

Meeting Minutes

Seniors' Focus Group Meeting
JMT Project No. 22-02994-001

PARTICIPANTS

Margaret McLaughlin, Ellie Hammill, Russ, Bukwa, Claire Raccosta, Dolores Grussler, John Grussler, Sally Sargent, Ethel Humienny,

Planning Team: Monica Tierney, CPRE, MBA; Andrew Mears, PLA of JMT: and Ann Toole, CPRP, of Toole Recreation Planning

PURPOSE

To obtain input from seniors regarding Macclesfield Park

MEETING REPORT

1. **Welcome** - Monica Tierney welcomed the participants and explained the project purpose.
2. **Project Overview** - Andrew Mears introduced the team. He explained the process. Today is all about listening to the participants. Ann Toole looking at operations, programming, financing, and maintenance. Neil Beach is our transportation engineer. We have other professionals to help on this project.
3. **Master Plan** – We are focusing on optimal park uses, how to solve problems, what to add or change, or move facilities to other parks. We did a site analysis to observe existing conditions to make sure that any investments meet community needs and address any problems. The next step is drawings, seeking funding, and construction. All this takes time.
4. **Engagement** – We have talked with sports, neighbors, appointed and advisory committee, undertaking focus groups. Next, we will talk with youth today.
5. **Sports Field Analysis** – The question is accommodating use and estimating future needs.
6. **Key Person Interviews** – Study Committee includes neighbor, park and rec, sports, township, and others to help with the process. They have given us names of others that we should talk with.
7. **Public Meeting** will be coming up and will be promoted.

DISCUSSION

To begin the discussion, Andrew Mears asked participants if Macclesfield is an Athletic Complex or Community Park. Most thought athletic but that it could evolve. One who did not know the park thinks of it as a park. We have an athletic complex but that's not what we want. Passing by indicates it's for athletic fields. They mentioned all the questions about what the park is, what the community needs and what it could be. Six of the eight participants think of it as athletic. A community park would have other active and passive facilities and more recreation opportunities other than organized sports.

The following points encompassed discussions about Macclesfield:

- Andy Mears showed the history of the land graphically via historic aerials. Current development was built as sports fields. He showed photos of existing conditions and described the challenges that spurred this study. We looked at field use, traffic, pedestrians, environmental, signage, and the neighborhood.
- Key Issues – Safety, circulation, drivers backing in, access drive is split, 101 acres with no pedestrian paths, most in flood plain so there are flooding issues, and most of the Township’s sports facilities are in this park. Scheduling and field relationships are not ideal. Parking appears to be full: is it a scheduling issue or insufficient space for fields?
- Site Impressions and use. John Grussler presented his impressions and distributed his written comments as attached. The Seniors asked him to visit the park and tell them what he found. He visited the park twice. He suggested a perimeter path noting that there is a lot of space to work with. AM explained that we’re implementing this plan so we can address the problems that Mr. Grussler identified. We’re doing a Requirements Plan as the basis for the master plan. Andy Mears noted that the Township did an ADA Transition Plan. He explained various conflicting interests. John Grussler said that not everyone has skin in the game and many different interests. He also thought that LMT should promote activities on the fields that are non-competitive using an example of playing baseball without keeping score and rotating positions. He provided his sentiment about not keeping score until professional level. The group contributed the following:
 - Wading pool that converted to an ice rink as a child. The town came out to watch.
 - Are sports facilities available to the public? Do the leagues have many participants and games. Yes, the park is packed with games. There’s no room for more fields. Monica Tierney explained that rumors are circulating about the addition of fields. Neighbors explained that they play right by their house. Andy Mears discussed how he observed this.
 - People park in the neighborhood and take a cut through to access the park. Signage does not deter people from parking tint he neighborhoods – it’s the locals that know how to do this. Portable nets are used to create more fields.
 - There is hardly any seating or tables and the ones there are deteriorated. Thorpe Brothers field became Macclesfield Park.
 - Any Mears asked what other opportunities would serve the seniors: a pavilion for playing games and socializing. Widen the trails. Boccie court.
 - How does the floodplain affect the park? It drains from the canal to the river. A few storm water ponds by River Road take the water to the river. The baseball field and the areas by the fields in the back on the northwest boundary are wet.
 - No basketball courts but there is sand volleyball. Teens need basketball.
 - The most welcoming towns that participants see have a pavilion. Have a pavilion for events. It would be good for both use but would also be a symbol of the park being welcoming.
 - There is concern about sound coming from events such as concerts.
- **If you could change on thing:**
 - Perimeter path
 - Benches
 - Move fields away from houses
 - Benches

- Improve parking – it’s horrible how the neighbors are affected. Don’t Police ticket? Police should ticket.
- Parking is the biggest problem because our property is right there.
- Have more publicity for the park and why it is there. Have activities to attract a wide variety of users.
- Many never heard of the park. No reason for seniors to go there so that may be why they don’t know about it.
- Beyond the physical improvements, senior activities are needed. Play cards, boccie picnics.
- Neighbors said it’s a nice place to walk in the morning as it is pretty and safe as well as has some seating. (Note participant has a cane and walks in the park.)
- What about restrooms? MT said they are inadequate and poorly located.
- Andy Mears addressed questions:
 - Township schedules as do the leagues for their games.
 - Parks and Recreation Department administers the park.
 - Who will pay for improvements? LMT will seek grants that the master plan will support and be competitive to secure.
 - LMT does all the maintenance with sports providing specialized care where they need it.
 - How much will the renewal cost? Andy Mears and Monica Tierney explained how grants supported the park development. Monica Tierney described the Garden of Reflection and the master plan for Memorial Park.
 - A desirable alternative to a pavilion would be a small field house for programs.

The above represents a true and accurate account of the discussion during this meeting to the best of my knowledge. If there are any conflicts, misrepresentations, or omissions with the above statements, please contact the undersigned within ten (10) days of this date.



Andrew A. Mears

04.18.2023
Date

Copy:
LMT
Project File

Attachment

The following written comments were provided by John Grussler during the open discussion.

Macclesfield Park

Observations/Suggestions

- 1) The park needs more trees, especially along the walking/(bicycle?) path. There's not much shade in the park. Current paved path is too narrow for combined bicycling and walking?
- 2) North end of walking path was under water when I visited. It needs to be raised
- 3) Guardrails along roadway need updating
- 4) Paving is starting to show wear.
- 5) Playground could use an upgrade.
- 6) Nice to have this much space to work with.
- 7) Baseball field scoreboard and dugouts need to be upgraded.
- 8) Only one field (primary soccer field) appears to have disability access and that offers a poor view of the soccer field because it's in a corner of a very large field. Activity viewing needs to be more friendly to those with disabilities and infirmities.
- 9) The park is out of balance between, in my view, in the 3 major purposes of a park:
 - a) A place to host competitive sports (90%)
 - b) A PLAYground (a place to play for those not wishing to compete) (5%)
 - c) A place for leisure activity and a relaxed atmosphere (ideally a place of beauty) (5%)
- 10) Put up a sign at the entrance that says:

"These facilities provided in the spirit of friendly competition.
Second sentence TBD"

Second sentence ideas:

"Leave your anger management issues at home."
Call 1-800-BE-NICE for more details."
< Something better >

Questions

- 1) Who uses the park? What organizations, leagues, etc.?
- 2) The online plan says the park is overdeveloped and overused. Can you explain what that means?
- 3) How is the park currently administered?
 - a) Who schedules activities?
 - b) Who does the maintenance?
- 4) Does the study include options to improve "balance" (see item 9 above) at the park?
- 5) \$\$\$\$\$
 - a) Who currently pays for the administration of the park? What percentage of the park's cost is "recovered" without using taxpayer funds?
 - b) How are these improvements going to be paid for?