

Mifflin Coalition Meeting – December 5th, 2019

Time: 5:30 pm

Location: SEAMAAC Offices (1711 S. Broad St.)

Attendees: Joel Arnold, *SEAMAAC*; Pan Kim, *SEAMAAC*; Sarah Nguyen, *SEAMAAC*; Andy Toy, *SEAMAAC*; Francis Carney, *United Communities of Southeast Philadelphia*; Al Girard, *Lower Moyamensing Civic Association*; Meghan Geiser, *Philadelphia Parks and Recreation*; Nicole Morgan, *United Communities of Southeast Philadelphia*; Rebecca Wanner, *Friends of Mifflin Square Park*; Erin Hughes, *Philadelphia Water Department*; Dan Schupsky, *Philadelphia Water Department*; Amy Hapf, *Philadelphia Water Department*; Shira Walinsky, *Mural Arts*; Ayse Unver, *Philadelphia City Planning Commission*; Jae Shin, *Hector Design Service*; Cooper Richardson, *SEAMAAC*; Sarun Chan, *Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia*; Rex Yin, *Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia*; Thoai Nguyen, *SEAMAAC*; Somaly Osteen, *SEAMAAC*; Karisa Barlow, *Bethanna*

Meeting Notes

Welcome and Introductions - Joel Arnold

- Joel - The project has moved forward a lot and we want to keep everyone in the loop.
- Tonight's agenda
 - Update from PWD on MSP project
 - Friends of Mifflin 2019 Recap
 - Schematic Design update from Hector
 - Discussion on Key Decisions/Need for Input
- Next steps: gather input from community members and consult with PPR (January).
- Introductions from all people in the room.

Philadelphia Water Department Update - Dan Schupsky

- Introduction and Overview
- Context/background for MSP project
 - PWD core services are drinking water, waste water, and stormwater
 - Drink tap water!
 - When stormwater hits hard surfaces like concrete, it cannot permeate the ground and begins to flow.
 - The Philadelphia watershed used to have lots of streams and creeks; as the city grew water became polluted and most streams were filled in to become sewers.

- Combined Sewer Areas collect both stormwater and sewage. They are great during dry weather when not full; during wet weather pipes are not big enough to carry stormwater AND waste which leads to waste overflow into waterways.
 - Negative Impacts: waterway degradation, flash flooding, bad water quality/pollution.
- Philadelphia is legally bound to manage combined sewers by the EPA and Pennsylvania DEP.
- Solution: Green stormwater infrastructure that is tied into the existing system, rerouting stormwater to green areas where it can permeate
 - Green City, Clean Waters - 25-year program; Philadelphia is a model currently approaching its 10th year.
 - Examples of infrastructure: tree trenches, bumpouts, planters, porous paving, rain gardens (less common in public areas).
- Projects in Mifflin Square Park and Weinberg Park - see handout. There are many other ongoing projects in the area of South Philly east of Broad.
 - MSP project will consist of a rain garden and underground storage basins in the four corners of the park.
 - Weinberg Park project will consist of a rain garden and tree trenches.
 - The projects will be bid out to contractors.
 - The construction time is less than nine months.
- In a rain garden, stormwater flows into the garden from the street and is stored in an underground area below the greenery, then is slowly re-released into the combined sewer.
 - PWD is open to input from residents on which plants to use in the rain garden. Native plants are often used.
 - New sidewalk and a 2-foot cut in the road is a sign of tree trenches
- PWD will update residents in the park neighborhood via letters.
 - Storage of equipment and materials, construction noise, etc. will be noticeable and impact parking.
- PWD Incentive Programs
 - Rain Check - residents can obtain a free rain barrel; cost-share program for depaving backyards (up to \$2000)
 - Soak It Up Adoption - eligible groups can get small grants to oversee and maintain green infrastructure tools
 - Many options for assistance in paying water bills
 - Help with basement flooding and other water-related services
 - Assistance for businesses, organizations, schools, and other entities.
 - New PWD Paperless Billing
 - PWD Contacts: Tiffany, Amy (contact for green infrastructure construction), Dan.
- Questions?
 - Are storage basins/rain gardens in MSP managing park and street runoff?

- Both
- Once construction starts, how long will the project take?
 - About six months in project control (PC) and nine months in construction phase. We hope to have a Notice to Proceed (NTP) in the spring of 2020. Construction will take up a large chunk on 2020 but we can work around scheduled park events with notice.
- Where will construction equipment be stored?
 - In the park.
- What is the timeline for the Weinberg Park project?
 - Not the same project as MSP so the bid will be advertised separately and could be a different contractor and timeline. Usually there are 3-5 community meetings on a project; Weinberg may have started earlier to build a stakeholder group since there isn't a Friends group there.
- Do you generally do all four corners at once, or a couple at a time?
 - It depends. At Carmella Playground in N. Philly, there is a little league so contractors didn't work during baseball season. Scheduling is usually written into specs ahead of the bidding season; it's not too late to add something like this for MSP.
 - We could time construction to be done during colder months when the park is less used - however, don't want to delay construction for that
 - We could do one corner at a time so the whole park is not closed at once and is still usable.
- In terms of education - is there any opportunity for programs like OST to learn about the process as it is happening?
 - PWD public affairs/engagement, tours, etc. with Fairmount Waterworks; Urban Watersheds curriculum
 - Students could be trained as champions of green infrastructure and give tours.
 - PWD can promote tours on social media.
 - Soak It Up grant
 - CDL youth could help engage folks.
 - Rain garden will have interpretive signage
- Is 501(c)3 status required for Soak It Up?
 - Not technically but it is preferred - the program is looking for who has the capacity to do it
 - Grant agreement with PIDC
 - One paid employee is "required" but there is flexibility
- How soon do addendums to the contractor bid need to be made?
 - The sooner the better - within a few weeks so that contractors know the full situation and bid accordingly

- Send addendum ideas to Joel to have to PWD by the holidays.
 - Limit of Disturbance (LOD) layout - the geographic extent to which equipment can be stored and space taken up during the project.
 - If equipment is being stored at the park, there could be issues of vandalism/safety.
 - Contractors are required to fence everything in - but if someone REALLY wanted to get in they could
 - Need to get the word out that there will be active construction.
 - There will be an inspector on site full-time to address community concerns.
 - Is there a budget for translation services?
 - PWD will hire translators for the top X (2, 3...) languages
 - How far out are neighborhood letters sent?
 - Varies by project but usually 3 blocks out from the site on all sides (estimated 550-600). There will be a bid letter, NTP (notice to proceed) letter, and the contractor will deliver another letter to those directly adjacent to the park.
 - Are the letters templated or customized? It is helpful to keep language very simple for ease of translation.
 - Is there an option to tell people orally (for those who cannot read in their own language)?
 - PWD is able to do robocalls; however, this is only for landlines - residents must opt in for texts or mobile calls.
 - Use nearby elementary schools with bilingual counseling as a resource for community meetings; which may also reach more people.
 - Services to call-in to a number for information, and list the number in park
 - PWD has preconstruction decals (weather dependent)
 - Make a project page or use project language on the MSP website - scan letters and put a URL on construction sign
 - SEAMAAC Community Development will do additional outreach to areas surrounding the park.
 - Translate construction signage into the top four or so languages
- Conclusion
 - Modify contractor bid so that construction is not being done on all four corners simultaneously
 - PWD and SEAMAAC will collaborate to ensure residents are aware of what is going on via letters, translations, URLs etc.
- Surveys

Friends of Mifflin 2019 Recap - Rebecca Wanner

- Love Your Park and Literacy Carnival
 - There is a chance to apply for another grant with Read by 4th to put on another carnival in 2020
- World Refugee Day took place in part at Mifflin Square Park
- Street Movies series
- Health Fair with the Mutter Museum
 - Free flu shots and Hep B testing
- Fall Fridays series ending with a Fall Festival
- Fall Love Your Park Day
- Next Friends meeting is tentatively scheduled for February at CAGP.

Schematic Design Update - Jae Shin

- Overview: review of concept design phase, details on input that is needed, sequencing of meetings/next steps
 - Please share with people at your organizations so we can get community input!
 - Happy to be a part of the process at MSP.
 - Hector is now partners with Ground Reconsidered, KS Engineers, and International Consultants.
- The April 2018 concept design was a long process that allowed us to figure out key components we want in the park and where they should go.
 - Documenting the process of this conversation: working with youth, Community Design Leaders (CDLs), small groups, etc. to figure out priorities.
 - Three key ideas we've held onto from concept design - the "core spirit" of this project
 1. **"Repack the suitcase"** for more efficient use of the land so active areas are concentrated, allowing other areas to be the green lawn folks wanted.
 2. **"Keep it South Philly but with some perks"** so people can see the fun, character, and grit of the park.
 3. **"Making room for everyone"** - this park serves such a large and diverse constituency and we want to make it usable for everyone
 - This coalition signed up for substantial stewardship commitments - a good example of what a park planning process should look like. Now we need to revisit and update these commitments and see what deserves more attention.
- April 2019: Green infrastructure corner paver design with PWD
 - Was narrowed from 11 options
- September-October 2019: Schematic design preliminary phase

- PWD surveyed corners of the park; Hector built on this and surveyed the entire site with KS, then laid the concept plan onto the site plan to make sure it's compatible and adjust it where needed
- Design is a work in progress; we hope to finalize the first draft layout plan in about one month.
- Review of deliverables for schematic design packet and design development and review schedule
- Questions
 - What tools are you using for cost estimates?
 - Mike Funk from International Consultants uses different methods for park projects.
 - Noted that the cost estimate for the city may be different from that for a private company.
 - The schematic design should be done by the end of February. Rebuild legislation is still in process but once it's complete the project will be handed off to the City.
 - Meeting with Nancy O'Donnell at PPR in two weeks will help to ID questions to ask of residents and address PPR requirements and any concerns. Subsequently the team will create an engagement agenda; second meeting will be held with PPR in January along with CDL workshops and a larger-scale workshop in late January or February similar to what was done during the concept plan phase.
 - How can you reconcile the deliverables with the timeframe? What's left to bring to the community?
 - There are a few questions we want to know if we can bring it to the community. We want to know how the community wants it to take shape; a few details, but overall it's a way to keep the community engaged in the process and reflect.
 - The overall design was agreed to in the Concept Plan. This is getting input on some key points to ensure the schematic design is reflecting that concept plan accurately.
 - Rebuild will do community engagement too - we are trying to get the project into a place to make it competitive and ready when the time comes.
- Community Engagement/Input and Stewardship
 - Herb and Flower Garden - we want to know if there is still a constituency who wants this; how to gauge interest?
 - Friends group has not had luck with sustainable garden - a common occurrence in many urban parks.
 - CAGP: P3 garden beds fell to the wayside after a few months.

- In any stewardship program you need paid staff coordination; someone to engage volunteers - there used to be a Key School VISTA.
- Studies that planters with dead things are worse than no planters at all
- We need to discuss if and to what extent Friends, SEAMAAC, and CAGP are comfortable caring for plants and flowers in the park
- SEAMAAC now oversees community gardens and have 200+ gardeners; could we raise funds for 2-3 gardeners to be paid to help with upkeep in the park along with students or elders?
- Addressing vagrancy and sleeping in the park - planters being used as storage, what kind of benches/seating to use.
 - South Philly High is facing similar issues: don't want to choose furniture that is unfriendly; Cannot deny the greater because there is going to be a problem sometimes.
- Elisa Ruse-Esposito at PPR has a background in community gardens; reach out to see if anyone could work with us to find a way to get staff support.
 - TASK - Develop a one-pager for a potential community garden plan between CAGP, and SEAMAAC.
- Will a community garden be fenced?
- There is a spigot in the park to use to water plants, and PWD is out biweekly to water planters
- Bathroom and meeting space
 - MSP needs a solid maintenance and stewardship plan, per PPR
 - Develop a memo/one pager about what support we'll need from Parks
 - Planning team will raise the concern of need for a full time staff member in the park.
 - How can community and partners commit to maintaining the space?
 - Give Joel ideas on how a space will be used and the benefits of it; existing events that do happen in park, event frequency, etc.
 - Open roofed space vs. a full building is a key point of current disagreement: an enclosed private space will mean less space for users, higher cost of heating/AC and maintenance (bathrooms alone are a huge expense), issues with graffiti/vandalism.
 - Looked to an enclosed space for security reasons at night and because it's weatherproof. Once constructed, a building would be a Parks project to maintain and we will not move forward without confirmation that it is possible.
 - This has been an issue of contention since the concept plan. It's worthwhile to put it into a cost estimate and the schematic phase to

see how much it would be. It could be phased for later stages of construction. The building location brought out differing opinions too. We also want Nancy's opinion on this – noted that building and staff are an ask, not a commitment.

- **The Coalition had diverse viewpoints on this issue, with strongly held feelings on both sides. This should be resolved immediately as it will affect the design moving forward.**
- Sportsfields
 - Need to confirm what is wanted: Hector notes say that some prefer grass and some prefer dirt - 50/50 split.
 - **A topic to bring back to the community!**
- Fitness equipment
 - Ranked fairly high as a feature wanted by the community but we have also seen fitness equipment in many parks that is just not used.
 - There are successful senior exercise programs - how could we work together to implement this?
 - Cobbs Creek example
 - Some adults use the jungle gym at the park now to work out
 - Commitment to teach people to use equipment could help - something like a seasonal kickoff introduction to the equipment
 - Friends group could do this
 - SEAMAAC used to hold senior walking groups 2x/week; this would be more interesting if it included stopping at the park to use equipment.
 - PHL Walks program
 - Parks staff in maintenance vs. for programming (rec leaders) - which is more valuable to MSP? Who do we advocate for?
 - The programming needs are so culturally diverse, MSP needs someone more integrated in the community for this. Maintenance is a need that the community can't fill. Maintenance is the ask.
- Neighborhood artists
 - People have said they want to see art in the park
 - Suggestions on artists, patterns, textiles, etc. that could be combined to make a mosaic
 - Art does not have to be a big sculpture artist or something
 - How to involve the community in art
 - Cambodian metal artist works at the Zoo
- Conclusion - review schedule and next steps

- Joel will reach out to former CDLs; please make recommendations for new CDLs **(compensation provided)**