

## **Chilmark Community Preservation Committee Grant Request**

**Date: October 3, 2022**

**Project Title: A New Playground for island children in Aquinnah**

**Applicant: Noli Taylor**

**Sponsoring Organization: Aquinnah Parks and Recreation Committee**

**Mailing address: 955 State Road, Aquinnah MA 02535**

**Project category:** Parks and Recreation. We are requesting to build a new accessible playground in Aquinnah for community recreation.

**Funding scope:** The total cost of playground construction is \$244,546. To date we have secured \$155,640, from private donors (\$31,000); foundations (\$60,000); and the Aquinnah CPC (\$64,640). We have requested an additional \$40,000 from the Aquinnah CPC which is now pending before fall/winter town meeting (yet to be scheduled); and \$15,000 from the West Tisbury, Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, and now Chilmark CPCs. If we receive this funding, we will have reached our goal and be able to move forward with playground construction in the fall of 2023. Please see the attached spreadsheet for further details.

**Goals:** For many years, the town of Aquinnah has wished to build a new playground for our children. There are few places for up island people and visitors to gather year-round, and we are the only town on the island without a functioning play space. We wanted to create a safe, welcoming, and accessible place where all children and families could gather and play safely, where caregivers could connect with each other, and where elders could be near those of other generations, reducing the social isolation that can be such a challenge, especially in the off season, for up island people.

In 2020, our Parks and Recreation Committee organized a community planning process with over 100 townspeople in partnership with the Conway School of Landscape Design to plan a new Community Hub on a 6-acre parcel of town owned land behind our Town Hall, that will include the new playground, a pavilion and walking paths, community food forest, and affordable housing.

We went on to conduct a collaborative planning process for the playground with respected playground design and build company Leathers and Associates,

in which town children worked with the designers to come up with a plan for our future playground. We now have a beautiful design, detailed budget, and have secured the majority of the funds we need for the project.

We are hoping that the Chilmark CPC will consider an application to help us complete our fundraising effort so we can build this beautiful new play space in 2023. We anticipate that this community space will be utilized not only by Aquinnah children but by all island—and especially up-island—kids and families. Many Aquinnah children go to the West Tisbury School rather than the Chilmark School, and we hope that our new playground will be a place where Chilmark and Aquinnah children can gather together and stay connected as the next generation of our up island community.

**Community Need and Support:** Our Community Hub and playground projects have received overwhelming support, winning unanimous endorsements at town meeting, and earning steady support from our town Select Board. Community engagement and collaborative planning have been the bedrocks of our entire process of envisioning and planning for our playground, from multiple stakeholder sessions with the Conway School to the two day intensive planning process with town children and Leathers and Associates, which was capped by a public presentation that won ringing endorsements from parents, grandparents, children, and town leaders.

We have held three community work days on the site, helping clear brush, invasive plants, and downed trees. People of all ages, from 1-81, came to help, Tribal members and non-Tribal members, year-round residents, seasonal people, volunteers from other towns, the town Fire Department, Select Board and Planning Board members, and more. This is a project with great community support behind it.

There is a shared sense that our children need a better, more accessible, and safe place to play, and that our year round community needs more year-round gathering spaces for people of all ages. We believe that our new Community Hub, with the new playground at its heart, will become an important nexus that can help keep our community connected, supported, and together.

**Timing:** Construction timing will be based on our fundraising efforts, and how quickly we can secure the funds we need to build the playground. Once we've secured all funds, our team will work with Leathers & Associates (our playground equipment supplier) to organize a mighty crew of volunteers to work with some of their expert builders to construct the playground over a two week period. Our goal is to have the playground completed by October 2023.

**Other information:** Please see attached Community Hub plan; playground plan; and one of the sketches done by town children that informed the playground design.

**Permits:** Our project violates no town bylaws and will not require approval from the MVC. To date, the Select Board has endorsed the project and the Planning Board has given unanimous approval for the project elements that have gone before them.