

Client: Boston Parks and Recreation Department, Friends of the Public Garden

Project Name: Improvements to Tadpole Playground, Community Meeting #3

Project Number: ENG24-1290

Date: March 16, 2026

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Presenters:

- Kevin Bogle (KB), Senior Project Manager, Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD)
- Rebecca DiTommaso (RD), Director of Capital Projects & Parks Care, Friends of the Public Garden (FOPG)
- Cassie Bethoney (CB), Practice Leader – Landscape Architecture, Weston & Sampson Engineers (WSE)
- Regan Andreola (RA), Senior Project Manager, Weston & Sampson Engineers (WSE)
- Allison Gramolini (AG), Project Landscape Architect, Weston & Sampson Engineers (WSE)
- Shanna Dixon, Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD)

Community Attendees:

- Samantha Courage, Mayor's Liaison for Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Fenway, Kenmore and Mission Hill
- Jessie Frasier, Office of City Councilor Durkan
- Nina and Eliezer, JQES Lilypad Idea Lab
- Ted Matwijec
- Valerie Burns
- Sandra Burns
- Ricky Zhang
- Dan Murphy

Tadpole: Presentation Review

- KB began by introducing meeting etiquette and the meeting's agenda. He informed the public that this meeting will be recorded and will be available on the City's website the following week. KB then introduced Rebecca DiTommaso of FOPG and the Weston & Sampson team members.

- CB introduced the meeting's agenda, which includes a brief overview of the site and its history, a description of the design process to date, and presentation of the preferred site plan.
- CB introduced the project's location and history. It is located on Boston Common east of Frog Pond, and the planned improvements will replace the existing playground with a larger play area covering most of the 'lawn panel' bounded by pedestrian walkways. The site has a long history, beginning with Indigenous groups using the land now known as Boston Common seasonally for thousands of years prior to European contact. It was officially established as Boston Common in 1634, declared a Boston Landmark in 1977, and listed as a National Historic Landmark in 1987. The first wooden playground was built in the 1970s, and the playground was most recently renovated in 2002.
- CB provided an overview of the project schedule, noting that the design process began back in fall of 2023. In 2024 WSE worked with Josiah Quincy Elementary School (JQES) to set up a series of workshops to get student feedback on the design. JQES students helped WSE develop a design concept from three initial options. The team also held two community meetings and developed an online public survey. WSE also met with the Massachusetts Tribe for feedback and commissioned an archaeological study to ensure the project would not disturb important historical artifacts. The team has developed a preferred design presented tonight for community input. Once approved, it will proceed to construction documentation and construction, with anticipated opening in fall 2027.
- CB introduced the Boston Common Master Plan, which highlighted the need to renovate Tadpole Playground. The report included a conceptual "fit study" for the most-desired elements at Tadpole. Site analysis indicated that expanding the play area's footprint would allow for enhanced accessibility, more play value, and space to incorporate additional amenities.
- CB presented an overview of community feedback received throughout the process. Feedback fell broadly into three categories: a need for more site amenities like seating and stroller parking; additional play value, especially accessible play options, swings, and slides; and embracing the site's setting with more green space and historical features.
- CB described the three initial concepts developed in 2024. These were presented to JQES students, who helped WSE refine the design into a preferred plan.
 - Concept A, "The Hills," emphasized play that embraces the site's natural topography
 - Concept B, "Sliding through Time," focused on interpreting the area's local history
 - Concept C, "Play to the Max," emphasized maximizing play value by incorporating play elements at a variety of elements, from ground level to elevated towers
 - Feedback received indicated that each had merit, and the refined concept incorporated elements of each design.
- CB presented the 2025 design developed through this process and highlighted elements from each initial concept.
- RA then presented the team's current preferred site plan. The plan maintains the current main entrance across from Frog Pond. It is designed around a natural history theme and incorporates seating and stroller parking throughout. The 2-5 area is wetland-themed and includes custom egret and herring-themed play structures and an accessible spinner. The 5-12 area is forest-themed with a wooden treehouse play structure, a spinning carousel swing, a zipline, and several slides. The 5-12 structure also has an accessible ramp entrance. A central

'story circle' provides a central reading and resting zone surrounded by trees and perennial plantings. Both entrances area ADA-accessible and are connected by a central accessible path. The playground will be fully enclosed with perimeter fencing and gates. The design also proposes a unique fish weir-themed ball run, which will double as a fence to protect proposed plantings.

- KB then opened the floor for the first round of questions.

General Comments:

- Will the existing bronze frog sculptures be used in the new playground?
 - KB: Yes, they will be relocated in the new play space.
- Will there be a splash pad in the new playground?
 - CB: No, because the playground is next to Frog Pond, where there is a splash pad planned!
- Will there be opportunities for public art on the herring and egret structures?
 - CB: The structures are custom-designed by a manufacturer, Kompan, and the team is not planning to add art to those specifically. However, there will be opportunities for art elsewhere in the design, especially through the poured-in-place rubber pattern and the ball run element.
- What is the intended timeline? Is funding secured?
 - KB: Yes, funding is secured through the City of Boston's 2027 Capital Improvements Plan.
 - CB: Construction is intended to start in spring of 2027 for a late fall 2027 opening. Note that there are advantages to bidding at the end of a calendar year or the beginning of a new year when contractors are planning upcoming work and pricing is more competitive. We are considering bid timing as part of scheduling. We also considered the timing of the FIFA World Cup and planned to avoid scheduling heavy construction at the same time.
- Will there be a ribbon cutting?
 - Yes, there will be both a groundbreaking and a ribbon cutting and the public will be informed of both events! Anyone who has attended a community meeting like this one will be specifically notified.
- Overall design was well received and appreciated by attendees who chose to speak at the meeting.

For any additional questions, please feel free to reach out to Kevin Bogle via email: kevin.bogle@boston.gov

Minutes submitted by: Allison Gramolini