

Richmond Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes February 7th, 2023

Members Present: Sheri Lynn, Mark Fausel, Kate Kreider, Kathy Costello

Community Members Present: Deb Shelby (resident of Bolton), Duncan Wardwell (Assistant to the Town Manager), Cara Labounty (ARPA committee member), Grace Colbeth (UVM student), Virginia Clarke (Richmond Planning Commission member). Lisa Miller (Richmond Planning Commission Member)

Meeting began at 7:13 PM

Sheri welcomed our new member from Bolton, Kathy Costello.

7:16 PM: Public Comments: Sheri read aloud an email from community member Jessie Heiser. This email encouraged the Recreation committee to explore the use of natural elements when designing a new playground for Volunteers Green and emphasized the importance of a public engagement process when the committee starts the process of designing a new playground for Volunteers Green.

Deb Shelby: Deb shared that she is a member of a newly formed committee in Bolton and the goal of this committee is to create a map of existing areas in Bolton where people recreate, research the impact of recreation on the ecology (plants, animals, environment) of these areas, and use that scientific information to make better regulations and guidelines regarding outdoor recreation in town. Kate offered to connect her with the Conservation Commission so that she can learn more about the educational opportunity for the community that the commission is planning that will address the challenge of balancing conservation with recreation.

7:24 PM Summary of presentation to the ARPA Committee: Sheri briefly updated committee members about the ARPA meeting that Kate and Sheri attended. Kate and Sheri presented the Recreation committee's request for ARPA funding to cover improvements at Volunteers' Green and a new playground structure. Cara, a member of the ARPA committee, also suggested that the Recreation committee could consider including additional structures in our request that were suggested by the public through the ARPA committee's public outreach process, which included a survey. Cara had been in contact with Grace Colbeth, a UVM student, who had done a map of Volunteers Green and Browns Court as a project for one of her classes, so she reached out to her. Grace then volunteered to create updated maps of the recreation areas that include many of the additional structures that community members identified as desirable through an ARPA survey. Cara and Grace met with Pete Gosselin to learn where the current underground utilities are and to get his feedback regarding where additional structures could be placed.

7:29 PM Approval of minutes from January 3rd. Mark motioned to approve, Kate seconded. No discussion. Passed unanimously.

7:31 PM: Grace presented her park maps. Grace presented her maps of what Volunteers Green and Browns Court currently look like, and then she presented her proposed maps that included many of the structures that community members identified that they want through the ARPA community survey. The additional items for Volunteers' Green included: an expanded playground area, additional swings, a paved parking lot, possibly moving the smaller baseball field to free up more space, lined parking spaces in the back parking area, a dog park in the back of the property behind the soccer fields, a pavilion near the current bathrooms, a basketball court/skating rink where current winter skating rink is, a paved walking path around the perimeter of the entire park, a small structure for people to change clothes near the boat launch/swimming area, a concrete ping pong table, and convertible benches/picnic tables. The additional items for Browns Court included: adding a tennis court and/or a pickleball court, and a larger parking area. ***There may be additional structures in the proposed plans for Volunteers Green and Browns Court that were missed and are not included in these notes but are part of the recorded meeting.***

7:44 PM: Initial discussion of proposed plans: Mark asked who currently uses the softball field that is at Browns Court and if spacing would be an issue with tennis and/or pickleball courts there too. Cara responded that Pete said that the softball field is used by a middle school team and there typically would be fencing at the back of the field to stop balls from flying over to the proposed courts. Cara also stated that Pete suggested putting the dog park in the back of Volunteers Green so that it would be away from houses and less noisy for neighbors. Mark asked if the proposed path around Volunteers Green would be overlaid on the trail along the river which is currently there. Cara responded no, the proposed recreation path would be further inside away from the river. Cara stated that Pete suggested that the path could be made the same width as a sidewalk and then he could plow it during the winter time. Sheri expressed appreciation for all of the work that Cara and Grace have done and for all of their great suggestions. All of this goes beyond the committee's current focus, but they are great ideas and the committee will discuss them further.

7:54 PM: Committee discussion regarding Cara's suggestions: Sheri and Kate reviewed the request that was presented to the ARPA committee. Sheri also reviewed the results of the Recreation committee's survey that was completed a couple years ago. The most popular items from the Recreation committee's survey were a hard surface walking loop, a pool, and a dog park. The next most popular items were a tennis court and an outdoor basketball court. The third most popular items were a pavilion/outdoor seating and a mountain bike track. Many of the same items/structures were identified by the public through both the Recreation committee's survey and the ARPA community survey. Some of the additional items that the ARPA committee identified through its public outreach were: pickleball courts, a skating rink, exercise stations, additional bathrooms.

Sheri asked members for feedback on whether we want to update our request to the ARPA committee and include some of the additional items that were identified, or do we want to stay with our current request. Sheri also noted that Cara suggested the possibility of keeping the current playground and repairing it, however the general consensus of the committee is that it

would be best for the entire playground to be replaced due to its age and condition. This committee is planning on having the playground inspected this spring and any identified repairs made in order to keep the playground safe for use until it can be replaced. Sheri mentioned that there are town funds set aside for maintenance at Volunteers Green. There is an annual park maintenance budget of \$3,000 and an annual recreation equipment budget of \$3,000. The park maintenance budget is for general repair needs at Volunteers Green and the recreation equipment budget is for repairs to the playground equipment. The Recreation committee does not have control of these funds. However, the committee can make requests and recommendations to the town manager regarding the use of the funds. Committee members are in general agreement with the plan to have the playground inspected and then submit a request for the identified repairs to be paid for using the budget for Volunteers Green.

The committee discussed the various suggestions from the ARPA committee. There was also discussion regarding the floodplain rules for Volunteers Green and whether or not that would prohibit certain structures from being placed at the park. Mark mentioned that flat structures such as a court would most likely be allowed, but a larger structure such as a pavilion or fencing may be a problem. More research needs to be done regarding what types of structures are allowed and are not allowed at Volunteers Green. Mark mentioned that floodplain regulations can be tweaked/adjusted to allow for structures if deemed appropriate and reasonable. Kate also mentioned that the need for ongoing maintenance for some of the proposed structures should be considered. Kathy suggested that we keep in mind the importance of keeping some open green space at Volunteers Green when we consider how many structures to add to the park.

The committee identified interest in including the following items in our ARPA request in addition to the items we have already requested: a basketball court that could serve as a skating rink in the winter, a pavilion, and improving and/or rebuilding the soccer and baseball fields through landscaping work. It was identified that as our next steps we need to get an estimate of the cost of these items, and then an additional request can be submitted to the ARPA committee with these items. During the committee's next meeting the estimated costs for these additional items will be reviewed prior to sending a formal request to the ARPA committee. Sheri will check with the ARPA committee about the timing to make another request. Mark commented that we need time to engage the public about these additional items before making a recommendation to the ARPA committee.

Kathy mentioned that she will not be able to attend our next meeting on March 21st. Sheri will send out a poll to determine other possible dates for our March meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:45 PM