

Committee looks at two plans for Lafayette park

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Lafayette Street Park Advisory Committee is getting closer to choosing a design for the next phases of the park.

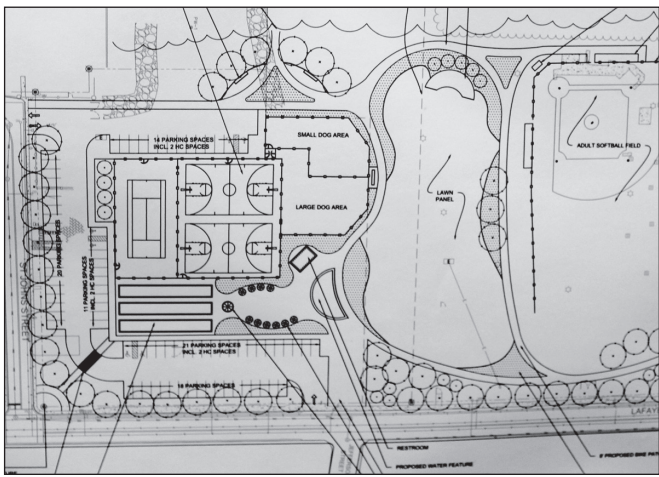
During a meeting June 7, two concept plans were presented by the engineering firm of Mott MacDonald. Landscape architect Jason Harkins took earlier suggestions of the committee and produced two concept plans, including measurements of proposed features of the park.

Concept one features a U-shaped parking area.

"That gets you 14 additional parking spaces including two handicapped-accessible spaces with access to the dog park," he said.

The size of a proposed new dog park section of the park would be similar to the current configuration but split into sections for large dogs and small dogs, Harkins said. City engineer Tom Thornton said it probably would be a 65/35 split with larger dogs getting the bigger section. The dog park will have a water spigot.

Deputy Mayor Shaine Meier said concept one



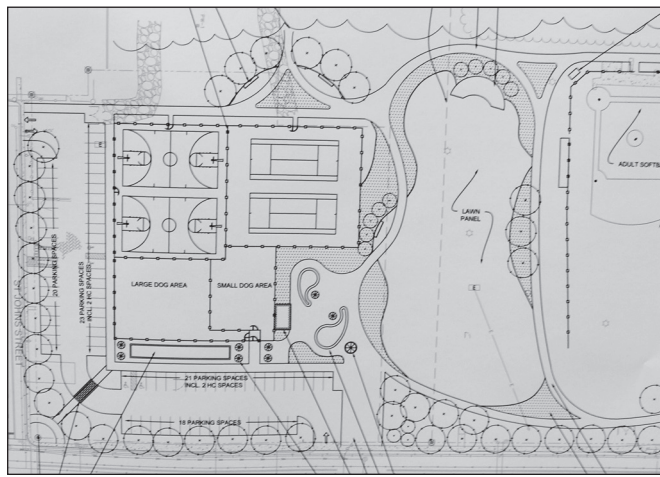
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Concept one would have a baseball field, two basketball courts, one tennis court, bocce ball courts and a dog park, as well as a plaza with a seating area, picnic tables and a fountain.

places the dog park section toward the back of the park but concept two places it park toward the front of the park.

Concept one would have two basketball courts, one tennis court and bocce ball courts. He said this concept would not allow room for two tennis courts in order to create a plaza space with a seating area, picnic tables and a fountain.

Harkins said a stage would be at one end of a lawn area. Thornton said



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Concept two would have a baseball field, two basketball courts, two tennis courts, bocce ball courts and a slightly larger dog park, as well as a plaza.

the park would have at least one bocce ball court. He said the concepts were open to suggestions and changes.

Thornton said an open lawn area is included in concept one, measuring about 300 feet by 100 feet.

Concept two would have two basketball courts, two tennis courts and a slightly larger dog park, according to Harkins. He said concept one would offer more parking spaces with a total of 84.

An 8-foot-wide bike path would pass through the upper section of the park on both concept plans, split between the lawn area and baseball field.

Meier said he prefers concept one. He suggested moving the bocce ball court to make room for a second tennis court under that plan.

Dog park users were in attendance. They suggested a gazebo in the new dog park section to provide shade and noted the mulch surface in the current dog

park is not well maintained and is muddy in wet weather. Putting the dog park in the rear section of the park would place it closer to wetlands, which is a good

idea, according to the dog park users. Harkins suggested a stone dust surface as an alternative to mulch.

Meier said pickleball has become popular and can be played on a tennis court. Committee member Sharon Lee Kustra said the front of the park would have a line of trees and a parking lot. She suggested signs at the park's two entrances to direct users to their chosen activity.

In concept one, Meier suggested moving the restrooms toward the event space and lining up the dog park with the basketball courts.

Committee member Hilary Pritchard said she hoped a walking track around the park would be included. She suggested an additional lane on the bike path for walkers. Thornton suggested a multiuse path for bikes and pedestrians.

Lafayette Street Park

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from the Board of Education.

Kustra said beds surrounding sycamore trees are overgrown with weeds.

"We had expected more flowers and shrubs," Kustra said.

The original design from Temple University landscape architecture students was more lush, she said.

"It just looks so barren there," Kustra said.

Clover is taking over the playground and advanc-



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Lafayette Street Park Advisory Committee member Sharon Lee Kustra said trees at the park are dying due to a lack of care.

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ing into the soccer field.

"It could look beautiful if all of this was attended to but it's an awful lot of work," she said. "We have found evidence the irrigation system is broken in places."

Kustra said the school board would like to view the original plans for the irrigation system. She said their goal is to save trees, especially those along Lafayette Street that are visible to those entering the city. Currently there are two dead trees along Lafayette Street, she said.

"Trees on the inside we feel are dying and they are so starved, they need to be capped off 2 to 3 feet off the top to promote growth in the middle, in addition to getting water," Kustra said.

The trees have offshoots growing from the bottom portion, one or two small leaves and a little tuft on top, she said.

On trees inside and outside the fence, wires bracing the trees are down, which is a hazard to children on the playground, Kustra said. The majority of stakes used for bracing trees are broken.

Kustra suggested an arborist check to see if the

trees need to continue to be staked. She said each tree has only a few leaves.

The school does not know the timer schedule for the irrigation system to determine if it is operational. It is also unknown who turns on and off lights on the playing field, Kustra said.

An archway from the school grounds into the park is too big and is rotting because sealer paint was never applied, she said.

"We would like it removed," Kustra said.

The school board would be pleased to see an old concession stand on the property demolished, she said.

On one of the light poles designated to be removed is an osprey nest. Kustra

said osprey nests cannot be moved from April 1 to Aug. 31 during their nesting period. The nest should be preserved and placed on an osprey nesting stand in the nature trail section of the park during phase IV, she said.

Kustra said she spoke with osprey expert Ben Wurst, who said he would assist with moving the nest. She said ospreys return to the same site each year.

Deputy City Manager Jerry Inderwies Jr. was in attendance and said he would follow through on the complaints.

Lafayette Street Park Advisory Committee Chairman Mike Jones suggested landscaping be handled by a private contractor.

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