

# Cootes Paradise Home & School Association Outdoor Space Town Hall

March 18, 2024

*Present in Person:* Kara Jessop (President), Natalia Gonzales (Vice President), Mike Malysewich, Kristina, Nikol Piskuric, Stacey Brown, Matt Lindo, Heather Ricks, Lisa, Rosalie van Staalduinen, Bekki Kam, Jennifer Hogan, Sarah Alves

*Online:* Caitlin, Bobbi Duncan, Hillary, Jaime Fallon, Lauren Vraets, Meredith Vanstone

*Minutes prepared by Jean Brown*

## **Home & School Introduction and Land Acknowledgement (Kara Jessop)**

### **History of Existing Outdoor Area:**

- A subcommittee was created to spearhead the effort to overhaul the outdoor play area
- Home & School contributed financially but did not lead the initiative
- Committee obtained grants from City of Hamilton and private sources (TD Bank)
- Natural playground was not properly maintained over time

### **Introduction of Nikol Piskuric:**

- Joined Home & School because she felt motivated to improve outdoor space based on feedback from kids, such as the student-led protest last year, about their disappointing experiences with outdoor play at Cootes
- Undertook a leadership role in effort to renew outdoor spaces and improve kids' outdoor play options and accessibility

### **Plan:**

- gather opinions from school community to be sure that school orgs, administration, and community had shared priorities and ideas
- Created outdoor survey to collect ideas and gather data
- identify projects to which Home & School could contribute to financially

### **Survey Results:**

- had 116 respondents
- Separated into short-term and long-term goals, survey was designed to gauge the project priorities of the community
- Short-term goals (projects that could be completed this year)
  - adding equipment and spray painting blacktop games were most popular short-term goals
  - adding soccer nets also a popular choice
- Long-term:
  - Improving back grass area received most support
  - Specific ideas:
    - replace grass (artificial grass? micro clover?)
    - add equipment
- Survey also asked what kids want to do at recess:

- Climbing and running were the priorities for kids
- Additional Comments:
  - Multiple comments about reducing mud and generally making the outdoor areas more playable

### **Next Steps:**

- Short-term Goals
  1. Purchase new outdoor equipment (such as soccer nets) and a shed to house (school board has a preferred shed)
  2. Add new spray painted games (more 4-square, basketball area, maze, map) to blacktop
  3. Create an outdoor chalk board
- These projects will be financed exclusively by the Home & School Association
  - Home and School is currently gathering quotes and hoping to implement these by end of year
- Long-term Goals
  1. Grading and seeding back area to reduce mud
  2. Fixing mud problem in kinder pen
    - woodchip retention
  3. Install a climbing structure in the natural playground area
- Items 1 and 2 are outdoor maintenance issues and should not be financed by Home & School
  - Maintenance has explained that we need to apply to School Board—admin to submit Outdoor Design Project Request Form
- Quotes:
  - Back grass area (~\$20,000)
  - Mud in kinder (~\$20,000)
  - Sandbox in creative (\$13,500)

### **Next Steps:**

1. Submit Proposal
2. School Board approves and then we gather quotes
3. Select vendors

*Thank you to Outdoor Space Team (Mike Malysewich, Stacey Brown, Kara), School admin Ms. Hogan and Dr. Alves, survey respondents*

### **General Discussion:**

- How do these responses align with Student Survey that was given in school?
  - Student survey is available online
  - although not quantified in the same way, overall student priorities tend to align with Home & School survey
- Discussion of possibility of adding turf to back field
  - likely more expensive
  - there was significant sentiment expressed in Home & School survey against turf or paving over grass

- Suggestion: could there be a mix of turf (such as a small turf soccer field) and natural ground cover?
- Are there other schools we could look to as an example of what we would like to do here?
  - encourage community members to share pictures of other schools
  - recommended for School Administration to include photos in proposal to School Board
- Could we get feedback from a landscape architect/designer to help create a staged plan and contribute to the proposal to school board?
  - perhaps we could find a program at a post-secondary school that would be willing to take up our project
- Opportunities for Grants:
  - longer-term outlook
  - Meredith Vanstone volunteers for grant-writing
- Strategizing School Board vs. Grant funding
  - Use school board for more attainable things like fixing grass and mud—functional items
  - Consider grants for things like climbers and “extras” that are less likely to be approved by school board
  - School Board will approve any vendors as long as they are licensed and insured
- Paving from Glen to northwest entrance path is part of the Churchill redevelopment plan

**Next Steps:**

- Submit Grass/grading proposal and shed request
- Home & School to lead effort to create painted games and purchase small outdoor play equipment (soccer nets)
- Community members are encouraged to share contact information of landscapers or others who could help create a plan

**Next Home & School Meeting: April 16, 7:30-8:30**