

FRIENDS OF SPY POND PARK ANNUAL MEETING

January 7, 2007

In attendance: Eric Baatz, Eva Balazs, Frances Cameron, Sarah Conn, Anne Ellinger, Bill Eykamp, John Gearin, Karen Grossman, Brian Hare, Elizabeth Karpati, John and Carmen LaPorta, Betsy Leondar-Wright, Paul Marquis, Kathy Modigliani, Fred Moses, Julie Nardone, Gail Neff, Tomi Ann Nolan, Doris Powell, Ellen Robertson, Patricia Worden.

Guest speaker: Joe Connelly, Director of Recreation.

The **minutes** of the December meeting were accepted with one correction: the date of the next (this) meeting should have been included.

Treasurer's Report:

- Eric Baatz just took over this job after Karen had been doing it most of the year since Marilyn Hepner died.
- Eric presented a report for 2006 broken down by month and by category. Our year-end balance is \$7825.66 in the bank, \$25 in the cash box, and \$1858.86 in a CD maturing on 3/19/07. We also have some unsold T-shirts.
- The CD is earning just under 3%. Eric will look into getting a better rate when it matures.

Park Maintenance:

- Joe Connelly presented a concise but thorough report on events since he took over the job of Director of Recreation six months ago, when the park renovations were mostly complete.
- He described his job as threefold: the recreation program, managing the rink, and managing parks and fields (scheduling and group permits for the latter).
- Joe works closely with DPW, with weekly meetings. We can bring maintenance issues to him to be relayed to DPW.
- The demise and replacement of the two trees inside the circular benches near the playground raised the question of how to keep the new trees watered until they were established, which led to a search for funds, which led to the discovery of enough money left from the original appropriation to pay for an irrigation system for the whole park, which was installed in the fall.
- The vandal who destroyed the new glassed-in bulletin board has been apprehended. He is paying partial restitution. The new board should be ordered in about a month.
- We also have a wooden bulletin board which we want to erect just inside the playground. Joe has cleared this with the Park & Rec Commission.
- The fence which protects the shoreline plantings came from Germany. DPW is trying to repair the section which was broken by a falling tree rather than ordering a new piece. Meanwhile temporary vinyl fencing is in place.
- On the shore near the parking lot a bare tree trunk, which is an eyesore, will be removed.
- The existing signs in the park need better placement, and signs prohibiting alcohol and swimming are needed. Joe will ask Park & Rec to vote on new signs before any are ordered.
- The signs on the fence, created by Hardy School students, are generally seen as too negative, mostly demanding that people not walk on the grass, but it's hard to reject their contributions.
- As for maintenance, mowing is routine; the rest involves two questions: having the money, and having the necessary knowledge. The plan from CRJ Associates is too elaborate; Joe asked them for a one-page "scope of work" which he can use to ask landscapers for bids.

- The erosion from the “50-year” storm last fall has been repaired. The aggregate used for the paths turns hard in storage, so it cannot be bought pre-mixed and kept on hand.
- Karen mentioned that Myra Schwartz said the Vortechincs stormwater management system in the park is different from the other one used in the Town, and the manufacturer is willing to offer training in maintaining it properly. Joe got Myra’s contact information to work on this.

Questions and Answers with Joe Connelly:

- Q. Is there any drive to make Spy Pond swimmable? A. No. There would be questions of liability and water testing; it would require lifeguards and lifeguard chairs, rules, etc.
- Q. Is fishing allowed? A. It doesn’t seem to be prohibited. The state tested the water a couple of years ago and issued a warning against eating carp from the pond, the only fish that live long enough to accumulate possibly dangerous amounts of contaminants.
- Q. The fences protecting the shoreline plantings don’t reach the water; kids squeeze through the gaps and damage the plants. A. Joe will ask Park & Rec to put signs at the gaps.
- Q. Is there a rule against walking on the grass? A. No. The kids’ signs that say so may be replaced after a while.
- Q. What about our coyote? A. Parks & Rec approved it.
- Q. Can we get trash from the park picked up on Sundays? A. Joe will ask for more pickups – or more barrels so that they don’t overflow by Monday.
- Q. Next steps on maintenance? A. Joe will let us know what bids he gets from landscapers, may need our help to advocate for enough money for it in DPW budget. (DPW has only four natural resources workers for the whole town, for all parks and playing fields.)

Accomplishments and Goals: The following were adopted. They are not prioritized; they are listed more or less in the order in which they were mentioned, but with related ones grouped together.

Accomplishments 2006:

- Successful park reopening celebration with about 400 people attending, newspaper publicity.
- Library display in the spring, with new display boards, and updated brochure.
- Town Day with about a dozen people helping at the booth; \$150 worth of T-shirts sold.
- Bulb planting: 24 people on 10/14, a few more on 10/21, planted about 2000 bulbs, also removed some invasive plants.
- New bulb planting equipment bought with grant money (Sarah has it now).
- Beautiful new “Spy Pond Park” sign in Linwood Circle.
- Meetings with Town Manager and DPW; liaison with Vision 2020.
- Advocated for irrigation system.
- Participated in town-wide meeting of “Friends” groups.
- Caught up with annual reports owed to the Mass. Dept. of Public Charities.
- Some members attended workshops on invasive plants and on loosestrife control with beetles.
- Plastic coyote to scare off geese is ready to be put out in spring. (Need to publicize.)
- New website: www.friendsofspypondpark.org about to be linked to Town website.
- Increasing database and membership: about 430 people now, about 200 paid dues.
- Calls to members before meetings.
- Three newsletters published.

Goals for 2007:

- Continue advocating for the Town to get plans and money for park maintenance in place, and clarify our role.
- Install the bulletin board in the playground.
- Clean-ups (2), including trash in water at shoreline; get waders for this.
- Prepare to apply for another grant for 2008 – define a project. (Sarah and Elizabeth)
- Town Day 2007 (Kathy and Eric).
- T-shirt inventory and proposal for what to order (larger children's sizes have been requested); wheeled containers for storage. (Kathy)
- List of where everything is kept – Town Day canopy, T-shirts, tools, brochures, etc.
- Augment website: content, photos, contact information.
- Committee to work on the following ideas: Database of basic membership information on-line, visible to members only. A way for members to join on-line, enter their data, perhaps pay dues via PayPal. Update database and e-mail list (Yahoo group) with one data entry to keep both in sync.
- Project to fill in missing e-mail addresses of current members. Ask in newsletter for volunteers to call those who gave phone number only; perhaps have a calling party. Set up a telephone tree to serve those who have no e-mail.
- Have another Library display with new photos.
- Continue liaison with Vision 2020 and participation in meetings of "Friends" groups.
- Continue publishing the newsletter – 3 or 4 issues.
- Have a presence in the park – talk to people, encourage them to join FSPP, discourage inappropriate behavior. Maybe put up the canopy and FSPP sign once a month.
- Have a list of one-time projects for which people can sign up, to get them started on being active, e.g. bulb planting, help with data entry, calling party. Have it at Town Day; could also be in newsletter or on website or sent to e-mail list.
- Plan "Spy Pond Splash" in conjunction with Spy Pond Committee, as part of celebration of Arlington's bicentennial.
- Have several events in the park each year – e.g. repeat the play, scavenger hunt, jazz group (Eva Balazs), Earth Day event in alternate years when the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park don't do theirs. Anne Ellinger is willing to coordinate.
- Try to get more *active* members and develop new leadership – officers-in-training – before the present leadership "burns out."

Officers elected for 2007:

- President: Karen L. Grossman
- General Vice-President: [none – there were no candidates]
- Vice-President for Communication / Newsletter: John Gearin
- Treasurer: Eric Baatz
- Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Karpati
- Corresponding Secretary: Betsy Leondar-Wright
- Co-Chairs for Beautification: Sarah Conn and Ellen Robertson
- Coordinator for Park Activities: Anne Ellinger

Next meeting: 7 p.m. Sunday, February 4, 2007, 32 Hamilton Road, #402.

Respectfully submitted: Elizabeth Karpati