

Minutes for Friends of Dorothea Dix Park
September 29, 2009

In attendance: Jean Adamson, Isaac Anderson, Sandy Arnett, Trisha Bruen, Nancy Buckley, Phil Buckley, Kay Carter, Shannon Flavin Cox, Val Grindrod, Donna Hill, Jane Jarvi, Jean Lawlis, Judy Luro, Rebecca Martin, Kurt Mathies, Edward McKeon, Emmy Monahan, George Patterson, Karen Rielly, Anthony Sangiovanni, Dory Sangiovanni, Jon Simms, Susan Simms, Patricia Totman, Robert Totman, Pam Tremblay

The meeting was called to order at 7 pm by Kurt Mathies. Each attendee introduced themselves and their interest in the Dorothea Dix Park.

Kurt and Council Member Cox provided background information about the formation of the Friends of Dorothea Dix Park (FoDD).

- The idea for creating a citizen organization to improve the park came from the town's Open Space Policy Committee. Due to Town restructuring the charge is now with the Services Committee. Kurt Mathies, Director of Recreation, is to facilitate the formation of FoDD and serve as liaison to the Council. If there is not sufficient commitment by the citizenry, park rehabilitation and development will continue under the auspices of the Services Committee.
- In 2008 the Town Council approved a charter for FoDD. At that time it was aligned under the Tree Board. This is no longer true and FoDD, if formed, will be responsible to submit to the Town Council a plan for revitalization of the park.
- Improvement of the park should be a grass roots initiative. The council's role is to support the citizens of Hampden through appropriations and ordinance.
- The Town Council wants FoDD to develop a long term redevelopment use plan for Dorothea Dix Park that will increase usable green space, compliment trail connectivity, be accessible, with trail improvement, year around use, and ADA compliance.
- One of the responsibilities of the Tree Board is to make recommendations to the Council re: the removal of trees on town property. The Tree Board has submitted their recommendations for tree removal within the boundaries of the park and also provided their vision for park development. Their recommendations were done in consultation with Prentiss & Carlisle.

Questions were raised regarding the responsibilities of FoDD and the process for plan approval and implementation.

Responsibilities: Membership to FoDD is the same for any citizen committee. Application needs to be submitted to and approved by the Town Council (forms are available on line or at the Town Office). Once the committee is formed, the charter will be revised and resubmitted to the Council, and a governance policy established (i.e., voting privileges, officers). FoDD will develop a vision based on citizenry input. The vision will be the basis for a prioritized plan (short and long term) for the entire park that best meets the needs of all the citizens of Hampden. Fund raising may also be necessary.

Process for plan approval and implementation. The finalized plan will be submitted to the Services Committee who will then pass it on for full council review. Upon final approval the plan will be implemented. The town reserves the right to approve on going work within the park to ensure the safety of park visitors. At this time the council has not identified any deadlines.

A general discussion followed with clarification questions, insights, and several recommendations.

- One citizen requested that Town Council members and employees be ex officio with no voting privileges.
- Initiation of inventories: wildlife, Audubon, plant inventory, environmental impact statements, archeological study, confirmation of vernal pools, etc. The Audubon inventory is available on the Town Web site. Other experts have been consulted and their reports will be made available to FoDD.
- A usage survey and/or citizen survey to receive citizen input. Kurt offered to include it in the Recreation mailing.
- The history of Dorothea Dix and her legacy should be promoted.
- Educational opportunities should be offered and may include signage.
- Winter access. This is currently denied through statute. The ordinance is currently under revision. The reservation policy is also being reviewed as no reservations are allowed in Town parks.
- It was recommended to have a voting board with input provided by citizens who would not have a vote.
- Preservation of unique features of the park especially the black locus trees at the entrance to the park as well as the stone wall.

A list was passed for those interested in membership in FoDD. The next meeting was set for Tuesday, November 10, 2009, 7-8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Jarvi