

**Town of Barre  
Recreation Board  
Meeting Minutes**

The Town of Barre Recreation Board held a virtual, special public meeting on Monday, February 15, 2021 regarding a proposed town-owned natural area between Camp Street and Lague Lane bequeathed to the town on condition that it be turned into a neighborhood park. Board members in attendance were Doug Farnham, David Rouleau, Terry Smith, Amanda Gray, Stacey Lynds, and Moriah Fraga. Also in attendance were Robert Pope, Lee Walther, Jeff Allen, Barb Allen, Joby Feccia, Jennifer Lovejoy, Martin David, and assistant town manager Elaine Wang.

1. Chair Farnham called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.
2. Rouleau made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Gray seconded and the motion passed 6-0.
3. **Discussion** – Wang reviewed the results of the community-input survey about the proposal. Hard copies were mailed to property owners within 600 feet of the bequest lots, 105 and 106. The survey was also made available online and broadcast via Facebook and Front Porch Forum. At least 25% of the households in the neighborhood responded to the survey. More may have responded electronically. Of the 210 responses, 19% were mailed. Of the 210, 81% were from people who self-reported as living what Wang called nearby, that is, within 2000 feet of the lots or responded they lived “unsure but nearby.” Wang said most the respondents were supportive of the proposal. However, 40% of the immediate neighbors strongly disagreed with the proposal. Of the concerns and comments that appear to cause this disagreement were trespassing, privacy, and a feeling of the areas just being “too close” to homes. Concern about the environment, especially wildlife, as well as safety and drugs, were also frequently mentioned. Those who strongly disagreed with the proposal also tended to strongly agree that it would cause traffic issues, make them feel unsafe at least some of the time, and would mean a lot of litter and that would concern them. Wang said that from these results, accepting this bequest and turning it into anything publicly accessible is very likely generate a lot of resistance from the immediate neighbors and indicated a need for dialogue, which is why staff sent postcards out to the neighborhood to alert them to the public meeting opportunities to provide input.

Mr. Jeff Allen said he owns lot 107 and has a right of way on lot 105 so he can access his woods behind his house. He said he was very concerned about his right of way, and how people would be prevented from going onto his property. If there were a fence, his concern is how he would then use his right of way. He said needs to be able to move his trailer using that right of way to remove wood. Also because of the terrain he wouldn't know if someone was on his property. Chair Farnham said a locked gate could be installed and Mr. Allen be provided a key. Mr. Allen said that would make his work harder. Rouleau said markers could be installed like in the Town Forest to show where private property begins. Mr. Allen continued to express his concern of expanded public access to the lots. Rouleau said one option could be to accept the lots and leave them completely as is. Another option is an ADA walking path and parking lot. Smith asked if Mr. Allen would have less concern if the property was owned by the church and library, since that's who the bequest would pass to. Ms. Barb Allen said the deed prohibits development so they wouldn't be concerned. Mr. Bob Pope said he wasn't sure if that was the case. Development by the town would be prohibited but the deed may not prohibit the church and library from development. Ms. Allen said she was also concerned about safety of walkers if they, the Allens, were using a tractor with a trailer in their right of way.

Mr. Joby Feccia said he thought it was a great idea but was concerned because the lot is very close to the Scenic View Drive homes, including his. He also said he was opposed to any parking lot, because he's been a cop for 30 years and said it would cause issues for the highway department, police department, and the neighborhood. Smith asked if Mr. Feccia would prefer people park along the street. Mr. Feccia said he did not have a great answer to that but opposed a parking lot. Mr. Allen said he also opposed a parking lot.

Ms. Jennifer Lovejoy said she lives across the street from the Allens and the Longfellows. She expressed concern as their properties are bordered on two sides by the lots and so felt they would be impacted the most. She said in general she is favor of open space but feels if it were a vote that the Allens' and Longfellows' votes should count three times hers. She said she was in favor of a town-owned park without a parking lot.

Mr. Lee Walther said he lives nearby, is not an abutter, and shares the concerns of Mr. Allen. He said he hears the concerns about litter, drugs, parking, signage, and time of day for usage, and would yield to the wishes of the immediate neighborhood.

Mr. Martin David wanted to understand what the plan was for the grassed triangle near his lot. Wang said the Rec Board had previously discussed that, if the lots were accepted, that the grassed area not be for public use because it would be hard to not wander into people's backyards there.

The Allens both spoke to wildlife they have seen there. Ms. Allen said she wanted what Mr. Donald Allen did to improve the property for wildlife to be protected.

Mr. Allen said they have seen homeless camping in the lot, and found alcohol bottles, camping gear, drug paraphernalia, and ashes from a campfire.

Rouleau asked the opinion of the participants about improving the entranceways. Mr. David said he was in favor of that.

Smith said she was concerned that if the town accepted the bequest and left it as is, unlike all the other recreation facilities in town, it would be town-owned land but the town would not do anything to promote it. Rouleau said it would just be a different type of facility, a different kind of common land.

**4. Recommendation** – Rouleau made a motion to recommend the Selectboard accept the bequest and leave undeveloped at this time. Smith seconded. Gray asked if it would require more work for the town to conserve it for wildlife. Wang said she was not aware that the town owned any land specifically for wildlife conservation. She gave examples of the town forest and Act 250 prime agricultural conservation properties behind the town offices and Wilson Industrial Park. She said some land could just be held by the town undeveloped, like the steep slopes behind her own house. Gray and Lynds asked about liability related to injuries and fallen trees. Farnham said that would be for the Selectboard to consider. Fraga asked if the current recommendation to leave as is would prohibit the town from doing something with it later, noting that the town has recreation facilities for younger kids but not so much for older kids. Farnham said he would think if the town wanted to do that, they would go through the same process as they were now: notify the neighborhood and get input before deciding. Farnham called the question. The motion passed unanimously.

At 6:55pm on a motion by Rouleau, seconded by Gray, the board voted 6-0 to adjourn.

Recreation Board Members

Approved by Doug Farnham,

David Rouleau

Terry Smith

Amanda Gray

Stacey Lynds

Moriah Fraga