

FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM

c/o 67 Coolidge Road,
Arlington, MA 02476

Dear Neighbor,

Sept 22, 1998

Well, first, *Friends of Robbins Farm* does not actually exist, but we hope to start such an organization, in part based on the success of *Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park*. We have already existed back a few years, having put on several *Kite Festivals* at the park. And, as most of you know, another group got together to redo the playground. The project at hand is the renovation of the tennis courts. To accomplish same, there needs be some neighborhood input and response.

So several of us are planning a meeting to start the process — to plan and advocate for the restoration and renovation of that section of the Park. Tennis courts, of course, are a possibility, although it is said that conditions are too windy for tennis up on the hill, and they're enough courts elsewhere. A neighborhood architect has offered to design a new concept gratis. One imagines a sculpture garden with a labyrinth — a circular design where one meditates (not a maze where you get lost) as is found in mediaeval cathedrals. Question: could one accomodate toddler tricyclists and older roller bladers? One local young teenager is eager to have the courts turned into a skate board park. Unfortunately too many teenagers use the Park at night for the comfort of neighbors, and recently there have been several vandalisms and thefts of neighboring houses. So to add another attraction would bring opposition. A number would like to eliminate the basketball court, for sometimes the clang of missed shots can be heard late into the night. Solution? We've set aside Monday night, October 19th @ 8 PM for a meeting to discuss and organize, the meeting to be held at the Community Safety Building, 112 Mystic Avenue.

I enclose a blank to return. We're asking everyone interested to write a short account of how they would like to see that section of the Park renovated. The membership fee will go towards mailing costs and incidental expenses. Our mailing list is friends, the Heights Tower Association (which essentially started the Park in the first place), and supporters of the new playground.

Look forward to your response!

Sincerely,



Oakes Plimpton (after talk with neighbors & friends)

ps: Writer is writer of *Robbins Farm, a Local History* (from Colonial times to present — illustrated, 124 pp + Addendum — @ Robbins Library or for \$5, \$7 delivered).

FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM

c/o 67 Coolidge Road, Arlington, MA 02476; 648-5117; E-Mail: plimag@atablast.net

Notes of Formative Meeting held October 19, 1998, 8 pm, 112 Mystic Ave.

Present: Oakes Plimpton, Roland Chaput, Steve Pooley, Pam & Frank Wilwerth, John Weiss, Jeff Zimmer, Bruce Whittle, Tania Wilke, Carol Beggy, Elaine Backman, Kaye Denny, Jackie Harrington.

Procedural: 25 people answered mailing about forming Friends organization, sending along \$5 dues. Mailing went to members of the Heights Tower Association and some members of the Skyline Playground group. Calendar notice not printed by Advocate (possibly computer fax didn't make it). Letter to Editor suggested as better way to have publicity. Suggestion made to collect E-Mail addresses — those receiving this can send theirs to above address (if not already signed up at meeting). Next meeting scheduled for Monday night, November 9th @ 8 pm, same place, to go over mission statement and purposes, and perhaps to hear concept from neighbor architect or architects. Jackie Harrington just called me to report that the Park & Recreation Committee meeting is on that very date. Debi Hayes, Director, informed her that the Committee had voted to eliminate the tennis courts several years ago. There is \$300,000 in the capital budget for Robbins Farm slated for 2002, but that is essentially "paper" money. Jackie suggests that people from our group attend that meeting to advocate removal of the asphalt and fence, and postpone our meeting one week to November 16th.

Restoration suggestions made concerning the tennis court section of the Park received in the return mail may be summarized as follows: 1.) Yes, restore the tennis courts — would like to play. [Others mentioned wind and courts elsewhere]. 2.) Yes to labyrinth and sculpture garden with benches, etc. 3.) What about community gardens to go with history as farm? 4.) Grass only, with no attractions for late night noise. 5.) Keep recreation (basketball, tennis), bringing in police to control late use. 6.) Keep hard surface for tricyclists and skaters (also specific dissent to that — don't mix the two!) 7.) Place for telescopes to view sky & view!

Go around respecting concept of Friends of Robbins Farm. General assent and some enthusiasm for the idea. People recount pleasant association with the Park, children playing there, etc. Neighbors on the other hand make strong statements resenting the intrusion of the teenage and "young adult" users of the Park, recounting various stories of vandalism and bad behavior, and demanding removal of any "attractions" along the Hawthorne Avenue border of the Park. Someone makes the point that recreation and its intrusions had been going on for a long time — grand-fathered so to speak, but they responded that matters have gotten much worse in recent years. And to the mention that a Friends group could be more effective in pushing for better police protection, etc., the neighbors responded that they already had had sessions with the police command, talking them into improved enforcement procedures. But perhaps the greater group could be effective — mention of Friends

of Menotomy Rocks Park. Also, as the Menotomy Rocks group, we could organize events — concerts and Spring clean-ups and kite festivals, etc.

Go around about restoration of tennis court section of Park. One person relates what fun the tennis courts were when they were there, a lot of people around enjoying themselves. But same relater shocked to hear of the young adult intrusion (mostly from out-of-town various people note). One person advocated a telescope, though he withdrew the suggestion in the face of vandalism. Several support recreation, one father commenting on the safety of the basketball court — no street nearby. The problem for the neighbors is that the kids play ball at midnight and 2 am! They advocate moving the basketball court to the Eastern Avenue side, suggesting that as the school uses the Park for the required acreage of open space, perhaps the school could pay for relocation. [Not likely, someone comments, as the school capital budget has no excess.] One neighbor (Bruce Weltle) makes a more philosophical case for passive recreation, noting that the Park & Recreation Commission mostly promotes active recreation — soccer fields and the like. Why not open areas where adults and children can invent their own games; he sites the recent occasion at Robbins Farm where the primary schools science coordinator organized a harvest moon viewing, the Park full of families viewing the moon (and the moons of Jupiter!) through various binoculars and telescopes! He also noted that returning the asphalt to grass would be much cheaper than restoring the tennis courts, around \$30,000 versus \$300,000! For one thing the courts were not installed properly in the first place. And also the removal of the fence and asphalt and conversion to grass (or soil for gardens) could occur in a timely fashion versus a distant 2000 date for the larger project, which would probably be postponed further. Several in this discussion note the deteriorating shape of the Park — not good maintenance — also the new playground is starting to show wear and tear. The strong light over it, which interferes with night viewing and star gazing, encourages teenagers to congregate there; with no light they might ignore it. Everyone agrees that the tennis courts are totally decrepit now, and because of that they encourage vandalism and bad behavior.

What next? Roland Chaput suggests a smaller group get together to figure out our goals — our mission etc. Too many people would not get the job done. Others agree with this analysis, but feel we should still ask anyone who is interested in participating to participate. The effort needs the discipline of a good chairperson. November 9th is decided upon as the next meeting; communicate as to whether you think we should meet as planned with one of us attending Park & Recreation, or have several attend and postpone our meeting until next week (November 16th).

Notes written by Oakes Plimpton, Organizer Pro Tem

FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM

To advocate & work on the beautification, safety, recreational and cultural activities at the beautiful park in Arlington Heights known as Robbins Farm!

NOTES OF MEETING NOVEMBER 9, 1998, 8 PM, AT COMM'Y SAFETY

Present: Oakes Plimpton, Roland Chaput, Steve Pooley, Judy Leich, Sandy Vorce, Edward & Marion Pierce, Jim Miller, Jackie Harrington, Greg Porfido & Tania Wilke, Bruce Wheltle, Marc & Jennifer Demaree, Dorothy Lally, Kenneth Reilly, Jeanne & Harvey Hansen, Beverly Wolf, Bud & Sandy Carmichael, Chris Culhane — (22, "representing" Grandview (6), Hawthorne Ave (6), Coolidge Road, Pine Ridge & Hillside (2), Cedar, Fayette, Glenburn, Kenilworth, Mt. Vernon (1)).

Go around: people say where they're from and a word or two about their ideas for Robbins Farm — neighbors fearful of attracting any more people to the Park and concerned over vandalism, others with less strong opinions, several for tennis, one remembering the way it was, he and others worried over the deterioration of the facilities of the Park.

Talk by Judy Leich designer and architect spells out structure — Parks and Recreation Commission, the capital budget (\$300,000 set aside for Robbins Farm in 2002 which may be for other parks as well). The deterioration of parks is a common problem, which is partly the result of the passage of Prop 2 and 1/2. When funds were cut, parks were considered least important. In Arlington, the Department of Natural Resources was abolished to become part of DPW — much reduced staff. To try and bring back some maintenance and care for the parks, Friends groups have been started — both Spy Pond and Menotomy Rocks now have Friends' groups. Friends of Menotomy Rocks were served well by finding an expert landscape planner to be involved. A master plan is a good idea, to have maintenance scheduled over time, rather than just to react to crisis. Judy passes around a beautiful photograph of the gardens at Monticello overlooking a view of Virginia countryside, not too unlike Robbins Farm.

How to Proceed? Roly Chaput's E-Mail suggests taking areas of concern separately, breaking up into groups to discuss them; everyone decides to have everyone discuss each in turn. We consolidated the topics into the following: safety and security; landscape design and planning, maintenance and care, recreation (tennis & basketball courts); special uses (memorials); master plan — mission statement. We should add a seventh: Friends' activities such as clean-ups, kite festivals, etc. Committee will draft mission statement. We discuss safety/security and landscape design, notes on separate sheets.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:30 pm, next meeting Monday @ 8 pm same place November 30th.

Developments: Roly Chaput attended Parks & Recreation Meeting Nov. 10th. They encouraged our formation. Chair thought they could obtain \$10,000 for a feasibility study. In forming plans, they suggested we should take into consideration Brackett School use (gymn classes, etc.).

From consultation, notes & memory, *Oakes Plimpton*

FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM

To promote preservation, restoration, recreational opportunities and safety, and to sponsor clean-up and other community activities at the beautiful park in Arlington Heights known as Robbins Farm!

Concerns and suggestions regarding the issue of safety at Robbins Farm at the Friends Meeting November 9th, 1998

1. Dogs - Dogs need to be restrained and picked up after.
2. Sledding — Signs should be placed to make "snow sledders" aware of danger, and that there is another safer hill to sled on (onto baseball diamond). Bales of hay at the bottom good idea too.
3. Signs - Signs should be located at park entrances in addition to the Eastern Ave. side announcing the park closes at 9:00 p.m. Signs should be professionally prepared. Parks and Recreation Department should be contacted regarding placement of signs.
4. Police should make at least one arrest in the spring to set the theme that there would be no tolerance for misbehavior.
5. A fence with gates and key locks should be mounted at openings at Pine Ridge, Puritan and Coolidge to prevent access after hours. (This was attempted by Al Ponte in the early 70's, former owner at Pine Ridge opening. Town required removal of gate since there is some right of way that exists).
6. Police should be encouraged to make more frequent tours, especially during hours the park is closed. Shining of lights encourages the kids to scatter (at least temporarily).
7. Private ways and parking - A significant parking problem exists on streets surrounding the park. Private ways that are on two sides of the park have heavy parking. This issue may be resolved by abutters privately placing signs in front of their property announcing a parking restriction. Further, the issue might be resolved by relocating "active" use areas such as basketball courts and tennis courts to the Eastern Ave. side of the park.
8. Eastern Avenue barrier (telephone pole stumps) should be mounted to prevent automobiles and motor cycles from being driven on the field tearing the grass up and causing an overall nuisance (allowing emergency vehicle access).
9. A sub-committee should meet with the Police Department to address these issues and devise an action plan.
10. Department of Public Works - A long-term plan should be devised with the DPW to truck in sand on an annual basis to replace sand lost due to erosion. This plan should include other areas that are subject to either erosion or wear and tear due to heavy usage.
11. Playground equipment must be inspected for dangerous conditions and replaced. Any new equipment must be safe.

Notes taken by Steve Pooley.

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NOTES ON MEETING NOVEMBER 30, 1998, 8 PM @ TOWN HALL ROOM

Present: Oakes Plimpton, Roland Chaput, Dorothy Lally, Judy Leich, Ken Reilly, Chris Culhane, Bud & Sandy Carmichael, Jim Miller, Bruce Whelple, Greg Porfido, Frank Willwerth, Kaye Denny, Corinna Vanderspek, Elaine Backman and ???.

Review: Oakes reported we know have (exactly) 60 paid up members (several joined at the meeting). Briefly reviewed last meeting's discussion on safety and landscape. Ken Reilly thought we should get together to work on Skyline Playground — have a work day in conjunction with the Town to fix it up, make it safer. Oakes suggests hay bales and signs re winter sledding at "Suicide Hill". Several suggest no parking bans after nine o'clock on the Eastern Avenue side as well as the Tower Association side; parking tickets will make teen parents take notice. Roly Chaput urged that we advocate the removal of the strong light over the playground which shines over the Park attracting teenagers to play in the playground and ruining the star gazing.

Maintenance: Everyone in agreement that maintenance needs upgrading. Some of the deficiencies discussed — the playground, the periodic mowing of the grass, the wear and tear of the grass from soccer and baseball (no reseeding), erosion problems, etc. Reduced personnel from Prop 2 and a half part of the problem. How to do something about it is the question. We'll ask Richard Bento, the DPW head, to come to our meeting, Roly Chaput to arrange it. (Later) suggestion made by Corinna Vanderspek that we take photographs to show Mr. Bento some of the problems at the meeting. Elaine Backman offers to coordinate, Ken Reilly says he'll take some (slides) also. What about the \$10,000 feasibility study money offered by Parks & Recreation Commission (see 11/9 Notes)? Roly reports Clarissa Rowe, the excellent landscape architect at Menotomy Rocks park was not interested in another Arlington project, but offered the names of three architects. Problem — are we talking about present maintenance or long term planning — how to restore the Park with some of the 300,000 in 2002! Also Judy Leich brings up possible culture conflict between (fancy) landscape architect and practical DPW.

Recreation — Carmichaels advocate restoring the tennis courts, recalling how pleasant it was when the courts were in good shape — people enjoying themselves, no rowdy behavior or vandalism. Tennis brings rare intergenerational play someone else mentions. There is possible assistance from the tennis associations to set up coaching and conceivably for court construction — the Carmichaels will look into costs of construction and possible aid. Another idea brought up is to poll Precinct 12 to ascertain the demand for having tennis courts there. Our small list has 7 for, 5 against, though a number more talk about orchards, gardens, etc. Mention of idea of reversing the baseball field brought skepticism. The present use of the Park seems very nice — pick up games of football and soccer and baseball, as well as the organized soccer and the use by the Brackett School gymn classes. Jim Miller mentions there is possibility of soccer association pitching in on grass maintenance.

Mission Statement: Draft statement passed around. Concern expressed that mention of pick-up day by volunteers might imply that it wasn't the Town's job. No, it seems pretty standard, and shouldn't be interpreted that way. Judy Leich passed around a revision which was read and generally approved of as follows. No doubt it is not written in stone, so we can change it further in case someone has inspiration. —

Friends of Robbins Farm is a non-profit volunteer organization founded in 1998 to promote the preservation, protection and renewal of the beautiful 11 acre park in Arlington Heights known as Robbins Farm. To accomplish these purposes, the Friends plan to hold publically advertised meetings open to all, and to form close advisory relationships with Arlington's government groups concerning the use, maintenance, and provision of amenities in the Park. To encourage visibility, the Friends will also hold and promote cultural, recreational, clean-up and other community activities in the Park.

Should we form as a non-profit corporation as Menotomy Rocks? Oakes thought not necessary; if we need to raise money for a project (as the failed historical sign) we can use the already established *Arlington Beautification Fund* which was incorporated as an adjunct to the Park & Recreation Commission to receive contributions for projects.

Adjournment around 9:45 pm. The next meeting will take place the first of the new year, and will depend on Mr. Bento's availability — we'll call around when the time comes. We will have a smaller meeting in advance to prepare, look at the slides etc.

From Memory (no notes) — Oakes Plimpton

ps: Please call in any additions or corrections (or via E-Mail); for one thing I think a few additional unrecorded people attended.

O.P.

FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM

To promote preservation, restoration, recreational opportunities and safety, and to sponsor clean-up and other community activities at the beautiful park in Arlington Heights known as Robbins Farm!

From: RADIOROLY@aol.com Date: Sun, 24 Jan 1999 12:47:40 EST To: plimag@atablast.net

Robbins Farm Park Walk-Around

Oakes: Here's a recap of our observations yesterday at Robbins Farm. There were a dozen of us and we spent about an hour and a half of good observations and remarks covering a variety of problem areas. I have listed the various tasks that the Town DPW/Parks can do for us and will do per Rich Bento's comments the other night. We need to send him a list and we can certainly do that via E-mail. But first we should meet again and review all that has been listed to see if everyone agrees to the priority. The list is shown in my priority, and some folks may want to change it before we send it to Mr. Bento.

1. Eliminate the arc light at the playground (not just turning it off, but taking it away). It brings unwanted teens to the playground at night, shines into neighbor's houses, ruins star gazing and view of city lights. (O.P. edit).

2. Fill in the area between the sidewalk and the curbstone along Eastern Avenue. This is now a serious safety problem since the school bus picks up the Bracket kids up near the top end of the park, and the ditch there is nearly ten inches deep!

3. Replace the wooden steps on the big slide. This is again a potential safety issue. Someone mentioned yesterday that already kids have fallen on the steps.

4. There is very bad erosion at the top of the big slide. If work isn't done on it soon, the top portion could collapse or worse a kid could fall through.

5. The general condition at the entrance near Coolidge Road is in bad shape. Another possible safety problem with exposed roots. Need to ramp the entrance.

6. The bank and rock wall along the Hawthorne St side needs cleaning and leaf removal.

7. The baseball back stop fence fabric needs to be repaired and painted.

8. There are several areas where erosion on the sides of the hill (both upper and lower) is very bad. Without action soon, we will see ruts that will carry off much of the soil that is left. See along edge near tennis courts, areas where kids slide in the winter, both sides of the big slide and others.

9. I believe we should request that Parks stops mowing along the steepest part of the hill near Hawthorne Street side and let it grow to wild flowers.

10. The manhole near Eastern Ave is now eight inches above the grass. Erosion has washed away the soil. It should be regraded and reseeded.

11. The tot lot is in major need of repairs — missing stair treads, missing rope, tires need replacement, rubber covering on chains is missing, sliding handles are gone. There's a crack on the big slide. This is a mixed bag which addresses quite a few problems in the Skyline Playground. Obvious evidence of no maintenance these past few years.

12. Remove the yellow posts and chain that block vehicular traffic up the hot top walk to the tennis courts. They do not good; even the cruiser goes around them!

13. Remove the three white bollards on the other end of the tennis court. There's no reason for them to be there and they are a safety issue.

14. Put back the left field foul line marker pole.

15. Remove the hot top walk up to the tennis courts and replace with pea stone or stone dust.

16. Replace the temporary hot top sidewalk section near the fire hydrant on Eastern Ave. It's where they had to connect to the water for the school.

17. Double plant a row of shrubs behind the tennis court and basketball court. This will provide more privacy for the houses on that side of the park.

18. Remove the fence at the tennis courts and seal the cracks so kids can ride tricycles and play street hockey there (I would give this more priority -- Oakes).

19. Discuss moving the Student memorial to the Bracket School grounds after the building is finished, or repairing the vandalism in a more professional manner.

20. Discuss moving the Konig memorial to a less conspicuous spot in the park, perhaps down closer to the tot lot. As for the the memorials, we realize tragic circumstances brought about their placement, but we don't want our park to be a cemetery, and do we want that tree right there — it points up the need for a professional master plan for the Park and for a review system for projects like that. (Oakes edit).

Although this may not be all of what needs to be done, it would certainly be a good start. I think we should emphasize that our group will work with the town including some volunteer labor to get a number of these projects done.

Let's set up another meeting ASAP*. Seems everyone is hot to get going!

Regards, REC :-)

* Now scheduled for Redevelopment Board Room, 2nd Floor, Academy Street entrance Town Hall @ 7:30 p.m., February 11th, 1999.

O.A.P.

Coordinator: Oakes Plimpton, 67 Coolidge Road, Arlington, MA 02476
Telephone: 781 648-5117; E-Mail: plimag@atablast.net

FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM

To promote preservation, restoration, recreational opportunities and safety, and to sponsor clean-up and other community activities at the beautiful park in Arlington Heights known as Robbins Farm!

Notes on Meeting with Richard Bento, DPW Head, Town Hall, 7:30 PM, 1/26/99

Present: Oakes Plimpton, Roland Chaput, Kaye Denny, Greg Porfido, Bud & Sandy Carmichael, Bruce Whelittle, Corinna Vanderspek, Sandy Vorce, Jim Miller, Ken Reilly and Rich Bento.

Go around — Mr. Bento has seen our papers and notes, so knows both our diversity and unity of opinion — we now have 65 paid up memberships (at least 100 people). Jim Miller has taken some photographs which Oakes arranged in montages to show erosion, flooding, deterioration at the Park. We're meeting on the stage of Town Hall having lost our regular place to a recycling meeting.

DPW Report: Mr. Bento reports that the Parks Division of DPW, headed by Bill Jones, has 13 employees, 10 just a year ago — at one time there were 26 employees (1989)! They rotate through the town parks to do maintenance and upkeep; they have other duties as well, particularly in winter removing snow, etc. They do get extra help during the summer, but that mostly replaces vacationing employees (most are older, getting a month's vacation). DPW meets weekly with Debi Hayes, Recreation Director. She reports to the Parks and Recreation Commission, which decides on policy. There is a Pines/Swallow consulting report assessing Town park conditions and quantifying solutions. Robbins Farm is in competition with other more intensively used parks. The Capital Advisory Committee has slated the Park for \$300,000 expenditure in 2002. That would include tennis court restoration or replacement, turf irrigation and rehabilitation and other repair and fixing up. For the present, DPW could asphalt the cracks at the court, and fix or remove the fence. The erosion needs to be looked at — we have suffered from extreme weather, a ten inch storm last October and five inches of rain in three hours June 23, 1998! One filling was washed out — Oakes suggests half seriously it could be left as dramatic natural occurrence of interest!

Discussion: How can Friends help? Lobbying for funds will help — as mentioned there is competition. Reporting problems to Parks Division will work, particularly if the group agrees on priorities. DPW and Recreation operate with a "punch" list. Volunteer help? Welcomed, and DPW will supply materials and machinery. Examples are trail repair at Menotomy and the playground at Robbins Farm itself. Group could also put together concept plan, particularly with expert members, or give input to feasibility study suggested by Parks Commission (\$10,000 available).

Tennis Court Area — Bruce Whelittle reports from Vision 20/20 poll that the majority felt there were adequate facilities for tennis and basketball, but that the Town was deficient in nature trails, community gardens and passive recreation type parks. He also mentions that a basketball court is slated for the Brackett School yard, so not necessary at the Park. As kids use it into the night, it is a problem for neighbors. On the other hand, re tennis, Bud Carmichael did some polling on his own — of 29 families, 21 supported fixing up the tennis courts. He also obtained an estimate from an engineering firm for \$52,600 for installing new courts and fence (the engineer having a son at Brackett). People note that there might be problems with drainage and improper fill at the Robbins mansion site. For the present, Mr. Bento said he could also remove the asphalt (and the fence), but that it would be too expensive to replace with top soil. Possibly he could also replace the offending metal basketball hoops.

Recommendations: Roly Chaput suggests letting the grass grow to meadow along the slope towards Mt. Vernon as a way of preventing erosion and lessening maintenance. He also strongly recommends the removal of the arc light over the playground, which shines in neighbors windows,

and interferes with star gazing and viewing the city lights. It also attracts teenagers to the playground, thus leading to inappropriate use (the playground being designed for children). Jim Miller brings up the sensitive issue of proliferation of memorials, which perhaps don't belong in a public park. Bruce suggests yellow brick path with memorial bricks leading down from the water tower, and then no more. Park plan could solve the issue. Work needs to be done on the entrances of the Park, several point out. Only the Coolidge Road entrance is OK due to the work of Bruce and Susan. Others are eroded and impossible to enter with baby stroller, etc.

Adjournment — group thanks Mr. Bento and remains to plan. Decided to meet at 3 pm Saturday at the tennis courts to do a walk of the Park to start in working up priority list. No further meeting plan set.

Notes transcribed from notes and memory by Oakes Plimpton

FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM

To promote preservation, restoration, recreational opportunities and safety, and to sponsor clean-up and other community activities at the beautiful park in Arlington Heights known as Robbins Farm!

Meeting Notes, February 11, '99, @ Town Hall, Arlington

Present: Oakes Plimpton, Roland Chaput, Elaine Backman, Corinna Vanderspek, Judy Leich, Bruce Wheltle, Bud & Sandy Carmichael.

Prioritizing Park Observations - from Park walk-around January 23rd, Roland Chaput's notes. Elaine chaired discussion, these notes taken in part from her magic marker notes on large sheet. In general we decided to organize according to items which the DPW could immediately take care of, and those which really need more careful planning with input from landscape architect. There was also the issue of safety versus just improvements. On that score the first priority was the repair of erosion along Eastern Avenue between the sidewalk and the curbstone, and the erosion around the slides in the playground. Also necessary repairs for the steps leading up to the slides, and putting sand at the bottom of the slides is priority. These items should also be looked at long term, for temporary repairs may be washed out again. Thus item 2 on Roland's list should be taken care of immediately, and items 3, 4, and 11 (all relating to the slides and the playground) should be also taken care of as soon as possible.

Item # 1, the arc light, the Committee felt should be removed, but we will probably need to talk with the Police Commissioner about that, Roland to call him to arrange a meeting with Friends in the end of February or beginning of March. An item discussed later which should be added to the list is the absence of signs indicating the Park is closed at 9 pm (theoretically the police cannot act unless there are signs). But Oakes brought up the anomaly that the sign applies to others as well, and it was reported one of our members was harrassed by the police for walking their dogs after 9. Police need instruction on this. Also, perhaps we could research and lobby for an improvement on the blanket rule.

Item #5 should have read Puritan Road (entrance), and Bruce volunteered to put down wood chips to improve grade and cover the exposed roots. That's another item which needs to be looked at long term (possible ramp). It was felt item #6 was low priority, and was something we could volunteer to do on a volunteer basis (removing leaves along Hawthorne stone wall).

Item #7 is connected to item #14 (baseball field items — foul poll placement and backstop repair) are not high priority, and should probably be reported to the Parks & Recreation Commission rather than directly to DPW.

Item #8 is another two fold item — needs prompt repair and long term strategy — (erosion on the steep hill). Another steep hill item, #9, there was concern over, one neighbor noting that runners like to come up that slope, and long grass might bring ticks. There was support for trying it out (just don't mow), but again it is an item for planning, perhaps planting a wildflower mix, etc.

Item #10 is not a safety question (exposed manhole cover) — there's another one at the Puritan entrance (#5), but while DPW is filling in other erosion, they could pay attention to these items.

There was not agreement on item #12, some people of opinion yellow posts and chain give clear message not to drive cars into the Park. Again it is a planning question connected to item #15 (replacing hot top with stone dust), for narrow path might be effective alternative. Unfortunately stone dust is hard to maintain, and not good for Mothers with strollers — so we have another planning item (#15).

Item # 13 it was felt was low priority, definitely not safety item (taking out the three bollards), but if it were convenient to take them out as the tennis court fence was being removed, good. Item #16 also low priority (possibly responsibility of school contractor) (replacing hot top by Eastern Avenue fire hydrant).

There was not agreement on item # 17 either, one person suggesting it was really the responsibility of people to plant in their own yards, and another that it would provide hiding places for undesirables.

Everyone felt item #18 should be put at higher priority — one of the very reasons we got together in the first place. Also DPW has offered to remove the fence and fix up the asphalt.

As to items 19 and 20, Corinna spoke strongly for grandfathering the memorials, and others felt we would find ourselves very unpopular if we opposed them. General consensus, though, that we represent to Parks & Recreation that a moratorium be placed until planning can be accomplished.

Planning - Judy Leich talks about process to find planner. Parks & Recreation has set aside \$10,000 for the purpose, though we may not get all of it. RFP are magic letters "Request for Proposal". We would interview candidates, look at their prior work, etc. Clarissa Rowe of Menotomy Rocks Friends to be approached for advice in drawing up RFP, Roland, Bruce and Judy to work on this.

Police: as mentioned above, Roland to approach Comr Del Gaizo about coming to talk to us about security, policing, signs, the arc light, etc. in 3 weeks or so.

Clean-up - idea brought up for us to volunteer to clean up the Park. We need to find out from DPW what time of year — March or April — would be the best.

Adjournment — 9:30 pm, next meeting to be announced. . .

From Notes & Memory — Oakes Plimpton

FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM

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Notes on Meeting with Director of Police Services, Eugene Del Gaizo, March 5th, 1999

Present: Oakes Plimpton, Roland Chaput, Bruce Whittle, Bud & Sandy Carmichael.

In recent years, the Town of Arlington has applied for and received grants for community policing, which has enabled the Police to have police in blue jeans to intermingle with the kids, and be more effective in controlling their behavior. They have also figured out a letter writing strategy which we could take part in, namely writing down the registration #s of cars and writing the owners that their cars were seen at Robbins Farm where drinking and vandalism and other bad things take place. They also do arrest kids at the start of the Spring season to send that message. Veteran park neighbors (Bruce, Roly, Bud & Sandy) felt that the situation had improved over the last few years, last year's Fourth, for instance, being much calmer and less violent than other Fourth's.

Signs are the provence of DPW (as in signs saying the Park is closed at 9 pm). In the past these have been vandalized. Oakes brought up wish for more sophisticated bylaw, which perhaps would prohibit "loitering" after 9 pm, rather than outright prohibition which technically would prohibit the dog walkers and the star gazers. Signs saying no parking after 9 pm could be put out along Eastern Avenue. Problem of course is that then the kids would park elsewhere.

Obnoxious light over the playground? Director Del Gaizo had no objection to its removal and understood our presentation (though he had just met with a group from Union Street who demanded that a similar light be restored). He said he would communicate to Rich Bento of DPW that he had no objection to its removal.

Roly Chaput had given Director Del Gaizo our listing of security concerns. -----

**NEXT MEETING MARCH 17TH AT 7:30 PM BOARD ROOM AT TOWN HALL
2ND FLOOR ACADEMY STREET ENTRANCE.**

Notes taken by Oakes Plimpton by memory.

FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM

To promote preservation, restoration, recreational opportunities and safety, and to sponsor clean-up and other community activities at the beautiful park in Arlington Heights known as Robbins Farm!

MEMORANDUM TO PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

MARCH 11, 1999

As you know, we're a recently formed association, with presently 68 paid up members. Our mission is briefly stated by the letterhead. We have met a number of times to try to reach consensus on our views for the future of the Park — improvements, new ideas, planning, etc. As might be expected we received quite a diversity of opinion ranging from installing a skate board park to having just grass. [Our primary initial focus was what to do about the deteriorated tennis courts — a majority probably favors restoration of the courts]. But I think there is general consensus that professional help is needed, and a \$10,000 planning grant would be very welcome!

But there are some immediate concerns for Park upkeep which the photo montages show quite vividly. A group of us walked through the Park on January 24th, and these are a list of our park observations of problems listed in approximate order of priority.

1.) Area between sidewalk and curbstone along Eastern Avenue needs to be filled in -- the ditch by where the kids are picked up by Brackett School bus is 10 inches deep. There is also a manhole there that sticks out.

2.) Serious erosion problems around the slides, and the wooden steps need replacement. There's also a crack in the slide itself, and there's no cushioning sand at the end of the slides.

3.) The playground is in major need of repairs — missing stair treads, missing rope, tires need replacement, rubber coating on chains is missing, sliding handles are gone. The playground needs regular maintenance.

4.) The arc light over the playground attracts teenagers at night to use the playground, for which it is not designed. The light also ruins star gazing and looking at the city lights, and shines into the windows of neighborhood houses. Director of Police Service Eugene Del Gaizo has no objection to it being removed.

5.) The tennis courts are a serious eyesore and need to be fixed up. DPW has offered a temporary fix — to remove the weeds and fill in the cracks and either take down the fence or possibly fix it up and paint it. The children could use it for tricycling, etc., and it wouldn't look so bad. Long range plans can then be made.

6.) Erosion on the Boston hill is so bad that perhaps it could be made into a science exhibit! There is erosion on the hill above the baseball field as well. Other things being equal the erosion should be filled in, and problem noted to planning expert as to how to prevent in the future.

7.) The Puritan Street entrance is in bad shape — as volunteers we can put in wood chips as we have at the Coolidge entrance, but it needs a long term solution.

8.) The backstop of the baseball field has torn fabric, and a foul poll is missing.

We would like to schedule a clean-up day some weekend in April during which some of these tasks could be done with the help of our volunteers. We're also thinking of scheduling a kite flying day in late April or early May. Thanks for your consideration. We look forward to further communication.

Sincerely,

Oakes Plimpton, Coordinator, 67 Coolidge Road, Arlington, MA 02476 781 648-5117

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MEMO TO CORPS GROUP

APRIL 14, 1999

This is a plea to stay with it! I actually thought last night's meeting with Parks and Recreation went pretty well. I don't think we need unanimity of opinion. It isn't really for us to decide what happens up there. As I see it our roll is to bring attention to the deplorable conditions up there, and to get going both the short term remedies and long term planning process. Jim Miller's photographs made quite an impression, and the prioritized list we gave them was obviously being taken seriously. Alternative long range plans were well stated; to me that was a service to Parks and Recreation to give them the main currents of opinion about the long range plans. From comments made, I take it there is a formal system they have to go through — public meetings, etc., to OK a long range plan for the Park. And even for the short range fixing up of the Park, I don't think we need to dictate to them what to do; hence I see nothing wrong in their fixing up the fence versus taking it down.

On the other hand, I know we should probably have had a meeting to prepare for our appearance, and I think Corinna is certainly right to have asked for a meeting earlier than the 27th to prepare for our clean-up day. [Afraid, as your self-appointed leader, I've been distracted with other things lately]. Also I realise care must be taken to accurately state what consensus we do reach, and for individuals not to site Friends for their particular wishes. I've tried to state what I saw as our consensus in the prioritized list, though admittedly edited to a degree — our original list was longer, and perhaps rightly I was criticised for adding the phrase "possibly fix it up and paint it" as regards the fence. I was trying to give them some flexibility, but admittedly I was expressing my own opinion. [I have to confess to being a fence partisan — it's difficult to play tenniball or street hockey without a fence, and even for tricycling it gives a sense of protection]. As to the Radcliffe Seminars initiative, I realise that wasn't passed on, but we had decided to look for design planning help, and our planning person Judy Leich supported it.

What do you think our structure should be? Perhaps we should devote our April 27th meeting to that subject. Lets see: there's the chairing and minute taking at the meetings, publicity, event planning, maintenance/safety policy, design and long range planning, liaison with Parks and Recreation, DPW, Police, Selectmen. I've been doing most of these functions, and Roly Chaput has represented us at a number of meetings. We have a de facto "Working Committee", which I've been communicating with by E-Mail — I belong to an Arlington birding list; perhaps we could set up a Friends list where you can automatically communicate with everybody. At the least I could provide everyone with everyone's E-Mail address and telephone #. I tend to think we should stick with "Working Committee" rather than have a formal Board of Directors, but that's something we could decide upon at the meeting.

As to our clean-up day (May 1st) I'll send out some publicity for the Advocate (enclosed). (over) We need to send out notice to our members for both the clean-up day and the meeting, perhaps in the form of an informal newsletter. I'll definitely provide all of you with a draft copy for comment. Having another meeting at this point makes me a little anxious, so perhaps we can go with Roly Chaput's scheme of things — if he could provide me with a scenario of the different tasks to be accomplished, I'll circulate it with some of the above materials, and we can volunteer for the various tasks — refreshments, poster publicity, day organization, etc., and we can review it at our 4/27th meeting. On the other hand, if people want to meet, I can offer our attic room for the purpose some night next week. And then we need to plan for a kite flying day — maybe 5/16!

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NOTES — MEETING HELD APRIL 27, 1999, TOWN HALL BOARD ROOM , 7:30 PM

Present: Oakes Plimpton, Roland Chaput, Bud & Sandy Carmichael, Corinna Vanderspek, Sandy Vorce, Greg Porfido, Jim Miller, Elaine Backman, Ken Reilly, Chris Culhane, Frank Wilwerth and Jim Marzilli.

Go-around — introductions & Robbins Farm stories: some winter tales of sledding disasters, and skating everywhere on the 'farm' -- and the wonder of a snow storm with a child. Also spelunking adventures down the manholes, and a dramatic rescue of a child injured by an errant toy rocket. Posted — 1989 kite flying day poster, photo of skating on the basketball court with barn circa 1960, and the opening of the shuffle board courts with view of meadow grass, Chestnut trees and the American flag circa 1943.

Clean-up Day May 1st — Roly Chaput will direct the activities per e-mail circulated — DPW truck to be present with dirt to spread and some tools. Various members volunteered to seek donations of refreshments, paper yard recycle bags, and to contact the Advocate. Corinna has spread the word at the Brackett School. Oakes will draft a flyer to give to neighbors and to post. Jim Miller will bring his camera.

Meeting with Parks & Recreation: Committee impressed with Miller photographs of the deterioration of the Park, but a little put off by our differing versions for the future.

Friends' Organization — Repr. Jim Marzilli dropped by just in time to give us some advice on organization. He felt that you do not need to have a formal Board unless there is money involved. A standing committee, and good planning to be sure that the organization speaks with one voice is all that's needed. He gave as an example of successful organization the 20/20 tree planting committee that leveraged a small grant into cooperation from the Town Manager, etc. to replant and redesign the grounds around the statue of Uncle Sam. Good communication is also essential; several members stated the need for a recording secretary. Sandy Carmichael is "nominated," and accepts the responsibility. Minutes will be e-mailed to everyone and reviewed at the beginning of the next meeting. It is agreed that Oakes continue as moderator, sending out an agenda in advance, Elaine Backman to assist. Roly Chaput will be our "Director of Programs" (clean-up, kite flying); Ken Reilly volunteered for publicity; Corinna will be our Brackett liaison. No-one volunteered to be treasurer, but as Oakes has the bank account, he will keep track. [We have received \$350 (70 members X 5), and spent approximately \$125 in copying and the original mailing].

Park Design — approval of offer by Radcliffe Design Seminar to use Robbins Farm as their class project next year. John Furlong, the Professor, offered to take a tour of the park with us in June. Oakes to try to get him to come before our next meeting, and also to attend.

Adjournment — 9:30. Next meeting set for Tuesday, May 25, 7:30, try for same place. These notes typed by Oakes with help from Sandy. Will e-mail next time.

O.P.

Core Values

These statements represent the overall principles that will be employed in making decisions about Robbins Farm Park and illustrate how we envision it as a community resource:

- **We value the view :** Robbins Farm Park's unique resource is its special vista of Boston and the harbor. The views and vistas should be preserved and enhanced.
- **We value the community:** Robbins Farm Park is a special community resource. It should meet the needs of all of its citizens as a place for gathering, for solace, for peace and for recreation. It should serve the needs of all age groups and interests.
- **We value public safety and the rights of privacy:** None of the features of Robbins Farm Park should inherently create troublesome situations or predictable problems for those live around the park.
- **We value quality improvements:** Landscaping and recreational improvements should be carefully reviewed in order to amplify the natural features and enhance the aesthetics, practicality and beauty of the park.
- **We value the past, present, and future:** The present needs of our community will be addressed while we respect Robbins Farm Park's uniqueness as a special resource. The history of the area should be honored and its facilities should serve future needs.