

Friends of Salter Grove Community Meeting Notes

April 13, 2017

Pilgrim Senior Center

In attendance:

Friends of Salter Grove (FoSG) members; Peter Becker, Marina Wong, Matt Dickinson, Louise Jakobson, Jason Major, Alfred Nazareth, Mary Grady, Rep. Joseph McNamara and Isla Jean and Bill Custer.

Honored guests; Councilman Richard Corley and Michael Jarvis

Thirty-one (31) neighborhood residents

A reporter from the Warwick Beacon

Notetaker: Bill Custer

Louise Jakobson called the meeting to order at 7:01PM. She welcomed everyone and gave a brief summary of the agenda for the evening. She encouraged everyone to sign in and to either fill out one of the surveys available at the door or do so online at the FoSG website, which was listed on the screen.

Joseph McNamara announced that after much discussion over the last three (3) years we have a commitment from the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) to replace the bridge on the causeway this summer.

Richard Corley mentioned that when he was going door-to-door in the area while seeking election as the Ward 1 councilman, he spoke with many people about the opportunity to enhance Salter Grove Park. He met Peter Becker, from FoSG, and has had several subsequent meetings about establishing footbridges to better access the breakwater from the causeway. Richard did express concern about the parking lot asphalt so close to the water and the runoff. He believes this matter should be addressed. He would also like to see some flowering bushes in the park and perhaps the establishment of a garden club, like they have in Governor Francis Farms. He believes that safety of the travelers to and from the breakwater should be our highest priority.

Peter Becker narrated a slideshow. The slideshow helped explain the parts of the puzzle that FoSG faces in requesting modifications within the Park. The DEM manages

the property for the State of Rhode Island. Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC) is responsible for the shoreline and any activity within proximity to the shoreline. The US Army Corp of Engineers is responsible for the breakwater. The City of Warwick has a 20 year agreement with the State of RI to maintain the land within the park and maintain liability insurance for the Park. Finally, the role of FoSG is one of advocacy for the Park.

Peter reported the following:

New England Grassroots Environmental Fund provided a \$1,000 grant to FoSG for trail maintenance, education, and community outreach.

FoSG has been involved with developing nature field trips for St. Peters school and is collaborating with Providence College in further research activities. FoSG is also working with Save the Bay to increase the number of organized clean-ups of the Park and shoreline.

The City of Warwick has committed to the installation of a portable toilet very soon.

DEM and the City of Warwick plan to replace the footbridge on the causeway which leads to the breakwater. The causeway remains risky, however. In the last thirteen (13) years the causeway has been lowered by one (1) foot.

Matt Dickinson prepared some slides related to the whole park and the playground, specifically. The Park comprises eleven (11) acres. FoSG has the goal of increasing awareness of this open space and enhancing utilization of the Park.

The existing playground equipment is forty (40) years old and replacement would be very beneficial.

In the development of a plan for the playground it was felt that the equipment should address the needs of children aged 2-5 as well as those aged 5-12. A cable-net climbing system is ideal because it is durable, is not likely to be defaced by graffiti and it blends in well with the environment.

The group is investigating relocating the playground to the existing parking area. Adding bike racks and possibly adult exercise stations may also be considered.

If the playground was relocated, the parking area would be moved closer to Narragansett Parkway and would accommodate about twelve (12) cars.

Louise Jakobson mentioned that input from the neighbors was the point of this meeting and encouraged anyone with a concern or a question should step up to the microphone and be heard.

Rick Moller announced that he lives across the street from the Park. He observed that there are a high number of short-term and drive-through visitors to the Park who come and look at the water and then leave. There are also a number of dog walkers.

Rick is very concerned about moving the parking lot and feels that the view of the parking lot from his home will devalue his property. Trash will also be inevitable in the parking lot. He also kayaks every weekend and likes to use the high tide to go from one side of the causeway to the other. He agrees that the causeway is dangerous and the breakwater is filled with trash. Rick also requested information about the timeline for any of the proposed changes.

Peter Becker responded by saying that everything thus far has taken far longer than anticipated. The meeting with DEM and CoW concerning the footbridge was in February and City of Warwick staff were just notified last week.

Bill Plumb lives on Fulton Street and identified himself as the Warwick Harbormaster. He reported that the culverts within the causeway have disappeared and the culverts are useful for allowing water flow between both sides of the causeway and helps to clean debris from the cove.

Joe McNamara responded by advising that Larry Mouradjian from DEM is preparing plans for an aluminum footbridge to span the "large gap" in the causeway. He also said that there may be two (2) footbridges.

Bill Plumb added that moving the parking lot would not be a good idea and wouldn't look nice. He also mentioned that the original boat ramp was well-intentioned, but didn't work and an improved boat ramp should be supported.

Bob Waring, who lives on the corner of Bentley and Narragansett Parkway was next to speak. He believes that there is a major change in the use of the Park. He sees

much more kayaking. He also believes that foot traffic (both walkers and runners) passing by his home is very high and the Park could attract them if it was more accommodating.

He also questioned the causeway and suggested that nature is trying to undo the causeway to return to a more natural state.

He questioned the relocation of the parking lot, as well. He believes we should focus on the use of the Park and the projected use.

Rich Waterhouse (Narragansett Parkway and Landon Road) – Rich reported that the Park is open 24 hours a day and is often very noisy. He would prefer the causeway to be removed. The fishermen leave their trash. He believes moving the parking lot to the upper area across from his house is a very bad idea. He has seen children running away from their parents at the present playground site and headed for Narragansett Parkway and would suggest the installation of a fence.

Kris DiPrete Koopman lives at the corner of Gillooly and Narragansett Parkway. She is really concerned about the relocation of the parking lot and suggested that twelve (12) parking spots is not nearly enough. Her family uses the boat ramp often for her kayak. She also believes that a fence should be erected around the playground.

Joe McNamara added that the causeway was constructed as a temporary solution to allow equipment to reach the site of the breakwater during construction and was not intended to be a permanent structure.

Leslie Holcroft identified herself as a new resident and would hate to see access to the breakwater limited. She would prefer that we maintain the environment and use natural materials to make people appreciate the park.

Leslie did mention that 80% of the people who would use the bridge to the breakwater don't come from the area.

Peter Becker in response to an earlier question concerning the causeway explained that the waters on each side of the causeway are identified as different usage classes, with the southern side having more restrictions under CRMC regulations. Removal of the causeway would be problematic and expensive because permitting would be more complicated than for causeway repair and timing of removal would be restricted. Peter explained that presently the water flow exchange between both sides of the causeway is really limited, causing the northern and southern sides to be chemically distinct.

Increasing the water flow will increase the relocation of industrial pollutants. He added that the installation of a footbridge on the causeway will make access to the breakwater safer.

Bill Plumb suggested that the Committee address the poison ivy which is extensive within the Park.

Joe McNamara suggested that purchasing graffiti-proof playground equipment would be a good idea.

Richard Corley thought that installing adult exercise equipment might be attractive to joggers and walkers and the Committee should consider this. Trash continues to be an issue. Better access to the breakwater might encourage the fishermen to walk back to their cars with their trash, but the boardwalk would have to be 600 feet long and would be extremely expensive. Richard also suggested that the City of Warwick put covers on the trash receptacles so that the trash wouldn't blow away.

Bill Custer advised the group that the City of Warwick installed covers following our last meeting with them and pick-ups are done three (3) times per week during good weather.

Joe McNamara commended Bill Custer for his trash collection within the Park.

Louise Jakobson thanked everyone for attending the meeting and providing their input. She suggested that the attendees partake of the coffee, water and desserts and adjourned the meeting at 8:00PM.