

The Hood Park Steering Committee met on Thursday, January 21, 2021, beginning at 11:00 a.m. All members of the Committee joined via Zoom.

Present: Beverly Donovan (Economic Development Director); George Sioras (Planning Director); Elizabeth Robidoux (Economic Development/Planning); Mark Brassard (Chair); Jay Tombari (Co-Chair); Mike Fowler (Director of Public Works); David Caron (Town Administrator); Kim Walsh (Parks and Recreation Director); Paul Lindemann (Heritage Commission); Barbara Bailey (Waterview Estates)

Mark Brassard called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m.

#### *Minutes*

Motion by Beverly Donovan, seconded by Jay Tombari to approve the minutes of the January 07, 2021, meeting as written. Motion passed with Paul Lindemann abstaining.

#### *Ranking of Implementation Plan*

Elizabeth Robidoux advised Mike Fowler and Kim Walsh prepared a spreadsheet and memo for the Committee, outlining the recommendations that arose from the UNH report, benchmarks for when the projects might be able to be completed, as well as preliminary dollar amounts for each project, to include who might complete the project. She suggested the Committee review the information provided, discuss it, and determine if this is the list that should be presented to Town Council for consideration.

Mike Fowler advised if everyone agreed, this is where the funding portion comes into play. The committee has taken the ideas presented by the community, and staff will take a lead role in moving the items forward. The Committee can discuss the implementation plan in detail or adopt it to move it to Town Council in February. Dave Caron advised a presentation from this Committee has been placed on the Town Council's agenda for February 16, 2021 to discuss the Committee's recommendations. Mike Fowler explained the budget process is the next step in the process for the fiscal 2022 budget. Appropriations would need to be included in the Capital Improvement Plan and in the budget.

Jay Tombari asked about funding sources. There had been prior discussion about corporate sponsorships for some projects, including the potential for HP Hood, LLC to partner with the town on some projects. At what point does that conversation begin? Or, do the projects get moved forward to Town Council and the town would look to sponsors for additional funding later?

Beverly Donovan explained HP Hood had been engaged earlier than this Committee's process. In the short term, the Public Arts Council can work with Kim Walsh and Mike Fowler to see what the town might want to do and then reach out to HP Hood. The company would like to see something very specific before it would commit to anything.

Jay Tombari asked if they should be leaving third party funding out of the conversation for now and requesting it all up front? Beverly thought it was early for that part of the discussion. Jay suggested Bauer Hockey might be another corporate sponsor to keep in mind to perhaps assist with upgrades to the hockey rink.

Dave Caron advised the Town Council approved a 1.8 million dollar bond for recreation improvements. They have been looking at this process and other improvements at the other parks. Once this committee finishes its recommendations, he will discuss them with Mike Fowler and Kim Walsh. Some resources may be available sooner. A few years ago, the Commerce Corridor TIF District was expanded and that expansion includes Hood Park. \$235,000 per year has been placed into the Commerce Corridor Redevelopment Fund. Between the recreation bond and the funds available in the TIF, some of these items may be addressed sooner rather than later. It will be up to Mike Fowler's team to roll this out and implement it. He likes the idea of corporate sponsors. There has been good cooperation between the community, the Committee, and potential stakeholders.

Jay Tombari felt it would be prudent to let Town Council know that might be part of the conversation. Projects at Hood Park have not yet been discussed with private sponsors. A good way to approach it might be to earmark a certain amount for private sponsorship.

Mark Brassard asked if the Committee felt there was a role for Pinkerton Academy. Could they assist with some of the projects and should the committee pursue that? Mike Fowler agreed if Pinkerton could be a part of the efforts it would be positive outreach and a good partnership.

Mark Brassard wondered if the items identified on the implementation schedule could be placed under an economic development umbrella. If an arboretum and discovery center were created at the pavilion, and a sign placed on the highway, it would create an area that is a destination which would drive economic growth. An arboretum and discovery center would be a good addition, unique for a town to have, and would be an economic driver. He would like to see Red Lambert, the gentleman responsible for the creation of Hood Park, be remembered, as well as Gerry Cox, the first Recreation Director (Lambert Arboretum; Gerry Cox Discovery Center). He would like to see if there is support for that. Jay Tombari suggested incorporating all of the ideas in to one conversation. The arboretum/discovery center might be the final piece of the puzzle once all in place. He suggested working on what is on the list first. Mark Brassard felt strongly that he did not want this to just be another park. This would be a way to establish Hood Park as something different. Elizabeth Robidoux suggested adding those suggestions to the implementation schedule so that they don't get lost as ideas.

George Sioras felt these were good ideas. Past experience shows the town is good at starting with what it can do and then building into what it wants it to be. This is how Don Ball Park was developed.

Mike Fowler felt it was appropriate to look at the long term goals in that respect. From an operational standpoint, the committee needs to consider the limited resources the department has to set up, monitor and staff activities at the Park, especially if there was to be a discovery center open to the public. There is a tight tax cap in Derry, so when the Committee is looking at

something that requires staffing, that needs to be kept in mind. It would be difficult right now to keep a place open and staffed unless there is a volunteer component.

The Committee reviewed the implementation schedule and the memo provided by Mike Fowler and Kim Walsh, looking at each item to see if the benchmark (short, mid or long term project) was appropriate.

With regard to the walking trails, Mark Brassard asked if there had been any consideration to a bridge from Mitchell Ave that could accommodate the weight of a cruiser. Mike Fowler said the trails north of the bridge could be designed to be paved or as a stone dust path. The trails should be 10 feet wide and some of the vegetation removed. The other ancillary trails would need to be looked at to see if they needed to be made wider or left as walking trails. The bridge does not have a structural rating for vehicles. The existing footings are not able to handle that type of weight and he does not see the value in a major upgrade of the bridge. The existing bridge has good character. With regard to landscape and maintenance, Mike felt there was an opportunity to spruce up the landscaping at the entrance. The entrance can be enhanced, as well as the area near the flagpole and other areas. Parks and Rec staff can purchase flowers/shrubs to spruce the area up. If there is a desire, they can do more to find options for that.

Food trucks could be scheduled on site with collaboration from Economic Development. Beverly Donovan and Kim Walsh have discussed how the area could be improved as a community gathering spot. Pop Up Arts could be accommodated; not all events at the Park have to be recreation or sports oriented. Mike felt there was a good opportunity to collaborate with the Conservation Commission or another interested group who might be interested in creating something like the pocket park on East Broadway or a vegetable garden. The town could partner with that group, but a specific location has not yet been identified. As the town maps out the projects, they will need to make sure all the pieces fit.

As the town looks to improve the playgrounds, Kim Walsh will be looking at different age groups to see if the equipment is appropriate, she will also look at the space and see what other features could be added.

Mike Fowler noted he and Kim looked at the committee documents and suggestions that pertained to the availability of rental equipment. The town would need to make sure there was ample staff or that there was a partnership with someone who was teaching a skill, such as kayaking. There needs to be cognizance with regard to water quality and the perception of water quality. The town does not want to invest money and not have participating patrons. This should be more of a long term goal. Mark Brassard asked if a short term goal might to be partner with someone like Blue Bike; this would provide opportunity for people who do not have bikes. Mike Fowler thought the committee members should continue to be mindful of security and vandalism issues. The town needs to ensure a project like that is in a secure location. Beverly Donovan commented there are opportunities for private companies to come in and operate on an event type basis so that the town does not need to maintain staff, etc. Barbara Bailey added it might be a good idea to approach Benson's to see if they would be interested in hosting a one day event once a month.

Improving the existing basketball and hockey areas will be an ongoing effort for the Parks and Rec Department. Elizabeth suggested there is a good opportunity to perhaps partner with Bauer for a sponsorship when it is time to install new fiberglass backboards.

Adding sculptures to the Park has been an ongoing agenda item for the Public Arts Committee.

Mark Brassard suggested having the Fire Department conduct ice safety training during the winter months. Mike Fowler explained the Parks and Rec Department does clear the pond when it is safe to do so for ice skating. The town needs to be cautious in terms of safety when promoting events and when they are promoted. Mark Brassard asked if it was possible to flood the basketball court and use that as a rink during the winter. Mike Fowler said they would explore that option. With regard to skate parks, Mike Fowler reported the activity levels increased during COVID. Other communities have had the same experience. This idea may not be appropriate at Hood Park, but the skate park will be refurbished at Alexander Carr Park. Mark Brassard felt this should be a long term item in a highly visible area to attract families to the park. Mike Fowler said it could be looked at again in the future if there is an interest and a desire for it.

Beverly Donovan has indicated that Hood Park is not a good place for retail establishments given its proximity to the downtown. Retail tenants want to be near like businesses and to have high visibility. Pop Up events could be an option and would be appropriate at the Park.

The addition of fishing amenities is listed as a mid-term goal and it might be beneficial to request the assistance of the Rotary Clubs. Perhaps a boat dock could be installed. Mike Fowler recalled when there was a beach at Hood Pond there was a small dock. His department would look to restore them; he agreed this would be a mid-term goal. Access to the peninsula will be added to the list as a mid-term goal as well.

Mike Fowler said a small splash pad can be incorporated at Hood Park. It would not be as large as the one at Don Ball Park. The town will need to look at the logistics of water access, water pressure, etc. The design for the splash pad will commence in 2021, with construction in 2022.

Elizabeth Robidoux asked who would be presenting to Town Council and what will be presented. Mark Brassard felt it was appropriate for he and Jay Tombari to present to Council. They can come up with a PowerPoint. Dave Caron suggested limiting the presentation, including time for questions and answers, to 20 minutes. He has been working with Mike Fowler on the Recreation Bond and that will also be discussed at the February 16 meeting.

Paul Lindemann said there seems to be a lack of clarity with regard to the scope and purpose of this committee and what is planned to be presented to Town Council. The original mission was to obtain community input. He feels the committee has gone beyond that by adding a layer of reality to the suggestions from the community. It seems the Committee wants a first cut at how to implement the ideas through priority and phasing. This discussion feels well beyond the scope of this committee. He feels it is up to town to decide the next step by taking the data and creating a plan. With regard to private sponsors, there needs to be a concrete plan to obtain

commitment. He also did not see the history aspect incorporated. The historical aspects of the park should be tied in as the history of the Hood Creamery is tied to this area specifically. Beverly Donovan stated the historical aspects are part of the public arts discussion and anything the Public Arts Council looks at will incorporate the history of the Park.

Motion by Lindemann to accept the implementation schedule as amended to include the work at the peninsula and to consider an arboretum/discovery center, seconded by Sioras. The motion passed.

Mark Brassard, Jay Tombari, Elizabeth Robidoux and Beverly Donovan will meet separately to discuss the particulars of the presentation to Town Council.

Motion by Beverly Donovan, seconded by Elizabeth Robidoux to adjourn. Motion passes and meeting stood adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elizabeth Robidoux

Benchmark	Need - Want	Corresponds to:	Improvement	Anticipated cost	Completed by
Short term	Additional seating	3	Build benches and picnic tables	\$ 2,500	Parks & Rec staff
Short term	More programs & events	4	sponsor age appropriate events such as outdoor activities and youth arts and crafts	\$ -	Parks & Rec staff
Short term	Landscaping	5	add seasonal plantings and other landscape enhancements	\$ 1,000	Parks & Rec staff
Short term	Maintenance				
Short term	Food Trucks	6	permit single food truck or rotation of various vendors (no concession stand)	\$ -	EconDev/Parks 7 Rec staff
Short term	Incorporate Art & Historical Elements	12	Engage with local artisans, similar to the Rail Trail motif	\$ -	Residents/artisans
Mid Term	Improve Water quality	1*	Installation of aeration equipment	\$5,000 - \$10,000	Parks & Rec Department
Mid Term	Walking Trails	2	upgrade existing walking trails to carriage road standards (peastone); clear dead/live trees to revitalize forested area	\$ 50,000	contracted work
Mid Term	Improve playground	9	investigate and recommend possible upgrades to improve the 15 year old playground	\$ 50,000	Parks & Rec staff, vendors
Mid Term	Court improvements	10	Refurbish Hockey Boards	\$ 5,000	Parks & Rec staff
Mid Term	Court improvements	10	install new breakaway fiberglass backboards	\$ 10,000	Parks & Rec staff, vendors
Mid Term	Court improvements	11	Install additional netting	\$ 5,000	Parks & Rec staff, vendors
Long Term	Court improvements	11	Lighting and Security improvements	\$50,000 - \$100,000	Parks & Rec staff, Information Technology staff, vendors
Mid Term	Court improvements	11	Install pickleball court with lights	\$ 100,000	contracted work
Mid Term	Access to peninsula		create accessible access to peninsula located on the N High St. side of the Pond	unknown	Parks & Rec staff, vendors
Mid Term	Fishing amenities	17	review possibility of extending a short dock into the pond to permit fishing opportunities	unknown	Parks & Rec staff, vendors
Long Term	Rental Equipment	10	make equipment available for rental for water and other activities	unknown	Requires staffing and improved water quality
Long Term	Splash pad	18	consider a small splash pad that would serve as an attraction for families. 30 x 30. Revie and design for construction in 2022	\$100,000 - \$150,000	contracted work
Long Term	Arboretum & Discovery Center		consider creating an arboretum and the conversion of the existing building into a discovery center	unknown	contractacted work, partner with Pinkerton Academy

Revised January 2021

Key:

Short Term	complete by December, 2021
Mid Term	1-2 years, requires funding and/or design
Long term	2+ years, requires funding and/or design