

PARKS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE  
MEETING, APRIL 17, 2023

This meeting was convened to choose equipment for the children's play area in the new Page Park.

The following Village officials attended the meeting: Mr. Bruce Pirnie (Council Member and Chair, Parks and Grounds Committee), Dr. Alfred Muller (Council and Committee Member), Ms. Paula Durbin (Council and Committee Member), Mr. Julian Mansfield (Village Manager and ex officio Committee Member). Ms. Melanie Rose White (Mayor, Village of Friendship Heights, and Council Member), and Mr. Michael Dorsey (Council Member).

This meeting was originally scheduled for 11:00 AM April 6 to support the Council meeting on April 10. However, the Chair received a resident's request that the meeting be rescheduled for a later date so that young mothers would have an opportunity to attend. Accordingly, the meeting was rescheduled to 7:00 PM April 17. Unfortunately, the meeting was sparsely attended and young mothers were not in attendance.

The meeting was held in the auditorium and recorded using the new audio/visual equipment installed by Advanced Media Solutions of Virginia to facilitate live streaming. Committee members sat at two tables facing each other so that the wall-mounted cameras could record their faces.

## INTRODUCTION

Bruce Pirnie explained that committees work through issues so that the Council can make well-informed decisions. He gave street trees as an example. The Committee conducts a walk-through, identifies where trees should be planted, consults with an arborist, and offers a plan to Council. If the Committee just said "let's plant more street trees" the Council would be very ill-served.

He noted that typically the Committee asks the Council to approve new spending, but in this case the Council has already approved the expenditure. It concluded a contract with GreenSweep to build Page Park including equipment for the children's play area. This contract did not specify what equipment, leaving that decision for the Council in light of recommendations from Parks and Grounds.

He shared highlights of emails received in response to announcement of this meeting:

"I think the Forest Shop rustic playhouse and Water Lilies seesaw look like excellent, engaging options (with the playhouse being a special favorite--my son will love it!). If

you could find stepping stumps for kids to walk on vs. sitting stumps I think that would be both aesthetically pleasing and functional.”

“Yes - Sitting Stumps Yes - Water Lilies seesaw No- Hollow Logs — interiors will be wet and dirty No - Large Garden Statues No - Forest Shop playhouse — No playhouses of any kind, please.”

“The redesigned Page Park was never intended to serve this purpose, and I do not welcome the noise and commotion that will result from the park being repurposed this way. The neighbors of Page Park have consistently disapproved the idea that a playground should be built on the property and we do not want it now.”

“I don't care what kind of playground items you pick for this park, but please make sure they are very heavy and/or fastened down.”

“The space would maximize its purpose if it had a set of swings, a set of slides, and a small jungle gym. The see saw is good too. I can guarantee you after working with many, many toddlers that a set of sitting stumps, hollow log, and statues will not bring the kind of joy the children in this neighborhood deserve.”

#### PARAMETERS FOR CHOOSING EQUIPMENT

The Council supports a play area, not a traditional playground, which would feature such equipment as jungle gyms, slides, and swings. The nearby Willard Avenue Neighborhood Park offers this sort of equipment. Bruce gave these parameters for choosing equipment:

##### Demographic

Equipment should be appropriate for toddlers and small children ages two to seven.

##### Number of Items

The Committee should choose four items of equipment: one large item that requires six-foot separation and three smaller items that do not.

Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Maryland State Department of Education, and the National Safety Council recommend six feet of separation between large items of equipment. Children might fall from large items and must have an open space for safe landing. The level space in the children’s play area, which is carpeted in hardwood bark mulch, is 32’9” across and 24’10” deep.

##### Suggested Items

GreenSweep, Committee members, and residents have suggested equipment from Landscape Structures, Natural Playgrounds, and Kompan. (See Annex A, Suggested Items of Equipment.) GreenSweep suggested these items from Kompan: Forest Shop, Water Lilies, and Busy Wall, no separation required for Busy Wall.

## DISCUSSION

Michael Dorsey: The equipment should not make repetitive noise, which can be annoying. None of the equipment should allow movement of metal against metal. To prevent rot, bark should be removed from logs.

Melanie Rose White: I have long association with the National Association for Education of Young Children NAEYC [Note: NAEYC is a professional membership organization that promotes high-quality learning for children, birth through age eight}. The companies chosen [Natural Playgrounds, Kompan] have good reputations. I would chose the Labyrinth 4 rooms offered by Kompan. I would also choose wooden stumps and the wooden boat offered by Natural Playgrounds.

Norman Wheeler: I would choose a small slide. I also like the Water Lilies offered by Kompan. Could we have just one color for the panels of the Labyrinth offered by Kompan?

Paula Durbin: A resident from 4620 told me that the Park should be fenced. We should finish the Park before choosing equipment for the play area. I consistently voted against the new Page Park. In 2015, residents decisively rejected a proposal to build a playground. I propose narrowing the options to give the Council a choice.

Alfred Muller: Originally, a high-rise building was planned for this site. Later, we intended to build a community center there. We bought the property and demolished two houses standing on the site, but did not have enough money to build a park. After twenty years of dry weather, trees in the area began looking raggedy. A proposal to build a playground caused a big fuss and the project failed. Council members who had supported the project were voted out of office. The current Council revived interest in building a park. Up to this time, people with disabilities could not enter Page Park, but dogs loved it. Professional landscapers entered a contest for the best design, which GreenSweep won. We now have a children's play area. It should be kept as rustic as possible. Should we have a real hollow log or an artificial hollow log? Chevy Chase currently has an artificial hollow log that children use. None have become stuck in this hollow log. I think that bouncy items break easily and are difficult to maintain. For that reason, I would not choose Water Lilies offered by Kompan. I would choose Stepping Stumps and Seesaw offered by Natural Playgrounds. I find Labyrinth offered by Kompan to be interesting. We can always replace any items of equipment that do not serve their purpose.

Bruce Pirnie: We should include some kind of playhouse, which is often a central feature of play areas for young children. I would choose Forest Shop offered by Kompan, but would also be satisfied with Labyrinth offered by Kompan. I think that we should choose between these two items because they serve essentially the same purpose. If we were to choose Forest Shop, it should have a naturally colored roof,

which is offered in the catalogue. Note that wooden products from Kompan are fabricated from black locust, which is extremely durable and resistant to rot. I have experience with honey locust and can attest to its hardness.

Norman Wheeler: We need to deal with the problem of bicycles in the Park. Boys with bicycles took the plywood sheets used to protect the blue stone from heavy equipment and used them to build a ramp for jumps. Also, we need to regulate dogs, which should not be allowed off leash.

Bruce Pirnie: We're on an tangent, but these problems need to be addressed. If necessary, we will add vertical projections to the sitting walls so that bicycles and skate boards cannot be ridden over them. All dogs in the Park must be on leash and none should be allowed within the children's play area for obvious reasons. I would place signs at both entrances to the play area announcing that dogs are not allowed. Perhaps moral suasion will suffice to enforce this prohibition.

Alfred Muller: Here is another good argument for approving a dog park. Off-duty Montgomery County police officers who patrol our Village could assist in enforcing the requirement to keep dogs on leash.

## CONCLUSION

The Committee chose the following items for the children's play area, subject to approval from Council. All were approved unanimously except for the hollow log. These choices should focus the Council's attention on the most viable alternatives, considering the requirement for six-foot separation.

Forest Shop with naturally colored roof offered by Kompan. As an alternative, Labyrinth 4 Rooms offered by Kompan. If Labyrinth 4 Rooms were chosen, the panels should all be rustic brown, not many colored.

Log Crawl Tunnel, offered by Landscape Structures, 60" long x 43" high. Al and Paula voted for this artificial hollow log. Bruce voted against an artificial hollow log, preferring instead Hollow Logs 4' long offered by Natural Playgrounds, which is a real log hollowed to a 23" diameter.

Sitting Stumps ten inches high offered by Natural Playgrounds. The Committee noted that stumps of this height might also serve as stepping stumps.

Seesaw (log rocker) offered by Natural Playgrounds

## ANNEX A SUGGESTED ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT

GreenSweep, members of the Parks and Grounds Committee, and residents of the Village of Friendship Heights suggested these items of equipment for consideration.

Landscape Structures offer a wide variety of playground equipment in several different lines made of metal and composite materials. Natural Playgrounds specializes in rustic, unadorned equipment made of wood. Kompan offers equipment made of wood and several other materials. For wooden structures, Kompan uses Robinia pseudoacacia also called black locust, an extremely hard wood that is very resistant to rot.

Landscape Structures <https://www.playlsl.com/>

#173594 Log Crawl Tunnel 15'x17' with six-foot separation

Natural Playgrounds <https://naturalplaygroundsstore.com/>

Log House 4' x 6' x 5'

Hollow Logs 3' or 4' inside diameter 23"

Stepping Stumps - four pieces heights 10" 12" 15" 18"

Sitting Stumps - four pieces 10" high

Seesaw (log rocker) high side 24" or 36" off ground

Notched Log Climb 6' high

Kompan\_ <https://www.kompan.com/>

NR0404 Village Shop 6'7"x5'12" height 8'5" no separation required

NR0407 Forest Shop 5'3"x6'4" height 8'6" no separation required

M63272 Labyrinth 2 Rooms 6'2"x3'10" height 4'6" no separation required

M63273 Labyrinth 3 Rooms 9'10"x3'9" height 4'6" no separation required

M63274 Labyrinth 4 Rooms 6'1"x6'1' height 4'6" no separation required

M175 Water Lilies 15'5x15'5" with six-foot separation

GXY959 Spinner Disc 23'10"x23'10" with nine-foot separation

M620 Billy Goat Gruff 1'9"x4' height 3'2" 16'1"x13'6" with six-foot separation

MSC5407 Magic Garden 6'1"x2'10" height 3'11" no separation required

NR0820 Waterlilies Balance Posts - five 15'6"x19'1" with six-foot separation

NR0118 Bee Springer 13'7"x7"x14'6" with six-foot separation

NR0112 Forest Bug Springer 13'7"x14'4" with six-foot separation

NRO518 Lizard Sculpture, Oak height 1'2" no separation required