

Plans for 3.5 Acre Waterfront Recreational Complex Unveiled at Township Council Meeting

WEEHAWKEN—Mayor Richard F. Turner, the Weehawken Township Council and the Waterfront Recreational Committee approved plans for a major expansion of Weehawken's waterfront recreational area — including three pools and an ice skating rink/multi-purpose pavilion — at the December 27 township meeting.

According to RSC Architects President John Capazzi and Senior Project Manager Ralph Walker, the site plan includes a six-lane lap pool; a recreation pool; an infant pool; and a splash park. The architectural firm took its cue in designing the complex from a 21-member committee comprised of residents and township officials. The complex, which has been approved by the planning board, will cover 3.5 acres. The pool portion of the complex is slated to be open by summer of 2019; the entire complex by the end of 2019.

The 11,200 square-foot ice-skating rink can be used for ice hockey practice and recreational ice skating in winter. During warmer seasons, the multi-use space, which will include bleachers, can be converted for roller-skating, volleyball, basketball and general public use, Turner said.

The pool complex on the east side of the recreation center will include a 25-meter long six-lane pool, as well as a recreation pool for those who don't want to swim laps — both of which will be handicapped-accessible. The lane pool will have bleachers on one end for viewing, and the recreational pool will include a slide as well as a vortex, or whirlpool area.

An infant pool as well as a splash park for children are planned for the southeast portion of the complex. The infant pool will have walk-in access and be about 14 inches deep at its maximum. Restrooms, changing buildings and a pump house will be to the northeast of the pools and splash park. Scattered between them will be tables, some with umbrellas.

Residents can practice their basketball skills in a new court, which will have an entrance outside the park's perimeter to allow for after-hours access. Residents can also play on a tennis half-court, on which they can also play handball, racquetball and other sports.

Or, if they prefer, they can sprawl on the Great Lawn, which will slope eastward for the New York City view. At the top of the Great Lawn, residents will be able to enjoy a sand

volleyball court alongside the river. A new pedestrian bridge will connect the existing Hudson Riverfront walkway across the lagoon to the Lincoln Harbor Park waterfront walkway. The entire complex is geared toward maximum river and New York City skyline views.

“Our planning for the extension of the south end of the park took into account some of the key features that Weehawken has to offer,” Walker said. “This included connecting existing public amenities with the completion of the Riverwalk and a new bridge; taking advantage of existing views of the Hudson and Manhattan skyline through a carefully landscaped and terraced site.”

The Waterfront Recreational Committee played a pivotal role in designing the recreational area, Walker said. Committee members suggested the addition of the central lawn area as an open gathering area; the inclusion of three pools and splash park; as well as of bleachers at the lap pool and rink. Most valuable to the architects was the committee’s ideas of how the park might be used at different times of year; how best to control access to various areas of the park; both its integration with and separation from the Riverwalk; and making sure there were multiple uses of the rink, courts and landscaped areas. “The committee has provided excellent feedback,” Walker said.

Weehawken taxpayers won’t be footing the \$10.5 million bill for the construction of this project: Funding will be provided by waterfront developer fees; the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program; and the Hudson County Open Space Trust Fund. The site was originally planned for an approximately 75,000 sq.-ft. Hartz Mountain Industries office complex, until the township purchased the property from the company in the mid-1990’s with state of New Jersey funds. Once the recreation center is open, the operating budget will be funded mostly by admission and use fees.

The first construction phase — which should commence by mid- to late February, weather-dependent — will require piling about 50 thousand cubic yards of new soil to both compact the existing loose soil and, raise the level of the soil where needed, to meet current floodplain standards. The new soil will set there for about four months. It’s removal will take another month. Then construction will begin. The township is in the process of applying to the state for the necessary waterfront permits, and will be holding public presentations before the Weehawken Planning Board.

“When this recreational complex is completed,” Turner said, “together with Weehawken’s existing recreational waterfront areas, the township will have a total of

15.5 acres of continuous active and passive recreation space along the Hudson River.
“It will be a phenomenal complex.”

Waterfront Recreational Committee

Township Officials

Mayor Richard F. Turner
Councilwoman Rosemary J. Lavagnino
Township Manager Giovanni D. Ahmad
School Board President Richard Barsa
Michelle McLellan - Planning Office
Michael Kilkeary - Planning Office
David Curtis - Weehawken Township School District
Jeffrey Cosgrove - Weehawken Township School District
Jerry Lange – Consultant

Resident Waterfront Recreational Committee

Rebecca Cannata
Richard Clarke
Sarah Coblentz
Yolanda Cuomo
Marissa Dennis
Andrea Eberhard
Kristina Ehret-Karcic
Susan Felder
Robert Hinton
Shari Pople
Princess Rivera
J. Nicholas Strasser
Victoria Swanson
Susmitha Thomas
Jackie Wheeler-Moran

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***Caption:** The proposed 3.5-acre recreational complex, together with the township’s existing recreational waterfront areas, will give Weehawken a total 15.5 acres of continuous active and passive recreation space along the Hudson River. The pool portion of the complex is slated to be open by summer of 2019; the entire complex by the end of 2019.*



SOUTH PARK SITE PLAN



SOUTH PARK SITE SECTION