

Roberts Field Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
May 27, 2020

- Attendees:
Bill Askenburg, Marcus Bush, Elizabeth Bobrow, Barry Jefferson, Adelle Stavis; Jim Martin, Sandy Rainey

- Following the call to order and live broadcast notification, there was a call for any public input but there was none.
- Marcus reviewed the list of current board members. Most are pledging to stay on the board for another year. Barry Jefferson is awaiting tentative appointment. Several members voiced concerns about the pandemic situation impacting their available time. Others noted that their self-isolating status would be affecting how they would be able to contribute. Elisabeth Bobrow expressed some concerns with continuing on as a committee member and will let us know what she decides.
- Marcus reviewed updates from the DPW which are outlined in the meeting slides. There was considerable discussion over committee concerns that the DPW had stopped sending representatives to the RFAC meetings and that information needed from the DPW was seriously impacting the committee's ability to execute its planning agenda. Discussion turned to how this might be rectified.
- There was a lengthy discussion about the need for more information regarding irrigation plans. Has a contractor been chosen? Is there an RFP in process, and if so, can the committee obtain a copy? Will the committee be able to obtain a copy of the engineering plan? This information would allow the committee to identify any shortcomings in meeting requirements, and also plan future park features.
- One message that did come from the DPW was that obtaining permits would likely be delayed a full year and cause dependent projects to be pushed out accordingly.
- The committee discussed the fact that the DPW had denied requests to lay down mulch to protect the park trees, but that the reasoning for such denial has not been communicated. Marcus is going to try to get more information from the DPW on this matter.
- Bill raised the need to have the DPW remove materials left from old park seating that had been torn down.
- Sandy and others have made solid progress with plans for the gardens, including plant selection and sourcing, but information about irrigation plans was needed to take further steps.

- Six of the remaining master plan projects were discussed in detail, with focus on what needed to be done for each and who could take on the tasks. These projects are the pond side shade and picnic pavilion, the portable bathroom enclosure, the hardscape play area, upper and lower parking lot improvements, the park welcome area, and an assortment of natural park area improvements.
 - The biggest undertaking for all of these is funding. Government funds originally identified as viable, such as the section 209 bond bill, may no longer be with priorities shifting due to the pandemic.
 - Adelle led a discussion about several grant possibilities and said that she would resurrect information she had to help us to apply for them. The committee will also begin exploring other grant opportunities through Google and possibly local libraries.
 - The grant would invariably require more statistics about park usage, including it being a regional and not just a town resource. Discussion turned to how we could conduct surveys. This would entail creating an appropriate questionnaire and setting up a survey through our website to get public feedback. It also would involve a promotional campaign through surrounding town news and Facebook groups; Barry will begin exploring this.
 - The DPW is adding the location of the proposed pavilion to its master plan.
 - The bathroom enclosure was discussed, and we determined that this might be a viable project for a local scouting team. Bill and Adelle have contacts to explore this further.
 - The hardscape play area may need to wait and be coordinated with parking lot expansion work and/or fire station renovation work. Marcus is going to reach out to see if he can obtain any more information from the fire department on their plans.
 - Rather than taking on full projects, we will likely cherry pick items from the park welcome area and natural park improvement projects. In particular, Bill is going to give the committee a proposal for a new Roberts Field sign to replace the current one which is deteriorating.
 - The park welcome area is going to require detailed planning and coordination with The Shack where the new proposed covered bridge will reside. Up until now park plans have been drawn up by hired vendors (e.g., Howard Stein Hudson) which involves expense we cannot support at this time. Barry is going to explore the feasibility of finding inexpensive software and doing our own plan drafting.
- Barry presented his proposal for placing the Friendship Park sandbox on a raised mound to alleviate the current water collection problems. The committee liked the idea but voiced concerns about safety and handicap access. Barry said he would work to provide more detailed plans and also to research further on how other playgrounds have handled this issue. In the meantime, Jim Martin voiced his idea of drilling a hold in the current sandbox to test the idea of breaking through compacted soil for improved drainage. The committee liked this idea, and Marcus has volunteered to make an initial attempt with a post hole digger the next time he is at the park.

- Barry briefly presented his Gantt chart which lists all the outstanding projects, their expected time frames, and their level of completion. He indicated that he would update the chart from information obtained at this meeting and walk through it at the next meeting.
- Before the meeting ended, discussion turned to the fact that some people had removed the Friendship Park closed signs and barriers and then started using the park. Although the specific violations were turned over to the police authorities, the matter highlighted the need for the committee to draft a public statement regarding park plans for re-opening. Such a statement would need to be consistent with state and local pandemic guidelines and be coordinated with the local health department. Just as important, any form of reopening would need significant resources to be done safely. Equipment would require repeated cleaning, social distancing would need enforcement, and risks associated with children wearing masks while on the equipment would need consideration. The issue is not a simple one. Marcus took the action to explore this with the town health department.