

## **Subject: Reintroduction of the Playground Workgroup**

February 2, 2025

To the Mayor and Town Council,

Given the recent listserv discussions about elements of the Woodward Park facilities and playground equipment, as well as the letter being circulated for signatures specifically regarding the merry-go-round, members of the ad hoc playground workgroup would like to take this opportunity to more formally and factually introduce ourselves to you, as well as to our neighbors. We think it's important to clarify some points that have been raised, explain the group's proposed mission and timeline, and encourage everyone to reach out to us if they have questions or concerns.

After the Town Council voted unanimously to remove the jungle gym at the December 2024 council meeting, a group of neighbors, many of whom have young children, formed an ad hoc workgroup that was interested in making improvements to Woodward Park including the installation of new equipment and the possible removal, relocation or repurposing of older equipment. This work would be a continuation of earlier efforts to update the park, including work done around 2003 and an effort that started in 2014 to update the park's youth equipment.

On the advice of many of our town leaders, the workgroup decided that a comprehensive approach to improving the park would be better than making piecemeal changes. This comprehensive approach would come in the form of a master plan that would be guided by the need to install safe, accessible, appealing, functional park equipment that was compatible with Washington Grove's historic aesthetic. The group would consult the Washington Grove Comprehensive Plan, its Historic Register, and any relevant safety and accessibility regulations in the process of developing the master plan.

Our workgroup met for the first time on Sunday, January 12th at 9am to do a walking tour of a snow-laden Woodward Park and its neighboring areas. [This was the slideshow we viewed in preparation for our first meeting](#). As we visited various spots around the park, we considered the equipment that we have, the spaces that they sit in, and thought about what could be. [These are the notes from our visit](#). As you will see, it was just a brainstorming session, where members were asked to share their experiences and ideas. It was meant to kickstart our planning process.

Our workgroup members then completed a survey the afternoon of our park visit, and we reconvened a week later to review the ideas that had emerged and to begin discussing potential equipment needs, whether we want to recommend expanding the “footprint” of the playground area, and whether we thought we needed to move any equipment. Some of us were excited about some new equipment that we tested during a visit to a local playground equipment company. Ultimately, the workgroup decided that we should reign in our excitement and take a more methodical approach to the creation of the master plan. We decided that we should seek professional guidance in order to comply with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) regulations and out of a general understanding that we don’t know what we don’t know. We plan to consult and seek guidance from other committees whose work impacts the park, such as the Forest and Beautification Committee. Additionally, we recognize Washington Grove’s designation on the national register and we will be mindful of the Historic Preservation Commission’s recommendation that Woodward Park should retain “different styles from the different stages of playground development that both reinforces the long time use of the location and helps tell the story.” Currently, the workgroup has not made any decisions and the master plan has not even been started.

The workgroup will be asking our town leaders to commit funds (potentially \$30,000) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget for the initial implementation of a master plan, hopefully including the addition of one or more new pieces of playground equipment during FY 2026. The proposed master plan will be developed with inputs from town residents and vetted publicly before submission to the Town Council for approval. It will guide how any money approved in the FY 2026 budget will be spent. We hope that the Town Council will also commit funding under the capital improvement funds over the next few years to execute the approved master plan. A multi-year commitment, subject to periodic resident input and council approval, will allow for the master plan to be implemented in phases.

The workgroup suggests that once a master plan has been vetted and approved, that a formal body, such as a standing committee, be created to oversee its phased implementation. Such a committee could also take responsibility for ensuring that all of the playground equipment is inspected according to a regular schedule, and that funds are allocated for seasonal maintenance of both the equipment and the spaces. The Mission, Committee Structure, and Membership would be defined at that time.

The workgroup understands and fully expects that any plan we develop will be announced in all the appropriate forums and will be open to feedback from our neighbors. We emphasize that Woodward Park belongs to everyone and we will be happy to consider all comments and suggestions for improvement.

The members of the workgroup hope that our neighbors will embrace this process and help us develop a park that serves the needs of everyone. If you have any questions about the workgroup's mission and/or process, please feel free to contact any of the members, who are listed below.

**Woodward Park  
Playground Workgroup Members**

- **Andy Bielen** (asbielen@gmail.com)
- **Lisa Bielen** (lvbielen@gmail.com)
- **Jonathan Dail** (jd.inthegrove@gmail.com)
- **Sandra Gallagher** (gallaghersandra17@gmail.com)
- **Jane Klinger** (janeklinger89@gmail.com)
- **Peggy Koniz-Booher** (peggykb@gmail.com)
- **Arlene McCrehan** (mccrehans@gmail.com)
- **Mickey Minnick** (mickey@nostalgic.fm)
- **Sara Parent-Ramos** (sparentr@gmail.com)
- **Eva Patrone** (counciloreva@gmail.com)
- **Lacy Prebula** (lacy.prebula@gmail.com)
- **Oscar Ramos** (oscar.ramos.01@gmail.com)
- **Ilya Ryaboy** (iryaboy@gmail.com)
- **Anna Spector** (aspectorpj@gmail.com)
- **Jen Wilmering** (jenni\_101978@yahoo.com)