

City of Concord, NH
Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee
DRAFT Meeting Minutes from January 16, 2025 5:30pm

Committee Members: Althea Barton (Ward 1), Robert Kleiner (Ward 2), Sarah Beauregard (Ward 4), Zoey Murphy (Ward 5), Nick Kotkowski (Ward 5) Brian Sartorelli (Ward 7), Paula Bowers (Ward 8), Chair Mary Miller (Ward 10) and Councilor Michele Horne

Absent: Barb Higgins (Concord School District), Councilor Nate Fennessy, Kenny Edwards (Merrimack Valley School District) and Jim Figueira (Ward 3)

Staff Members: David Gill, Parks & Recreation Director, Chip Chelsey General Services Director

Meeting was called to order at 5:30pm by Chair Mary Miller

Minutes approved as written from the November 2024 meeting (no meeting in December 2024)

New Business:

Apparel Impact: The General Services Director Chip Chelsey and Joe from Apparel Impact gave an overview city's solid waste system and the need to reduce the amount of used clothing going into the waste stream (trash). Used clothing is 8-10% of the current waste (higher than plastic) and they are recommending trying to reduce the amount of clothing that is just thrown away. Over time this will help reduce/control the cost of trash in Concord/Penacook. Chip is recommending a pilot program to have a bin at the City-Wide Community Center and the COMF so people can donate clothing vs. throwing away. The pilot program is recommended by the Solid Waste Advisory Committee. Paula asked how often are bins emptied, and the bins will be emptied once a week, if full just call and the company will come and take care of it. Councilor Horne asked if the company has reached out to Merrimack Valley School District yet and Joe indicated not yet. Brian asked if we are having issues with the bin can the city ask for it to be removed without penalty. Joe indicated if the city requests a bin to removed they will do so within a week or so. RPAC members agreed it would be good to try to reduce the amount of waste going into the system. Paula made recommendation to try a pilot for one year, Michele second, unanimously approved.

CIP Overview: David reviewed the CIP handout from the Nov 21, 2024 meeting. Staffs FY26 recommended CIP projects focus on safety items and replacing equipment. David indicated usually the department receives between \$400,000 and \$600,000 annually for regular ongoing maintenance needs (maintaining what we currently have). Large projects like Memorial Field Complex, Terrill Park, White Park Pond and needed building repairs are outside of the regular yearly amount and is harder to fund. David reviewed the following recommendations for FY26 consideration:

CIP51 White Park: \$400,000 for phase 2 of safety improvements needed at the maintenance building at White Park. This will be work related to installing an equipment lift and related building work.

CIP56 Rollins Park: \$100,000 for full restoration and repaving on access roads inside the park.

CIP 443 City Wide Community Center: Funds (TBA) for design and permitting of the expanded parking lot as recommended when the center was built.

CIP 587 Cemetery Improvements \$350,000. \$250,000 for improvements at the small garage when staff are

based out of. (new windows, electrical, repoint building, eye wash stations, roofing repairs etc.) and \$100,000 to continue repairing roads at Blossom Hill Cemetery.

CIP 569 Equipment: \$105,000. Replace 2013 zero turn mower (parks) \$20,000, Robot paint machine \$45,000 (will lower paint costs by 30% and staff time needed to paint fields) and \$50,000 to buy Ventrac mower and brush cutter. The Ventrac will be used to cut back undergrowth/invasive plants and help maintain the new section of the Merrimack River Greenway Trail.

David also reviewed current ongoing multi year initiatives that are not currently funded:

White Park Pond restoration, Terrill Park construction (fully designed and permitted), Kiwanis Park construction (in final design and permitting now), Memorial Field Master Plan Implementation. David also noted in the next several years we will need a plan to replace the playgrounds as they were all installed around 2002.

Mary made a recommendation to approve staff's recommendation for FY26 funding. Nick seconded, unanimously approved.

Brian recommended the committee have a more in-depth meeting to review the larger projects that are pending – like Memorial Field Complex, Terrill Park, cemetery buildings as they are long overdue for maintenance, plus he is concerned how the city will move forward on these projects without a lot of support from RPAC. Committee agreed with his recommendation.

Sarah asked why is the Keach Park light project not included in FY26 request, David indicated that was a project approved in FY24 and we are still working on the design. Sarah asked if the field with lights will be available to entire community and leagues. David indicated at this time if lights are added to the field it will be available to entire community and leagues and regular rental fees would apply.

Healy Park Clean Up: David gave an overview of the history of Healy Park and growing number of homeless camps and several pictures of the camps where shown. Due to the high number and extremely poor condition of the camps he is recommending city fund a full cleanup of the park to include: clean up of all (active and abandoned) camps and cutting down brush to increase sight lines. Over the past couple of years there has been increasing number of serious crimes in the park (shootings, stabbings and drugs arrests). In addition, the City Police Department has seen increase in number of calls to the park that is taking up more and more resources. Several times the fire department has used their water rescue units to save homeless from flood waters. The majority of the park is between 222 and 228 ft above sea level and the river often floods areas up to 227 ft above sea level. The total cost to clean up the camps, increase sight lines and improve old hiking trails is currently \$165,000. He indicated the best time to clean up the site is early spring when no leaves on the trees/bushes allowing the cleanup company to see all areas that need to be cleaned up (before early May) Mary and entire committee thanked David for bringing this up as it's an important initiative to make the area safe for everyone. She asked if the park is open to the public and David indicated for the past year or so the park has been posted closed on the web site. David indicated the situation in the park is significant worse than prior years.

Mary asked if RPAC approved his request to clean up Healy Park what is the next steps. David indicated he would recommend going to the Public Safety Committee for review and then to City Council for funding request. Mary made a recommendation to have the department work with public safety committee and city council as soon as possible to clean up the homeless camps and cut the brush to increase sight lines. Seconded by Paula, unanimously approved.

2024 Year In Review Report: David gave out copies of the 2024 report and indicated will be online this week and will be included in the City Managers weekly newsletter.

Motion was made by Mary to end the meeting by Mary at 7:10 pm and seconded by Nick and approved.

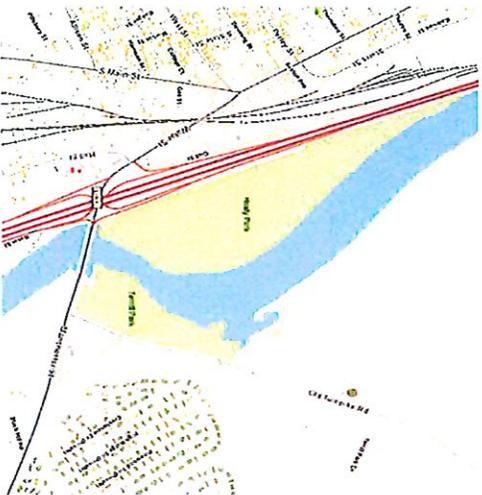
Next RPAC meeting will be held Thursday February 20, 2025.

Submitted by David Gill



Healy Park Clean Up

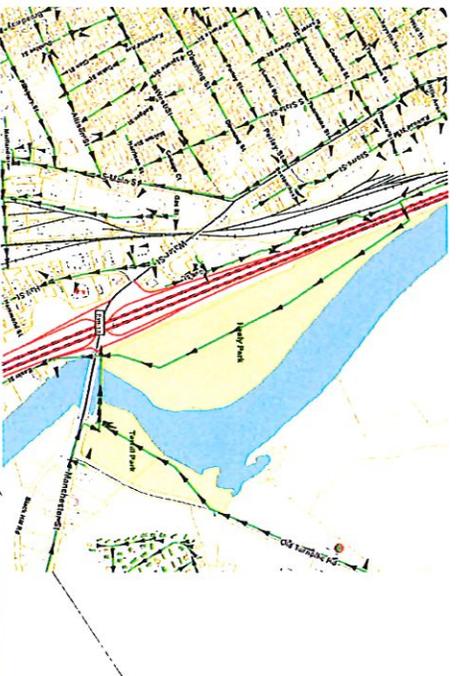
RPAC Overview, Jan 16, 2025

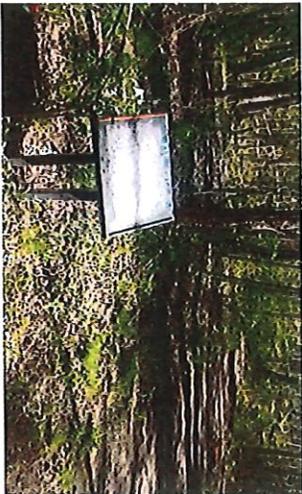


Healy Park is a 48-acre park located at the end of Basin St. The land was bought from the State of NH for one dollar in 1964 with the condition that the land is kept in public ownership for park and recreational purposes only.

The land is relatively flat and averages between 222 and 228 feet above sea level. This is important to note as high water levels on the Merrimack River often flood areas up to 227 feet.

Main interceptor sewer line also run through the park.





Over the past several of years, the park has seen an increase in the number of homeless camps and the size of the camps.

The police department, homeless outreach workers etc. are very proactive with regular outreach with the people living in the park. Depending on the time of year the Police Department estimates there are between 8 and 15 active homeless sites and numerous abandon sites”

With the extreme poor conditions of the camps - (trash, human waste, needles etc.) and safety of everyone (homeless and first responders) we are at the point where a major cleanup of the park is required.





Both the police and fire departments have experienced an increase in the number of calls to the park. Their calls for service range from shootings, overdoses, fights, fires and even several water rescues when the Merrimack River floods.



Depending on the time of year there are between 8 and 15 active homeless sites and numerous abandon sites



The scope of the project would be to clean up the homeless camps and cut the underbrush to increase sight lines and visibility in the area. Best time for the work is spring before trees/undergrowth start growing their leaves.

Possible funding requested this spring (2025) for cleanup of the camp sites, cutting the under growth, renovate the walking trails and install new informational signs in the park.

Clean up camps:	\$55,000
Cut undergrowth:	\$85,000
Improve trails/signs:	\$25,000*
Total Projected Cost:	\$165,000

* Could be FY26 or later request if needed

