

MEETING NOTES
WATKINS RECREATION CENTER
DPR PROGRAMMING DISCUSSION
Watkins Elementary School
420 12th Street SE
Wednesday, February 11, 2015
6:00 PM

Project/Government Attendees:

- John Stokes – Chief of Staff, DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
- Jeffrey McInnis – Chief Operating Officer, DPR
- Sharia Shanklin – Community Services and Programs Officer, DPR
- Toni Thompson – Chief of Community Recreation, DPR
- Jacqueline Alvarado, Constituent Services and Permits Manager, DPR
- Dietrich Williams – Area Manager, DPR
- Brian Cobbs – Site Lead, DPR
- Stacie West – Community Planner, DPR
- Dawn Clemens – Principal, Capitol Hill Cluster School, DC Public Schools (DCPS)
- Mary Rankin – Perkins Eastman DC
- Abbie Cronin – Perkins Eastman DC

AGENDA

1. Rules of the Road
2. Goals of the Meeting
3. Introduction to Overall Project
4. Current Programs
5. Future Programming + Recreational Needs
6. Impacts of Modernization
7. Next Steps
8. Q + A

Meeting summary:

John Stokes, DPR Chief of Staff, led the DPR Watkins Programming Meeting on Wednesday, February 11, 2015, held to discuss current and future programming at Watkins, as well as the impact of modernization on summer DPR programs. After a brief summary of the overall project (school modernization) and existing DPR programs at the site, Mr. Stokes led a discussion of current and future programming, supplemented with a discussion of the Play DC Master Plan and community recreational needs as well as agency goals for recreation centers led by Stacie West, Community Planner. The following is a summary of the questions and comments regarding programming.

Current programming:

- Several attendees commented on the need and importance of the afterschool programs that DPR provides, and noted that they are important particularly for students who do not play organized sports.
- Discussion was raised about the need to make sure that there is a diverse response about programming at DPR; many people who use the programs are not in attendance, there needs to be a layered approach to reaching people about the future of programming, and decisions should not be made solely by the school or immediate neighbors.

Future programming:

- Interest among attendees to not let the school diminish the DPR programs or the DPR programs to diminish what the school can offer. Both programs should be planned for as best as possible, and in coordination with each other. Separate planning unfairly pits families and site users against each other for space.
- Questions were raised regarding the focus of the project, and why there wasn't a larger focus on providing an actual recreation center, and not just collocated space. There is a concern about real estate and how squeezed the site is. Attendees want to know how shared interests, such as a gym, can be accommodated in the design.
- Attendees concerned that the site is too stressed to accommodate both DPR and DCPS programs well, and that DPR should be expanded in other locations to meet the neighborhood recreational needs.

Impact on summer programs and next steps:

- There is concern that with Watkins' interior space offline for the summer, there is no nearby center for programs such as summer camp; Sherwood was too far.
- Suggestion from attendees that dedicated spaces be added to nearby summer camps for kids that would have attended at Watkins this summer, and that a more targeted message go out to summer camp families regarding the program being offline this summer.
- Emphasis from attendees placed on the need for a true master plan for the site that includes spaces that work together. Generally, people feel that the space is special and offers a number of amenities to all, and the District needs to come up with a solution that can solve many problems.

Following the formal portion of the presentation, attendees were asked to break into small groups to discuss their ideas for programs. The following is a full list of feedback from attendees.

Break-out Session Reports:

- DPR should add guaranteed extra spaces in nearby rec centers for summer programming due to construction at Watkins
- Early childhood program
- Indoor soccer space
- Multiple large spaces for eating, meetings, performances simultaneously
- Overall, more spaces are needed: build up (add multiple floors) and consider adding gym, cafeteria, classroom space, and mixed uses
- Keep current recreation and education programs
- Expand programs to include adult indoor fitness, life skills, tech programs
- Computer lab & quiet study rooms
- Adult education space
- Weight room
- Arts & crafts room
- Additional meeting spaces
- Games room
- Non-negotiables: 1) more space; 2) keep existing programs; 3) expand programs
- Outdoor space largely OK. More indoor space needed: full size gym & multi-purpose
- Integration of school & DPR for win-win opportunities
- Look at entire footprint holistically
- Look at school across the street. Can city look at surrounding spaces, too?
- More adult programs
- More indoor programs
- Senior classes/programming
- Weekend access to indoor spaces
- Larger pool/aquatic center
- Fitness center
- Library with media room/computer lab
- What can we take advantage of that is shared by both school & DPR?
- Pedestrian bridge/catwalk to Buchanan, if site is acquired
- Look at site layout & programs of nearby (closed) Boys & Girls Club
- Revisit the outdoor space
- Add more lighting outside
- Larger indoor space; basketball courts
- Will pool restrooms be available during modernization?
- Full-size/Regulation-sized basketball gym with bleachers (brought up by most groups as a desired program) that is comparable to Sherwood Recreation Center – DGS/DCPS/DPR should find a way to make this happen
- Joint board among school & community & agencies for decision-making
- Build up (put a gym on top of the building)
- Build below (put the boiler room to use)

- Office space should overlook field and playground for supervision – possibly where the trailers are located
- Would like to see list of 73 recreation centers + 5 co-located sites
- Want to see Master Plan in entirety
- Gender equity in programming and athletics (Title IX)
- DPR & DCPS need to speak to architect at the same time
- Full-size cafeteria, auditorium and full-size gym for the school that meet the ed specs and a process that allows consideration of adding all of that and appropriate DPR programming
- Wants a process that ensures DPR and school work together to maximize needs of DPR and school
- Will the pool restroom be available and/or upgraded during modernization?
- Pool is underutilized and not the best use of space given the site constraints.
- DPR sponsored sports activities need access to restrooms in safe proximity to the field (not across parking lot).
- Current restrooms are in poor condition and not in good location.