

FRIENDS OF SPY POND PARK ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

January 23, 2022

ATTENDEES:

Karen L. Grossman, Adrienne Landry, Lally Stowell, Jenny Aurielle Babon, Marshall McCloskey, Colin Blair, Sally Hempstead, Lori Tsuruda, Lauren Bonilla, Betsy Leondar-Wright, Jamie Ciocco, Elizabeth Orth, Bill Eykamp, Sharon Green, and Megan Chrisman. Introductions were completed before the recording started.

SPEAKER: Joe Connelly, “2022 Spy Pond Park Improvements”

Joe Connelly was unable to attend because of a miscommunication, so Karen presented the plan on his behalf and will be distributing links to the proposed redesign when they are available.

Two meetings were set to gather public input about the park to consider public needs and interests. Landscape architect Kyle Zick and the consulting team used information from survey responses and meeting feedback to create a design that they felt responded to residents’ and visitors’ comments about the design. There will be two or three areas of the playground; one will be used as a discussion/meeting space for educational material for daycare visitors. There are two daycare groups that frequent the area nearly every day of the week. The mastodon tusk idea was incorporated into one corner where kids will be able to crawl through it. On the ground there will be a design that represents the ice in the former icehouse that used to be nearby. There will be benches and a canopied covered area for sitting. Some trees will be planted to offer shade, with a decorative fence that will have shapes of things pertinent to the area such as fish, turtles, birds, etc. There will be two climbing areas: one for older children (up to 12 years) and one for younger children. These skew older than the present playground equipment. There will be toy riding horses on the pond side and the swings will be back near the bike path embankments to ensure a clear view of the pond for anyone within the confines of the playground. There will be a space for strollers within the fenced-in area, so the roots of the tree outside won’t get damaged by the strollers. Karen hopes that a fence will be erected around the tree outside the playground at the entrance. There will be two entrances; one will be on the bike path walkdown side near the area where the present bench is located, so people can enter from that side of the play area. The handicapped ramp is also scheduled to be redone using the porous surface that already is on the path through the park. The ramp is in dire need of repair, so Karen is looking forward to seeing it fixed this calendar year, although it wasn’t presented in the plans for the playground area. It’s not clear when the entire pathway surface will be resealed since there are some pebbles coming up from the path right now; it is not as durable as originally hoped. The sealing is intended to fix that problem. The main part of the playground would still be wood chips, and a soft rubbery surface and a path that curves around from one side of the play area to the other. FSPP is pleased with the renovation that is occurring, even though it was not requested—the disability assessments of the park had shown that some repairs and upgrades would be needed.

Karen asked if there were any questions about the park or repair so that she could pass along concerns, suggestions, and comments.

Elizabeth asked when the park renovation will be complete. The current estimate is by the fall. Work is slated to begin in the spring and the playground will be closed during the renovation. Karen will pass on the question about the exact start time.

Lally noted that the other non-mastodon tusk structures had been removed from the new design, and it’s important that the park concepts are relevant to four-and five-year-old children. Karen replied that representatives of daycare providers gave feedback and the ice poles from the original design were eliminated; the meeting area was also made smaller than it was originally since people thought it should be an area for the children to play and be active. FSPP might consider using the small meeting area for Fun Day. Jen Rothenberg on the Conservation Commission (Con Com) attended the public meeting and thought it would be good for this.

Jenny mentioned that the consultants handling this project also worked on the Arlington Reservoir Playground and that project took about 6 months, so if they start SPP this spring, it seems likely that it would be a shorter time frame because it’s a smaller area. Karen noted that there may be different priorities but will inquire about the time schedule.

Adrienne asked if the playground footprint will be the same and Karen confirmed that it will be the same, without expansion. A decorative fence will go around the front of the playground, and not on the embankment side. There could be more maintenance issues if trees are planted there because there would be more leaves within the playground area that would have to be picked up, whereas on the grass they can be easily pushed to the side; Karen is not sure if the parks department will provide that service. Maybe the people contracted to remove leaves can do so within the playground area in the same way they do in the main lawn area of the park.

NOVEMBER 7 MEETING MINUTES ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS:

The November meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2022 BUDGET & GOALS:

**Friends of Spy Pond Park - 2021 Financial Report as of December 31,
Treasurer's Report 2021**

2021 INCOME	Totals
Dues & Donations - 2020 solicitation received Jan-Mar 2021	\$3,117.50
Dues & Donations – spring 2021 solicitation received May-June 2021	2,472.50
Dues & Donations – Dec 2021 solicitation	2,065.00
January 2021 Network for Good posting	737.50
Other 2021 Donations	1,492.75
CD Interest	0.00
T Shirt & Sticker Sales	348.00
Donated Booklet Sales	0.00

Friends of Spy Pond Park 2021 Budget	
Projected Income	
Membership Dues	\$4,480.00
Donations	\$2,520.00
Merchandise Sales	\$240.00
Miscellaneous	\$100.00
Total Projected Income	\$7,340.00
Projected Expenses	
Portable Toilet	\$500.00
Beautification Committee	\$250.00
Fun Day Expenses	\$500.00
Outreach Booths (Town Day & Feast of East)	\$150.00
Solicitations	\$200.00
Newsletters	\$1,100.00
Invasive plant removal contract	\$2,500.00
Park maintenance expenses	\$600.00
Website	\$500.00
Misc. (Web, fees, supplies)	\$500.00
Total Projected Expenses	\$6,800.00

2021 Expenses	Amount
Winter/Spring Newsletter	\$ 346.11
Website / Domain Name / Software License	\$ 386.15
Spring Solicitation Letters	\$ 109.84
P.O. Box Renewal	\$ 126.00
Other postal / postal processing expense	\$ 298.31
Mass AG fees	\$ 70.00
Envelopes & Return Envelopes	\$ 487.76
Removal of invasive plants / transplanting	\$ 212.65
Beautification tools/supplies	
Summer Newsletter	\$ 266.84
Fun Day Generator Rental	\$ 76.50
Fun Day Supplies & Posters	\$ 401.61
Fall/Winter Newsletter	\$ 438.01
Year-end Solicitation Letters	\$ 70.36
Annual Meeting Notice	\$ 58.71
Exterior fixtures (bench, bulletin board repair, portable toilet)	\$ 2,505.48
2019 Town Day Booth	
Brochures	\$ 140.99
Other printing expenses	\$ 65.10
Other / miscellaneous	\$ 29.00
Total Expenses	\$ 6,089.42
Total newsletters	\$ 1,109.67
Total solicitations	\$ 180.20
Total Income	\$ 10,233.25
Difference (Income - Expenses)	\$ 4,143.83

Assets	End 2021
Cash Box	\$ -
Checking account	\$ 30,816.99
Certificate of Deposit	\$ -
Net Increase in Assets	\$ 4,901.37
Difference - Outstanding checks	\$ (757.54)

Outstanding checks: \$487.48 2021 portapotties + \$270.06 printing = \$757.54

Sarah was unable to attend the annual meeting, so Karen presented the Treasurer's Report on her behalf. Some of the end of year's dues/donations money from January was attributed to 2021 donations. Network for Good posts some of the donations from December in January; there are still people giving on a regular basis via automatic paycheck deduction to Network for Good online. This is a good way for us to get income from people who are interested in supporting what we do. Other 2021 donations may have come from people who gave on Fun Day at stations that Betsy set up. There were no sticker sales in 2021 because there was no park outreach, but 29 T-shirts were sold. We may have to order some more T-shirts. Stickers were instead given out as a reward to people who gave a donation. Karen moved to do this by default in the future and it was approved by the group. FSPSP spent more money on the newsletters this year—the fall newsletter was larger than usual at 8 pages and Jamie did a fantastic job with the layout. The outreach/communication is invaluable. We've gotten great photographs from people to share in it. Fun Day supplies and expenses were higher than usual due to more participants at the individual exhibitor booths. A bench was donated in memory of Bithika Khargharia's mother. We still need to pay our portion for the portable toilet, an expense that we share with the crew team. Total expenses were lower than income, resulting in a surplus of \$4,143.83. Additional checks have yet to be deposited.

BEAUTIFICATION:

Anne has been fixing the community side of the bulletin board and Lally says the shed is packed.

On the plant maintenance front, Lally reported that she, Adrienne, and Sharon walk through the park the Wednesday before each Workday to outline what will happen on Saturday, which is helpful. Adrienne takes great notes. Each month, a lot of people (especially young people) came to the Workdays. Lally usually monitors work in the playground, weeding between cobblestones, digging trenches along the fence, and cutting invasive plants around the playground area. Adrienne organizes volunteers for the planting beds themselves. Lally and Adrienne assign people to tasks to keep them busy for the whole two hours they are there, depending on their interests. Adrienne reported that the Wednesday before a Workday the team goes through the beds, what tools they will need, and how many people will be needed, so while Saturday is still a scramble, people at least get assigned to needed tasks. Last year the team adopted a new focus on eradicating invasive plants and then improving the soil by getting rid of roots and composting. Adrienne is getting better at choosing native plants and sees her work now as centering around choosing the plants that work best for the park soil while promoting biodiversity. The three stages of eradication, preparation, and planting evolved over the summer and by the end, 11 native plants had been planted in place of invasive plants. Next year we hope to have 20 new native plants. Some of the more prolific plants have been transplanted into areas that really needed some plantings. Adrienne's goal is maintenance because the invasive plants will never be eliminated completely. The team is working together well, and their efforts are much appreciated. Special thanks to Julie McBride, Seth Anderson, Bill Stalcup, and Linda Clark for taking leadership roles inside the beds and learning what needed to be done.

Adrienne's wish list is to get the fencing back at the end of the beds, purchase a tool for pulling up saplings that are very hard to pull up (the most expensive tool is around \$200), and develop a group of trained youth and/or adults who can meet between Workdays on a regular basis and get trained. This would allow us to get more work done outside of Workdays. Lori suggested weed wrenches for woody saplings and native plant starts from New England Wetland plants, which were used in the Walden Pond shore restoration. Karen asked if we want to approach the Town to take on any of the cost for buying the plants, mulch, and compost, as they have done in the past. The Beautification team was applauded for all their work.

WEBSITE:

Julie McBride has done a fantastic job of redoing the website and the design looks wonderful. The payments are up to date.

OUTREACH:

The Good Citizen Award this year is being presented to Sally Hempstead. We are so thankful for all the work she has done over ten years as VP for Communication and Outreach! Sally will send a photo of herself with the award to Karen for inclusion in the newsletter.

Jenny reported that outreach through Facebook has been effective this year. Beautification has been getting amazing numbers of volunteers for Workdays. Jenny updated the mailing list that goes out to schools/orgs in Arlington, which has been the source of many new volunteers, especially from Arlington HS and Arlington Catholic HS. She is still working on updating the list for upcoming Workdays but thinks there are a lot of potential volunteers. As of January 23, FSPP has 922 Facebook followers. Most of the audience reception is through Workday posts which have 500 views on average. The most popular post was about the playground renovation which reached 2500 people. Many people are interested in the park and there was a great response at the contractor outreach meeting. The second most popular post was about the recent Fun Day—around 1500 people saw it, which may have contributed to the higher attendance. Jenny's goal for this year is to start up an Instagram page and ask the Arlington Facebook list to populate it with photos to help draw in younger people. Jenny could use some additional help if we start up an Instagram presence, so Karen will work with her to put up a post on VolunteerMatch.com.

Betsy reported that Fun Day was awesome, and we should do it again. At least 400 people were in the park that day, which is the third biggest attendance ever.

Sally commented that this past summer's library display was lovely, and all the brochures were distributed. We'll skip a year and then do the following year (2023). This past year it was easy to get a display time, but when normal times return, slots will fill up fast. Sally recommended that Lauren call the library at the beginning of the year (January 2023) to reserve a slot. The point of contact changes but the library can direct her to the right person.

We haven't had a viewing of the memory scrapbooks for 2020 and 2021 because we can't meet in person, but the scrapbooks are good to have for posterity and future FSPP members.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Jamie recognized Karen for all the work that she puts into the newsletter. If anyone has requests or suggestions about the newsletter layout, his email is on the back of the newsletter: jamcio@gmail.com. Jamie will check in with Karen about any suggestions for improvements.

Lauren said she has big boots to fill with Sally's departure, but Karen and Lally have been helping her get familiar with everything over the Workdays and Fun Day. She has been supporting those days and working with volunteers, and she will be doing more direct engagement with volunteers and VolunteerMatch contacts in the future. Lauren's personal goal for next year is to make people feel appreciated for their work and encourage interests and expertise around SPP—getting people excited about the park. She also wants to make the database easy to use and accessible for the Workday committee to look up people who have signed up. She has switched from Excel to Google Sheets to make sharing possible. She will also get more involved in the newsletter for the coming year in addition to getting more familiar with the operations. Karen noted that Town Day, EcoFest, and Feast of the East may need some handoff or communication between Sally and Lauren; in the past FSPP has set up a table at these events to pass out literature and sign up new people. Sally has a list of people who have volunteered for these events in the past.

Marshall has been involved in various roles over the years and is now the Mailing Coordinator. He will continue trying to get the mailing out and has gotten FSPP a non-profit mailing permit, which saves postage on the biannual solicitations (a cost of 9 cents with the permit, vs. 55 cents without it per envelope). Karen is searching for a volunteer to assist as a mailing-coordinator-in-training from Arlington and will continue to look for trainees. FSPP appreciates Marshall's hard work as the mailing guru.

SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR NEXT YEAR:

President – Karen L. Grossman

General Vice-President – Open

Recording Secretary – Megan Chrisman

Treasurer – Sarah Zadova

Membership Secretary – Daniel Jalkut

Vice Presidents for Communication & Outreach – Lauren Bonilla and Jamie Ciocco

Outreach Committee – Anne Ellinger, Bulletin Board Maintenance, and Marshall McCloskey, Mailing Coordinator

Publicity Chair – Jenny Babon

Beautification Committee - Sharon Green, Adrienne Landry, Lally Stowell,

Web Developer- Julie McBride

Chair for Park Events – Betsy Leondar-Wright

Fundraising Chair – Open

Videographers/Photographers – Jenny Babon, Mithilesh Sharma, and Fred Moses

Photographer's Assistant – Open

Post-processing – Mark Sandman, Fred Moses

The group voted to confirm the above slate of officers for 2022.

Accomplishments for 2021 in addition to some of the Standing Annual Goals:

1. Monitored and influenced, as much as we could, the Conservation Commission efforts re: shoreline rehab, and path improvement in our best interests,
2. Conducted Workdays in the park May through October. Consultation with Parterre enhanced our understanding of the challenges we face in trying to control invasive plant growth. We provided more intensive invasive plant elimination and began replacing them with native plants and bushes in efforts to curb soil erosion in the planting beds along the shoreline. (Parks and Recreation financed these efforts, adding to the last of the CPA funding.)
3. Identified and awarded 1 worthy citizen for outstanding service to the FSPP,
4. Created a wonderful Fun Day with approximately 400 attendees, new additional stations for entertainment, education, and outreach facilitated by 34 enthusiastic volunteers, and
5. Recruited a new Treasurer, VP for Communication and Outreach, and Recording Secretary.

We suspended or had limits on achieving some goals due to Covid-19.

Goals for 2022 in addition to standing goals:

1. Continue to monitor and have a strong voice in decisions, as much as we can, with the Conservation Commission and Parks Department re: shoreline rehab, path improvement and signage about the soil erosion project/care of the planting beds in the best interest of the park.
2. Work with Parks Department and DPW to return fencing to the ends of the planting beds and around the tree at the present playground entrance.
3. Monitor Community Preservation and Parks Department Spy Pond Playground and North Ramp Renovation project efforts.
4. Have permanent number signs made for the planting beds to identify them.
5. Create a way to identify FSPP leaders during Workdays such as “FSPP Beautification”.
6. Remove more invasive plants, amend soil, replace with native plants, up to 20 new plants for 2022. Acquire a sapling removing tool.
7. Create and foster small group of youth and adults who are willing to learn more about removal of plants and the actual physical act of planting new plants.
8. 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 2022.
9. Determine the need for alternatives for handling litter/trash/recycling and investigating how other towns do it.
10. Recruit a General Vice-President, Outreach Committee member(s), Assistant Bulk Mailing Coordinator, Assistant Treasurer, and Publicity Committee member(s).
11. Recruit more FSPP active members.
12. Monitor the Town’s pursuing finances for establishing signage.
13. Identify and award 1-2 worthy citizens for outstanding service to the FSPP

Karen is not sure if we can still coordinate with Hardy School. The standing goals are unchanged from 2021. For 2022 goals, Adrienne would like to get about 20 new plants in and continue a third year of eradicating invasives. She will email these goals to Karen for inclusion in the newsletter about goals. Betsy noted that original 2022 goals #5 and #6 seem to have fizzled and Karen agreed, saying we should probably put them on hold until after the renovation. Karen suggested adding an educational sign about the planting beds to original goal #8. Cathy Garnett will be doing outreach with David Morgan, the new conservation agent for the town Con Com. Hopefully, he can get the fencing put back at the ends of the planting beds and engage Parterre (the consultant who helped three times with the invasive plants) to come five times this year. The group will keep an eye out for next year’s Citizen Award candidates, especially outside the main FSPP membership, and let Karen know of any during the year. The group voted unanimously to approve the amended goals.

OTHER BUSINESS & NEXT MEETING DATE: March 20, 2022, 7 PM via Zoom

The team voted to have an in-person Annual Meeting next year.

Karen will present the Beautification team’s dates to the public closer to the work dates. Lally will send corrections to Karen first. September isn’t definite yet because we don’t know about Town Day. Karen will chat with Lauren about whether Karen needs to attend the Workdays; Lauren thinks that she can take on the outreach around this.

2022 Saturday Workdays in Spy Pond Park:

(Rain dates will be the next day, Sunday 1-4 pm)

- April 23, 9-11 am
- May 21, 9-11 am
- June 18, 9-11 am
- July 23, 8-10 am
- Aug. 13, 8-10 am
- Sept. 17, 9-11 am
- Oct. 15, 9-11 am

Respectfully submitted,
Megan Chrisman
Recording Secretary