

Riley, Kate

From: Wendy Zens [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, January 12, 2020 10:39 AM
To: Riley, Kate
Cc: Peterson, Lisa; Roy, Brendon
Subject: Re: Reminder- Submit School Programming Questions

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Thank you for reaching out and asking for new comments.

I have concerns about the playground designs shown at the meeting on 1/9, namely whatever the motif, the playground areas will need to be constructed with solid, durable equipment, strong enough for the largest teenagers who often spend time socializing, playing basket ball and being teenagers at the school site after-hours. There is occasional mischief but it is rare and the presence of young people far outweighs any negatives. Providing props like the sticks, stumps and rocks, may be dangerous and they may end up damaging people or property or being scattered around. It would be a loss for the community to need to close-off play spaces that are now open and used by all ages of community members.

Simplicity of design might last longer in the site if it is without temptation for even minor disruption. It was mentioned that designers desire to make the park better than it is now, but there needs to be a recognition that it is a unique area in the city that is inclusive and welcoming. While it is not a showplace it is functional and in use year round. Comforts like more benches would make it more usable for elderly people. During school running students use the walkway as a track, there is free play on the fields during recesses, basketball all summer, there is shade and walking under the mature trees. Maintenance has always been a challenge, so less designed space might be more manageable for both the park and the school.

There are currently areas in the old building called pods, like porches that have provided more creativity stimulating outdoor spaces that are able to be monitored by staff. These protected spaces with movable objects that can be put inside after-hours provide creative play for students and safe places to socialize for older kids after school. Combining them with access to larger open spaces for physical activities was a winning combination for students, like my own kids 40+ years ago. Play grounds and open spaces will be even more important if the student population doubles. Can the pods be duplicated in the new school in some way? Plans for removal of the ball game programs for after-hours and week-ends already takes away another resource for Cambridge children.

The start of efforts to downsize the proposed building footprints and to consolidate and keep the open spaces are appreciated and I look forward to seeing the reworked designs on Thursday's meeting.

I have seen new letters of approval of the project posted on the site and have become worried that the parent groups are being suspicious of neighborhood folks portrayed as not wanting the project. Nothing is farther from where I as neighbors position myself. As a parent decades ago, I want the new school to be a wonderful experience for all it's children, so all ideas of how to proceed with the plan must be weighed for the joint benefit of the students and the community.