

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 Monday, February 17, 2020 at 6:30 PM at the Middlefield Community Center, Middlefield, Connecticut.

Committee members present: Mrs. Booth and Mr. Yamartino, Mrs. Johansen, Mrs. Casillo, Mrs. Dubuc, Mrs. Kahnke, and Mrs. Johansen

Other community members present: Mr. Giamatteo and Ms. Malcolm

Mr. Yamartino called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda, as presented.

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

Approval of Minutes - February 4, 2020

It was decided to table this agenda item until next meeting.

Equipment Requirement and Cost

- A. Lyman**
- B. Memorial**

It was explained that there is no formal quote as of yet, but Game Time has provided information. They are working on two different quotes, one with a playscape structure. They are aware that the budget is \$50,000 and felt that the playscape could fit within that budget. The reservation to the playscape is that it will be incredibly difficult to move once it is installed. The rep had estimated that it would take three to five days to install and a team of 12 would be needed. It can be disassembled and moved, but some damage could be possible. The second quote will be for freestanding items. That will include a couple of spinning options and a climber. It will still be labor-intensive to move these items, but less so than the playscape.

If the district moves fast and orders by the end of March, there would be a 35 percent discount on the playscape, but the rep also stated that he hoped for a 10 percent discount otherwise. Mrs. Booth felt that March was not going to be possible. Mr. Yamartino suggested they ask for the 35 percent discount anyway. The committee then reviewed the pages from the catalog with the various parts of the playscape and freestanding equipment.

Mrs. Booth added that it has been estimated that there about 40 pieces of cement still at Lyman that would need to be removed. Mr. Yamartino asked if it would be possible to anchor the concrete and then bolt the posts to it to make it easier to move.

Mr. Giamatteo added that he had some information on a Ultiplay playscape for \$32,000. There was then discussion about where and when the playground equipment would need to be moved. Mrs. Booth noted that since the amendment did not pass, they really don't know what will happen. She did feel that Lyman will be open for this year and at least two more years, but it could be more. Mr. Yamartino asked if the \$50,000 proposal is what they would want at Lyman for perpetuity. Mr. Giamatteo explained that he had told the company that it would probably need to be moved in three to five years and they said it would not be an issue though there might be an adjustment in the installation price at that time. He will also provide a quote on having the community do most of the installation, with the company providing a supervisor at about \$850/day. The full quote is for approximately \$52,000.

Mrs. Booth had a quote from Creative Recreation for \$50,000, including \$16,000 for installation. One option does include a rock climber and the other is primarily freestanding. One option does include a zip line.

Mr. Yamartino asked about the gaga pit for Lyman and Mrs. Booth explained that out of the 12 classrooms at Lyman, only two wanted a gaga pit. Mrs. Johansen explained that Memorial wants a gaga pit because the gym teacher taught it to them. She felt that if the students at Lyman don't know what to ask for, they won't ask for it. Mrs. Booth went on to report that six classrooms wanted monkey bars, six wanted rings, six wanted a slide, six wanted a rock wall, five wanted a tether ball, four wanted a bucket seat that spins, four wanted a tire swing, four wanted a mini zip line, three wanted a quiet reading corner, three wanted a sand box, three wanted a dome climbing structure, three wanted volleyball, three wanted a maze, three wanted corn hole, three wanted an obstacle course, two wanted a seesaw, two wanted swings, two wanted a bridge, two wanted a cargo net, two wanted a gaga pit, one wanted a crafting table, one wanted dodge ball, one wanted a picnic table, badminton and a castle. Mrs. Booth also reported that eight out of the 13 senators said they would like corn hole and 12 out of the 13 would like life-sized checkers. The teacher also stated that children prefer ball games over playground-type structure at Memorial.

Mr. Yamartino reported that Mrs. Canning had sent the results of the survey they did of second and third graders at Brewster who rated playscape activities, court activities, blacktop activities, field activities and quiet activities. They had also asked the students about a gaga pit and 32 second-grade students knew what it was and six did not, 30 said they would like one at recess and eight said no. Of the third-grade students, 25 students knew what a gaga pit was and seven did not and all 25 students said they would want one. The highest ranked activity was playscape activities, with 21 second graders ranking that as their first choice. The second-highest ranked activity was field activities. Playscape was ranked second by 11 students and third by 10 students. Many of the second graders ranked blacktop activities as second and third, followed by court activities. The third graders ranked field activities number one overall, with nine still ranking playscape as number one. Mr. Yamartino summarized that playscape was number one overall for third graders, court activities was number two and field activities were number three. They also asked the students what the most fun thing they've ever done at a playground was and Beth Johansen stated that the spider web and the rock at Brewster School was her favorite. Mr. Yamartino report that the number one thing for third graders was a rock wall, followed by a spider web, followed by swings and monkey bars. For the second graders, their favorite activity was the monkey bars, the swings and the slide.

Mrs. Johansen reported that they had asked the Memorial students what they would want on a playground and 27 out of 45 wanted a gaga pit, four wanted a slide, spider web and a jungle gym. Since that time, a survey was sent out to 227 participants. The first question was about their favorite activity at recess and 43 said soccer, nine said football, walking and running, 32 did not answer the question, 20 play tag, basketball, gymnastics, kick ball, monkey bars, role playing, 25 play Four Square, 25 for swings, gaga pit and a lot of them are sitting and drawing. Most said having fun with friends.

Mr. Giamatteo thought that the community could build the gaga pit with possible donations from Home Depot. Mrs. Johansen thought maybe the Boy Scouts could be involved as well.

Mrs. Johansen went on to explain that the second survey question was about their favorite activities at recess and field games scored highest. Over 100 voted for Four Square, 80 wanted a walking path, 50 answered board games or just hanging out and 40 for hopscotch. There were several write-in answers, including baseball, soccer, gaga, reading, swings, basketball and football.

Mrs. Booth noted that she visited Memorial last fall and the kids were mostly playing soccer, Four Square and basketball. Mrs. Johansen stated that fifth grade students in Meriden are not allowed to play on the play scape. Mrs. Booth stated that the budget was a little bigger for Memorial, but Mr. Yamartino noted that they could make a recommendation to move money between the schools.

Mrs. Johansen stated that she walked the field at Memorial and the backstop is completely rusted and would need to be removed, but there is space available for playing back there. Mr. Yamartino noted that fence material is relatively inexpensive through the state contract. Mrs. Booth wondered if the aides or teachers would want to walk on the grass. It was also mentioned that a walking path could help with that issue. Mrs. Johansen also explained what Go Far is and that it happens at Brewster, Lyman and Memorial.

Mrs. Johansen also reported that Mrs. Stone stated that intramurals no longer happen because of a finance issue. Mr. Yamartino felt that it would still be two separate areas at Memorial School because of where the courts are located. He also reminded everyone that Middlefield has committed funding to the courts as well and he will be talking to Laura Francis this week.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed that the courts are on school property and have been operated by the school. Middlefield has committed \$25,000 in their budget towards the courts. He also noted that he spoke with Sherry Hill about pickle ball courts and the cost was close to \$300,000. Durham's Board of Finance wasn't interested in doing the courts with the material that they are proposing at Memorial. They are now talking about three pickleball courts for about \$180,000. Mr. Yamartino asked if Durham would contribute \$25,000 towards the courts at Memorial before they commit to the new courts in Durham. Sherry Hill also felt that Memorial was the ideal place for the courts and that Durham's residents would use them.

Ms. Malcolm reported that they had 128 students signed up for summer camp, with about 62 from Durham. Mrs. Johansen hoped that kids would want to play pickleball after school as well. Mr. Giamatteo asked about how much time the kids actually get for recess and if it would be realistic to play pickleball. He sees the courts more for gym and community activity rather than recess.

Mrs. Booth would like to develop a list of playground equipment that they would like at Memorial and have that be the focus. Mrs. Johansen felt that they would need a climber, some type of spider web and balls.

There is currently about \$175,000 budgeted for Memorial (\$50,000 for the courts and \$100,000 for the playscape, plus \$25,000 from the Town of Middlefield) plus another \$50,000 for Lyman for next year. Mrs. Booth wondered if they could get a better discount if they order everything from one vendor. Mrs. Johansen felt that they should get a playscape for Lyman since no one is sure when, and if, it will close. Mr. Yamartino reviewed that the playscape at Brewster cost \$115,000 in 2010 and the playscape at Peckham Park was \$150,000. If he could get Durham to donate \$25,000, that would leave \$200,000 for Memorial but he felt that that much may not be needed for a playscape. That may leave more money to put towards Lyman.

At this point, they have still not heard back from JLPA about any possible donation. Mrs. Booth stated that Dr. Serino was going to talk to Mr. Ford about funds in the activity fund. Mrs. Johansen wondered how many kids are on a playscape at once since they play other things. There was discussion about what would happen if Lyman doesn't close and where grades will be located. It is hard to make a decision when they don't know what will be happening at Lyman in the future. The thought was that money from JLPA and the activity fund could provide the kids with something this spring. Mrs. Johansen felt that Central Office is behind getting playground equipment at Lyman.

Mr. Yamartino stated that there is a Utilization Committee meeting this Thursday and he asked the Lyman group to prioritize what they would want before that meeting. As a board member, Mr. Yamartino believes that the most irresponsible thing he can do is to not fund \$6 million in capital improvements to John Lyman. That includes \$2.5 million that needs to be done in the first year and \$4 million for critical items over the next two to five years. He believes that they need to fund John Lyman to keep it open for the next 20 to 40 years because the towns have stated they want that. Mr. Yamartino felt that they still need to move third grade because he believes all the students in one grade should be under one roof in a single program. Mrs. Booth reminded everyone that there are other board members who feel there needs to be two K-5 schools, though she does not. Mr. Yamartino summarized that if that becomes necessary, they will probably have to cut the money for the playgrounds. He does feel that whatever is proposed should be for a 20-year plan. Mr. Giamatteo stated that he was comfortable with \$50,000 for Lyman in the short-term, but may want to up that number if it was for long-term. Mr. Yamartino explained that he is trying to look at the full investment that Lyman needs to stay open and he was encouraged to be sure to include equipment that is inclusive for all kids.

Mr. Yamartino would like a recommendation for Lyman for the short-term and also for a 20-year plan and he explained that this committee will continue to work on the track, the fields and all of the equipment for the next 20 years. He would like a plan for next year by the beginning of March.

One of the committee members asked when she could expect something to be done at Memorial and Mr. Yamartino explained that if it gets approved in the budget, that will be effective July 1st, which means contracts can be signed as early as May and construction can take place over the summer.

Mrs. Booth felt that the basketball/Four Square area should remain where it is and Mrs. Johansen would agree not to change the current plan. She would also like to see the lower field used for a walking path, a possible quiet area, climber and rock wall.

C. Brewster

Mr. Yamartino reviewed that Mrs. Canning is still waiting for information about modifying the current playscape to make it more inclusive. She has reached out to a couple of vendors for information on

sensory-type stuff to be added. The installation of the playscape that is at Brewster was supervised by the playground company and done by a lot of folks from the district. It was paid for with grant money at a total cost of about \$115,000 and the site work was all done by local contractors and donated.

Mrs. Canning has not been able to locate the warranty or life expectancy of the playscape, but felt it was typically 15 to 20 years.

Mr. Yamartino felt that the only thing for Brewster at this point may possibly be a gaga pit. Mrs. Johansen had a concern about putting the same thing at multiple schools and feared the kids would get bored of it quicker. Mr. Yamartino felt that if a gaga pit is appropriate for second to sixth grade students, it would be appropriate to have it at each of the schools. Mrs. Johansen feared they would be bored, but felt it would be good if the gym teachers were to incorporate it into the curriculum. Mrs. Johansen also did not know where it would be possible to have a gaga pit at Brewster. Mrs. Booth mentioned that kids have to alternate using the blacktop and the grass at Brewster and Mrs. Johansen stated that that was because there was no space. Mrs. Booth would still like to see a gymnasium or cafeteria added at Brewster.

Mrs. Booth felt that they had gathered a lot of information, but wasn't sure they would get anything else in the next two days. Mr. Yamartino summarized the information that they have now, but noted that it doesn't provide anything for this spring. He would like a list of items and cost estimates for the spring and a more long-term plan in the event Lyman does not close.

Mr. Giamatteo felt that it should be \$50,000 for the spring or they shouldn't do anything. Everyone agreed that \$50,000 is good for the short-term, but not to keep it open long-term. There are just over 200 students at Lyman currently and enrollment projections for Lyman over the next 10 years are at just about 200. Mrs. Booth mentioned that they eliminated one of the kindergartens at Lyman, so that has limited the number of students.

Mrs. Booth asked if they can just order things off Amazon or does it have to go through a certain vendor. Mr. Yamartino felt that it can probably be bought from Amazon, but the approved vendors provide the state discount. Mr. Yamartino felt that once the committee decided what they wanted, the district would put out RFPs to all vendors. Mrs. Booth stated that she'd like to go back to the kids to see what they want before the committee chooses one. Mr. Giamatteo summarized that they certainly found something close for \$50,000 and that \$75,000 to \$100,000 could cover what they need for the long term. He also felt that the capacity of the playscape matches well with Lyman and then individual pieces can be added.

D. Adaptive equipment (all schools)

Mr. Yamartino stated that they are waiting for information on adaptive equipment.

Fund-raising efforts

Mr. Yamartino explained that the district does not allow teachers, schools, coaches or students to fund-raise in any way on behalf of the school. He did ask if this committee would be able to fund-raise, but does not have an answer on that. Memorial's parent organization is going to put the item on the agenda for their next meeting. They had mentioned having companies sponsor specific pieces of equipment with signage to acknowledge their help and Mr. Yamartino stated that that would have to be approved by the board. Mr. Yamartino has asked Mr. Moore about obtaining a corporate sponsorship with Wilson for the district's athletic needs. It was also suggested that there be a formalized committee to coordinate fund-raising.

Mrs. Johansen reported that Kaboom is not looking to sponsor anything here in Connecticut currently, however they do encourage you to apply anyway. She mentioned that they would want signage at the site. Mr. Yamartino asked her to do the application and find out what the signage requirements are. He did mention that the Board of Education would have to vote to accept any grants. Mrs. Johansen also mentioned that there are many companies that have grant programs.

Mr. Yamartino will raise the issue of fund-raising at the Utilization Committee meeting and will also ask the Policy Committee to make a recommendation.

Long-term expenditure

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

New Business

The next meeting will be held on March 2, 2020 at 6:30 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Public Comment

Beth Johansen commented on which playscape she liked the best.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Debi Waz

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