8OWN OF OCEAN VIEW
DELAWARE

October 8, 2026

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Carol S. Houck, Town Manager

SUBJECT: Discussion, Consideration and Possible Voting on a Recommendation to Move Forward with the John West Park Playground Renewal Project Public Outreach – Preliminary Design Review

Background

We've been planning for the redevelopment of the John West Park playground and its associated funding in our reserve study. The reserve study (sometimes referred to as an equipment replacement program) dictates the level of funding to be budgeted annually in order to have the funds available for replacement of many aspects of the Towns equipment, operations or facility needs. As such, Ocean View has adhered to its annual required contributions to the Capital Replacement Trust Fund (CRTF) in association with these anticipated future expenditures. Our reserve study was last updated (to allow for inflation and changing needs) in February of 2026.

A portion of our existing playground units were put in place in 2002, with a 15 to 20 year life expectancy. Some existing aspects of the current playground have been in place longer. The current playground's protective surfacing and its requirement to step up into the play area essentially renders it a non-accessible playground, which is undesirable and less common now for public facilities like ours.

Our goal for the redevelopment of the John West Park playground is to update the play equipment as well as install a protective rubber surface that is fully accessible (often referred to as poured in place, although it's actually laid similar to concrete), with unique and fun design elements suitable to our beautiful park setting and including additional accessible attractions.

Playground Design/Planned Purchase Approach

Redevelopment of playgrounds has evolved over the years since ours was last updated. Safety, accessible, protective surface options, and manufacturing improvements now allow for more unique installations. We've worked with Brian Lewis the sales associate for Cunningham Recreation (a distributor of "GameTime" commercially manufactured playground equipment, accessories and installations), to come up with a design that offers a multi-age and ability

playground setting that we believe our Town and community can be proud of and enjoy for years to come.

Cunningham Recreation is an existing State of Delaware Awarded Vendor, however in order to access greater buying power and terms (including available grant funding), we plan to utilize the "GameTime" and in turn Cunningham Recreation's contract award from Omnia Partners. Omnia Partners is the nation's largest group cooperative purchasing organization, that provides small Towns like Ocean View collective pricing power by utilizing their contract award for park and playground equipment. Omnia serves the needs of state and local governments, K-12 Education, Higher Education, non-profits, etc. through ready to use competitively bid contracts and terms, backed by their collective buying power, and representing significant discounts. In our case we've estimated a discount of approximately $30,000 in association with our preliminary design (subject to change prior to final design).

The Omnia Partner contracts are established through a competitive process that is fully documented. Our bidding requirements allow for the use of competitively bid contracts including the State of Delaware, which has an active contract with Cunningham Recreation, a "GameTime" local representative/distributor. Other Delaware communities and organizations have utilized this opportunity including the City of Dover, New Castle County, Indian River School District as well as the Ocean City Maryland Department of Parks and Recreation. Likewise, Ocean View can satisfy its bidding requirements by taking advantage of an existing contract award and cost saving opportunity though Omnia Partners, via Cunningham Recreation, a State of Delaware awarded vendor, as doing so is in the best interest of our community.

To be clear, Omnia Partners has already completed the RFP process, and awarded pricing contracts to various vendors, one of which is "GameTime" under the Playground and Outdoor Fitness Equipment, Surfacing and Related Product Contract #2017001134, available through June 30, 2027, at which time it will be rebid. "GameTime" is the contract holder and Cunningham Recreation is the regional distributor for "GameTime" and has been in business for 60 years.

Playground Design- We've spent a good deal of time with Mr. Lewis to discuss options for the development of an inspiring play space for a wide range of ages and abilities. We've also expressed the importance of working around/protecting our existing old growth trees that surround the playground. This extensive engagement and site visits led to our preliminary design, which is attached for your initial review. Please note the attached is our preliminary design subject to possible changes following Council's review and our public workshop meeting. The buildings surrounding the playground spaces in the attached are placeholders for the actual facilities (so they don't necessarily look like the actual buildings).

We've already suggested the following to be incorporated (in time for our public workshop meeting):

- Additional inlaid designs to be added to the protective surface
- Two play unit swaps (possible size option change/or to another unit entirely)
- Additional unit additions (add second dolphin and second balancing surfboard)

To the extent our suggestions are feasible, or any other changes that may emerge, they may be incorporated into the final design, and others may be removed.

Funding Update

In full awareness of the cost to redevelop a playground the size of ours, with an accessible protective surface, unique features, and safety as primary requirements, while also protecting our trees and considering the addition of new trees (in anticipation of future possible decline of our existing trees) we've been shoring up our funds for this purpose over the years in our Reserve Study and in turn the CRTF. In addition, as you may recall, there's a playground redevelopment project component to the General Obligation Bond Sale that was approved earlier this year and is currently moving towards implementation.

Therefore, we currently have $800,000 available from the CRTF from annual reserve funding for playground replacement and have identified $475,000 in the borrowing effort for a total of $1,275,000.

This redevelopment also eliminates the need to purchase additional jellybean mulch (which we will need to do in 2027 to maintain required depth) absent this project moving forward, at the cost of no less than $15,000.

"GameTime" also offers a ***Community Champions Grant*** opportunity)referred to above) that we qualify for that will provide as much as $60,000 of matching funding towards our project cost for "standard items" (depending on the final selections associated with the final approved plan). Utilizing the State of Delaware Contract solely would eliminate the opportunity to access this grant funding. Likewise, the Omnia Partners contract discount is currently estimated at $30,000 in association with the preliminary design before you. The final discount and "GameTime" Community Champions Grant will ultimately be represented on the final proposal/invoice as a direct reduction of the cost of our project once finalized.

What's Next!

The next important step in the redevelopment of the John West Park Playground is holding a public workshop to allow our community to view the plan, comment, and ask questions before we finalize and bring it back to Council for a vote. **The workshop has proactively been scheduled for Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at 3p.m.** In addition to its posting, an ad will be taken in the local

paper, and we'll post the meeting on our website, meeting noticeboards, on OVTV and share with the HOA contacts we have.

On October 7th we were advised by Mr. Lewis that a price increase of 8% will go into effect on November 5, 2026, in association with higher freight costs being experienced by "GameTime". This inflationary cost increase is in the form of an addendum to the Omnia Partners contract. For that reason, we've also proactively scheduled and will advertise a **Special Meeting of the Town Council for Thursday, October 29th at 3p.m.** to vote on the final recommendation regarding the playground, in advance to the above noted price increase.

Timeline

October 27, 2026 – 3p.m. start John West Park Playground Project Public Workshop

To allow the public and Council the opportunity to view the preliminary plan, ask questions of Cunningham Recreation Sales Associate and provide feedback prior to final plan acceptance.

October 29, 2026 – 3p.m. Special Meeting of Council

To present the final recommendation on the John West Park Playground Project, its cost, and final funding sources with a vote of Council on the recommendation regarding the award of the contract.

February 1, 2027 – Mobilization of Contractor

If the contract is awarded notice to proceed will follow our last event in the park before next summer - Fire and Ice. Therefore mobilization of the contractor would be expected to begin the First of February. The contract will with the removal of the existing equipment, followed by construction of the new playground, with the final installation being the protective surfacing. Taking into consideration the possibility of winter weather delays, the anticipated completion of the project and opening of the new playground would be by June 1, 2027.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Mayor and Council authorize the Town Manager to move forward with the public workshop on October 27, 2026, and proceed to final recommendation and vote of Council on a recommendation to award a contract at a Special Meeting of Council to be held on Thursday, October 29, 2026, regarding the John West Park Playground Renewal Project.

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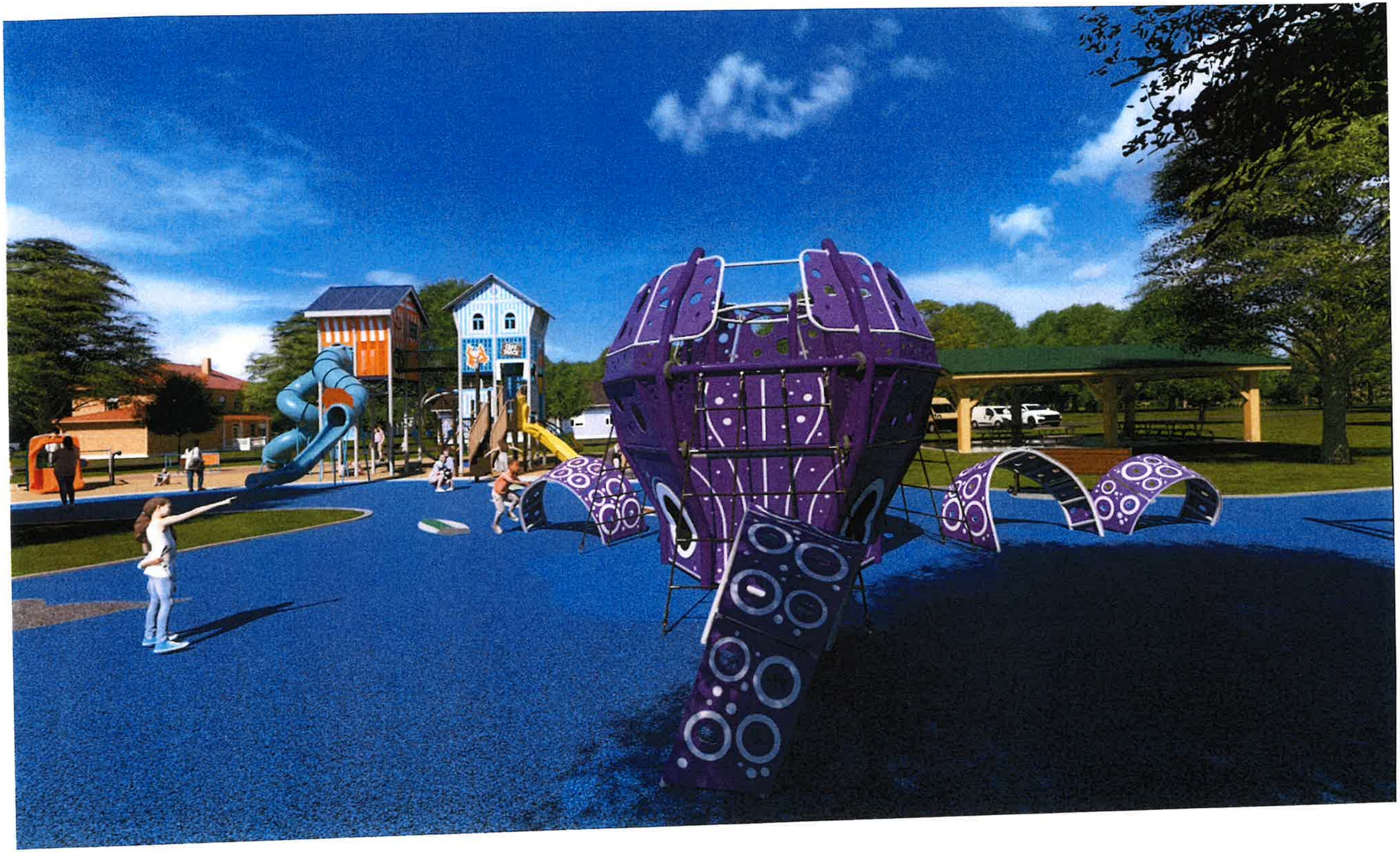

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