

Friends of Spy Pond Park Annual Meeting Minutes January 10, 2021

The times being what they are, our annual meeting this year was conducted via Zoom. Karen Grossman, President, started the Zoom meeting promptly at 6 p.m. after giving everyone invited (anyone on our MailChimp list) a chance to sign in.

SPEAKER

Karen Grossman introduced our annual meeting speaker Emily Sullivan, Conservation Agent and Environmental Planner for the Town of Arlington, and liaison for the Conservation Commission. The topic of her presentation, “Friends of Spy Pond Park and Community”, was followed by a Q & A period. This is the second time Emily was called upon to address our annual meeting. She first made a presentation on December 2, 2018, when she discussed the imminent start of the Spy Pond Soil Erosion and Conservation Project which began in April 2019 and was finally completed this last November. Emily mentioned that the project was preceded by a few years of design, along with the procurement of funding with many people involved.

The Spy Pond Project goals were to:

- preserve, stabilize, and strengthen the pond’s banks to control erosion
- protect and enhance wildlife habitat
- prevent unauthorized paths through the planting beds
- improve water quality and recreational opportunities and
- improve stormwater infiltration.

This involved the construction of:

- a porous pathway throughout the park
- a new timber over-look
- a rain garden/vegetated bio-basin and
- new native plantings.

Funding consisted of a total budget of approximately \$700,000 from the following sources:

- Community Preservation Act grant (\$552,900)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund grant (\$40,040)
- Community Development Block grant (\$94,000)
- Judy Record Fund grant (\$10,000) and
- Friends of Spy Pond Park (\$5,000).

There are ongoing provisions for plant maintenance and training. The Conservation Commission submitted a FY2022 CPA application to renovate the North Beach Ramp with the same porous pavement material used to renovate the other pathways through the park. This project will, hopefully, start this Summer or Fall.

Cathy Garnett, Associate Commissioner and recently retired professional landscape architect is working on a buffer area guidance document for the Arlington Conservation Commission. The guide will instruct property owners along Spy Pond on how to construct a vegetated buffer and use natural methods like coir fascine (an erosion control barrier) to stabilize slopes. At least one resident has already installed coir fascine and others have asked for details. Cathy is researching permits granted to Spy Pond residents over the past 10 years to prove that plants are serving their intended purpose, and that other, perhaps non-native, plants might also serve the same purpose.

Michael Ratnor wondered about Massachusetts’ policy re: plantings, over how wide an area plants might be drawn from, along with considerations of short and long-term survivability. Cathy indicated that if plant selection was limited to those found within too small a local area, considered “native” plants, that would severely limit options for the homeowner/gardener. It’s an ongoing process to determine the best approach. Michael pointed out that Hemlock trees are apparently dying out in MA and that perhaps sugar maples might suffer the same fate. So, should MA invest in planting sugar maples? Cathy Garnett noted that there are more plant pathogens in warmer climates, and that it could be a problem, of course.

Karen brought the group's attention to the passing of Carol Johnson at the age of 91, a premier landscape designer, who was a wonderful partner and friend of the Friends of Spy Pond Park. Her firm, one of the largest owned by a woman, was known for large-scale projects in Boston, Washington and elsewhere. She developed the plans for the renovation of the Park in the late 1990's and said that it was one of her favorite projects. Just a few years ago, Karen and Carol did a kayak tour of the Pond along Spy Pond Park shoreline to inspect the impact of soil erosion.

Karen asked Emily when the Conservation Commission might be able to provide some guidance on the maintenance of the planting beds and FSPP plans for the upcoming year. Emily said that there is currently funding in the budget for invasive plant management and that, hopefully, by April they will have a contract with a company to provide assistance to the community and to the Friends of Spy Pond Park for our upcoming workdays. Emily said that the new pervious path has not been vacuumed, yet, but that will be done this spring, and that the path will, in fact, be resealed prior to its vacuuming. Jean had a question for Emily about the color of the path. Emily said that the color can't be changed now, but the color of the North Beach ramp path could be different. She noted that the path does have a limited lifetime and will have to be re-installed, eventually.

Karen noted that problems with the irrigation system for the park were discovered during the park renovation last year and that these were addressed and repaired.

Lally requested that the cords and ribbons marking the planting beds from the non-planting beds stay in place. Emily said they would eventually be removed. However, they intend to keep them in place until after the training sessions are completed and that, perhaps, a more permanent solution can be implemented.

Emily noted that the DPW will be responsible for vacuuming the pervious path, as well as other pervious installations, e.g. the Hurd Field parking lot. Different size machines will be required for different applications. The schedule will have to be worked out with DPW.

Cathy Garnett suggested that a Zoom meeting be set up with Emily and the FSPP in March to discuss park maintenance with any interested parties, and to be aware of the responsibilities of the contractor/volunteer workers. Karen agreed.

INTRODUCTIONS: Name, where you live and what you've enjoyed at the park lately

Karen Grossman – has not been in the park lately, but recently had a treat when she saw two bald eagles on the pond fighting over a fish. The female (generally larger) won.

Eileen Coleman

Cathy Garnett

Marshall McCloskey – has driven through via Pond Lane a few times and looked over the shed and the bulletin boards just to see if all is well. Looks OK.

Sally Hempstead

Michael Ratnor

Lally Stowell – has been down several times recently. Finds it a joy to see lots of people still enjoying the park.

Mithelish Sharma – loves the park. Every day it's different. Loves the sunsets, especially.

Jean – likes the new overlook

Betsy Leonard-Wright – has a tradition of singing with Anne Ellinger and sometimes others on the winter solstice at sunset. It was a glorious red, purple pink, sunset. An enormous bird, must have been an eagle, flew towards them then veered off in the sun. a magical moment.

Bill Eykamp – flattered that someone (Fred Moses) remembered his fruit cobbler from when we could have an actual Annual potluck. Now has 2 grandsons and his son in residence. Enjoys having them. Has also seen eagles and many mergansers. Saw an eagle swoop down and catch a fish not 20 feet from one of the mergansers. His son and grandsons went out in a kayak to break the ice, something he much enjoyed doing himself, but has given up lately, deferring to youth.

Sharon Green

Jenny Babon – lives nearby and goes often to the park with her daughter for walks. Good to see everybody.

Colin Blair – much enjoys walking on the new path. Lives on the South side of the pond, and saw a bald eagle circling above, then land on the pond. Must have been ice underneath. 10 minutes or so later a smaller eagle joined her/him, and they stayed for another 5 minutes or so. Phenomenal.

Julie McBride – walks down from Pleasant St and enjoys watching the birds and the ducks on the Pond. She recently noticed two swans together, although, usually, she sees just one.

OCTOBER 4 MEETING MINUTES ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

Lally requested an addition to the minutes noting she will continue to organize the volunteers to do work in the park but wants to pass along the responsibility for going into the planting beds. The minutes were accepted as presented per a motion from Colin Blair.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Joanie Walls, our recent Treasurer before a very short stint by Kevin Wall, graciously filled in after his departure to provide an end of year statement for 2020. She has also submitted all currently required government forms and reports to keep our status up to date. Namely our PC (Public Charity) filing, annual report and tax forms. Again, a very warm thank you to Joanie from everyone. She has said she'll file the 990, also.

Several of the 2020 expenses were not included on Joanie's report because they were not known or available at the time. Marshall noted that postage expenses for our spring and fall solicitations are withdrawn from an account we maintain with the US post office, called an Advance Deposit Account. The current balance being \$169.15. The postage for the last mailing was \$75.94, which was fairly typical. We can get two more mailings before the account will need to be replenished.

Karen noted that the total dues received in 2020 was somewhat greater than in 2019, even though there were 2 fewer households that contributed. A number of expenses have been less in 2020 than in 2019, and we expect will be less in the near future, e.g., the portable toilet expense, Fun Day, Town Day, etc. Lally does not anticipate much in the way of expenses related to beautification. No new tools, but possibly trash bags, depending on how things develop with workdays this year. The expenses for dues/donation solicitations should be less than the \$600 budgeted for 2021, as we will not need new mailing envelopes for a while. So, just the cost of printing the solicitation letters and postage will be involved. The \$1050 expense budgeted for website development last year is no longer anticipated.

Friends of Spy Pond Park Financial Report as of December 31, 2020

2020 INCOME		Totals
Dues & Donations - Nov 2019 solicitation received in 2020		\$1,580.00
Dues & Donations – May 2020 solicitation		2,985.00
Dues & Donations – December 2020 solicitation		85.00
Other 2020 Donations		
Fun Day	0.00	
Feast of the East	0.00	
Town Day	0.00	
Workdays	0.00	
Total Other Donations		0.00
CD Interest		0.02
T Shirt & Sticker Sales		0.00
Donated Booklet Sales		0.00
TOTAL INCOME		\$4,650.02

2020 Expenses	Amount
Winter/Spring Newsletter & Brochures	381.15
Website/Domain Name/Software License	129.09
Spring Solicitation Letters	89.98
Prepaid Postage/ Permit Fee & Postage	-
P.O. Box Renewal	90.00
MA Filing & Annual Report Fees	-
Envelopes & Return Envelopes	-
Beautification tools/supplies	96.74
Summer Newsletter	44.40
Fun Day Generator Rental	-
Fun Day Supplies & Posters	-
Fall Solicitation Letters	57.63
Fall/Winter Newsletter	127.52

Friends of Spy Pond Park 2021 Budget	
Projected Income	
Membership Dues	\$3,200.00
Donations	1,800.00
Merchandise Sales	100.00
Miscellaneous	100.00
Total Projected Income	\$5,200.00
Projected Expenses	
Portable Toilet	\$500.00
Beautification Committee	250.00
Fun Day Expenses	350.00
Outreach Booths (Town Day & Feast of East)	150.00
Solicitations	600.00
Newsletters	650.00
Bench	1,500.00
Website	500.00
Misc. (Web, fees, supplies)	500.00
Total Projected Expenses	\$5,000.00

Annual Meeting Notice	-
NCOA address processing	-
Misc./Bank Fees/Network for Good Fees	-
2019 Town Day Booth	50.00
total newsletters \$553.07	
total solicitations \$147.61	
Total Expenses	\$1,066.51
Total Income	4,650.02
Difference (Income - Expenses)	3,583.51
Assets	End 2019 End 2020
Cash Box \$50.00	\$50.00
Checking \$22,050.22	\$25,915.62
Certificate of Deposit \$0	\$0.00
Net Increase in Assets	\$3,865.40
Difference - Outstanding checks	(281.89)

Outstanding checks: \$185.15 + \$96.74 = \$281.89

Notes: All above schedules are prepared on the cash basis.

- 1) Unused balance in Post Office balance is \$169.15 which goes against future mailings/permits. \$95.85 was used this year.
- 2) \$1,895 from December solicitation not deposited in checking account as of this report.
- 3) 136 households in FSPP database contributed \$6,055 vs. 139 households contributing \$5,916 last year.
- 4) Not included above are expenses which relate to 2020 but were not paid at year end:
- 5) \$518 bulletin board replacement and \$69.99 data processing and mailing fees.

Karen presents an updated Treasurer's report and budget here and at the next meeting, since the current report had to be hastily put together at the last minute. She has reposted a request for a volunteer Treasurer on the MACPA Society site, contacted a local bookkeeping firm and volunteermatch.com, but has not heard back from any as yet. She will also post a request to our Mailchimp list.

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2021 BUDGET & GOALS

FSPP Standing Annual Goals

1. Increase *active* membership, enlarge the core group of volunteers
2. Maintain the park as needed
3. Have Town Day, EcoFest, & Feast of the East outreach
4. Send bi-monthly meeting announcements & agendas
5. Sell more t-shirts
6. File annual report and PC report to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
7. Have a library display, as permitted
8. Increase awareness of FSPP and park events: hold a successful park activities day for children and families
9. Maintain and update the FSPP database
10. Maintain and update the FSPP website
11. Publish 3 FSPP Newsletters
12. Maintain archives of news items on Spy Pond Park (Memory Scrapbooks & Newsletters)
13. Create a scorecard on annual goals, and
14. Recruit two new board members from a broad range of the membership: see attached list of Board members to be posted on our website

Goals for 2021

1. Monitor and influence, as much as we can, the Conservation Commission efforts re: shoreline rehab, and path improvement in our best interests
2. Coordinate with Hardy School re: a unit for study of the Spy Pond Park environment and field day in SPP involving parents, the DPW, and Charlotte Milan from Arlington Recycle – this was done in 2018 and will be investigated for 2021.
3. Determine the need for alternatives for handling litter/trash and investigating how other towns do it.
4. Recruit a General Vice-President.
5. Recruit people for a FSPP Public Art Committee – Mithilesh Sharma has volunteered to be on it and Betsy has some ideas for others.
6. Explore additional art for the park and investigate what is being done in other parks – look into themes with connections to Arlington history and indigenous peoples.
7. Monitor the town's pursuing finances for establishing signage about the soil erosion project and care of the planting beds.
8. Put up a sign in the rain garden explaining its environmental purpose.
9. Identify and award 1-2 worthy citizens for outstanding service to the FSPP, if possible.

BEAUTIFICATION

Marshall indicated that the new enclosed bulletin board seems firmly in place and is functioning well. New keys have been distributed as needed. For the record, there would have been no way to repair or replace the corkboard in the previous enclosed bulletin board. We now actually have two separate enclosed boards, back-to-back.

WEBSITE

Fred Moses has set things up so that FSPP now has its own GoDaddy website account. The website fees will be deducted automatically from our checking account. When acknowledgements from the last solicitation are complete, Fred will arrange for a migration of the website and database to a server which is up to date with current technology. Thanks to Fred for all he has done over the years to develop and maintain this very important, indeed essential, function for FSPP.

No new features or enhancements to the website are currently planned. Daniel Jalkut continues to maintain information to our database and the Mailchimp list. Julie McBride will post the October minutes to the website, as well as the Workday schedule, when it is available

OUTREACH

Anne Ellinger has posted the newsletters on the 3 FSPP bulletin boards through the year, as they have become available. There are two boards at the Pond Lane entrance to the park, one is enclosed, and the other one is on the bike path at Linwood St.

Betsy Leondar-Wright hopes that we will be able to have a Fun Day this coming year and recommended that we leave \$350 in the budget for it.

Jenny Babon has been mostly posting to our Facebook page. In publicizing the scavenger hunt she has managed to gain some valuable experience with contacting the Patch and the Arlington Advocate, and some others on our contact list. Karen has posted QR code information on our bulletin boards that enable people to go directly to our Facebook page. They would then be able to post photos, for example. Jenny notices that there is considerably more activity from others when she posts something to Facebook and intends to try to do this as often as she can. She will also look into creating an FSPP Instagram account.

Betsy Leondar-Wright showed a new sticker design created by Puneet Syal who has supplied about 100 to us. He is a graphic designer for Fidelity and may have gotten them gratis from people interested in his business. Betsy thought we could, perhaps, sell or give them out to people at our next outreach table, along with the current stickers created by Jason Fliggburger a few years back, which we will do when the occasion arises.

Betsy designed two Scavenger Hunts, one with identifying public art which did not require reading, so very young children could participate. She intended to supply prizes, perhaps in Tupperware containers, however, the Park Commissioners did not give permission for that, since at that time it was thought that touching objects might be a factor in Covid-19 virus transmission. In any case, there was very limited response to the flyers Betsy put out and Jenny's publicity efforts last September. The second hunt was a Spy Pond Historical Hunt, with various clues for each century, from the 1600's up thru the present day. This used QR codes for participation, and Betsy got a few responses from people complaining that they didn't know how to use them, or that they were not working. She did get about 20 responses from people that she could monitor who were interested in the 1600's, but there was a steep drop off after that, perhaps a dozen or so from then to the present. So, in her opinion, not a very successful venture even with plenty of publicity surrounding it in our social media.

Jenny Babon suggested that we put back up the QR codes and direct people to our website and Facebook and make the historical information available as a matter of public interest to park goers. It was agreed that this was a fine idea. Karen noted that we need permission to post things throughout the park other than on the bulletin boards. Betsy will create new QR codes or give Jenny the necessary information as required. Lally suggested that we put some information on the bulletin boards re: the availability and use of the QR codes. All agreed.

Betsy will go with the formula that has worked for Fun Day in the past, before Covid-19, and hope for the best next year. She is open to any suggestions regarding activities both with and without possible Covid -19 restrictions.

Sally Hempstead has made all the arrangements for a Robbins Library FSPP display for the month of April this year. Hopefully, the library will be open. She and Karen will get together previous to April to update the FSPP photo display. Lally said there was little to add this year to the FSPP memory scrapbook.

Lally Stowell and Marshall McCloskey were presented with FSPP Good Citizen Awards. Lally, for her 10 years of leadership on the Beautification Committee, organizing workdays, purchasing necessary equipment and supplies, contacting volunteers, supervising the workers, interfacing with the Arlington DPW, and also managing FSPP T-shirt sales. Marshall, for his service over the last 10 years in several roles, currently as Recording Secretary, previously as Treasurer for several years along with database maintenance, for the Beautification Committee procuring and helping to erect the FSPP tool shed, setting up the FSPP canopy on workdays, and seeing to various maintenance tasks re: the shed and bulletin boards when required. Karen mentioned that his reward for all this has been his wife, Sally Hempstead, for without FSPP, who knows?

COMMUNICATIONS

Sally has set March 15 as the deadline for articles for the FSPP Winter/Spring Newsletter.

SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR NEXT YEAR

The following slate of officers was proposed, approved and elected for 2021.

President – Karen L. Grossman

General Vice-President – Open

Recording Secretary – Marshall McCloskey

Treasurer – Open

Membership Secretary – Daniel Jalkut

Vice Presidents for Communication & Outreach –

Sally Hempstead & Jamie Ciocco

Outreach Committee – Anne Ellinger and Marshall McCloskey

Publicity Chair – Jenny Babon

Pinal Maniar

Beautification Committee -

Sharon Green, Adrienne Landry, Julie McBride, Marshall McCloskey, Lally Stowell, and Beverly Williams

Web Developer- Julie McBride

Chair for Park Events – Betsy Leondar-Wright

Fundraising Chair – Open

Videographer and Photographers – Jenny Babon, Ram Subramanian, Mithilesh Sharma, and Laura Homer

Photographer's Assistant – Puneet Syal

Post-processing – Mark Sandman, Fred Moses

OTHER BUSINESS & NEXT MEETING DATE: March 14, 2021, 7 PM via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Marshall McCloskey

Recording Secretary