

**Volunteers Green, Browns Court, Round Church Green  
3 Parks Improvement Committee (ARPA Funds)**

**Minutes from meeting on January 9, 2024 - approved**

**Members Attending:** Denise Barnard, Kendra Ziskie, Fran Thomas, Tess Storrs, Jeanne Agner, Mary Lefebvre

**Members Absent :** Megan Andrews

**Guests in person:** Chris Haggerty, Jay Furr, Lewis White, Tanner Petry, Jon Kart, Jessie Heizer

**Guests attending Virtually:** Pete Gosslin, John Linn, Molly Hall, Polly's i-pad, Velma, Mark F., John Linn, Lane Marshall, Martha Nye, MaryAnn Barnes, Janet Mo, Gillian Grefe, Mary Claire Carrol, Jim Oliver (?), iphone 227 (two people)

**Public comment:** None - everyone hoping to get home before the high winds

**Minutes Approved** from meeting on Dec.28, 2023

**Next meetings**

Tuesday 1/23/24 at 7pm

Tuesday 1/30/24 at 7pm

A reminder that the Select Board will be meeting on Tues. Jan 16. The agenda will be posted. They are scheduled to talk about Brown's Court at that meeting. Any interested folks are encouraged to attend.

Our January 23 meeting will look at our overall plan for Brown's Court, including a rough budget compiling all of our quotes. We will plan how to present our information to the Selectboard regarding Brown's Court.

**Browns Court**

Chris Haggerty Survey

Chris Haggerty, from Button and Associates, was hired by the town to survey the boundary lines for Brown's Court. He shared a working draft of the boundary lines based on preliminary work that shows 3.15 acres. This acreage does not show buildable acreage as density setbacks and wetland buffers are not factored in. Buildable acreage would be much less. Chris explained the three boundary areas for us to look at- the east line that abuts the lots on Jericho Road, the south line abuts a lots on Browns court, and then the westerly northerly line that abuts the McCarthy 12 acre V lot. The evidence shows some inconsistencies with property lines that may have to be resolved.

We learned about the journey of numerous property conveyances from Gleason's pasture in 1905 to becoming owned by the trustees of Richmond Village in 1947. Chris explained the process of going back through town records, including key documents pertaining to the property from 1905, 1906, 1911, 1947, to the most recent survey for a boundary line agreement done by property owner McCarthy to determine their property line in 2006.

Chris will continue to work on defining the lines, getting bearings, flagging and monument markers. It was suggested that the town and the neighbors will want to determine if there are any conflicts, and if so, how to proceed if there are survey problems that cannot be easily resolved. Chris said that in his experience, most problems are fairly easily resolved and basically consist of cleaning up the vague legal agreements,

### Bocce Courts

Tess introduced Lewis White and Tanner Petry who are both very involved with bocce. Lewis is a Richmond resident, the caretaker of the Burlington Bocce courts. He has a construction background. Tanner has been involved with the Burlington Bocce League for many years. They currently have over 200 members.

Bocce courts are usually 80' long and 12' wide. They explained construction, drainage and discussed pros and cons of concrete vs wood exterior. We learned that there are 3 base layers. A base would consist of first bigger gravel, then baseball infield type soil and then hard clay. You also would need to build a scoring towers and the ball racks. Burlington has 4 courts at Oakledge. Two courts are built side by side thereby sharing one interior wall. They are used by leagues and people of all ages and abilities, including people who use wheelchairs. Lewis and Tanner feel it's a very social sport. "It takes only about 15 minutes to learn the rules and how to play. But a lifetime to master."

It cost \$22,000 to build 2 courts in Burlington. They shared information re contractors that they have used to build the courts. It was mentioned that a skilled patio builder with specs could do the build. They recommended a small, locked storage shed to store equipment for playing and for court maintenance.

The annual maintenance would be for resurfacing the court at the end of the year. Some of the material gets spent and falls apart. You scrape that off, and put down a very thin fresh layer. If you have 2 courts that would probably be about \$1,000 to get the material delivered. Court volunteers then did the labor. The club collects dues from the members and that money goes into maintaining the course.

They explained that there are many clubs around Vermont. Rutland has a big club with their Italian American Association. Grand Isle has a private club with about 100 members. Waitsfield just made a new court last year. The Vermont Special Olympics is one of the biggest bocce events in the state. For many retired people, bocce is one of their daily activities.

John Linn - architecture design. John will wait for more details from the survey in order to firm up the layout of the park.

Parking - Members have met with contractors to get quotes for the gravel parking lot. John confirmed the dimensions of the parking lot for those quotes. The proposed lot with 20 parking places, including one van ADA space is roughly 63 x 102. Discussion of signage and perhaps some type of barrier to stop cars from going beyond the lot. There was a suggestion for a type of barrier/poles (similar to CHMS) with a concrete base that can not be easily moved by an individual but can be moved by a tractor needing to access the area beyond the parking lot.

Cedar hedge- We're proposing a cedar hedge along one side as a noise buffer. Tess has been doing research regarding the noise of pickleball courts. Denise and others have informally talked with neighbors to learn about their concerns. One of the neighbors questioned stated that she enjoys hearing the sounds of children playing and the sounds from the ballfield in the summer.

### Amenities

These are some rough estimates - not exact quotes as we would need to determine style etc.

Wooden storage shed 8x10 - \$5,000 (to be shared by bocce and pickleball courts for storage of nets and maintenance items such as brooms, shovels and more)

Four 6 foot benches - \$6,000

One picnic table with including ADA seating- \$5,000

Bike rack - \$1,250

Trash can (w recycling) Similar to one at VG - \$380

Water fountain - \$4,000 (There is a water source. This fountain has 3 levels - Top for w drinking spigot, middle to fill water bottles, bottom includes a dog bowl)

Kendra will be pulling all of these numbers together to get an idea of the cost of items we are presenting to the Select Board with regards to Brown's Court. We will discuss at future meetings how we will present this portion of the project and ways we can get community input regarding the plan.

Jay Furr, Selectboard chair, commended the committee on the work we've done thus far on all three parks. He spoke to the discussion the Select Board has been having about looking at the Brown's Court park for housing development vs recreation. He emphasized that he was speaking as himself but feels strongly that the Brown's Court park should be maintained for recreation. He mentioned the need for recreational outlets for people of all ages and abilities. He mentioned how important it is for the growing senior population to have recreational and social opportunities every day. Some of this discussion continued as part of the presentation regarding recreational opportunities for all at Volunteers Green.

## **Volunteers Green**

Background: This committee has been working diligently looking at improvements to Volunteers Green. We have reviewed ideas mentioned in the ARPA survey for recreational wishes and looked at the overall condition of the park. Currently there is a 40 year old bandstand (therefore not historical) that needs significant structural repair and replacement of the floor that has a negative pitch and no drainage. The roof design only covers 50% of the floor. The bandstand is not ADA accessible. We have been gathering quotes for major structural repairs to the bandstand. Looking at landscaping throughout the park, and doing research on the pros and cons of a small loop path that could be used by many, including those with strollers and people with mobility issues. We are getting initial playground design quotes from 3 different companies in order to replace the 30 year that has far exceeded its lifespan. A new playground structure of similar size that is ADA compliant is estimated to be in the \$200,000 range. We have spent many hours learning what it takes to get such a structure built in a flood plain. That being said, it was very disheartening to see the second flood in a few months devastate parts of this park.

As Pete Gosslin and the town crew worked to repair the playground yet again, Pete shared his ideas regarding a different way the town might look at Volunteers Green. Considering that Pete has been doing the maintenance in that park for 29 years, rebuilding the playground numerous times, rebuilding the park roads, the parking lot, the roofs, and all the maintenance in the concession stand, he knows the park well. Pete attended this committee meeting to share his ideas.

### **Plateau** for playground and pavilion

Considering the extensive damage the playground has received over the years from flooding, it's hard to justify replacing the aging structure with a new playground structure that will surely be flooded again. Pete recommends moving the new playground to the plateau, removing the bandstand and replacing it with a new pavilion,

How that could work: Currently there is an area with four overgrown crabapple trees and some older large benches. There is a memorial that has become unsightly. The trees could be removed and the memorial relocated to make room for a 30'x 50' pavilion. The pavilion could contain restrooms that are accessible to all. The pavilion would be able to be used in so many more ways - by musicians, groups, picnics or parties and a rain shelter as is often needed. The bandstand would be removed and the playground would go in that area. There would still be about 40 feet of green space between the pavilion and the playground.

The usable portion of that plateau measures 100 feet from the river to the parking lot, and 150 feet in length from Bridge Street to the Volunteers Green fields, and that's all flat, usable land. There seems to be more than enough room to build a new pavilion and a playground structure on that raised land.

The plateau is located in a flood hazard overlay. It will require an engineer or an architect to go in there and do elevations on this and see if we could apply for a letter of map amendment to get this area removed from that flood hazard overlay given to a certain elevation that will allow us to build a structure there. Chris Haggerty, who is surveying the Brown's Court park will be doing this survey. He was the surveyor who looked at the area after the flooding of Hurricane Irene so already has much of the information we need.

The area where the playground is currently would be turned back to green space, allowing for the Farmers Market to expand in that space. There would be access to bathrooms. That would be better space for the Fourth of July events, any community events or activities. Pete feels like it would be a win win scenario. The green space would be used under good weather conditions, versus putting in a structure that will be washed away in flood conditions.

If the playground cannot be moved to the plateau, the other alternative Pete suggested to keep the playground in the center of town, would be to build a new playground in the green space behind the library. That alternative would bring a lot of extra traffic into the parking lot. There are also tentative plans to expand the library in the future. Brown's Court could be an option, however that is out of the town center. And there is a new large playground at the elementary school just down the street from Brown' Court which also can be used by the public.

Pete recognizes that the activity really happens at Volunteer's Green. He states it's the place our kids come to, families get together, high school kids congregate there, many daycares bring their kids there. It's just a great spot in the center of the village. He stated that he wanted to throw his ideas out while all of this work is going on about park improvements.

Kudos to Pete for all of his hard work for getting the playground back to being usable once again. And thanks for all of the thought he put into this presentation.

We recognize that it's a wise choice to relocate the existing playground. We'll have to do some research to see how the bandshell removal and installing a pavilion might work and how to present the idea to the people of the town.

Questions about maintenance were asked and how much Pete thinks it might have cost to repair the playground after this flood. He estimates that it took his entire crew a full week of labor to pull the playground and park back together after the Dec 18 flood. The special base of engineered wood fiber (specialized wood chips) cost about \$3,800 to replace. The base has washed away after each flood and been replaced. A question was asked about how much it might have cost the town to repair the playground from

floods over the past 10 years. Pete could not give an answer on the spot but said that FEMA money most likely covered the repairs from Irene and the July flooding. This past flood was more localized and probably won't hit the FEMA threshold for the county. Each time there is flooding, the base of wood fiber is washed away and has to be replaced. The fortunate thing is that we do it with the town labor and town equipment which we already own. But if you had to put the value to that, it could be \$10,000 per week just for the equipment and manpower. Then add material.

There was discussion with Pete and others about a **walking path**. Grade, width, materials, water flow and more was brought up. Pete suggested a perimeter path of about 4,000 feet. He thinks a path might take some of the foot traffic off of Cochran Road, especially during the winter when it is so dangerous. An asphalt path could be plowed as are the sidewalks. Jay Furr mentioned that a paved walking path was very high on the ARPA survey.

Future meetings of our committee will be about how to get public input for some of the suggestions we've been working on for improvements to the three parks. With regards to the information presented tonight about Volunteer's Green, we'll digest these suggestions and look into if and how some of these might be implemented. Public participation at our meetings is always welcome.

Meeting adjourned at 9pm.