

Aston Township Parks Master Plan

**Steering Committee –Meeting #2
Meeting Minutes
April 20, 2015, 7:00pm**

Location: Township Building, Pennell Road

Attendees: Marc Morfei (Pennoni Associates), Jake Williams (Pennoni Associates), Fran Miles, Nancy Bowden, Maggie Berry, Carol Graham, Anthony Skwirut, + 3 others

Items Discussed:

- Marc Morfei, landscape architect for Pennoni Associates (appointed Township Engineer), reviewed the agenda for the meeting, which was to review the available parks and open space resources in the Township, and identify key needs and issues of concern.
- To facilitate discussion, existing parks were divided into 3 categories: active recreation, neighborhood parks, and natural resources. Existing parks were discussed one by one, to identify needs, concerns, and potential opportunities.

Active Recreation:

- Overall comments regarding active recreation:
 - Need more indoor space, for civic activities as well as indoor sports.
 - Sports Associations – especially soccer – want to be less dependent on school district. AYSA wants its own fields.
- Site-specific discussion items:
 - Community Center/Butch Ryan Fields:
 - An “inclusive park/playground” for all abilities is being planned at the Community Center.
 - Outdoor space should be preserved for community activities such as the Easter Egg Hunt.
 - Grass on the multi-use field is suffering because it is heavily used throughout the year, and does not get a chance to regenerate. Artificial turf has not been previously considered, but perhaps should be considered (cost would be an obvious factor).
 - Overwhelming demand for use of indoor space at the Community Center, both for sports and for community events. More indoor space is needed.
 - Aston- Middletown Little League:
 - A second driveway access is being planned.
 - More parking is needed.
 - Fields are subject to seasonal flooding due to low position near Chester Creek.

- Weir Park:
 - More parking is needed.
 - Stream bank is being stabilized to reduce erosion and downstream flooding.
 - Tennis court is lightly used. Consider possibility of converting this to parking.
 - If another location for the playground is identified, this space could possibly be converted to parking also.
- School Properties (Sun Valley HS, Northly MS, Pennell Elem, Aston Elem.)
 - Heavy use of school properties for youth sports: soccer, baseball, softball, also civic events such as fireworks at Sun Valley
General public uses track, tennis courts at Sun Valley
 - Youth sports associations are dependent on School District for field use
 - Use of school gyms is not maximized – this could alleviate some of the pressure on the Community Center
- Overall comments regarding active recreation:
 - Need more indoor space.
 - Sports Associations – especially soccer – want to be less dependent on school district. AYSA wants its own fields.

Neighborhood Parks:

- Aston has a number of small neighborhood parks. Many of these are located at the center of residential blocks and are surrounded entirely by houses, so have limited visibility from the street. These parks sometimes are havens for undesirable activity, including vandalism.
- Overall comments regarding Neighborhood Parks:
 - Many are functioning well and should be kept intact with basic maintenance and improvements.
 - Park lighting (perhaps triggered by motion sensors) might help deter illegitimate behavior at night.
 - Some parks appear to have few users and may be obsolete. Township should consider the possibility of eliminating parks that have no real purpose. Potential options for how to dispose of the land should be investigated.
 - Any major changes that are considered for neighborhood parks should first be planned with the input of immediate neighbors. Each park deserves to be addressed specifically through a design/planning process that involves neighbors.
 - Entrances to the neighborhood parks are often poorly marked and unwelcoming. Improvements to the entrances might encourage more use.
- Site-specific discussion items:
 - Bridgewater Park:
 - Overall good condition, has been recently upgraded. No major changes warranted.
 - Collins Park:

- Poor condition, not heavily used, subject to vandalism and undesirable activity.
- Smallest park in the Township – less than 1 acre.
- Limited access – only 1 access point.
- Options for renovation should be developed. Further discussion on the future of this park should involve the immediate neighbors. Potential park users should be identified. No desire to invest money to rehabilitate the Park if nobody will use it.
- Concord Square Park:
 - Overall good condition. No major changes warranted.
- North Lamp Post Lane Park.
 - Overall good condition. No major changes warranted.
- Savage Park
 - Steep slope limits usable area in the park.
 - Wooded area hides illicit activity.
 - Existing play structures are in generally good condition.
 - May be a candidate for renovation.
- Valley View/Vinsmith Park:
 - Significant improvements are planned for 2016, including perimeter walking path, and renovated playground, baseball field, basketball court.
- Woodbrook Park:
 - One of the nicest Township Parks. Has good connection to the street.
 - No major changes warranted.

Natural Resources:

- Overall comments regarding Natural Resources:
 - Opportunities to expand and enhance trails along Chester Creek should be investigated. Need to research property ownership and available rights-of-way.
 - Opportunities to promote natural areas should be developed.\
 - Overall accessibility to nature parks could be improved. No sidewalks along Mount Road, making it difficult to walk or bike there. People still do.
- Site-specific discussion items:
 - Lewis K. Fisher Park:
 - Should investigate ways to connect with Poore Park along the creek
 - Needs more parking.
 - Consider adding picnic pavilion, gazebo overlooking the creek, or other similar features.
 - Basketball court gets use, but might not be consistent with the “nature park” theme. Consider eliminating this in favor of more parking.

- Poore Park:
 - Playground and basketball court are well-used and should remain.
 - Needs more parking
 - Improved trails along the creek should be developed.
- Newsome Park:
 - Future plans for this park have already been developed, including walking trail and fishing pond.

Other Discussion Items:

- The former Sewer Authority property on Gamble Lane may be available to be redeveloped as public open space. This might be a possible location for new soccer fields.
- The Township owns undeveloped property along the West Bank Chest Creek, including lands adjacent to Highgrove and Valleybrook Chase. These should be considered for use as part of a continuous trail alignment along the creek.
- There is interest in a dog park, but not sure of the best location.
- The next Steering Committee meeting will be held in early June. At this meeting a preliminary list of recommendations will be reviewed and evaluated. The refined set of recommendations will be one component of the draft Master Plan.
- Following the next Steering Committee meeting, a public meeting will be scheduled to present the draft Master Plan to the public.

If you have any questions or comments, or would like to correct or add to these minutes, please contact Marc Morfei, Pennoni Associates, at 215-254-7790 or mmorfei@pennoni.com.