

JAMES H. ROBERTS PLAYGROUND COMMUNITY MEETING #2

Meeting Summary Notes

DATE: February 23rd, 2026 @ 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

LOCATION: ZOOM

PRESENTERS: Kenya Thompson (KT) | Boston Parks & Recreation Department (BPRD)
Cassie Bethoney (CB) | Weston & Sampson
Gracie Swansburg (GS) | Weston & Sampson

PRESENTATION:

- KT opened the meeting by informing the public that it will be recorded and available on the city website the following week.
- KT introduced My'Kel McMillen (BPRD Outreach Coordinator) and the Weston & Sampson team. She discussed the meeting agenda, general project timeline, and clarified the scope of Phase 1 work: updates to the splash pad, improving grading and drainage, and prioritizing the health and care of the existing trees.
- CB briefly reviewed several maps and site analysis relating to existing circulation, amenities, and topography of the park.
- Next, she discussed what will and will not be included in the Phase 1 scope of the project, specifically that updates to either play area and the playground equipment will be part of a future phase.
- Next, GS shared what was heard at the previous Community Engagement Meeting (December 15, 2025), and how these comments relate to the project's design goals.
- GS then shared three concept alternatives and compared their main themes and features.
- KT then began the listening and discussion portion of the meeting.
- Community members shared their observations and feedback.

COMMENTS:

Safety and Access:

- Some parents/childcare providers in attendance are concerned about the potential elimination of interior fencing that encloses the 2-5 age play area.
- There is a preference against having gates at the main entrances of the park because it is used as a thoroughway between streets.
- Concern about nature play/contemporary playground elements being unsafe or potentially inaccessible.

- Park is used by multiple generations, and grandparents should be able to easily supervise or retrieve children from play areas.
- Some neighbors desire lighting at night because the park is used as an important circulation route, however others are concerned that lighting will attract gatherings at night.

Dog Park:

- Local residents have a strong desire for a space to exercise and relieve their dogs and are disappointed there is not a dedicated area provided for them here.
- Dog owners often allow their dogs to run around the 2-5 play area off leash because it is enclosed by a fence, but this creates sanitation and maintenance concerns.
- The W&S/BPRD team shared that a dog park is not feasible on this site due to offset and will share dog park fit test studies with the community after the meeting to show those constraints more specifically.

General Comments:

- More gathering spaces and increased planting shown in Concept C was endorsed.
- There was a desire for paths and seating areas to stay separate from the splash pad so that they can be dry areas.
- There was a continued strong emphasis on keeping the park family/kid friendly, and maintaining the existing culture and legacy of the park as it has been enjoyed by neighbors for generations.

End of Notes.