



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
Fairfield Hills Authority
MEETING MINUTES

**The Fairfield Hills Authority held a Meeting on June 28, 2021
in Council Chambers at the Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown CT 06470**

These minutes are subject to the approval of the FHA at their next meeting.

Present: Ross Carley, Brook Clark, Michael Holmes, Melissa Beylouni, Renata Adler

Absent: Andrew Philbin, Terry Sagedy

Public Attendance: Chris Malloy

Also Present: Amy Mangold – Director of Parks & Recreation, Carl Samuelson – Assistant Director of Parks, Clinton DePaolo – Chairman of Parks & Recreation Commission, Brad Accettella – Bikes & Trail Committee member, Paula Burton – Project Manager at Western CT Council of Governments – Recreational Trails, Christal Prezler – Deputy Director of Economic and Community Development, Kim Chiappetta (clerk)

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Public Participation: None

Acceptance of Minutes:

Chairman Ross Carley asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the meeting held May 24, 2021. Mike Holmes entertained. Renata Adler seconded and all were in favor.

Bicycle Playground – Parks & Rec:

Chairman Ross Carley invited Parks & Recreation Director Amy Mangold to come forward to discuss the Bicycle Playground. Director Amy Mangold began by reminding members of a presentation by the Bikes and Trail Committee in 2019 for the Bike Share Program and noted the insightful questions asked by Authority members. Since that time the popularity of biking on the campus has grown and there have been no complaints by pedestrians who share the trail with bicyclists. The Bike Share program continues to go very well, especially through the pandemic when families were looking for outdoor activities and there was a bicycle shortage. Assistant Director of Parks, Carl Samuelson, told Authority members of the many variations reviewed for the Bicycle Playground and that he feels the current location is the best for numerous reasons such as accessibility and keeping people out of the main areas of the campus. Paula Burton introduced herself as a resident of Newtown and a Project Manager at the Western CT Council of Governments (WestCOG). She explained that she has been involved with the AI's Trail National Park Service grant working on a plan for maintenance and connecting it throughout Newtown through sidewalks and other trails which includes various places in Fairfield Hills. She continued to tell the Authority that she is an advocate for mountain bikes and has done quite a bit with the New England Mountain Bike Association who has seen an uptick in young children wanting to bike and biking with their families. Having a bicycle playground will teach children safety and handling skills. Paula explained that these types of parks are a growing asset to many towns and gave examples of Madison, Bristol and Tolland who are installing pump tracks and skills parks that are open to the public. The Fairfield Hills campus is a good location since this is also the location of the Bike Share program. Chair of the Park & Recreation Commission, Clinton DePaolo, introduced himself to the Authority members and explained that he was in attendance to give his full support of this project. He expressed that the Bicycle Playground would be a great

asset to the community and campus. He recalled concerns expressed by the Authority when the Bike Share program was presented and explained that the Bicycle Playground would help to alleviate some of these concerns by providing a safe, contained location for children to ride away from the roads. Brad Accettella introduced himself as a member of the Newtown Bike and Trails Committee. His role on the Committee is to work on grants and volunteering. Brad told members that he works for a children's bike company and has been designing bikes since the early 2000's. He began working for the children's bike company a few years ago who helped to provide bike donations for the Bike Share program. Brad noted the health and educational benefits, and told members that he discovered his passion for bicycling as a child which led him to where he is today. He has worked on donation and education programs across country and feels Newtown could benefit from these types of programs and facilities that are low cost and high traction. Amy noted the talent and knowledge on this project that extends outside of the Parks & Recreation department.

The Parks & Recreation Director then presented their plan for the Bicycle Playground. (See attachment A.)

Below are discussion points from the presentation by slide:

What is a bicycle playground?:

Ms. Mangold began by providing a description of a bicycle playground. Melissa asked if there would be any pavement. Amy replied that there is no pavement; only natural trails. Clinton told members that looking at this through an economic lens show it is also beneficial for the community. Paula added that when people consider moving they are looking for trails and opportunities for bicycles. Renata Adler questioned the teeter totter that would be part of the playground. Paula explained that they are for small children so they are close to the ground.

Health Benefits in Kids & Economic Benefits:

Amy continued to review the health benefits, then moved on to the economic benefits. She explained that the bicycle playground will create jobs for adults and teens in the Newtown Community. Paula added that bicycling is a wonderful lifetime sport and a great alternative for children who prefer a more individualized activity.

Community Benefits:

Amy informed the Authority of the bicycle repair class taught by Brad and that a facility like this will provide the opportunity to teach safety classes. Ross asked if this will be a supervised area, or will it work like the skate park. Amy explained that it will operate like a local playground where they're not regulated. Access will be on a first come, first serve basis and they will perform spot checks for permits. As with other parks in town, police are asked to do directed patrols when needed. Being that the bicycle playground will be located close to the offices, there is not as much of a concern. Clinton added that the demographic is different from a skate park. This park will be for children ages 3 – 12 years old and will be more focused on learning to ride and safety; not necessarily tricks. Mike Holmes asked if there would be instructions available. Amy replied that they do plan to have a bicycle instruction program. Paula added that other bicycling programs in other towns that are the most popular are for children 3 – 6 years old. Mike asked about insurance to cover liability. Amy explained that they have worked with the Town's insurance company, Rose & Kiernan, to ensure that the Town's insurance will cover liability just as it does with the other town parks.

Current Concept:

Ross asked if there was a possibility to stake the area so that Authority members can walk the location and get an idea. Clinton said that the actual areas is much smaller than it appears on the maps. Carl pointed the group to the map in the slide show and explained that the playground would be installed 22 feet behind Plymouth Hall. Ross then asked Carl if it was necessary to dig for the installation. Carl explained that some of the features may have a fitting form which may need to be installed below the frost line. Brad further explained that the bicycle

playground is moveable so nothing is permanently secured into the ground. Amy then told members that this same presentation has already been presented to various departments and noted Christal's concern with the closeness to the buildings. It has been confirmed that the playground will be more than 15 feet away from vacant buildings. Ross asked if there were plans that could be reviewed by the Authority. Amy explained that the preliminary design documents were provided by American Ramp Company free of charge to the Town, and the detailed design will be at a cost. She noted the support of the American Ramp Company in the community. Amy continued to review the slide and explained that the plan is to have natural design features that will be aesthetically pleasing to the campus and have a low environmental impact.

Parking Plan:

Amy told the Authority that George Benson, Ron Bolmer, and Rob Sibley were brought to the proposed parking location. Some patch paving will be necessary. Carl then directed the group to the Parking Plan slide and explained that the location can accommodate two individual rows of parking, but depending upon what happens to Cochran Hall they may not be able to be utilized the one closest to the building. There may be an opportunity to add parking along the access road.

Features options:

Amy pointed out the teeter totter feature mentioned by Renata and showed members the types of features that may be installed.

Benefits to Fairfield Hills Campus:

Amy again emphasized the benefit of providing children a safe space to ride and the accessibility to the Bike Share program.

Funding:

Amy explained that their group is planning to fund the project through crowd funding, grants, corporate and private donations, and possibly some Municipal support. Ross asked about the costs. Amy moved to the next slide which showed a cost of \$80,000 for the features and installation. She told members that in addition patch paving for the parking lot would cost between \$20,000 and \$40,000. Fencing and lighting are currently not planned. The existing storm drain around Plymouth will be utilized for drainage. Mike asked if the bicycle playground was meant to be a daytime activity only. The presenters all agreed that this is meant to be a daytime activity only.

Maintenance:

Amy then moved on to the Maintenance slide. She explained that the Bike and Trail Committee can organize volunteers who will be stewards to maintain the playground, along with the Parks & Rec crew. Funds will be needed to perform any necessary maintenance, but cost for repairs is expected to be minimal.

Support & Approval Process:

Ross told the group that he spoke with the First Selectman who is in favor of the Bicycle Playground. Amy noted that in addition they have received the support of the Newtown Parks & Recreation Commission and the Newtown Bike & Trail Committee, but they have not yet presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission. They have discussed this proposal with the Community Center and Senior Center who are also in support.

The group briefly discussed the opportunity for parents to borrow bikes from the Bike Share program and Amy told members of the success of the program during the pandemic. Paula asked that when watching the videos members remember that this proposal is for a bicycle playground which is not quite the same as a pump track. Christal provided Authority members some of her thoughts to consider. She began by telling everyone that she is a biker, a runner, has done triathlons and has three kids who have learned to ride bicycles when they were

young. Christal explained that she supports the project, but questions the location and would like to see it in a safer location with less through traffic. She informed members of an EDA grant that was awarded to the Town for the Fairfield Hills campus which requires a percentage of commercial development in order to keep the grant funds. She continued to explain that it is the Economic and Community Developments department's responsibility to support awarded grants and if an effort is not made to be more strategic it would be a disservice. Christal next explained that from an economic perspective having activities all in one location is not beneficial and that there should be pockets throughout the various districts in town. Having activities in pockets throughout the town stimulates economic activity in those areas. In regards to Fairfield Hills, she explained that safety is always a concern. Although signage notes to remain 15 feet away from the vacant buildings this is an arbitrary number and there is the concept of a fall zone to consider. Parking is another thing to consider strategically. With recent interests in vacant campus buildings and a potential of up to \$70,000,000 in investment it is important to ensure that lack of parking does not become something that could derail this large of an investment. Buildings in the vicinity of the proposed location, Plymouth Hall and Cochran House, are planned to either be redeveloped or demolished, and although this could take a number of years it may be best to install the bicycle playground in another location instead of having to eventually move it. Ross again recommended that the Authority be able to visit the proposed outlined location and consider all factors. He would like the Authority to visit the location as a group so they can discuss this together and asked if there was an alternative location that it is provided to the Authority. Carl said that the initial proposed location was to the left of the Community Center between the NYA, but they had found many reasons why this may not be the right location. The group continued to discuss the skate park and the thought that went into selecting its current location. Melissa asked the presenting group if they considered the potential environmental impact to the playground if the buildings are taken down. Carl said that the area would be contained. Christal added that toxins are removed from the buildings prior to demolition. The Chairman expressed that he felt the bicycle playground was a great idea, but with recent proposals for the campus locations must be thoroughly considered. He continued to note that the Authority is starved for money and the importance of not compromising grants or promised funds. Ross reminded members of the First Selectman's support for the project and expressed that he felt it would great for the campus. Vice Chair, Mike Holmes, said that he fully agrees with Ross and would like to physically see the location and look at some alternative sites. Amy explained that the First Selectman directed Parks & Rec to the current proposed location. Brook Clark agreed with all comments and shared Christal's concerns with proximity to the building and the fall zone. The group discussed existing trees in the proposed location and that decaying trees would be removed.

Ross thanked everyone for spending the evening with the Authority, and asked Carl to let the Authority know when the area is staked out.

Chairman's Report:

Ross informed members that Walt Motyka has officially resigned and there are currently three candidates for the open position. He continued to tell members that developers submissions are still in the review process. Ross told members that NewSylum continues to do well. Their outdoor space has been expanded and they have fenced the area. Ross asked if anyone was aware of the removal of the granite steps. Christal answered that her department was not made aware, but other Town departments may have been. Members discussed the close proximity to Stamford Hall and concerns with insurance coverage.

Member Updates:

None

Staff Update:

Christal told the Authority that there was a request to put art up on a fence on the campus which is not permitted by the Zoning Regulations. She is working with the Cultural Arts Commission on a creative solution which uses the Boy Scout Kiosk. Terry Sagedy should have more information to present at the next meeting.

Kim updated members that events continue with the majority of the larger events happening in September. There is a meeting scheduled with the design team on the Fairfield Hills sanitary sewer replacement project in which it is expected to receive a design completion date. The next major step in the project will be the RFP for the construction.

Ross reminded members of his main ambition to have an event field on the campus. He personally asked for assistance from the Authority to formulate a plan to get funds scheduled in the Town budget. He explained that his vision is the demolition of Norwalk Hall to make way for an event field and parking, but recognized that the location may be marked for commercial development. He further explained that the Parks & Rec department may also be in support of this project as it would potentially move events from their soccer field which requires allot of work to make the field usable for sports again after an event.

Adjournment:

With no further business, Mike Holmes motioned to adjourn, Melissa Beylouni seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.

A recording of the meeting is available by contacting Kimberly.Chiappetta@newtown-ct.gov.



Newtown Bicycle Playground

2/3/2020

What is a bicycle playground?

A Bicycle Playground is exactly what it sounds like, a playground designed with features for kids to ride. Bicycle Playgrounds include features like ladder bridges, rollers, tunnels, and even teeter-totters specifically designed to offer a variety of fun obstacles that safely build cycling confidence.

Many people live in neighborhoods where kids don't have a safe place to learn to ride, so they end up trying to learn on the sidewalk or in the street. In a community with a Bicycle Playground, parents can teach kids to ride in an area created just for that purpose.



What is a bicycle playground cont...

There is an added motivation for kids to learn to ride since they are witnessing other kids riding and having fun. There are benefits to Bicycle Playgrounds at the top of the list for recreation professionals that kids never think about, such as getting kids outside, learning balance, gaining strength, focusing on and completing tasks, and interacting with other kids. Bicycle Playgrounds also teach kids to practice taking turns as they complete laps around the track.

Like traditional parks and playgrounds, a bike park or Bicycle Playground creates a place for community members to interact, families to bond, and new friendships to form. Everybody can use and enjoy a Bicycle Playground regardless of age. Even if your community has infrastructure with access to paved and natural trails, a Bicycle Playground can complement what already exists by providing a place purposefully built for young riders.

Start with the kids and start with a Bicycle Playground. Those kids will grow up happier, healthier and turn into the community's best advocates and volunteers for outdoor recreation. © 2020 **Progressive Bike Ramps**

Health Benefits in Kids

1. Exercises Cardiovascular Muscles - Cycling helps increase blood circulation, stamina, and increase metabolism.
2. Builds Muscle Mass - It's a known fact that cycling is a good exercise for the legs, but actually, it also strengthens the entire body.
3. Relieves Stress - Children have a hectic day with school and can feel completely drained out in the evenings. A bicycle ride can help them recharge their energy, focus and make them happier.



Health Benefits in Kids cont...

4. Strengthens Emotional Wellness & Confidence - Cycling enhances their self-confidence because they can travel longer distances independently. Children become aware of their bodies and their surroundings and feel more responsible.
5. Enhances Socializing Skills - Cycling helps in socializing with children and people in the neighborhood. It also encourages camaraderie and forces social interaction.
6. Keeps Kids Active - Spending time on indoor virtual games and using gadgets that confine children to the indoors makes them lazy and inactive. This inactivity can lead to childhood obesity in many children. Cycling is one of the best activities to reduce weight and keep them active.

Economic Benefits

- Direct Benefits

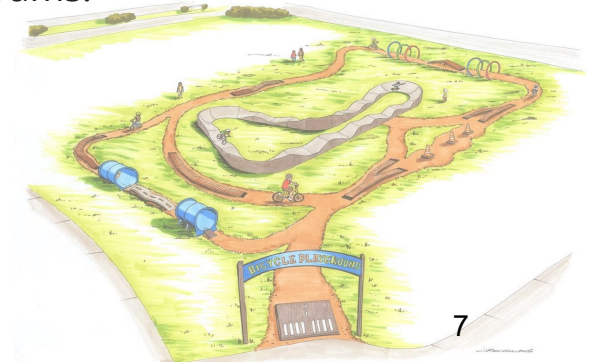
- Welcoming to guests and visitors.
 - It offers Newtown guests an opportunity to plan a family outing that includes activities, dining, and shopping at local small businesses.
- Directly supports local sporting goods retailers and local bicycle shops.
 - Bicycle parks and playgrounds drive bike and bike accessory sales within a 20-mile radius of the attraction.
 - The bicycle park can create job opportunities for adults and teens within the Newtown community.

- The health benefits of cycling in children decrease health care costs related to ADHD, obesity, and diabetes.



Community Benefits

- The community gets a valuable asset at a low cost
- Provides a safe place for kids to learn how to ride a bike off the narrow roadways and high traffic neighborhoods
- Children of all ages can learn & practice in the same location
- Bicycle playgrounds create a fun and positive atmosphere
- Many people can use a bicycle playground without disturbing the neighbors
- The community gets a valuable asset without emitting a lot of pollution if any at all
- Offers a location to run bicycle safety, learning, and skills programs.

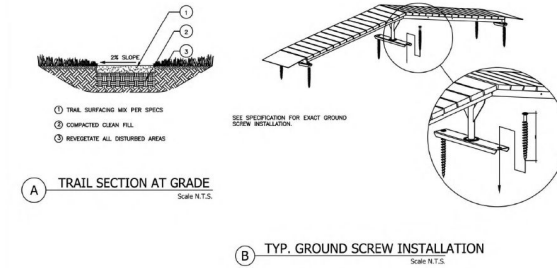


Current Concept

Location: Fairfield Hills
Campus

Preliminary design
includes:

- Natural design features
- Permeable surfaces
- No permanent structures
- Low environmental impact
- More than 15 feet from any building

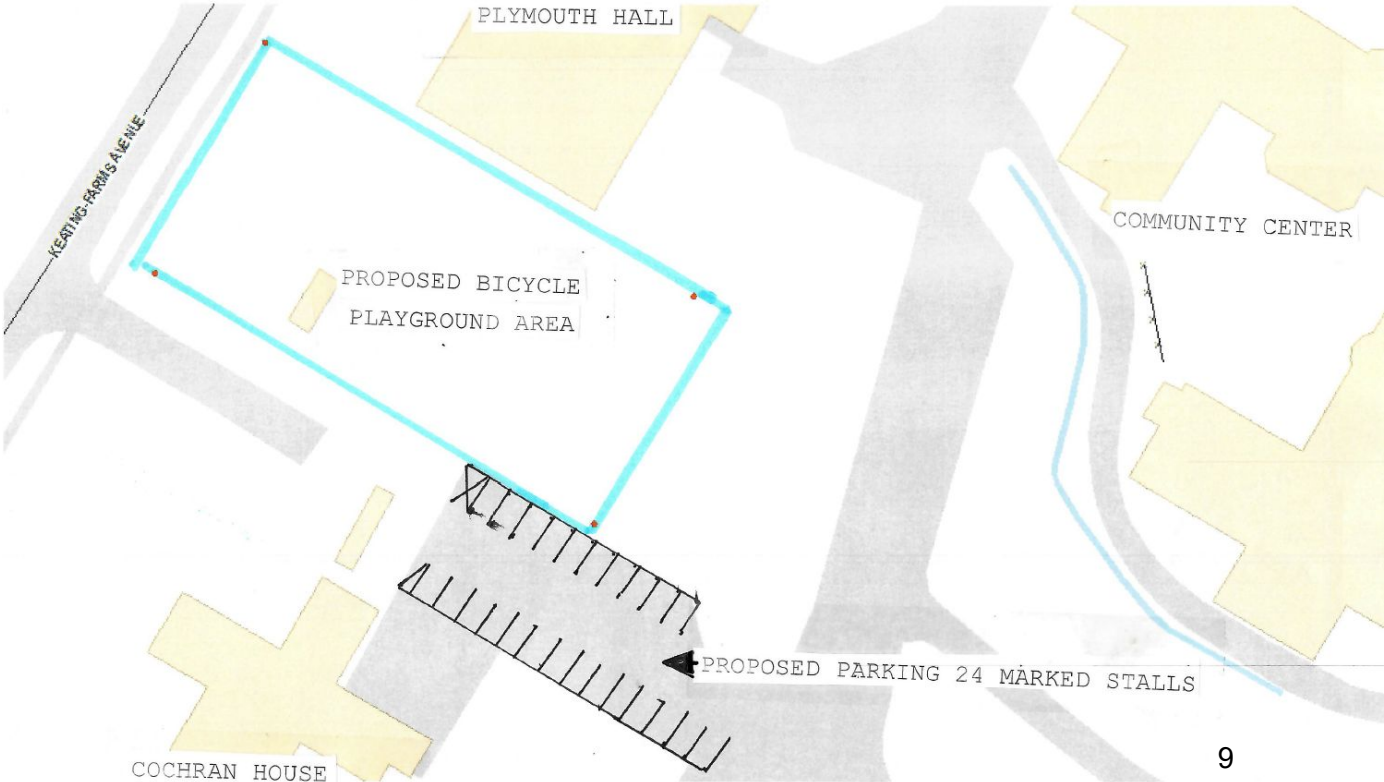


FEATURE LIST		
REF#	DESCRIPTION	QTY
1	FLAT LADDER SHORT	1
2	ROCK GARDEN	1
3	ZIG ZAG SHORT (15 DEG)	1
4	ROLLER	1
5	ROLLER CORNER (45 DEG)	1
6	ROLLER CORNER (45 DEG)	1
7	BERM TURN ROLLER	1
8	ROLLER	1
9	TUNNEL	1
10	180 DEG TURN	1
11	FLAT LADDER SHORT	1
12	TUNNEL	1
13	180 DEG TURN	1
14	CONE (CONCRETE)	1
15	CONE (CONCRETE)	1
16	CONE (CONCRETE)	1
17	CONE (CONCRETE)	1

LEGEND:



Parking Plan



Feature options

SPLIT DECISION



ROLLER x 2



90 DEG TURN x 3



ZIG ZAG S CORNER



STRAIGHT LADDER



FLAT SECTION



ZIG ZAG 90 DEG CORNER



SKINNY A-FRAME



A-FRAME



TEETER TOTTER



Benefits to Fairfield Hills Campus

- Provides a designated and safe place for kids to ride away from the existing paths and fields
- Provides a contained area where parents can watch and monitor their children
- Attracts more exposure to the FFH campus, facilities, and businesses
- Can utilize the children's bicycle share program that is already in place with Parks & Recreation



Funding

- Crowdfunding Campaign
- Grant Sourcing
- Corporate & Private Donation
- Municipal Budgeting



Budget

- American Ramp Estimate for installing the playground and features.
 - \$80,000
- Fencing
 - TBD
- Lighting
 - TBD
- Infrastructure
 - TBD parking patch paving per. Ron Bolmer
 - Use existing storm drain behind Plymouth



Maintenance

- Newtown Bike & Trail will organize volunteer stewards designated to maintaining the playground.
- Newtown Bike & Trail can fundraise for care and custody.
- Minimal cost for repairs and upkeep.
- Provides a sense of community pride!



Support & Approval Process

- ✓ First Selectman's Office
 - FFH Authority
- ✓ Newtown Parks & Rec
 - Land Use & Planning and Zoning
- ✓ Newtown Bike & Trail Committee
 - Buy in from Community Center and Senior Center for bike rack locations and access to playground.



Video Examples and Testimonials



Pumptracks and Bike Parks: Why They're Awesome for Kids!



Reference Links

- **Two Wheeling Tots**
<https://www.twowheelingtots.com/more-kid-friendly-bike-parks-pump-tracks-bucket-list/>
- **Progressive Ramp**
<https://www.progressivebikeramps.com/bicycle-playgrounds/>
- **CBC Kids**
<https://www.cbc.ca/kidscbc2/the-feed/5-bicycle-playgrounds-from-around-the-world>

