location, the costs will go up substantially. Mrs. Johansen stated that the swings aren't bad and the jungle gym is okay. Mr. Yamartino asked the committee members what type of equipment they would be looking for, at both Lyman and Memorial. It was mentioned that there should be signs at the playground for the kids who are nonverbal. There should also be ramps, not stairs. An example of a playground in Hamden was talked about. They felt that Brewster's playscape was great, but you do have to be able to climb up a rope ladder to access the best parts. They would like to think about access for everybody.

Mrs. Booth added that Dr. Serino was going to reach out to fellow superintendents about playscapes. Mr. Yamartino suggested they also look at ways to modify the playscape at Brewster in order to provide access. He felt that the committee should break up into smaller groups, focusing on each of the individual schools. He would like to see a complete inventory of what currently exists and what the committee would want to recommend, though he felt they should focus on Lyman and Memorial first because of the tight deadline unless there is an immediate need at another school. It was also suggested that some of the pieces at Lyman could eventually be moved to either Brewster or Memorial.

Carl Stoup asked about the balance beam and Mrs. Booth explained that it would be close to the ground.

The committee agreed to divide into smaller groups and Mrs. Booth volunteered to head up the John Lyman group. Mr. Yamartino will send the approved vendor list to the committee members. Mrs. Dubuc will help with the John Lyman group. Mrs. Canning member will look into making the Brewster equipment more accessible. The remainder of the group will work on Memorial. As far as the towns funding the project, Mr. Yamartino felt Middlefield might be able to contribute \$20,000 or \$25,000. Carl Stoup personally felt that Durham would not put anything in other than through the school budget. There may be people who would want to financially invest. It was also mentioned that the soccer club may be willing to participate.

A committee member asked how much fund raising they would be allowed to do and Mr. Yamartino felt that that is a gray area. Under board policy, the teachers and administrators are not allowed to set up GoFundMe pages or anything like that, but Mr. Yamartino felt that they might be able to receive permission to do that. Discussion continued about fund-raising and grants. Mrs. Johansen added that they may want to try for Kaboom as well. Mr. Yamartino cautioned that if they accept state money, anyone can use the equipment and there can be no restrictions. Discussion continued about who would be willing to look into grants and possible fund-raising. It was also mentioned that Rob Poturnicki certifies playgrounds and Mr. Yamartino will reach out to him.

Mrs. Johansen also mentioned that Mrs. Stone would like to be on all correspondence and may want to attend the meetings as well. They would also like to get input from Brewster students.

**Public Comment**

Carl Stoup felt that they should look for a warranty on the equipment. One contractor listed a 16-year warranty and the other did not list any.

**Wrap-up**

It was agreed to meet again on Monday, February 17, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the Middlefield Community Center, Room 2. At that meeting, they will review the wants and recommendations for John Lyman and Memorial. Mrs. Canning will report on possible Brewster modifications. Mr. Yamartino will send a general note out to all of the principals to let them know what the committee is doing. He will also send out the approved vendor list to the committee members and will also reach out to Mr. Moore and Dr. Serino regarding fund-raising. Mr. Yamartino has also reached out to Sherry Hill in Durham, but has not heard back. He will reach out to Laura Francis as well. Committee members will reach out to the PTOs and Mr. Yamartino will ask Mr. Moore if he'd like to send out a general note.

**Adjournment**

*Mrs. Johansen made a motion, seconded by many, to adjourn the meeting.*

*In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Canning, Mrs. Castillo, Mrs. Dubuc, Mrs. Johansen, Mrs. Kahnke, Ms. Malcolm and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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