

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!

WINTER NEWSLETTER

Newsletter # 4

January 2001



Skating on Flooded Basketball Court Circa 1960 — 2002?

**MASTER PLAN / INCORPORATION / DRAFT CORE PRINCIPLES
DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT / MEMBERSHIP & FINANCES**

ROBBINS FARM MASTER PLAN

Andrew Leonard, Designer and also Arlington resident, unveiled his preliminary plan for the renewal and restoration of Robbins Farm Park December 13th at the Jefferson Cutter House before a working group of Friends and Don Vitters, Chair of the Parks Commission. It is a million dollar plan! Like everything else, it would be accomplished over time — installment plan. Don Vitters set forth the philosophy: we have a unique park here, and it deserves a first class job of renovation and improvement! FORF members present seconded the motion!

First, a new playground will be constructed to replace the old wooden one, which is fading fast, the new equipment, state-of-the-art, to be plastic and metal which should last twice as long. He has re-designed the slides so that one is shorter and the other is curved (safety reasons) with the stairs to return between the two slides, so kids won't get bowled over crossing the slides as they do now, railings to discourage returning by sides. The swings will all be in one line, the older kid swings separated from the younger kid swings. The toddler playground will be also be separated as now. There'll also be an area for hopscotch and the like, and a labyrinth (painted or by materials depends on funding). Friend's wish for a water spray section is not included, but could be added to labyrinth area for the summer months. He'll also add some picnic tables. Then, to protect the kids from dashing out into the street, he has designed a fence along Eastern Ave., with a ceremonial entrance opposite the Brackett School entrance (a little below the present cross-walk). The playground, fence, etc. would be constructed the first year, 2002.

He has designed a path system through the park — six feet wide with a hard material (again the latest — better than asphalt!) which will be handicap accessible for the upper half of the park (grades too steep for the lower half). The path comes up

from the 'gap' across the lower end to the playground, back across the park as the present one does, then around the perimeter of the park, connecting to entrances @ Puritan & Coolidge but not Pine Ridge or Mt. Vernon (in the vicinity of the Pine Ridge entrance the trail crosses over along the back of the baseball backstop).

For the top of Boston Hill he has designed a curved patio area with low wall to sit on or lean against with a raised diorama of the skyline, with a pergoda (trellis with vines) far enough back so as not to interfere with the sledding. Mr. Leonard did not see a way to design for sledding safety other than hay bales (a berm wouldn't work!), but does recommend plantings along the Gray Street side of the hill to prevent sledding straight down towards the 'gap'. Further back, at the beginning of the present tennis courts (which will be removed), the Robbins mansion site will be excavated for a Japanese-type garden with historical interpretive materials. Around the site he'd plant some flowering bushes such as lilacs, and towards Hawthorne Ave. a small orchard of non-fruit bearing fruit trees (maybe crab apples). The rest of the tennis court area could be used as a sunken grass iceskating area, flooded in the winter, but reused in the summer as a volleyball court or for ball games. [A recent letter to the Advocate described the pleasure of skating at the Park — see coverage — later (1980s) the tennis courts were flooded for skating]. The present basketball court, essentially replaced by the new Brackett court, is redesigned as a hard-surface tricycling and rollerblading area.

The baseball field is not changed; he has outlined room for two small soccer fields (six player game), also one 50 by 100 foot soccer field for the older eleven player game, slightly smaller than regulation. Below the present playground there is space for two tennis courts to replace the old ones — better location as much more sheltered.

ROBBINS FARM MASTER PLAN

Andrew Leonard has recommended plantings of trees along Eastern Avenue, along the path from the Brackett towards the crest of the hill (about half way), some plantings at the various path intersections, plantings along the ledges near the top of the park, but not tall trees so as to block any views (birches and cedars).

The plans are still preliminary, but soon they should be finalized and the process of implementing them will start. All that will take a while, as public hearings have to be held, the various components of the plan put out for bid, etc. etc.

How the Friends may contribute has not been figured out, but the general idea is that Friends would raise funds for what the Town can't afford (ie the mansion excavation). There is the possibility also of hands on help for the assembling of the new playground (as was done with the old 10 years ago). So keep tuned to future happenings, and be ready! — either to participate in the process or to help when the call comes! As noted elsewhere, the next Friends meeting will be held February 7th at the Town Hall Annex meeting room, 7:30 P.M.

Friends of Robbins Farm Park, Inc., a Charitable Corporation

The next step in our evolution is to incorporate as a charitable corporation! Then we can receive corporate gifts and foundation grants, and people can take tax deductions for donating to Friends. It also gives us a better structure, and symbolizes a more serious purpose towards achieving our goals of park renovation and improvement. The reader will also note a change in name — thought up because our present name might confuse potential givers (we're a "park", not a "farm"). FORFP as a non-profit corporation won't be too different from FORF as it is presently. The Board of Directors will be similar to the Core Committee, the officers to the past co-coordinators and secretary. The business of Friends will be managed by the Board (as presently the Core Committee). The members can be consulted in an important matter, but generally their only legal power is to elect the officers and directors annually.

A Nominating Committee will select the first officers and directors, generally the same people who have been attending the Core Committee meetings. Officers, who will be directors, will consist of a President, V.P., Treasurer, Ass't Treasurer, Recording Secretary and Membership Secretary. One person can serve several offices save that of President and Treasurer. Copies of the draft bylaws are already available (from Oakes). The draft Mission Statement and Core Principles document which follow will be shortened and legalised for the Articles of Incorporation. Thanks to Attorney Mark Dolan for volunteering to draw up the Articles and Bylaws!

The process of incorporation will take a while, so input in the process is welcome. Come to our next meeting (February 7th), and feel free to comment on the following draft statements!

DRAFT CORE PRINCIPLES

These statements represent overarching principles that should be used in making design decisions, and represents what we expect for Robbins Farm Park as a community resource:

- **We value the view :** Robbins Farm's unique resource is the special vista to Boston and its harbor. The views and vistas should be preserved and enhanced.
- **We value the community:** Robbins Farm is a unique neighborhood resource. The Farm should be able to meet the needs of its neighborhood. It should be a place for community, for solace and peace, for recreation. It should serve the needs of all age groups.
- **We value the neighborhood:** None of the features should inherently create menaces or predictable problems for the surrounding neighbors.
- **We value quality work that enhances aesthetics, practicality, and beauty of the park:** Landscaping should be carefully considered to respect and expose the natural features of the park.
- **We value the past, present, and future:** Plans are made with respect for the past as well as the future. Present needs of the town should be considered, but efforts should be made to respect the Farm's uniqueness as a resource. History of the area should be represented, but facilities should also meet future needs.

DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT

Friends of Robbins Farm is a membership organization formed to promote the beautification, restoration, improvement and clean-up of the beautiful park in Arlington Heights known as Robbins Farm; also to hold or promote cultural, recreational, clean-up, and other community activities at the Park. To accomplish these purposes, Friends plan to hold periodic public meetings open to all, to advertise in the Advocate and other media to invite membership and participation, and to form close relationships with the Parks & Recreation Commission, Planning and Community Development, the Natural Resources division of the DPW (of the Town), Arlington 20/20 Environment and Open Space Committees, Friends of Menotomy Rocks and Spy Pond, and other private and government groups to promote the betterment of the Park.

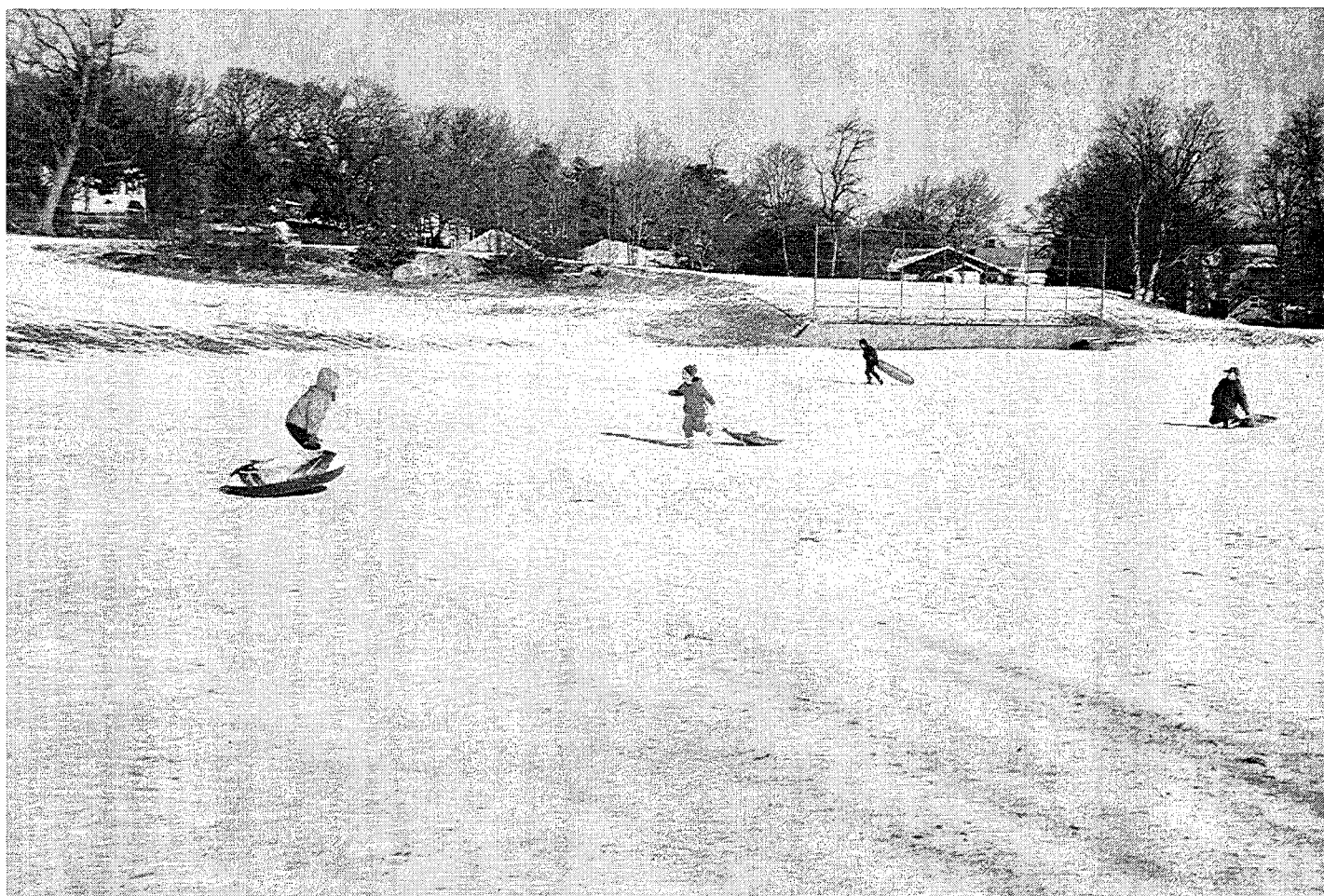
Friend's Status — Membership, Finances

Friends of Robbins Farm was started in October of 1998. Subsequently 152 people have enrolled as members, 112 members presently "paid-up" — \$5 annual dues. Since its first meeting, "FORF" has met once a month, all public meetings, often with Town officials and representatives — DPW, Police, Parks & Recreation, Capital Planning. Then FORF invited students from Radcliffe's School of Design to submit plans for the renovation of the Park. Four 'visions' were presented at the Brackett School (February, 2000), and subsequently exhibited at Robbins Library. Annual Spring Clean-Up days have been held in cooperation with the DPW, and a Kite Flying Day with "Kites Over Boston".

Finances: FORF presently has \$1080 in the bank. Our account is now with the Cambridgeport Bank (new in Town), which has generously offered FORF a free checking account. A number of people have made generous "beautification" donations, particularly Farmer Robbins' Niece, who gave \$500 with the wish that we plant some Magnolia trees (need a sheltered place, but perhaps we can find such). The t-shirts about broke even — let us know if your interested, they're being a few left, both adult and child, the adult t-shirt with a map of Robbins Farm as it looked in 1936, and the child's with a composite Brackett School design.

Decisions are made by a Core Committee, whose members (and functions) follow: Jen Rothenberg (Committee Co-Chair, Playground), Roly Chaput (Co-Chair, Clean-Up Days, July 4th!), Oakes Plimpton (Founder, Record-keeper, Newsletter), Sandy Carmichael (Secretary, T-shirts), Judy Leich & Shira Lion (Design), Susan Bernhard (Publicity), Jack Rogers (Fund Raising), Elaine Backman, Bud Carmichael, Chris Culhane, Chris Hall, Jean Hopkins, Suzanne Kaminski, Chris & Carole Kasper, Dorothy Lally, Jim Miller, Jennifer Ouelette, Martha & Paul Parravano, Ed & Marion Pierce, Greg Porfido, Corinna Vanderspek. Everyone's interests are not listed; under the reorganization (incorporation) plans are to have four committees: Design, Fund Raising, Publicity and Membership. Consider joining one of the Committees by checking off relevant interests on the membership blank following.

PLEASE TURN OVER FOR MEMBERSHIP BLANK.



Sliding on 'Baseball' Hill, December 24, 2000

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Will mark "Paid-up" on those who've paid. *By Spring would be re-up time (?)*
 Individual Membership Dues \$5 ____; Family Membership \$10 ____.

Five Year Membership \$20 & \$40 ____; Donation for Beautification: ____.

Thought: those who paid after 9/1 good for 2001, those before 9/1-re-up! O.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel #, e-mail: _____

Interests: Park Design __, Playground __; Publicity __; Newsletter __; Fund Raising __;

Friends' Events: __; Volunteer Labor __; Member of the Board __; Just a Member __.

Other & Opinions: _____ (over).

Please make out your check to *Friends of Robbins Farm* and mail or deliver to
 Oakes Plimpton, Ass't Secretary & Treasurer Pro Tem, 67 Coolidge Road, Arlington, MA 02476