City Council Workshop Meeting – Committee Notes

Thursday, January 2nd,
6:30 P.M.

Public Comment

1. ?????? - Concerns about expansion from woman who likes the park as it is now
2. Russell - also concerned about expansion. Also put in a time capsule under the bench. Hate to have it disturbed. Same class as Michele? Hopes neighbors won't be disturbed.
3. Andrew - skatepark enjoyed in Atlanta, gave dignity. Lived there when Pillar built their skatepark. Concerned about storm water drainage. Wants them used as part of design criteria.
4. Tom read Jeff's letter
5. Chris - what buffering will be put in place for those who live there. Questioned that the water table might be higher. He remembers concerns when pool was originally built.
6. Linda Boudreau - support placement, encourage council to honor the process taking place by committee, thorough and comprehensive process, we can answer questions, let funding begin.
7. Rupi - encourage council to follow committee recommendations, hours dedicated, time and due diligence, impartial, clear, thorough recommendations, representing the under-represented, kids grow up, parents drop the issue, now is the time, be brave, this is the time.
8. Susan - from Standish. Support the people, the kids, brings community together, impressed with committee work, skatepark is safe place for kids, worries about dangers of kids skating in other spaces
9. Beth and Otto - it is not at all like the Gen X generation reputation of skate parks, it is healthy, with adults, mainstream, all positive, better to have a space for our community, give someplace to go, all inclusive, not sketchy
10. Lucas - used to take public bus to go to Portland’s skatepark, Amato’s down the road, parking on streets as well, great to have it on campus, great space for kids to hang out
11. Michele Danois - we need a space to go so not on the streets. This is a chance. Kids deserve it. Let’s do it.
12. Seamus - get kicked out of spaces, so all for a park
13. Hunter - recent So Po High graduate, a refreshing community booster, beneficial to alternative sports opportunities, park is currently underused from experience, not good places to skate in So Po right now. Goes to Millcreek. Great way to make friends

Questions

1. What about expansion? Pillar has offered one hypothetical series of three expansions - initial, secondary, third
2. Disturbing the time capsule? - Committee and Pillar are aware of this and will honor it, get creative and build that history. Cognizant of this.
3. Buffering - still significant area of park left to buffer both residential streets, planting trees
4. Water table - does not want to get into specifics, would take some configuring. Draining pool with opposing water pressure. Kevin Adams spoke to urban legend that we could not drain the pool, not true at all, has been done a number of times, hot tub added.

5. Can council trust committee to choose final decisions about designs without having to come back for council approval.

6. Lighting? Dawn to dusk hours, no lighting, too expensive

7. What are storm water features? Andrew answered this. Need to make sure that the uphill areas aren’t being too stressed with rainwater draining downhill with impervious surfaces. Can Pillar use storm water needs into its design.

8. Is school laying claim to property, is school going to challenge the rights to use the property. There were some concerns about using school property. Will ask Sally to do a review for January 14th meeting. We don’t want to be challenged once fundraising has begun. We don’t want this to continue to be a question or worry.

9. Naming rights - anyone who wants park to be named for them, that has to come back to council.

**Council Members Giving Feedback**

1. Councilor Morgan - spectacular product, process is key here, easy to read and to follow, 100% behind committee recommendation, regarding water, water was not an issue with high school renovation, so not a problem with skate park, an appropriate use of space, not sure what to do with time capsules, as we go along, we will find answers to all of our questions, satisfied that we have identified and contained this spot, prepared to go forward, imagines city would have a financial component as well, can’t imagine feedback for fundraising, people can fundraise, wants to discuss naming rights, not enthusiastic about these, wants to fundraise without these.

2. Councilor April Caricchio - likes the safety of this location, enough activity, proximity to high school creates equity, recognizes that the green space is valuable to the neighborhood. Let committee move forward, honor green space and buffering, encouraging people to try and join

3. Councilor Pride - likes location, meets the needs, trust the committee, not have our hands in design decisions, go ahead and start fundraising, proud of youth, pushing this through

4. Councilor Bruzgo - very excited about the project, not many concerns because video was so comprehensive and detailed, perfect spot to encourage youth to be active, feels positive

5. Councilor Beecher - thrilled that trees are worked into the design, near community center, encourages walkability, feels storm water designs is an important consideration, presumes city to put money in but also like the fundraising, touched by individual (Susan) offering private donation

6. Mayor Lewis - central, can get there, equity issue, validates skating as a sport, totally visible and safe, confident of vetting process, would like to see it come as a formal order/resolve/endorsement for committee to start fundraising, let’s make it less of a tax burden, does not benefit only a portion of the community if done with great quality, all ages being able to enter, sit, enjoy. Let committee navigate design and fundraising choices. Fine with a plaque or sign listing any names who make the park possible but wary of any one entity getting named.

**JEFF WOODBURY’S COMMENTS READ BY TOM LONG IN HIS ABSENCE**
I’m sorry I could not be here tonight. I have attended almost every skate park committee meeting since we began, and I have devoted a lot of time and attention to the task of helping find a worthy home for South Portland’s first skate park.

The committee has worked diligently to study the available locations and rank them fairly and impartially. We brought in a highly qualified skate park design company to visit our top choices and render a professional opinion.

I believe we have chosen well, and High School Park is a wonderful location for a skate park. Between the high school and the community center, and centrally located on a bus line, it is already an area populated by kids and families, with parking, facilities, and, very importantly, visibility.

There are some people who feel we are taking away open land from our community. There are others who feel we are dismissing the work done by others long ago, and still others who feel we are trampling on history.

To those people I say we are not taking anything away. We are taking an underused park and adding to it. We have taken great care to respect the history that is there, and keep the landscape as natural as we can, and make space for skaters and non-skaters alike. We are making the park richer, more robust, and more full of opportunity for everyone.

The park will be used by skaters and scooters and bikers of all ages, and still have room for relaxing or reading or throwing a frisbee. It will be alive with healthy outdoor activities, and it will bring people together. Our cheerleaders may still practice there, and our science teachers may teach physics lessons there. We may even have middle and high school skate teams. And one day a South Portland youth may launch from our humble park to Olympic gold.

This is the time to light that flame. Let it be us. Let it be now.

Thank you,

Jeff Woodbury

KASPAR HEINRICI’S MESSAGE TO KIRSTEN AFTER MEETING

I wanted to speak only if the project was in jeopardy but it seems like you guys jumped through every hoop the council threw at you. The fact that they are pretty much giving carte blanche to the skate park committee for the design is amazing. When I realized the council was with you I realized it was gravy from there.

I would like to help with fundraising if I can although it is not my specialty. I work for a business with a SoPo location, but it is not the type of business you want on a plaque at a kids park.

Also, I still believe there was a lot of potential that was not touched on at the meeting. For a park to really get used having curriculum is key. Are there ways for the school to actually use it? Raise money for helmets, pads and boards? One thing we find can be important is to include things like pumptracks or snake runs so that kids with little skills can get introduced to the skate park on easier terrain.

Finally, my personal interest is in painting parks so that it is both a recreational and visually stimulating space.

I’m around and happy to be involved in next steps, so please let me know if you want to get coffee or just loop me in on next steps.