



## Community Information Meeting Recap

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### Landscape Architect Chosen

In December, the Park and Recreation Commissioners selected Carole R. Johnson Associates (CRJA) of Boston as the landscape designers for the renovations at Robbins Farm. FORFP representatives attended the final interviews, and we liked their community-focused orientation as well as many of their creative solutions.

The town has allocated \$323,000 for Phase I design and construction. During January and February, CRJA will be working with the town and FORFP to update the master plan and the preliminary plans for Phase I construction. The expectation is that construction will begin in July 2002 and be completed by the end of the year.

The Friends of Robbins Farm Park (FORFP) hosted a Community Information Session on Wednesday, November 14 in the Brackett Elementary School cafeteria. With approximately 60 participants, the evening was very well attended and allowed members of the public to gain valuable information about past, present, and future happenings with Robbins Farm Park.

By design, the session was intended to involve participants in a visually stimulating and participative evening that would primarily provide the public with updated park information that they may not have heard. FORFP board members and Arlington Park and Recreation Commission chairman Don Vitters were on hand to present information and answer questions. Different than a traditional question-and-answer type session, the evening was geared toward providing organized information in appropriate chronological contexts. The goals of the session were:

- Describe Friends of Robbins Farm Park (FORFP) with emphasis on the development and activities of the past year;
- Outline the current situation at Robbins Farm Park, with emphasis on current and future planning for park improvements;
- Identify specific comments from community members as they relate to planned improvements to the park.

Members of the public spent most of the evening listening and absorbing information as FORFP board members, as well as Vitters, presented a timeline of past, present, and future park happenings.

Don Vitters outlined current and future plans for the park renovations. In addition to

presenting updated and detailed information, Vitters answered questions from the public. He stated the Park and Recreation Commission is in the process of selecting a landscape designer to work with the commission to develop plans for park renovations. He also noted that members of the public who are interested in participating in a public hearing regarding the renovation plans for Robbins Farm Park should watch the *Arlington Advocate*, as the hearing should be scheduled during early 2002.

In the final segment of the evening, community members formed small groups and provided comments in reaction to what they had heard about the current and future plans for the park.

Here is a sampling of the comments and suggestions submitted by meeting attendees. All comments were sent to Parks and Rec.

- "Field needs infrastructure improvement."
- "The beauty of Robbins Farm lies in the non-dedicated spaces and the openness."
- "Don't interfere with rolling hills or views."
- "Fix playground first."
- "Safety of play structures is a real concern. Splinters, warped boards inhibit play."
- "Please keep the big slides!"
- "Keep imaginative play spaces at park (jeeps, house, etc.) in playground."
- "Can we have an old-fashioned merry-go-round?"
- "Low fence along Eastern Avenue (to keep balls in) is good idea"
- "Remove the tennis court!"
- "Take down tennis court and put in ...ice skating."
- "Ask kids what they want."
- "Include plans/funding for ongoing maintenance."



## Slipping and Sliding into Winter

### Founder's Corner

by Oakes Plimpton

Last winter was a great winter for sledding at the "Farm" — perhaps 30 days with sleddable snow!

Laughter and screams, the joy of speeding down the hill on sled, toboggan, tube or saucer, by yourself or in trains — everyone dressed in colorful snowsuits, parents conversing at the top while their kids slide down the hill and trudge back up, and even a few parents sledding with their wee ones. Once in a while there's crying when a child gets scared, or run into. But mostly it's just pure winter bliss!

Sledding can be a little dangerous at the big hill, sometimes called 'Boston Hill' a.k.a. 'Suicide Hill.' Kids usually have to jump off their sleds to avoid the fence. My neighbor's granddaughter broke her leg crashing into the fence last winter. I thought parents should be warned, so last season, I prepared a sign which read "If the hill is icy — DANGER — fence at the bottom! Consider sledding at Baseball Hill" with an arrow pointing towards the upper hill which, though steep, is short and runs out into the baseball field. I put my sign up after the snow got packed and icy. I checked for it later and it wasn't there. Asked parents if they'd seen it, and they informed me that some kids

were using the sign as a sled! And sure enough there were some kids with my cardboard sign folded in half sledding down the hill! Perhaps the park planners can figure out a solution to the steep hill ending in a fence — some kind of soft barrier or a path at the bottom that would be snowplowed so as to stop the sleds.

'Coasting' was the word used for sledding long ago according to Ralph Sexton (Arlington Advocate 2/25/93). Before Robbins Farm became a park, and even afterwards, Eastern Ave. was the place to coast starting at the water tower and going all the way down almost to Pleasant Street. The sleds kids used back then can still be found today — "flexible flyers" with steerable runners, or "snow kings." But they

open! In fact I know a group of kids from the other side of the Tower. They came up one night with a big bobsled — runners in the back and steering runners in the front. Had a whole string of kids sitting on it and off they went. They made the first curve (they since straightened Eastern Ave) and the second, but the third curve — they all went over — its a wonder they weren't killed! They all staggered up the hill with, you know, bloody noses, sore arms, but no one was seriously hurt, but what a mess they made of that so-called bobsled!"

What kind of winter will we have this year?? Friends is considering serving cocoa and fellowship some winter day — look for us!

*"Breath steamin' and icicles gleamin', Scarves blowin' and candles glowin', Mittens missin' and skaters kissin', Sleigh bells jinglin' and fingers tinglin', Sleds slidin' and some collidin', Kids shakin' and angel-makin', Papa's plowin' and dog's bowwowin', Snow's fallin' and Mama's callin', Snowballs flyin' — zing! Oof! And now I'm lyin' in a pile of snow, Rappin' and tappin' and finger-snappin'*

*On a walk through winter."*

*from Park Beat Rhythmin' Through the Seasons  
by Jonathan London*

didn't always use these comparatively safe sleds — as described in Robbins Farm, a Local History, "They used to block off the (side) streets, and wide

*Oakes' book, Robbins Farm, a History, is available at Robbins Library, the Historical Society, Jefferson Cutter House and the Town Barbershop or by email, robbins\_farm@hotmail.com.*

## "Don't You Cry! He'll Be Back Again Someday"

By Susan Bernhard

The life of a snowman sure is a mixed bag.

Big flakes lumber to the ground logged with water and promise, reminding us again why we like winter so much. Flakes that we catch on our tongues, flakes that show off their crystal form, flakes that turn into a fluffy comforter for the ground, flakes with the perfect genetic makeup for an awesome snowman.

We start singing "Frosty the Snowman" and gather possible noses and mouths and hats and scarves from around the house. Don the snow pants, the mittens, the hats, the boots, and trudge through the fresh snow, whiter than milk in a cereal bowl. Scoop up a handful to eat.

Gray wool toque? Check. Carrot nose? Cheery red scarf with fringes? Check. We need eyes. Who has eyes? Who has an idea for eyes? Pine cones. Ok. Arms. We need arms. Get some branches. The mouth is always the hardest. Frosty can't have a pipe anymore. It's not PC. How about that plastic New Year's horn? A smooth, groovin' Frosty. Can you dig it?

So we roll and we roll. Up, up, up the hill. Down, down, down the hill. Roll that snowman's big old behind up the hill one more time, get it into position. Work on the body. Down, down, down the hill. Back up, up, up. Great body! Who wouldn't want to be a snowman with these dimensions? You could eat anything! And the head. Pat, pat, pat. Roll around and around. Plop on top. Let's dress this jolly soul.

First the eyes. Drill in deep so the pinecones don't bug out or drop out. Same for the carrot nose. Jam that horn into an ice white mouth. Wrap the scarf and tie it. Oh, don't you look jolly? Stick the sticks pointing up but not like Frosty is being held up. Just up. Kind of like a wave. And not least, the magic hat. Lift up the little one to do the honors. There. And we wait. And wait. Guess Frosty isn't going to come to life this day. But he sure is happy soul! Blow that horn, Frosty Baby!

Back inside. Take off the mittens and hats. Pull off the boots. Wiggle out of the snow pants. Throw the coat on the floor and head to the kitchen for cocoa. We watch Frosty out the window, our own sentry in the backyard. Oh, won't the neighbors be so jealous?

Night falls but Frosty stands. Will Frosty get lonely? No, the birds and squirrels will keep him company. Even mom takes one last look at Frosty before it's lights out. A big owl moon shines through the trees, casting long iron shadows across the white stage. Frosty is still.

A sunny day wreaks havoc on Frosty's posture. Time to head out and do a little repair work. His surface is already slushy but we pat that away, put a little more weight on his mid-section and he looks as good as new. Hi Frosty! We wave from the warmth of our house. Frosty toots his horn and waves his sticky fingers. Morning and it's going to snow again. Sloppy, wet snow that teeters on the brink of freezing rain, just shy of the

dreaded rain itself. We stay inside. Board games, painting, train set, Lincoln Logs. We check on Frosty. He should be thrilled for heaven's sake. It's snowing! He's in his element. Yet, he's looking a little miserable. He seems to be shivering. Perhaps he needs a coat...

Day dawns, bright, sunny but cold. A beleaguered Frosty



had visitors in the night. Fresh tracks around his heavy base indicate that a squirrel or two chased and danced circles around him. It's nice to have visitors, especially when you're snowbound. The sun begins to wage war on Frosty. Bit by bit; drip by drip. Frosty looks concerned.

By week's end, most of the snow has melted or turned into crystallized gravel patches or mini-icebergs. Frosty is no longer a jolly happy soul. He's bent over backward, defying gravity, defying

the odds. He's dropped weight and the accoutrements of a happy snowman. He looks forsaken, staring straight up to the heavens. "Why me?" I lack the courage to put him out of his misery. It seems bullying and cruel to kick a snowman even one as pathetic as the hip Frosty we knew just days ago. Finally, a warm breeze blows through under the cover of night and

our snowman is just a pile of unmelted snow in the backyard. We gather his accessories and put them in cold storage for next

year. The kids are sad that Frosty has finally fallen. But I assure them, he'll be back again someday.

*Robbins Farm Almanac* is a quarterly newsletter published by the Friends of Robbins Farm Park. We welcome and encourage any articles or suggestions. Please send them to: [robbins\\_farm@hotmail.com](mailto:robbins_farm@hotmail.com).

If you would like to become a member, email us or call 781-648-1998.

### Friends of Robbins Farm Park Officers 2001-2002

Oakes Plimpton, *Founder/Historian*

Jennifer Rothenberg, *President*

Roly Chaput, *Vice-President*

Chris Hall, *Treasurer*

Sandy Carmichael, *Clerk*

Corinna Vanderspek, *Membership Secretary*

**Monthly meetings** of Friends of Robbins Farm Park are held on the second Wednesday at 7:30pm at the Jefferson-Cutter House in Arlington Center. Winter meetings will be held January 9, February 13, and March 13.

## Friends of Robbins Farm Park

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*The Friends of Robbins Farm Park is a community organization formed to promote the beautification, restoration, improvement and maintenance of the Robbins Farm Park in Arlington Heights, Massachusetts. We sponsor and promote cultural, educational, recreational and other community activities throughout the year. We invite active membership in the organization and seek to represent the Robbins Farm Park community. To volunteer please email: [robbins\\_farm@hotmail.com](mailto:robbins_farm@hotmail.com)*



## *A New Year of Events Planned with Winter Fest Kickoff*

The FORFP Community Outreach Committee met recently to plan a slate of events for 2002.

Based on the success of our 2001 season, we will be hosting or participating in a broad range of activities certain to appeal to all patrons of Robbins Farm.

We are excited to announce plans for a Winter Fest. The event, which will take place on the first "appropriate" snow day of 2002, will feature contests and games such as snowman and fort building, angel making, sled races and snow relays. We are hoping to have donuts, coffee and cocoa on hand as well. The official "Winter Fest" announcement will likely be "grass roots" with large signs along Eastern and Park Avenues and a banner at Robbins Farm. We will also post an announcement on our website if possible. Since big snowstorms usually bring out large numbers to the Farm anyway, we don't think there will be a

problem attracting participants. So get your snowman building supplies gathered and your sleds greased in preparation for a great snow day!

Additional events for the year include:

- Clean-up day in May
- Field Day and Annual Meeting in June
- Fourth of July Festivities and Shakespeare in the Park (new event!!) in July
- Free Friday Flick movie nights in August
- Town Day in September
- Kite Day in October

With a full schedule of events, we are realizing our desperate need for reliable volunteers to help out. Please consider signing up as a volunteer now. We would like to get a solid list together before we get busy in the Spring. We have a ton of fun getting ready for these events. It's a good opportunity to get to know neighbors

and make new friends. The level of commitment is up to you and we'd love to have you. Please send an email to [robbins\\_farm@hotmail.com](mailto:robbins_farm@hotmail.com) to volunteer or call any board member you know and we will hook you up with the right people. For the most part, volunteers need no particular talent; just a willingness to have fun and be part of a great organization.



*Our new web address is:*  
[www.robbinsfarmpark.org](http://www.robbinsfarmpark.org)

We will post issues of the Robbins Farm Almanac there as well as park updates, event schedules, and volunteer opportunities.

**Bookmark it to day!**