



Robert P. Astorino, Westchester County Executive

REINVENTING PLAYLAND FOR THE 21ST CENTURY FAQs

April 4, 2013

Q. Why did County Executive Astorino issue a Request for Proposals to Re-Invent Playland?

A. In recent years, Playland has had far fewer visitors than in the past and has continued to lose money – as much as \$4-5 million a year, which must be paid for with county tax dollars. It is now in need of major capital improvements as well. Astorino would like to preserve the family character of the park, but make it self-sustaining by “reinventing it for the 21st century.” The goal is to save Playland – which Astorino calls “one of the most beautiful pieces of property anywhere” – by strengthening its financial foundation while maintaining access to it to residents of the community and preserving the historic park.

The county executive issued the Requests for Proposals to ascertain the potential for uses of this beautiful facility addressing these concerns. Twelve proposals were received and evaluated by a citizens’ committee and then later internally by the county administration. At the conclusion of this process Sustainable Playland Inc. (SPI) was selected as the proposed operator of Playland going forward.

Q. What happens to Playland for next year?

A. Playland will open May 11 for the 2013 season, under county management. Go to www.ryeplayland.org for the full schedule.

Q. What is Astorino proposing?

A. SPI, a not-for-profit organization, would be given a 10-year asset management contract for Playland with an option for an additional 10-year term upon mutual agreement of the parties. Sustainable has assembled a team with strong experience in amusements, sports, restaurants and park operations. A variety of zones would allow for a “portfolio” approach with many different aspects to allow visitors to enjoy the park on a year-round basis and not just an amusement park in the summer.

Under terms of the agreement, the park will be divided into a variety of zones, including:

- **Amusement Zone:** Playland’s historic rides will remain, including the Dragon Coaster and the Derby Racer, as well as Kiddyland and arcade games. Some non historic rides will be replaced with new ones as part of an ongoing effort to upgrade the amusement area.
- **Aqua/Beach Zone:** Playland’s beach and pool area will feature more amenities including chair and sun umbrella rentals, cafes and activities such as water slides and floats.
- **Field Zone:** There will be a field house for indoor sports plus outdoor athletic fields for soccer, lacrosse and other sports.
- **Fountain Plaza Zone:** This area will feature year-round restaurants, cafes, outdoor dining, special events as well as the Ice Casino.
- **Great Lawn Zone:** This area will feature the Central Promenade, which will remain open to the public year round, as well a picnic shelters, mini golf, seasonal performances and the historic Grand Carousel.

- **Common Area Zone:** This area encompasses every other area of the Park including the entry and parking areas as well as the peninsula between the Edith Read Sanctuary and the Amusement Park.

Q. What about admission fees?

A. Admission to the Park, the Boardwalk and the Edith Read Wildlife Sanctuary would be free. Access to the beach would be open to all, but with fees charges, which is currently the case. Rides and other attractions would be on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Q. What about the Children’s Museum?

A. SPI is working with a variety of operators for the various zones. It will be up to SPI to work out an agreement with the Children’s Museum.

Q. Where does the agreement with Sustainable Playland now stand?

A. Astorino and SPI have agreed to terms of a 10-year Asset Management Agreement (AMA), with renewals as mentioned. Once signed and fully executed, this will shift responsibility to SPI to operate, manage and maintain the county-owned park as of Oct. 1, 2013. This date is contingent upon SPI having obtained all approvals and permits that are required, including any needed from the county Board of Legislators.

Q. What is the financial arrangement?

A SPI will pay the county a base fee, which could total \$4 million upon the opening of operations of all zones, including the Ice Casino. SPI will also make annual payments to the county based on net operating revenue. SPI estimates this to be about \$1.2 million per year once the park is fully developed. The money will go toward retiring the county’s existing \$35 million of debt on Playland.

Q. What is next in the approval process?

A. Each step in this timetable is dependent to some degree on previous steps. Here is the current timetable:

- *April:* Approval of the asset management agreement by Board of Acquisition & Contract is expected in mid-April.
- *May:* Playland opens for the 2013 season on May 11, under county management. Within 30 days of the approval of the asset management agreement by the Board of Acquisition & Contract, SPI must submit a Playland Improvement Plan (PIP), consisting of the material changes the group proposes to make when the park comes under its management.
- *June:* The County Executive’s office is expected to receive SPI’s improvement plan. Following the County Executive’s approval, the PIP will go to the Board of Legislators for its approval.
- *October:* Commencement date – when SPI takes responsibility for operations – is scheduled in the contract for Oct. 1, 2013. This date may be extended based upon receipt of required approvals. However, if commencement is delayed beyond Jan. 1, 2014 because the BOL has failed to approve the improvement plan, then SPI has unilateral right to terminate agreement. At the commencement date, SPI will pay the county the first \$500,000 installment.

What approvals are needed from the Board of Legislators?

A. The AMA itself does not have to be approved by the BOL – but the board must approve the PIP, which is a list of all the material changes it proposed to make at the park as the operator. The PIP also must be approved by the County Executive.

Q. What were the criteria for the selection of Sustainable Playland?

A. Criteria used by the citizens’ committee included:

- Economics – did the proposal provide a financially viable, long-term business model
- Environment – was the proposal appropriate and sensitive to local surroundings

- Entertainment – were the proposed activities consistent with the mission of a park
- Experience – did the proposers have a track record of success
- Expectations – did the proposal come with a realistic chance of completion in a reasonable amount of time

Q. Who are the operational members of the Sustainable Playland team?

The operating team being assembled by SPI includes:

- Dan Biederman, whose firm, Biederman Redevelopment Ventures, will manage the park for SPI.
- Amusement and Aqua Beach Zones: Steve Turk and the Mega Funworks Team. Capital investment upwards of \$7 million.
- Field Zone: John Abate and Eric DeGraw of Playland Sports Center LLC. Capital Investment \$12.4 million.
- Fountain Plaza Zone: Shane Coppola of American Skating Entertainment Centers. Capital investment \$600,000

Q. What happens to Playland's current employees?

A. There are currently about 26 full-time employees at the park. As government employees at a time when the county budget has revenue shortfalls, these jobs are never certain irrespective of what happens to Playland. The new operator will be free to hire whoever they want, but it is anticipated there will be more full-time jobs at the park.

In addition there are a number of part time/seasonal employees. It is anticipated the operators of the various zones, will be undertaking significant hiring to conduct their respective operations.