



Spring 2023 ROBBINS FARM ALMANAC

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 1



“Rainbow Over Boston” by Ken Hawkins

Note From FORFP Board

Big changes are on the horizon: 2023 marks the redesign and rebuild of the beloved Robbins Farm Park playground. Construction will start over the summer with expected completion by Spring 2024.

And what a rebuild it will be! The Friends of Robbins Farm Park (FORFP) advocated from early on for a focus on inclusion in the new design and are excited that the Town and the architects have worked to create what will be the most inclusive playground in Arlington. The guiding principle during the design process was to create an inclusive adventure playscape nestled into a beloved community park.

In this they have succeeded. The redesign maximizes play potential of the park’s slope, integrating it into the playscape via the famous long slides; elements for climbing, balancing, and hiding; adventure sheds with multiple climbing and play options on several levels; and paths incorporating musical and sensory play features. Aspects that hark back to the Farm— farm animal play, a market truck like the one Nathan Robbins drove into Boston with his produce – are sprinkled throughout the playscape. There’s also plenty to challenge all grade school kids, including 3 slides, monkey bars, so many climbing options outside and inside the adventure sheds and on the hillside, and several types of swings. It’s an embarrassment of riches—there is truly something here for everyone!

The Friends are launching a fundraising effort and chose to focus on a few pieces of play equipment specified in the Town’s inclusive design. We see fundraising as a way to continue Nathan Robbins’s tradition of bringing our community together by providing recreational space for everyone. Our goal is to rally constituents to support the important concept of inclusive (not just accessible) playgrounds that are fun and exciting, not only for children with disabilities, but for all children and their families who will be able to enjoy the Farm with a wider circle of friends.

The Friends are raising money towards the rebuild in several ways over the coming weeks. You can participate by donating on our website (QR code on page 3), buying tickets for our dance party on June 17 (see page 4 for more info) or mailing it to us directly at Friends of Robbins Farm Park, P.O. Box 750013, Arlington, MA 02475. Please join your neighbors by investing in this wonderful resource for our community.

Despite ongoing construction at the playground this summer, FORFP will conduct a (nearly) full roster of events this year, so mark your calendars and join us when you can!

FORFP 2023 EVENTS

- **Jun 17:** Dance Party Fundraiser
- **Jul 4:** 4th of July & Pie
- **Aug 5:** Rockin’ Robbins Concert
- **Sep 9:** Movie Night
- **Nov 4:** Fall Cleanup Day

See FORFP website for the most up-to-date schedule

Robbins Farm Park Playground Renovation by Jim Hampe

On a recent walk to school, my 9-year-old noticed a backhoe digging near the playground slides in Robbins Farm Park and exclaimed, "They've started!" While I had to inform him that it was just a site inspection and the renovation construction hadn't yet begun, it was awesome to hear the excitement in his voice that the new playground is coming soon.

In February 2022, the town announced that "The Robbins Farm Slides will be closed indefinitely" due to irreparable damage. A beloved piece of our park has been sorely missed since then! Fortunately, the Arlington Park and Recreation Commission has been engaged in a multi-year process of not only replacing the slides but renovating the entire playground. The project has been led by a design team that includes Joe Connelly, Director of Recreation, the design firm Agency Landscape + Planning, Park and Rec commissioners, and community members including myself as a representative of the Friends of Robbins Farm Park.

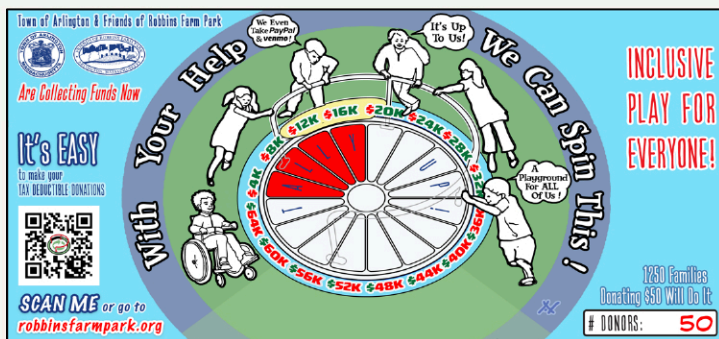


Rendering of Final Playground Design by Agency Landscape + Planning

After a 6-month process of design and public input, the Park and Rec Commission approved the final design on May 16th. Construction is slated to begin during the summer and expected to be completed by Spring 2024.

I commend the Town and the design team on their openness to public feedback and thoughtfulness in incorporating as much of that feedback as possible, balancing it within the goals, budget, and timeline of the project. The Town received an unprecedented amount of feedback, often contradictory, and I feel strongly that the voices of the community have been heard, thoughtfully considered, and integrated into the design.

A major goal from the beginning of the project has been to make this the most fun and inclusive playground yet in Arlington, building on the Town's commitment to increase inclusivity in all of its playground renovations. An inclusive playground also needs to be fun, challenging, and exciting to attract children of all ages and abilities. Robbins Farm is a signature park that serves all of Arlington and draws visitors from neighboring towns and beyond. Just search for "best playgrounds near Boston" to see how popular a destination it is! The playground rebuild is an opportunity for our community to lead the way on this important concept and build the type of park that we want all of our kids to enjoy.



PLAYGROUND FUNDRAISER !

Check Progress Towards Our Goal Online or at Robbins Farm Park

A Great Start Towards Our Goal!

The main goal isn't just "accessibility." We have a wonderful parent representative on the working team who has helped me at each step of the way put myself in the shoes of a parent or child with a physical or neurological disability who is trying to play with their friends, not just be nearby watching. I believe that learning how to play together, and including every kid, is just as beneficial for able-bodied children as it is for children with disabilities.

So now we turn our attention to helping our community invest in this playground for current and future generations of kids and families. Please help us to achieve this vision by donating to FORFP's goal of raising \$63,000 to support the playground renovation. You can donate and stay up to date on our progress on our website: robbinsfarmpark.org/playground. Or you can scan the QR code on the next page.

I know one 9-year-old who can't wait for the grand reopening!



Some of the Many Inclusive Elements in the New Playground:

- **Universal Carousel** with ground-level design to make spinning accessible for all
- Multiple **Musical and Sensory Play Pieces**
- **3 Slides** (our signature long slide + 2 roller slides, one 7.5 ft, one 4ft long) with ADA platforms and dignity exits
- **Adventure Shed** design elements to allow access and inclusive imaginative play equipment
- **Accessible Swings** as well as traditional ones
- **Accessible Paths** to all areas of the playground
- **Communication Board** using Meyer Johnson symbols

Robbins Farm Community Garden

by Mike Smith

First proposed to the Arlington Department of Parks and Recreation in 2009, the Robbins Farm Cooperative Teaching Garden is now in its 13th growing season! The current garden footprint, located at the downhill end of Robbins Farm Park, is twice its original size with an evolving design now featuring wider paths for the requisite garden tours. The all-organic garden is run cooperatively so there are no assigned garden plots. To support our mission as a teaching garden, we maintain two distinct gardening websites: robbinsfarmgarden.org for teens/adults, and veggieschool.robbinsfarmgarden.org for grade school children.



Watering the Garden

ripened and sun-warmed tomato, gobbled down right after picking.

Over the years, the garden group has sponsored children who were interested in learning how to grow their own food. The Cooperative waived the usual membership fee, welcoming them, showing them the ins and outs, and sharing the harvest with them in exchange for their labor.

If you are considering becoming a member of the garden, come by on a Saturday morning – our shared work time is Saturdays from 9AM to 12PM – and try out the experience! More information about our group is at our website: robbinsfarmgarden.org. If you would like to join, click on the Membership & Rules tab to download an application.

The best parts of being a member of the community garden are the camaraderie, sharing gardening tips & tricks, and welcoming the various visitors to the garden. Oh, and enjoying the fresh, organic veggies, herbs and flowers! An abundance of knowledge is brought to bear by the collective, and the group welcomes the chance to share their insights with both experienced and fledgling green-thumbers.

I recall an especially rewarding day when a mother was visiting the garden with her 4 year old son. The boy seemed particularly interested in the abundance of cherry tomatoes ripening on their vines. When I offered one to the boy for tasting, his mother said, “oh, he really doesn’t like tomatoes.” Well, the boy popped that little gem in his mouth, chewed, smiled, swallowed – and then asked for another! His mother stood there, her mouth agape! There’s nothing quite like a nicely



The Robbins Farm Gardeners



Collecting the Harvest



DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY at the Robbins Farm Park Playground Benefit Sat June 17th @ 7pm

Stanley Pollack has been a staunch supporter of Robbins Farm Park for over 3 decades. He and his band, the Undercovers, have played many concerts at the Park over the years. They have generously offered to host a fundraiser Saturday, June 17 at First Parish Church in Arlington Center, 630 Mass Ave.

It will be a dance party with a full set from Stanley and his band and a performance by the AHS Madrigals, among other things. Suggested donation is \$10-\$50 per ticket. Bring your dancing shoes and join us for a night of fun!

With your help, we believe we can hit our fundraising goal of \$63,000. Please show your support of this initiative & our wonderful community by scanning the QR code above to donate.



NEW Off-Leash Dog Hours

Summer (7/1-8/31)

Every Day 6-9am

Fall, Winter & Spring (9/1-6/30)

Mon-Fri:

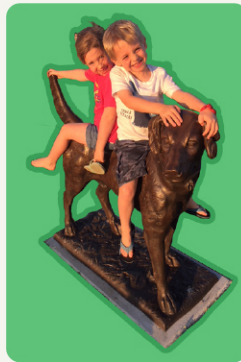
6-7:30am and 8:30-9am

Sat & Sun:

9/1-11/15 - 6-8:30am

11/16-3/31 - 6-9am

4/1-6/30 - 6-8:30am



Notes:

If field is in use for school department activity, off-leash activity is allowed behind backstop only. Fields are generally closed to all users in wet weather. For e-mail alerts re: park and field closures, subscribe to the Field Conditions Notification e-mail list at

www.arlingtonma.gov/subscriber.

Join Friends of Robbins Park!

Support RFP and honor the legacy of Nathan Robbins, farmer-philanthropist. FORFP seeks to continue his tradition of bringing this community together and providing recreational space.

Funds go towards projects, events, & upkeep of our wonderful park.

Join or renew your household membership:

1-year \$10, 3-year \$25

OR a gift of your choice \$ ____

[Join or Donate Now](#)

Our Mission

- Promote the beautification, restoration, & improvement of Robbins Farm Park
- Sponsor & promote cultural, educational, recreational, and other community activities
- Invite active membership in the organization & represent the Robbins Farm Park community

[FORFP is a 501 \(c\)\(3\) all-volunteer organization](#)

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Our mailing address is:

P.O. Box 750013

Arlington, MA 02475

INFO: friends@robbinsfarmpark.org

VOLUNTEER: volunteer@robbinsfarmpark.org

WEBSITE: www.robbinsfarmpark.org