MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Location: UWEC Children Center

Date/Time: April 5, 2010

Notes By: Phil Johnson

Attendees:

Becky Wurzer, Director, Children Center
Lisa Coen, Teacher at Children Center
Phil Johnson, Ayres Associates

Project No.: 08-1533.00 (Ayres) 08L1J (DSF)

Re: New Children Center Facility

Playground area

Nature Based Playground Design

Preliminary Concept meeting

This is the first in a series of meetings on the design of the outdoor playground at the new UWEC Children Center facility east of the HSS building on the north campus area. As requested, Becky had prepared a vision statement and needs summary for the new playground. To begin with, an overview of the major playground elements was reviewed with the Children Center staff. These meeting notes incorporate the vision for the outdoor play area and other elements that the Children Center staff feels are essential for the programming of each space and providing the learning tools necessary for outdoor play.

Defining the users

The following outlines the class size of the different age groups that will be using the playground:

Infants:
6 infants/class
2 classes = 12 infants

Toddlers:
8 toddlers/class
2 classes = 16 toddlers

2 year olds:
12 and 15 two years old/class
2 classes = 27 toddlers

3-5 year olds:
18/class
4 classes = 72 three to five year olds
School Age (summer only): 20/class
1 class = 20 (This replaces one 3-5 year old class during the summer)

Daily number of children using the playground: 127 to 129

Playground Area Connections

Each age group needs to have a self-contained space with gated access from one space to the next.

Containment

Next, we reviewed the various fencing options ranging from solid wood to chain link. The design committee comments about the appearance and durability of materials narrows the material options for the fencing. We discussed the various advantages and disadvantages of each type of fence and focused on the most likely option. We discussed using a panelized steel fence constructed with an open grid that allows views into and out of the play area. A product manufactured by Orsogril (see attached photos) is a possibility for this project.

The primary access into the playground needs to be from a large gate for materials brought into the site (sand and seasonal equipment) and the gate will be secured and used only when deliveries are necessary.

Water Street will need screening from the play area to reduce the playground visibility from Water Street and reduce the traffic noise into the playground.

Physical Elements

The next discussion dealt with the physical elements that need to be present in each play area: This list essentially reflects what exists at the present Children Center location with the exception of the pavilion, uneven terrain and a quiet area for infants.

- Access to a drinking fountain
- Water spigot for sand and water play
- Electric outlets for music players
- Shade/sun screening
- Durable surfacing for open areas
- Shaded sandbox with an at-grade cover for the sand
- Paved tricycle path loop within each play area and connected to adjacent play areas
- Trees
- Garden areas for vegetables and flowers
- Level terrain for the infant and toddler areas
- Uneven terrain for the older children (hills and built in slides)
- Outside storage
- A single pavilion connected to toddler/infant and older age group play areas
- Adaptable for the placement of seasonal features that will change over time
- Quiet areas for sleeping infants
Learning Elements

Each play zone should contain learning elements that address the following program needs:

- **Gardening**
  - Trellises for growing vines and fruit
  - Drainage and sunlight conducive to plant growth
  - Close to water spigot
  - Green house space available (possibly a small scale seasonal structure)
  - Space for plants should be throughout the playground
  - An area to compost that is easily accessible to garden area
  - Outdoor kitchen space (i.e. place for a picnic table and water to wash vegetables)

- **Music**
  - Space for dancing
  - Space for playing instruments
  - Outlet accessible
  - Area that can be used for large groups and story time (possible stage)

- **Sand/water play**
  - Covered from the sun
  - Covered at the sand box level
  - Easy to supervise for water safety and yet allowing for flexibility for mixing two mediums

- **Physical challenge (climbing, riding, rolling)**
  - A developmentally appropriate rock climbing area
  - Various terrains for climbing, for rolling and jumping on and over (stumps and logs)

- **“Construction” area**
  - This area can be combined with the art area
  - Temporary storage for materials like large blocks

- **Art**
  - Easy cleanup
  - Storage available near area
  - For building with sticks, pinecones and small bricks

- **Open space**
  - Allow for flexible programming
Summary of exiting and proposed conditions

The play area at the existing Childcare Center consists of approximately 9300 sf of fenced play area. A 6’ high chain link fence containing approximately 4500 sf encloses the primary area. This area has a modular play structure, sandbox, paved pathways, gardens, storage boxes and an access gate. The space has open ground that was intended to be a lawn but cannot be sustained due to the high use. Sand is the material used for the fall zones of the modular play structures.

There is another play area to the east contained by a 6’ high chain link fence of approximately 4800 sf with a modular play structure, swings, freestanding climbing structure, miscellaneous movable items and an access gate. Sand is the material used for the fall zones of the modular play structures.

There is also a non-fenced garden area on the site.

The new building footprint illustrates a play area of approximately 11,098 sf. The new building plan proposes a linear playground versus the wider open layout present at the current Children Center. To offset the differences between these configurations, swings and modular play structures are not intended to be placed in the new playground due to space limitations.

Special considerations need to be given to the material used as the surface for the play areas. Consideration should be given to the use of artificial grass as the primary surface material for non-paved areas and where digging/planting is to occur.