



Meeting Notes

Franklin Park Bear Dens Safety Improvements Meeting #2

March 14, 2024

Attendees:

- +/-36 public attendees
- (11 hosts)
- Amy Linne, BPRD
- Lauren Bryant, BPRD
- Kwanna Wise, EEOSC
- Kyle Zick, KZLA
- Mike Doucette, KZLA
- Spanish Interpreter
- Cape Verdean Interpreter
- Vietnamese Interpreter
- Haitian Creole Interpreter
- Cantonese Interpreter
- Mandarin Interpreter

Below is a summary of the feedback received at this meeting:

Summary

Community Meeting #2 was a comprehensive presentation of the proposed work, addressing the cost estimate as it relates to the allotted construction budget, and assigning priorities to each of the proposed conditions for the Bear Dens in Franklin Park.

Accessibility and Circulation

Several participants asked questions related to circulation and general accessibility.

Due to the limited access in Cage #1, the design team has proposed removing an existing panel to provide additional egress in and out of the cage.

While this project is limited to making the space safe, Boston Parks and Recreation (BPRD) has been in discussions with the City of Boston Disabilities Commission about accessibility. BPRD will request a time variance stating accessibility improvements will be addressed when the site is programmed with its desired use.

Holes and large cracks in pavement and stairs will be addressed as part of this project. Stair repairs will match the color and texture as much as possible.

Existing Pools

The existing pools generated a lot of great questions and feedback. Several participants discussed the possibility of alternatives to filling the pools with gravel i.e. wood decking, playground surfacing. Ultimately, a gravel fill is the most economical solution to temporarily fill

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in these structures and make them safe. There could be the opportunity to incorporate filter fabric, topsoil, and some type of plantings, such as annuals, if someone could maintain them. Plantings trees in the pools is not recommended because BPRD is hesitant to get trees established in the pools and then possibly need to remove them in 5+ years when the future programming is designed.

Graffiti

Only in cage #4 is graffiti removal recommended, because public access will be restricted to this cage. Graffiti in cages 1, 2 and 3 will remain until the future program is determined. It was suggested that an artist could paint on top of the graffiti for something more positive (this idea will need to be reviewed and approved by Boston Landmarks Commission).

When graffiti is removed, an anti-graffiti coating can be applied to the stone that makes removal of graffiti easier.

Timeline and Land Transfer

The project remains on schedule with construction documents to be produced this Spring, bidding in May, and an anticipated construction start in July. Spring 2025 completion is a realistic goal. All of these dates are dependent on the land transfer from DCR to BPRD, which is still progressing.

On March 26th the project will be reviewed by the Boston Landmarks Commission.

Funding Opportunities

There were several comments and questions about additional funding opportunities. Funding from the State and CPA are possible sources. These sources may not be available in time for this phase of work.

Signage

Interpretive signage addressing the history of this space and connection with the zoo was suggested.

In general, signage has been a part of a larger discussion with the Franklin Park Action Plan and will likely be part of the future phase of Bear Dens work.

Access during Construction:

Construction fencing will enclose the work area restricting public access during construction.

Miscellaneous:

There are no issues with the bear dens themselves. The roof and walls were inspected and the repairs will be limited to debris and vegetation removal from the roof.

Volunteer Efforts:

Franklin Park Coalition and the Emerald Necklace Conservancy lead volunteer groups that can clean up and manage vegetation around the Bear Dens.

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Public Meeting Chat:

17:50:32 From Cape verdean Creole to Everyone:

Cape Verdean creole interpreter

17:54:35 From Spanish Interpreter (Tracy Pichardo) to Everyone:

Tracy Pichardo- Spanish Interpreter

18:07:57 From Lauren Bryant to Everyone:

www.boston.gov/bear-dens

18:08:50 From Lauren Bryant to Everyone:

amy.linne@boston.gov

18:17:58 From to Everyone:

I'm curious who would walk in there with 5-foot wide openings and then feel trapped.

18:19:31 From to Everyone:

trapped feeling, think as if you are in a banking machine and someone steps in; wouldn't you feel trapped

18:21:02 From to Everyone:

This is many times larger than most bank lobbies. And optional to visit.

18:30:47 From Amy Linne to Everyone:

www.boston.gov/white-stadium

18:31:43 From to Everyone:

Is it possible to put a clear varnish or something on the stone walls that would make graffiti not stick? I know there is a sign material made from some kind of composite material that doesn't like graffiti paint stick. Thanks!

18:32:41 From to Everyone:

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Are there issues with the dens themselves, the buildings behind the cages, that are in need of attention from a safety or preservation perspective?

18:32:43 From to Everyone:

How about hiring artists to make better graffiti?

18:33:20 From to Everyone:

I'm worried gravel in the former pools will become a tossing around problem.

18:33:52 From to Everyone:

I may have missed, but are the stairs leading up to the bear dens plaza and the masonry of the walls around the stairs and supporting the plaza part of the project?

18:33:55 From to Everyone:

I'm glad there are some components that will help prevent further deterioration of the beautiful stones and grand staircase. I'd love to see the stairs fully restored. Next priority?

18:34:20 From to Everyone:

Can the gravel be capped with a light coat of tar or cement?

18:34:34 From to Everyone:

Ditto to question- I missed details of the stair work except making them safer?

18:34:55 From Lauren Bryant to Everyone:

Replying to "I may have missed, b..."

Yes, the stairs are in the scope.

18:35:36 From to Everyone:

thanks

18:37:05 From to Everyone:

We used to have FPC volunteers put leaves and brush to compost in the pools, could trees be planted there? Instead of gravel?

18:37:40 From to Everyone:

What about a future friends group when it's safer that can have volunteer days concentrating on graffiti & litter & debris removal as well as keeping invasive plants in check?

18:38:25 From to Everyone:

can you provide any additional detail on status of transfer of custody from state? this is a conversation going on now for years. Is there attention now at the state or should we be communicating with our reps and senator about this?

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18:39:46 From to Everyone:

Got it, Amy, thanks! Re tree planting and temporary.

18:42:10 From to Everyone:

Will the space be blocked off for this work, and will signs tell people what's going on?

18:43:15 From to Everyone:

FPC primarily does a community fall and spring volunteer day, ENC has groups out there a little more often.

18:43:24 From to Everyone:

thanks Amy

18:45:14 From to Everyone:

Does the Landmarks Commission have to review?

18:45:30 From to Everyone:

Has there been any effort to get money from the state for this given that this decline occurred while within it's care and custody?

18:47:20 From to Everyone:

Have you considered CPA funds

18:50:02 From Brittany Gravely to Everyone:

Could you simply grow plants in the pool spaces, or would that also be a future consideration?

18:52:13 From to Everyone:

It's very encouraging to see the progress on this! Thanks Bear Dens team.

18:52:40 From to Everyone:

Thank you for keeping the project on track

18:52:50 From to Everyone:

Thank you all for this :)

18:52:58 From to Everyone:

thank you

18:53:00 From to Everyone:

Has there been an inventory of wildlife?

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