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Meeting Minutes (Rev 5)
Roberts Field Advisory Council

TOWN OF CHELMSFORD
PATRICIA E. DZURIS
TOWN CLERK

Date: May 25, 2021; 10:00am

Place: Roberts Field

Committee Attendees: Bill Askenburg, Marcus Bush, Barry Jefferson, Adelle Stavis

Other Attendees: Steve Jahnle, Steve Callaghan, Jim Martin

Next meeting target: TBD

Barry called the meeting to order near the playground at Roberts Field and announced that he was recording audio.

The group walked to the southwest corner of the park where exercise station 4 (largest rectangular exercise station) is currently targeted to be installed. Bill expressed to Steve Jahnle the need to preserve the three inventoried protected butternut trees growing along the edge while still removing the massive growth of invasive bittersweet that has developed. Steve expressed that he could maneuver his large equipment around the trees but that it would take longer. He added that he didn't have the option to remove anything by hand. Bill responded saying that if Steve could use his equipment to clear up to around a 10- to 15-foot radius around the trees, then the rest of us could finish the removal under the trees by hand, adding a weed barrier and topping it off with wood grindings. Steve agreed that this would work. He said that if the trees needed to stay that he could position the exercise station slightly closer to the path as necessary. Bill questioned whether Steve would still be able to do his regular summer weekly maintenance mowing in the newly cleared area and Steve said that he could.



Trees with Invasive Bittersweet in Southwest Corner that had been cleaned out three years ago

Bill asked Steve if he could reach back with his equipment and clear the bittersweet to the property line behind the butternuts and around the corner of the field to eliminate the invasives. Steve said that his primary concern was clearing to install the exercise station, but if he had time he would attempt to clear the bittersweet back further. He reiterated that this would have to be done by machine; that he didn't have the time or resources to do it by hand. Bill suggested that putting down wood chips and a weed barrier in a 10- to 15- foot radius around the butternuts after clearing the bittersweet along with regular mowing would be really helpful for maintaining ongoing control of the invasive growth, and Steve agreed.

There was a discussion about whether exercise station 2 would be better suited to this location as per Steve's original plan. Steve indicated that it would be better to hold off and re-visit this idea again after he had worked through his final implementation plans and marked key locations such as home plate, first base, the backstop, etc. He said that he hoped to have this detailed layout work completed in the next two weeks.

The group next walked down the corner path and viewed where further clearing would occur in order to construct the playing field. Steve said that there would be no clearing needed on the west side of the path in the woods.

Marcus asked Steve about how he was going to approach grading. Steve said that he would start by scraping up the surface to give him a clean slate for bringing in material and leveling. He said that he would mark out where the new fitness trail is going, and then work inside of that and feather off outside of the trail.

Barry asked Steve about the timing of the irrigation well. Steve said that he had to meet with the drilling representative first, but was hopeful that drilling could begin in a couple of weeks. Once water flow yield was determined, then the rest of the irrigation system could be planned.

The group continued walking along the back of the field while Bill pointed out to Steve trees on the inventoried protected list along with a cherry tree that we would like to save if possible.

Bill asked the group if they were interested in keeping the bleachers sitting on the mound at the end of the field, because they are rarely used and he believes removing them would be a benefit to the plan. Steve said that he would move them over behind the fire station shed and that we could decide later what we wanted to do. Steve said that there were plenty of other fields that he could take them to if we so decided.

Bill next pointed to an inventoried protected elm tree near the pond that had split and needed to be bolted. He said that Jim Martin had the expertise to do the work and received the group's approval to have him proceed.

The next discussion focused on obtaining protective ground cover under the red maple tree inside the south end of the playground to deal with root compaction. Jim Martin has been expressing how the tree is in decline and others agree. The creation of a tree protection plan was discussed, including aerating the soil and adding wood chips, to help protect the roots and prolong survival. Steve Jahnle said that wood chips or mulch would have to be certified for use inside the playground. Jim Martin stated that they could be a different color, shape, and texture as that used in the rest of the playground so as not to suggest the tree being a play structure and bring liability to the town. Steve Jahnle said, however, that he could not do this. The suggestion of adding "Do Not Climb" signs to the interior playground trees was discussed as a possibility to enforce this message. Steve said he would consider ordering extra certified wood chips when he purchased other chips for the playground.

Jim committed to prepare a plan to deal with root compaction, and Adelle and Bill discussed it being vetted in a committee meeting.

Bill asked Steve about replacing the existing benches around the pond and adding some new ones around the new walking track. Depending on the chosen bench types, some cemented ground posts or crushed granite paddocks would be needed to secure them. Steve said approval might be obtained by contacting the town conservation agent, Katie Messer, rather than having to file for a variance with the Conservation Commission. It was noted that there are three styles of existing Friendship Park benches to be considered for matching: the stone benches, the Girl Scout Buddy Bench, and the green metal benches that exist both inside and outside the shade structure. Bill said he would look into costs and a fabricator for sourcing the new benches. Steve Jahnle

agreed that the green metal benches inside the playground cost about \$500 each to purchase a couple of years ago. Steve agreed that the DPW could install the benches once purchased.

Bill mentioned that there have been more occurrences of vandalism and suggested the idea of putting up "You Are Under Video Surveillance" signs. He asked Steve Jahnle if the DPW had any extra signs that could be installed around the park, or he offered the idea of purchasing them inexpensively from Amazon. Discussion continued about vandalism and how it is an issue with all the local parks, but nothing was decided.

Barry raised the question, since there was a committee quorum, if he could have the current survey data truncated. He wanted to do this because a new surveying method was expected to yield different demographic results from that collected so far, and he wanted to separate the statistics. Adelle and others said that this was unnecessary because [and Barry later confirmed with Ted Lutter] the data was time stamped and could be extracted for any span of time.

Adelle brought up that people have been asking for the asphalt basketball play area tentatively targeted to go at the end of the parking lot next to the fire station. She mentioned that this was frequently commented on in the recent park survey responses, and would provide a play area for the older kids. She asked if it could be included with the new track and equipment being brought in. Steve said that this could not be done because the footprint of the fire station was soon to be expanded into the area that the hardscape play area was proposed. Bill and others commented that this would also overload the park with amenities. Adelle asked that the committee take a vote on record at a later meeting regarding omitting the hardscape area from future improvements.

In recap, Bill asked Steve when he thought he would have a layout ready. Steve said that he thought he could have this done in a couple of weeks. Steve said he would take measurements, put flag markers for key locations on the ground, and then let us know; he would not be producing an updated paper copy. He said that he planned to start drilling for the well in a week or two.

He said that he would begin the major work by putting in erosion control around the pond and using snow fencing to mark the perimeter and keep people away from where he would be grading and installing equipment. Steve said that he was planning to begin this construction on the fields in the July-August time frame. He said that one time risk was obtaining the ball field fencing on time because vendors since the pandemic have been very slow in delivering product. He is planning on installing the smaller backstop fencing like what is currently used for the girls' softball field behind the town offices. These will be black vinyl which won't rust and will blend well with the trees.

At 10:50am Barry adjourned the meeting.



Backstop at girls' softball field behind town offices