

Village of Skaneateles
Planning Board Meeting
November 3, 2011

Site Plan Review in the matter of the proposal submitted by Parks and Recreation Council of Skaneateles (PARCS) to create a new multi-generational play space at Austin Park at the property addressed as 1 Austin Street East in the Village of Skaneateles.

Present: Bruce Kenan, Chairman
Douglas Sutherland, Member
Megan Keady, Member (**recused**)
Toby Millman, Member

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the Planning Board
Riccardo Galbato, Attorney for the Planning Board

Megan Keady, on behalf of the applicant
Karen Armstrong, Architect for the applicant

Robert Eggleston, Skaneateles
Jorge Batlle, Franklin St, Skaneateles

Absent: William Eberhardt, Member

Chairman Kenan opened the meeting at 7:50 pm announcing the application of PARCS (Parks and Recreation Council of Skaneateles for altered play area at Austin Park, 1 Austin Street East. The Chair acknowledged that Member Keady has recused herself from consideration of this matter.

Meg Keady of PARCS introduced Karen Armstrong of Parkitects, Inc., Lansing, NY. Ms. Keady said, "Basically, what we are trying to do is to re-create the play area that's up and upgrade it from what's currently existing at the Austin Park playground area. We are going to be creating multi-generational play place at Austin Park for the community to enjoy. We plan to centralize the play areas from the existing and upgrade the play equipment to be more challenging, age-appropriate and accessible. We are also adding an additional new fitness area for any age-13 and over. We intend to plant trees and position benches as part of this plan as we complete it."

Ms. Keady told the Board, "One thing – in your packet – to get a better visual of what's going on, there is a Google Earth that will really kind of lay out..."

Ms. Armstrong said, "There is a Google Earth map. We have sort of inserted on top of it, these new areas with a description of what we are looking to do in those areas. With the overall shape

of the play area, you can see where the existing playground is sitting. Where the lower area playground is, is where the adult fitness area would go. That way you would have parents who have small children on the playground, be able to supervise and those residents that utilize the trail, who don't have children, would feel a little more comfortable utilizing that space, instead of having it surrounded with play area. Then we are going to upgrade the existing sandbox area, to put a couple of sand diggers in there, because sand is one of the most popular pieces on a playground. Then we're going to reclaim where the existing swing set is, into some green space and centralize the whole play area to make it easier for supervision of all the kids who utilize it for the camps and various programs that they have. All the while, having those who aren't part of the camps and things be able to utilize the fitness area as well."

Ms. Armstrong continued, "The current play area - from the top play area down to the bottom playground - spans approximately 350 ft. That's a very large distance to try to have to supervise kids as they are running around. It also, in relationship to other amenities, the new play area was about 125 ft. from the tennis area, about 200 ft. from the pavilion, and about 500 ft. from the access road for the Rec Center, to just try to give you placement of it. And it would be accessible; the service road that's currently there that's used as the walking path would be the accessible route for individuals with mobility devices or wheelchairs and what-not. All the equipment would meet and exceed today's safety standards as well as the criteria for the number of elevated vs. ground-level play components for accessibility purposes. We have varying different styles of equipment; you've got climbing, sliding, spinning, rocking, swinging."

Member Sutherland asked, "What's the surface again?" Ms. Armstrong replied, "It's engineered wood fiber which will have underneath it a 3 inch layer of drain stone, so that you won't have your chips sitting in water. You will have that natural drainage happening, and given the slope of the hill there, there should not be any problem with the chips holding any water or sitting in any water; there's enough of a slope. If it were sitting at the bottom of the hill, I'd be concerned, but overall it sits in a good location."

Ms. Keady said, "I was just going to mention too that Karen's company, Parkitects, is also the same company or firm that helped to build the Waterman playground, so from a sustainability, from the equipment with our weather and what we live in, you can see it has really done quite well."

Ms. Armstrong said, "This equipment is manufactured in Minnesota, so if it can handle Minnesota, it can handle our space. Any other questions or anything?"

Chairman Kenan asked, "So the photographs that are on the..." Ms. Armstrong replied, "Those are individual photos of the various components, because it's very hard to be able to see what all of those are." Chairman Kenan, "So each of these represented here will be..." Ms. Armstrong, "Is on that structure, yes." Ms. Keady, "Each of those items will be part of the park. And there should be an additional one in the packet the shows the fitness..." Ms. Armstrong stated, "There is one that shows the fitness equipment, one that shows the two to five area, and one that shows five to twelve area, and then there is an overall 3-D representation."

Chairman Kenan asked, "And where is the fitness equipment?" Ms. Armstrong answered, "That would be that one right there." Member Millman asked, "Where is that fitness site?" Ms. Keady responded, "That's going to be, like right now where the existing tallest playground and newest piece, that going to be where the fitness equipment will go. And the existing playground that right now has the railroad ties around the side, that lower one, that's going to basically get expanded all the way back to the tree line. That's this. And this, if you wanted to align this, Toby, these would go right against these trees back here, which is kind of nice; this will be shaded. The front of the park will be the two to five-year-old range and the tot swings, which is closer to the front here, also visible right here by the others working or to the laps if you're doing laps around there. What we also did is draw the plan next so it actually pulls right up to the path that goes around so from an accessibility for mobility devices..."

Chairman Kenan, "And the fitness equipment that moves, that can sustain itself in an outdoor environment?" Ms. Keady answered, "Yes." Ms. Armstrong added, "There is similar equipment to that at a new park in Fayetteville, the Canal Landing Park, and that's right off of Route 5 on the little Limestone Plaza Road, right next to Freedom of Espresso."

Member Millman asked, "What is the lifespan of this equipment in general?" Ms. Armstrong said, "The warranty on it, which I did include in there – you've got on your aluminum posts and pieces and parts, a 100 year warranty. On your moving pieces like swing chains and things like that you have a 3 year warranty. But all in all, the warranty on that equipment you'd be looking at 25 years before you ran into any sort of issues, and it exceeds the current safety standards, which are always, always changing. We also offer free on-call inspections for the life of your playground. So for the next 25 years, every spring, someone from my organization would come out and review everything."

Chairman Kenan asked, "How long has the existing equipment been there?" Ms. Keady replied, "Oh gosh, that's a great question. I'm not exactly sure." Chairman, "It's more than 25 years?" Ms. Armstrong opined, "It's at least 15 years." Ms. Keady, "they have modified pieces and parts, I know Matt's put stuff in here and there."

The Chair asked, "What's the anticipated timing?" Ms. Keady responded, "Our plan is to do a community build, similar to how they did Waterman, and it's planned for the 18th through the 20th of May." Chair, "To have it complete?" Ms. Keady, "The whole thing done. We want to get it all in, we may have some prep work done maybe a week prior, for all the removal and some of the grading done, and then it will all be built that weekend in time for the end-of-school parties."

Member Millman asked, "What was the thought process in terms of which, I've got to believe there are millions of pieces of equipment you could choose from, how did you go through choosing what's appropriate for the site, for this community? Was it a community process?" Ms. Keady said, "There was a playground committee which is a sub-committee of PARCS, which also happened to be what we used as our funding group – people to do the fundraising. We tried to have a consensus group that included school superintendant, hockey coach, schoolteachers, as well as sports coach, who also consulted the athletic trainer, from the fitness equipment portion of it. Also people with kids that age; older people and younger; we tried to

take all timeframes. Now they have maybe six catalogs that you can go through, there's also plans within those catalogs of various different playgrounds that are all around the country, and they have them in age range. The products inside them are actually proposed in the catalog by age group two to five and five to twelve, and it was just a matter of trying to hit wish lists. So everybody was dispersed amongst our core group of eight, everybody came up with their wish list of whatever they would like, and then we threw all of those requests to Karen to try to come up with something that we could do to try to hit most of the equipment, but also to be unique so that it's a draw for the park and a draw for the town." Ms. Armstrong added, "I didn't want to duplicate what was at Waterman – that is counter-productive to bringing a park in, in the same town. I want to create a different experience for the kids there."

Ms Armstrong continued, "Part of this is your standard 'you climb up here and you slide down there', the other part is the spherical portion of it. You get kids that run up to it and they stop and say 'Well what am I supposed to do?' 'I don't know, you tell me' 'Well I could climb over that' 'OK then let's do it' 'But I could go under it' 'Absolutely fine, too'. So it's about using your imagination and getting kids back out to play. And a lot of this has to do with using your 'core', your center, as far as the activities that you have. You have the swiggle sticks that you have to wind around, and the larger you are the more difficult it is because they pivot – the pods actually pivot a little bit when you step on them – so if you have small feet, you stay close to the center and you can weave right through there without a problem. But the older you get the larger you get, the more you actually have to pay attention to where your hands and your feet are going at the same time. And then we looked at incorporating all of the different elements like swings— swings are always the most popular things at a park, as well as slides – kids want tall slides. So we did a tall slide. I think we went up to 96 inches for that slide, which is the tallest I like to go in public parks, because there's a lot of other factors you have to take into account as far as safety goes. You want to have upper body equipment, you don't want to just have things that they work on balance, you want to work on the upper body strength. And coordination – hand-eye coordination. And age separation for the little guys, so that they have something that fits them appropriately size-wise, because the bigger kids will run them off of a playground. You want them to be able to develop the climbing skills, and hand –eye coordination as well. And also be able to have swings. Moms love to be able to put the kids in swings. There are benches but for some reason they did not show up on my 3-D, so those would be placed in areas..." The Chair observed that, "They are on the plan." Ms. Armstrong confirmed, "Yes, they are illustrated on the plan."

Ms Armstrong continued, "We have also discussed about after this gets a summer of use, next fall looking at where they possibly want to look at putting new tree plantings in. The trees that are existing there are wonderful, but they are large trees; who knows how long they will last if something were to happen, so we are looking at putting in some new tree plantings and creating shade more up along the hillside. We want to see where people are gathering in order to make sure we put them in the right spot, because you don't want to have to try to move them. Along with the possibility of looking at, at that time, is there a need to have a shade structure for the smaller kids? You do have; parents will stay longer at a park if they can sit in the shade. Kids will stay all day, but the parents want to sit in the shade. I do too, and I'm in parks all day. Are there any other questions, comments?"

Chairman Kenan asked, "Any other questions?" He continued, "So our mission is a Site Plan approval; anyone care to make any motion in that regard?"

Member Sutherland stated, **"I would move that we approve the Site Plan, and from us it goes to the Village Board, is that the next step, to approve and send on to the Village Board"**. Ms. Keady said "Yes." Chairman Kenan asked "And what's the Village Board's role?" Ms. Keady offered, "I just think it comes back to them." Attorney Galbato offered, "It's not critical impact, but I think it's Village land..." The Chair said "So that's independent of our review." All agreed.

Chairman Kenan continued, "So you've made a motion, is there a second?" Member Millman seconded.

Upon vote of the members present in favor of the motion, Chairman Kenan, Member Millman and Member Sutherland, with Member Keady abstaining, the Chairman declared "The Site Plan is approved."

Ms. Keady and Ms. Armstrong thanked the Board.

This meeting was closed at 8:10 pm.

Chairman Kenan observed, "That's our agenda." Member Keady offered a motion to adjourn. Upon unanimous approval of the members present, the November 3 meeting of the Planning Board was adjourned at 8:11 pm.