

Special Public Meeting Minutes
Borough of Audubon
February 10, 2026
Audubon Family Park Enhancement Project Public Hearing

MAYOR JAKUBOWSKI READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "Notice of this meeting has been provided in a legal notice published in the Courier Post and the Retrospect; and posted in accordance with Title 10 of the New Jersey Statutes Annotated, specifying a 6:00 p.m. meeting time; and that formal action may or may not be taken at all Caucus and Commissioners' meetings".

Those in attendance: Mayor Jakubowski, Commissioner Wendell, Danielle Ingves, Administrator/Clerk, Attorneys S. Siciliano and J. McPeak, R. Callaway, Superintendent PW, Engineer Craig Reilly

Mayor Jakubowski called the meeting to order.

Project Rationale and Community Survey Findings

Commissioner Wendell opened with a clear rationale built on a January community survey that remained open for almost a month and collected 76 responses. Respondents expressed overwhelmingly positive sentiment toward the park's shade, natural setting, and diverse play equipment, describing it as safe, easy to supervise, and a valued community gathering space. Quotations included "It's a local favorite, safe and easy to monitor my kids," and praise for the new climbing structure, swings, and musical instruments.

The survey surfaced four top priorities—accessibility, inclusivity, connectivity, and safety, which now guide the enhancement plan and align with Green Acres grant requirements. Residents asked for better stroller and wheelchair paths, ADA-compliant crosswalks, and upgrades serving all ages and abilities. Many emphasized wheelchair accessibility and universally accessible equipment. Connectivity emerged as a key theme, with requests for clearer, safer links to Haddon, Lake, and surrounding trails, including multi-use walking and biking paths. Safety and maintenance were frequently noted.

Commissioner Wendell emphasized transparency: survey results are included in the handout, with actual quotes to reflect community sentiment. The final survey question focused on "What would you like to see changed or added to the Audubon Family Park?" confirming the four core themes. The borough is applying for the Green Acres grant based on this feedback; receiving the grant would accelerate implementation, while not receiving it would still lead to improvements but on a delayed timeline to maintain fiscal responsibility. Mayor Jakubowski noted that

Commissioner Wendell's background in special education adds an important perspective to the project.

Additional demographics from the survey indicated the average respondent age was 25 to 44 years, with 90% reporting children who use the park. Households reported children in the following age groups: 0–3 years (17), 4–7 years (24), 7–10 years (23), 11–13 years (11), and 14–17 years (16). Notably, 21 respondents reported no children in their household but still use the park. Usage patterns vary: younger children primarily use the playground, while the hockey facility sees users from their twenties through fifties.

Detailed Park Enhancement Plan and Phasing

Craig Reilly of Bach Associates presented a concept plan with a funded Phase 1 and additional phases contingent on securing grants. All proposed equipment is accessible and meets universal access standards, and the firm coordinates multiple state-contracted playground vendors (ten to twelve).

Phase 1 focuses on core accessibility improvements:

- A five-foot by eighty-eight ADA-striped walkway from the parking lot to the new playground equipment area, extending close to the hockey rink.
- A rubberized pathway to the inclusive whirl, designed for wheelchair users to roll directly onto the device.
- A new swing set featuring two therapeutic seats and standing swing seats, with all-wood manufactured mulch underneath, compacted for accessible foot traffic.
- A “miracle machine” (a stand-up, accessible sensory wall with kinesthetic features). A cover depicted in renderings is planned for a future phase, not Phase 1.
- Four benches on a concrete pad for relaxation or picnicking.

Future phases (contingent on Green Acres and other funding) would add:

- A mega tower structure (large, multi-slide feature with sensory walls and climbing elements).
- A wheelchair-accessible glider with two wheelchair positions and a bench section.
- An exploration bench outfitted with clocks and sensory components.
- A playhouse and a Goldberg machine.
- Enhanced safety fencing to protect users, particularly children with autism, due to proximity to water. Renderings indicate proposed fence lines with dotted markings.

- Preferred safety surfacing is a rubberized mat under future equipment if a sizable grant is secured; otherwise, manufactured wood mulch remains acceptable and is consistent with current installations.

Cost highlights include an estimated total plan near \$900,000. The mega tower is estimated at approximately \$300,000, and the play surface at another \$200,000. Residents praised the inclusivity and noted the mega tower's alignment with trends seen in county parks such as Cooper River. Commissioners reiterated that if foam-type surfacing cannot be funded, wood mulch serves as the viable fallback and is already in use once compacted.

Funding Strategy and Financial Overview

The total estimated project cost is close to \$900,000. Existing funding stands near \$100,000, with approximately \$90,000 already committed. Sources include the DCA New Jersey LIRG program (approximately \$65,000 to \$80,000 for the current year) and the Camden County Urban Program (\$25,000). An additional \$2,500 messaging board donation has been pledged and can count toward matching funds.

The primary strategy is a Green Acres grant application due on February 27. The borough can request up to \$500,000 and must provide matching funds; current funded elements can be counted toward the match. The Aubrey Group (New Jersey-based, with a Camden office) is preparing the grant application. Timelines indicate the local recreation grant (LRG) is announced in May, while Green Acres results are expected in June or possibly in the fall.

Board of Commissioners discussed differing request strategies: the Mayor suggested asking for \$200,000, whereas Commissioner Wendell advocated requesting closer to \$500,000 to fully cover critical accessibility and inclusivity goals. Bonding is the final option if necessary; the borough maintains a good credit rating and has responsibly bonded in the past. The Mayor emphasized preferring grants ("over taxpayers") to fund the project, while acknowledging bonding might be spread over multiple years if used. The borough likely receives \$25,000 per year from the county and is exploring additional donations and sponsorships for specific elements.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wendell to open the meeting to the public. Mayor Jakubowski seconded. All in favor motion carried.

Public comments spanned current facilities, proposed changes, and broader community interests:

- **Pickleball:** Residents Charles and Donna Hollinger (584 Walnut Street) asked about the planned court. Initially, two courts were considered inside the hockey rink, but that likely would not work. A single court was installed near the basketball area as a trial around National Night Out, without formal advertising. Hollinger described pickleball noise as irritating. Commissioners expressed caution about investing in permanent courts without demonstrated demand.

- **Skateboarding:** Residents asked about addressing skateboarders. Commissioners remained hesitant about a local skate park due to liability and insurance costs, noting the county's skate park at Cooper River and stating not every town needs every amenity. Skateboarders are generally respectful, with one exception involving an unauthorized storage box.
- **Hockey:** A Monday night hockey league began in the fall; Hollinger reported the activity as positive and enjoyable, with no notable noise concerns. Lights are used for hockey and maintained by PSEG.
- **Traffic calming at Walnut and Hampshire:** Commissioners described a "bump out" and intersection realignment to slow traffic, add two stop signs (one on Hampshire, one on Walnut toward King's Highway), and create safer pedestrian crossings at a wide, angled intersection. Hollinger questioned the need, citing 48 years without injuries and only one ice-related accident involving his own car. Commissioners and Mr. Reilly explained this is a state-approved traffic calming technique that encourages ninety-degree approaches to intersections and discourages cut-through speeding. Hollinger suggested speed bumps on Walnut Street; Commissioners responded that speed bumps often increase noise without effectively slowing traffic.
- **Visuals and transparency:** A resident, Amy Liberi (167 Paris Ave) stated that visuals are very helpful and requested renderings be posted on the borough website. Commissioners agreed to post them with a caveat that plans may evolve based on funding.
- **Pathways and biking:** A resident advocated for safer biking spaces and asked about additional pathways. Commissioners said internal paths exist and need repairs; expanding them is desired but not yet specified in the current plan. They noted better odds of funding smaller path projects through a county open space grant and said the current plan will close the path loop on the Hampshire side, connecting to existing paths near the baseball field. BBQ grills were removed years ago due to liability concerns.
- **Costs and phasing:** Media queries confirmed the full project may cost near \$900,000, with the mega tower around \$300,000 and rubberized surfacing around \$200,000. Smaller structures could be donated in honor or memory. The approach is phased, contingent on funding.
- **Connectivity:** Commissioners confirmed an existing path down to Haddon Lake, improved sidewalks on King's Highway, and narrowing with additional stop signs and pedestrian walkways on Hampshire.
- **Separate funding for roads:** Media asked whether road improvements are separate; commissioners clarified Hampshire/Walnut realignment is a separate NJDOT municipal aid project, estimated at \$325,000.

- **Park scope and safety:** The total park area is 5.35 acres. Lighter gray items in renderings indicate existing features; Memorial Grove remains separate. Additional cameras added in recent years reduced vandalism, and coverage extends to new installations. Lighting additions are not planned; the park closes at dusk. Existing lights support hockey activities; PSEG maintains the rink lighting. Residents asked about shading or tilting lights to reduce spill; commissioners said tilting might be feasible depending on coverage requirements.
- **Process and timelines:** Unlike prior grants, Green Acres requires this public hearing; the community meeting was held January 20, with tonight's hearing timed to meet the February 27 grant submission. Commissioners reiterated openness to input and willingness to adjust scope based on funding. They expect Green Acres feedback in approximately 3–6 months (probably June), with the local recreation grant announced in May.
- **Mayor's perspective:** Mayor Jakubowski reflected on the park's transformation over eight years, the strategic planning by Commissioner and Craig, and early funding from Disney and others. The intentional expansion of amenities and high usage (e.g., Audubon Day, post-Fourth of July crowds) are points of pride. The Mayor praised Commissioner Wendell's special education expertise and lauded community enthusiasm for hockey.

Related Infrastructure and Safety Improvements

Separate, state-funded infrastructure improvements will enhance safety and connectivity adjacent to the park:

- **NJDOT Municipal Aid Project (Hampshire/Walnut):** Realignment of curves and intersection design to calm traffic and improve pedestrian safety. The project totals \$325,830 and covers multiple streets, including Hampshire down to the block before Graceville. Two new stop signs will be installed (one on Hampshire, one on Walnut). A pre-construction meeting has been held; construction is expected to begin once weather breaks.
- **Pathways and sidewalks:** Prior work improved the path near the baseball field and maintained connections to existing sidewalks, with aims to close loops for continuous routes. County sidewalk enhancements on King's Highway increased safety, and additional pedestrian walkways are being added along Hampshire. Connectivity extends toward Haddon Lake Park.

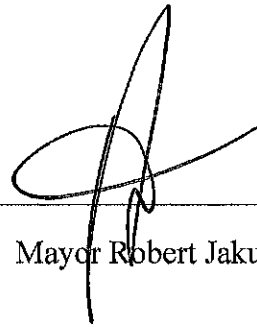
Overall, these transportation improvements are distinct from the park funding and will integrate with the park's accessibility and connectivity goals, reinforcing pedestrian safety and consistent traffic calming strategies.

Action Items

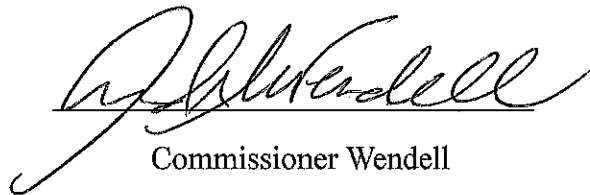
- Superintendent of Public Works will reach out to PSEG to ensure all hockey rink lights are working before spring and Audubon Day.
- Ask about tilting the basketball court and hockey rink lights to reduce spill into nearby residential areas, while ensuring adequate coverage of the playing surfaces.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wendell to close the meeting to the public. Commissioner Alemi seconded. All in favor motion carried.

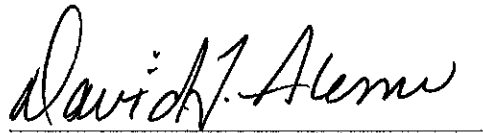
Motion was made by Commissioner Wendell to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Alemi seconded. All in favor motion passed at 6:48 pm.



Mayor Robert Jakubowski

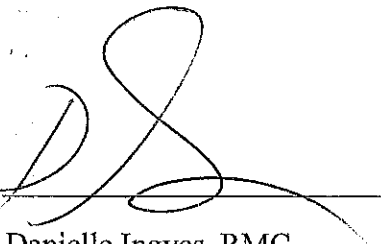


Commissioner Wendell



Commissioner Alemi

Attest:



Danielle Ingves, RMC

Date: February 17, 2026