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Parks and Recreation Minutes 01/29/2002

Spy Pond Park: Master Plan Update Meeting No.1 Meeting Notes

Don Vitters (DV) began the meeting with an introduction of the CRJA Team and a brief overview of the master plan/feasibility study process to-date.

Carol Johnson (CRJ) stated that the CRJA scope of work is to review the current master plan and cost estimates, and offer suggestions to improve and update the master plan based on our discussions with the Commission and Friends. To begin this process, CRJ referenced a prepared agenda (attached) listing master plan elements that CRJA compiled to elicit comments and discussion from the Park Commission and the Friends, as well as to get a sense of the priority of each element for implementation.

Shoreline Restoration and Protection

Erosion control: The Friends of Spy Pond Park (FSPP or Friends) felt that the Pat Loheed Study did not provide enough access points to the water. Several Friends felt that access all along the water was needed. The group furthered the discussion of access and realized that it would be difficult to control erosion along the bank if access points were not defined and limited to specific areas. It was also decided that a planted edge along the areas of steeper bank would be appropriate (generally within the middle portion of the shore).

Carol Johnson (CRJ) stated that the Pressley Associates planting plan implemented in 1993 was valid in its plant selection for the areas where the steeper bank should be planted, but that CRJA would need to develop ways to protect the planting from geese, vandalism, and being trampled by park users.

Jill Ochs Zick (JOZ) described a slope retention detail of coir logs and live brush that CRJA had implemented on a similar project and had great success in restoring a planted edge. She pointed out the addition of a "waterfowl protection barrier system" that could be implemented with the coir logs to prevent geese from destroying the planting during its establishment. This system would be removed after establishment.

CRJ expressed that there would be a need for an additional permanent barrier at the top of the slope to protect the planting over the long term from being trampled by the intensive use within the park. The FSPP agreed that this type of measure might be prudent. One Friend concurred and added that the Spy Pond Condos currently protect 900 linear feet of shoreline using a similar slope retention detail and have added a permanent fence at both the top of the slope and at the water's edge. The fences help to both protect the vegetation from the geese and to direct people to the appropriate access points along the shore. CRJ suggested that CRJA take a closer look at potential types of barriers and where they might be best employed along the SPP shore.

Regarding the retained sections of shoreline, the Friends liked the idea of the granite-walled edge; however, not in its current dilapidated condition. They stated that if the walls could be restored, perhaps this type of retained edge would be acceptable; however, there was a concern over the high cost of constructing granite walls at the water's edge. The timber walls were not at all desired. It was thought that these should be removed and re-graded, or replaced with another material. JOZ added that the permitting agents might require that any treated timber be removed from the pond's edge.

Lastly, the FSPP mentioned that the existing on-site storm water structures should be examined and repaired. They pointed out the locations of at least 3 drain structures within the park (one at Pond Lane, one at Linwood Street, and one located approximately midway along the Spy Pond shoreline – see attached plan). The FSPP felt that if these structures could function properly, the erosion problems would not be as severe, particularly in the area adjacent to the playground.

Stormwater Management: CRJ suggested that CRJA re-grade the park to tip the slope backward from the top of the Spy Pond bank to a swale or French drain at the bottom of the bikeway slope. This would stop the rapid sheet flow of stormwater from the bikeway over the park and into the pond that is currently the cause of much of the park's erosion. The FSPP and Park Commission thought this was an intriguing idea that should be further explored. The FSPP asked if new soil would need to be brought in to accomplish this, as well as

to provide a good planting medium for grass. CRJ responded that new soil would be required and that better soil would also be needed to support turf areas within the park.

Pond Access

Several access points were identified (see attached plan) and defined as 1) physical access points for boats and/or emergency access to the water sheet, 2) view sheds to the water from the shore, and 3) fishing access points to the water.

Boat/emergency access: It was determined that boat access into the pond was needed near the location of the playground, particularly for emergency access. However, it was also decided that this location could also be shared with recreational boaters. Boat access would also be desirable at the Linwood “beach” area where shallow slopes would accommodate easy access for recreational boaters.

Visual water access: Visual access to the water from all areas of the park rated as a high priority. JOZ asked if some visual access of the pond from the bikeway would be desirable. The FSPP thought this was a good idea and should be pursued.

Recreational access to the water: The FSPP stated that many fisherman have favorite fishing spots along the shore and that these should be accommodated to reduce compaction and erosion in those areas. CRJA agreed.

Geese

There was much discussion regarding the past geese problems within the park. CRJA presented some details with which they had great success, and thought that a combination of methods would help ensure that the geese would not destroy the new plantings and grass.

The FSPP mentioned that they did not think that Border Collies would work at Spy Pond Park, as the geese in the park are too smart and would not be intimidated by the dogs. They also mentioned that the public has started to feed the geese again, which only encourages the geese to return to the park. The FSPP suggested that egg adding be initiated again at the park. CRJ suggested that CRJA should do more research into these methods to address this serious problem.

Interpretation/Education

The FSPP expressed that they would very much like to provide more interpretation of the park’s history through additional signage similar to that along the Minute Man Bikeway. They thought it was important to also provide educational signage about the park, as well as its restoration process. In particular, the FSPP would like to add additional “DO NOT feed the geese” signage, as the current signs have all been vandalized. We all agreed that interpretation/education efforts should be discussed and incorporated in the project as it is being developed.

Maintain Views

Linwood Street: The FSPP would like to retain this view.

Minute Man Bikeway: The FSPP expressed a desire to prune existing vegetation to frame views of the pond.

Stone overlooks near Pond Lane parking: The FSPP expressed a desire to prune existing vegetation to frame views of the pond.

Park Maintenance

Grass areas: The FSPP suggested that no grass be planted near the playground, as the area receives so much use that it does not seem reasonable that it would survive. All agreed. CRJ suggested that grass types such as fescues, which the geese would not like, be used as much as possible. The FSPP agreed and asked that we look into a grass type already established at the pond to understand if it would be appropriate. This existing grass has survived the geese in the past. The FSPP also noted the types of grasses used at the Charles River Esplanade. CRJA agreed to follow up and identify these grasses to determine their applicability.

Picnic areas: The FSPP had much discussion around if picnics should be allowed in the park, and if so, where they should be designated. The final agreement was that picnics should be allowed, without fires, and that picnic area should be designated in the current area south of the playground and also in the grassy area near the Pond Lane parking area. The FSPP also requested new picnic tables and benches within these areas, as well as new benches placed throughout the park.

Playground area: The suggestion that the playground gate be relocated and that additional gates be added to the play area was well received. New gate locations were suggested at the north and south ends of the play area and/or along the diagonal fence section at the northwest corner of the play area (see attached plan).

Circulation path: The group discussed the need for a path through the park to accommodate park maintenance and emergency access, as well as the large amount of park users. It was suggested that the path be wide enough to accommodate these uses, but not too wide to encourage unauthorized vehicular use. An 8 foot wide path was suggested. It was also suggested that the pathway be a paved surface.

CRJA suggested that they would look into the types of paving that could be implemented, as well as what would be accepted by permitting agents, as the pathway would lie within the 100 foot buffer zone of the pond.

Irrigation (water supply potentially from Spy Pond per DEM grant)

CRJ suggested that the irrigation system that currently supplies the ballfield be expanded to cover the entire park. This would be of particular importance to support grass areas over the long term and to assist in establishing and maintaining a healthy planted slope at the pond’s edge. Both the FSPP and the Park Commission agreed that this should be done. There was, however, some concern expressed over the willingness of the Town to commit to the maintenance required for irrigation. DV mentioned that some serious thought on the part of the Town would need to be given to the maintenance of the park. CRJ responded that CRJA would help to

identify ways to reduce maintenance requirements, where possible.

Parking within the Park at Linwood Street Turnaround

There was much discussion regarding parking at the Linwood Street end of the park. The FSPP had different opinions about whether or not parking should be accommodated within the park. There is currently a lack of enforcement problem for illegal parking in this area, and the FSPP are not convinced that adding legal parking will help the situation. They do know that the area cannot provide enough parking to solve the problem, and therefore, are not sure that adding any parking is a good idea. JOZ also mentioned that permitting agents might not allow any new parking within the 100 foot buffer zone. CRJA agreed to look at this issue more carefully and suggest viable alternatives.

There was also some discussion regarding the relocation of the turnaround by pulling it back from the pond edge. CRJ also suggested that it might be moved in closer toward the ballfield and taken out of the Linwood Street view corridor. The FSPP were not convinced that this would be necessary. CRJA pointed out that this could also be desirable in creating a larger and more continuous green space within the park. The FSPP responded that a larger green space would be desirable, but moving the turnaround may not be worth the cost and effort, if it opens up the discussion of providing parking at this end of the park. CRJA responded that moving the turnaround back from the water's edge might be beneficial in permitting the park, as it would reduce the total amount of pavement within the buffer zone.

Other

- Relocation of the water fountain within the park (at water's edge near Linwood Street Turnaround) to the bikeway edge at Linwood Street (see attached plan).
- Removal of the water hazards which are located in the location of the former icehouse foundation.
- Remove the eroded pathway materials from the pond.

Next Meeting: Proposed for 20 February 2002, time and location to be determined.

Bob Sprague

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