

Hingham Centre Play Area

Neighborhood Meeting July 13, 2019

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Overview



OVERVIEW

How did we get here?

- During the spring of 2017, the Town closed the play area with no budget or plan to replace the aging, unsafe, and dilapidated equipment.
- That's when a group of citizens began a fundraising campaign to replace the play equipment.
- It soon became clear that we could not simply replace the equipment without considering issues like fall safety, fall zones, and accessibility.
- This "setback" gave us the chance to create a more transparent and inclusive process — to help ensure the new play area balances the varied interests of our community.

How did we get here? (continued)

- After discussing project goals and constraints in the fall of 2017, we met with Town officials and local installers, researched playground manufacturers, and consulted with local landscape architect Sean Papich.
- This led to the creation of two different design options: one featuring Dynamo equipment, and another featuring equipment from BCI Burke.
- In February 2018, we then administered an online survey¹ to gather community input on project goals, preferences, and the two design options.

¹ The survey ran from 2/7/18 to 2/11/18 and generated 186 responses.

OVERVIEW

How did we get here? (continued)

- The survey results informed the design option that the Planning Department and Selectmen unanimously approved in a public meeting in June 2018.
- In September 2018, the Town informed us that they had received complaints from a handful of citizens regarding the aesthetics of the proposed climber, and advised us to “come to consensus.”
- After many discussions and several iterations, we proposed a less functional, minimalist version of the approved design.

OVERVIEW

How did we get here? (continued)

- Though we received positive feedback from the Town, the same small, but vocal group of citizens maintained that the proposed equipment would look out of place.
- We then proposed replacing the climber¹ with a see-saw in January 2019.
- We received positive feedback from the Town again, but we have not yet obtained Selectmen approval.
- We have to asked to appear before the Town in another public Selectmen meeting, and are awaiting their response.

¹We proposed replacing the climber despite it being preferred by 72% of survey respondents

Proposed Plan



Version 1

Approved version (June 2018)



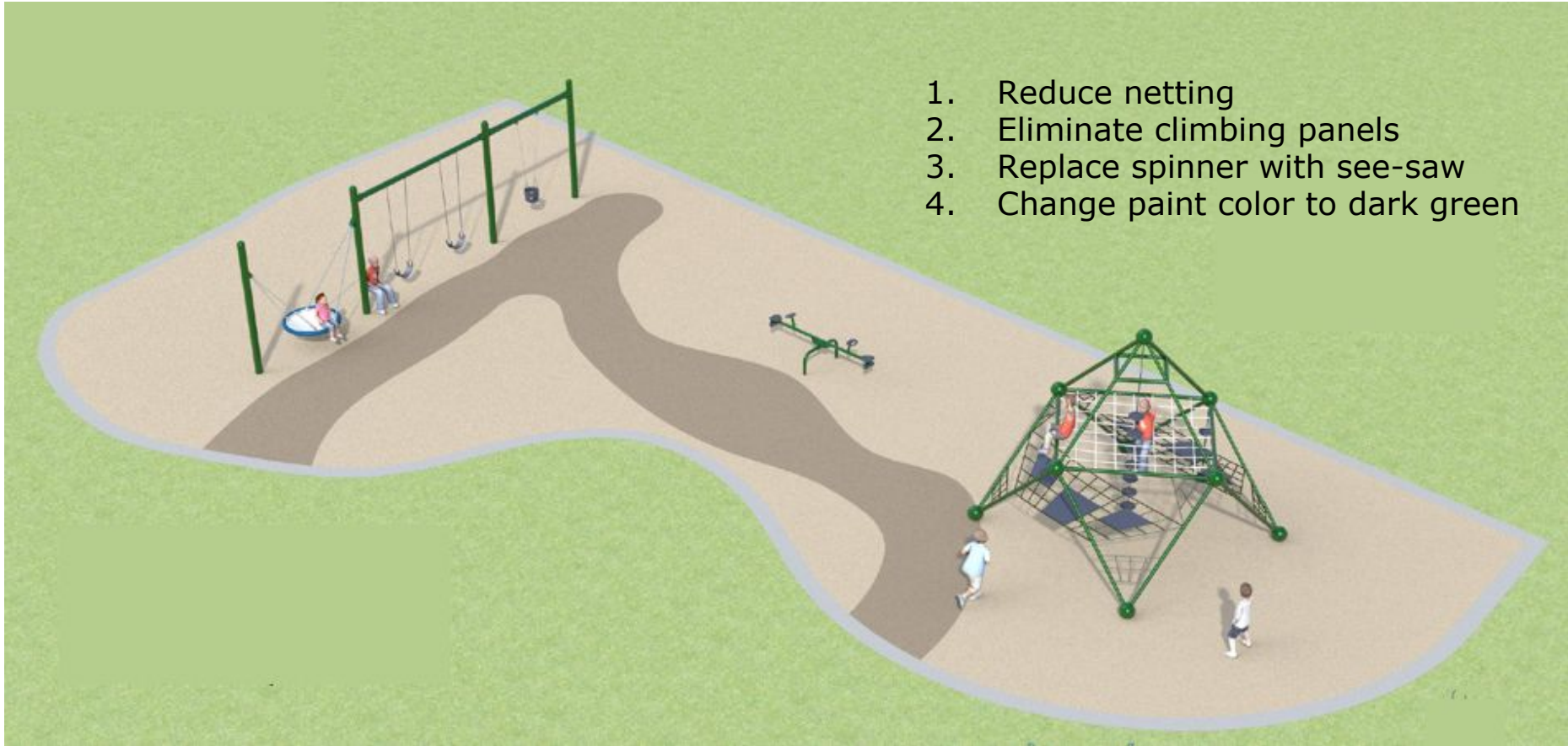


Version 2

**Less functional, minimalist
version**



1. Reduce netting
2. Eliminate climbing panels
3. Replace spinner with see-saw
4. Change paint color to dark green

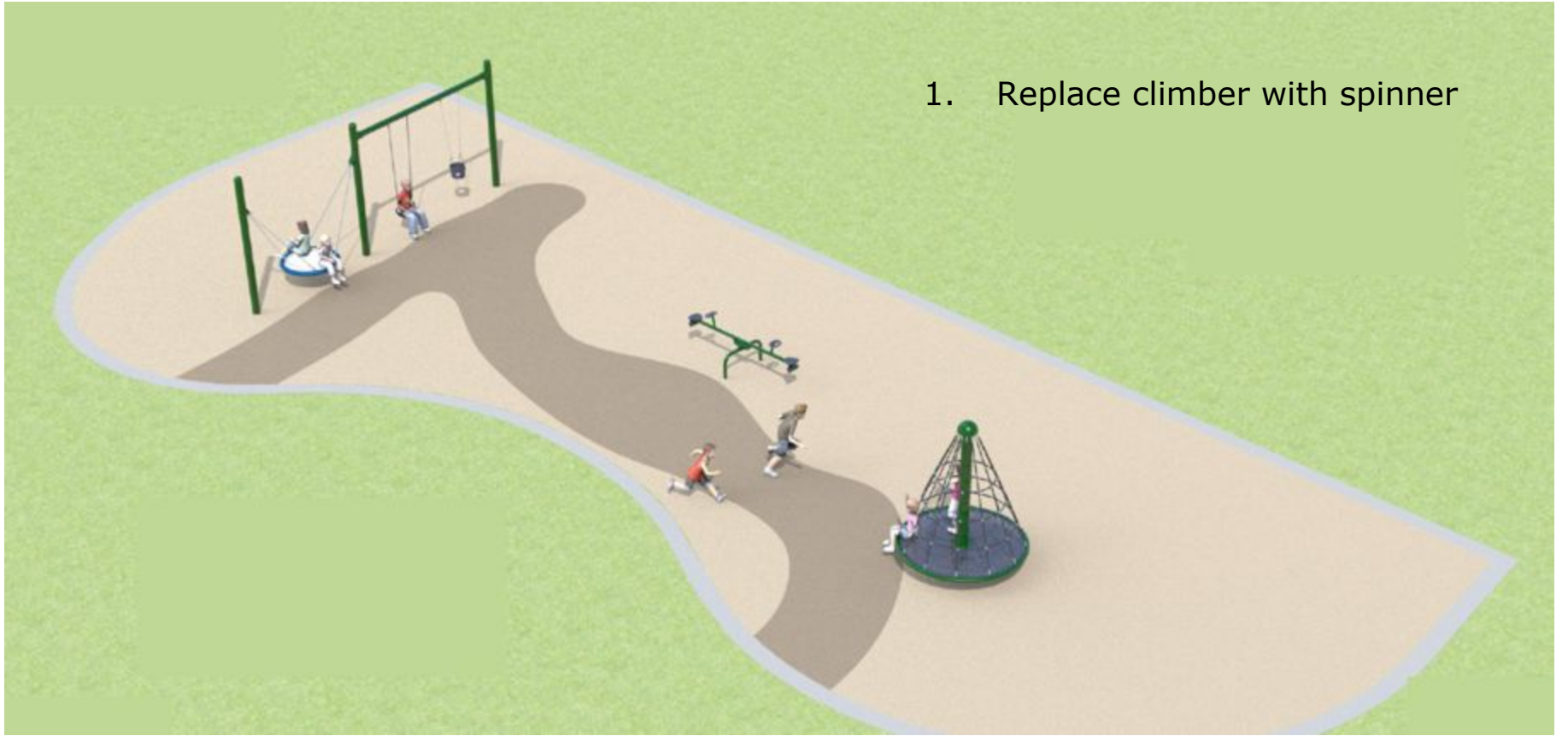


Version 3

Latest/current version



1. Replace climber with spinner



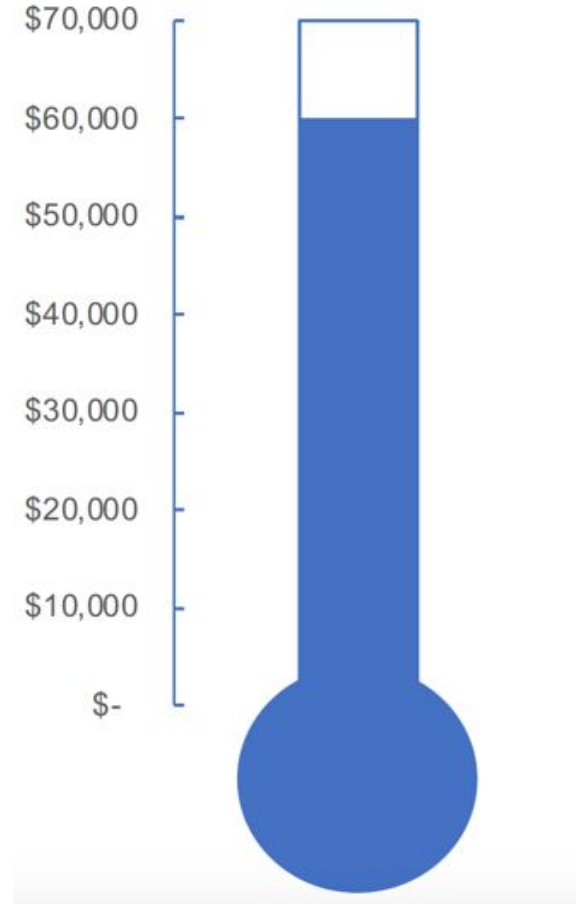
Fundraising



FUNDRAISING

Where do things stand?

- Unfortunately, today's playgrounds are not inexpensive.
- In this case, we expect the cost to come in around \$70,000 to \$80,000.
- The good news is that we have commitments for about \$60,000 so far.
- However, we decided to pause our fundraising efforts until we receive the Town's approval, and commitment.



Next Steps



NEXT STEPS

Where do we go from here?

- The next step is for us to obtain approval on the latest plan from the Town in an upcoming Board of Selectmen meeting.
- Once we obtain Town approval, we will turn our attention back toward fundraising in order to close the remaining gap.
- Stay informed and spread the word. With your help, and the support of the community, we will we make this neighborhood gem a safe and accessible play area for children of all abilities for years to come.
- Keep up-to-date by joining our email list at [www.SaveHingham**Centre**Playground.com/signup](http://www.SaveHinghamCentrePlayground.com/signup)

FAQs



What are the goals of the project?

The main goal is to restore the play area for future generations. More specifically, the goals are as follows:

- Meet modern safety standards
- Be accessible to children of all abilities
- Serve children ages 2-5, but be dynamic enough for older children too
- Keep to three pieces of equipment that are of a similar size to the existing
- Use colors that blend with the adjacent cemetery and natural surroundings
- Choose durable, high-quality equipment that will last a long time

How did you come up with the current design?

We came up with the current design¹ by gathering input from the community via an online survey², and by working closely with Town of Hingham officials, playground equipment manufactures, local installers, and local landscape architect Sean Papich.

¹ The current design is one of two versions shared with the Selectmen in response to aesthetic concerns raised after they approved the original design in June 2018.

² The survey ran from 2/7/18 to 2/11/18 and generated 186 responses

Why has the design changed after approval?

The original design was unopposed and unanimously approved during a public Board of Selectmen meeting on June 5, 2018. However, the Town wavered after a small, but vocal group of citizens raised aesthetic concerns about the proposed climber. Though offering less play value (and despite its popularity within the larger community), we have proposed replacing the climber with a see-saw to address the concern.

Has the Town approved the design changes?

Although the Town has given us positive feedback regarding the proposed changes, we are still waiting to get on their agenda at a future Board of Selectmen meeting in order to seek their approval.

When will the Town break ground?

That's a great question. At present, we are trying to get on the agenda of the next Board of Selectmen meeting. However, it has been difficult to get the Selectmen to make this project a priority (presumably due to competing priorities). Once the Town approves the proposed changes, we can turn our attention back toward raising the remaining money we need to fund the project.

Why is the project being privately funded?

Unlike other playgrounds maintained by either the Hingham Recreation Department, or the Hingham Public School Administration, the Hingham Centre play area is maintained by the Hingham Board of Selectmen. Given the growing list of demands on the Town's resources, restoring the Hingham Centre play area is unfortunately and understandably not a priority. In short, if private citizens and businesses don't fund it, the Hingham Centre play area will eventually go away.

Why did you chose equipment from Dynamo?

We considered three playground equipment manufacturers: Dynamo Playgrounds, BCI Burke, and Landscape Structures. All three companies make commercial equipment, but we ultimately chose Dynamo based on the results of our online survey, their innovative designs, and their reputation for making high quality equipment. Although it was not the deciding factor, we were also happy to learn that Boston, Newton, Brookline, Lexington, Marblehead, and more than a dozen other Massachusetts communities have installed Dynamo equipment.

Will restoring the play area create parking issues?

The current play area attracts mostly pedestrian traffic today due to the fact that there is limited parking, and only three pieces of play equipment. That is why one of the project goals (and one of the Town's mandates) is that we keep to three pieces of equipment that are a similar size and scale as the original. We are not increasing the capacity of the play area, so there is no reason to think that restoring it will create parking issues.

Can we just repaint the old equipment?

We know many people within the community have fond memories of their children growing up playing on the existing equipment. The old swing, see-saw, and jungle gym have served our community well for several decades, but the equipment does not meet today's safety standards, and is dilapidated with metal protrusions, sharp edges, and failing paint that likely contains lead given its age. It is simply well beyond its useful life. Further, the play area is not accessible, and the equipment is dangerously close to the wrought iron fence surrounding the cemetery per current fall zone guidelines.

Will any trees be removed?

Though the wood chip play surface and accessible pathway will require some minor excavation, we do not expect it to adversely impact any of the adjacent trees. The Town could change its mind, but it is worth noting that when the Planning Department, and Selectmen both approved the original plan to restore the play area in June 2018, they did so with the condition that no trees would be removed.

Do we need wood chips, and an accessible path?

We all love the look of grass, but it does not provide a “firm, stable, and slip resistant” surface per state and federal accessibility guidelines. That is why all new playgrounds in Hingham, like Kress Field and the new Hull Street playground, feature poured rubber play surfaces. However, unlike those larger playgrounds, ours features just three pieces of equipment. Therefore, most of the play surface will comprise wood chips with just enough rubber (in a neutral earth tone) to create a discrete pathway to the equipment so that children of all abilities may access it.



Thank you!