

Odell Park Centennial Committee

Introduction

On February 6, 2006 Mayor Palfrey appointed a committee to evaluate the condition of Odell Park and make recommendations to the City Council regarding projects and funding necessary before the 100th anniversary of the park in 2009. The following report details their findings.

Fields

*All three of the ball fields need to be reconditioned and upgraded. Fields #1 and #2 especially need to be brought up to meet the Little League specifications required to host tournaments.***

Little League field #2 needs new storage/concession/scorers building. Little League is in the process of acquiring a new scoreboard for field #2.

The softball field would greatly benefit from new field fencing, including backstop (with higher and wider screening on upper level of backstop to prevent balls from going into the river.) It also needs a new and larger storage/concession/bathroom/scorers building behind the field. A sprinkler system for the softball field and field #2 is needed as well. At present field #1 has a sprinkler system however linking the sprinkler systems to all fields is not feasible due to the distance.

The tractor, equipment, etc. used to drag and maintain fields should be housed in storage a building (possibly the cottage garage) and be accessible to all field users.

Storage container for inside the present batting cages to hold pitching machines, plates, etc. is needed.

All three fields need continued upgrading of the bleachers, installation of flagpoles and drainage issues addressed.

The existing lights on the softball field need to be removed and all fields need new or updated lighting.

*** Franklin Little League will be hosting the 2008 tournament at Odell Park.*

Playground & Courts

The present playground is creative and engaging however because it is made from wood it is no longer safe. All playground equipment needs to be removed and replaced.

The picnic area needs to be relocated to another part of the park. Possibly have 2 small areas instead of one large one. One close to the playground and another located possibly in the green space just inside the arch along the river.

Move outside basketball court to other side of cottage (next to tennis courts.) Create multiple side by side basketball courts that could be flooded in winter for an ice rink. Installation of a skating rink was the number one request of those we spoke with.

At this time the horseshoe pits are poorly marked and a danger to small children playing on the playground. They should be moved to another area of the park and be clearly marked for safety.

Recreation Center

As it is now the entire second floor is unusable because it only has one exit route. Installing a fire escape would increase the usable space by one third and create much needed meeting space for the community.

The ceiling of the gym and the fire escape from the gym are both in need of repair.

Trails

Continue to build the ten-foot hiking trail that runs along the existing fence at Odell Park. Top the trail with stonedust and replace fence with fencing that would match the fencing at Trestle View Park. Additional lighting along the trail would be advantageous.

In order to connect Odell Park to Trestle View Park, a boardwalk could be built along the river behind the existing properties. Working with the property owners, the Heritage Commission, and the Odell Park Centennial Committee the City Attorney could possibly be enlisted to draw up a Grant of Permanent Trail Right-Of-Way Easement to be signed by the property owners so the construction of said Boardwalk and hiking trails from Odell Park to Trestle View Park could be pursued.

In order to embellish the boardwalk, property owners and the Heritage Commission could be enlisted to restore the existing Griffin Hack Saw Company by putting in a restaurant, quaint shops, an artist gallery and others with an entrance on Memorial Street as well as on the boardwalk. The boardwalk could be beautified by potted plants and window boxes, lighted by lights similar to those at Trestle View Park and continue the fencing from Odell Park to Trestle View Park.

At the end of the boardwalk, just past the Griffin HackSaw Company, the hiking trail could continue on to a reconstructed covered footbridge which would span the Winnepesaukee River from the RD Paving Company parking lot to Bow Street. There, the Bow Street Hiking trail would be constructed along the banks of the Winnepesaukee River and continue on to re-cross the river over the existing pedestrian bridge at the Dam onto Trestle View Park. A second option would be available to hikers by continuing the construction of the Bow Street trail on up to the Sanel Auto Parts Company and the Sanborn Bridge on to Trestle View Park or to cross the pedestrian crosswalk onto the Winnepesaukee River Trail. A new Rotary Trestle Bridge Park is scheduled to open soon at this location. As before, property owners would need to be consulted.

Another means of linking Odell Park to the downtown area would be to construct a footbridge from behind the Peobody Home or the VFW across to Odell Park right in line with the home on the park grounds. This bridge would also serve as a connector for the Andover and Bristol Trail Systems to join the Franklin Winnepesaukee River Trail System. In this case, property owners would have to give their consent for passage along their property(s).

In order to improve the entrance to Odell Park and add additional parking for the park, the restaurant and others, the group could negotiate with the owners of the old Armory to demolish or alter the existing building so that a second exit to Odell Park could be realized. We could then have an ingress and egress for the park which will serve as a safety improvement for the increase of traffic in the area. The park now handles parking and traffic tie ups for the recreation programs at the Recreation Center, the recreation center league games and activities in the park, the Little League games, Lassie League games, the men and women's softball league games, the High School Softball games, the tennis courts, and children's swing and slides, etc.... To add additional attractions at the Odell Park as hiking trails, restaurant, shops, etc., we wish to add more parking and driving space in the congested area. This phase would also have to be dealt with by the property owners, the Heritage Commission and the Odell Park Committee.

Construction of the Odell Park Trail and the connector to Trestle View Park would be beneficial to the community and surrounding area. The trail systems coming from Andover and Bristol, New Hampshire have to be connected to the Winnepesaukee River Trail at some time in the near future. It is feasible for these trails to join in West Franklin along the Pemigewasset River and continue across the Republican Bridge into Franklin. The trail could then connect to the Odell Park Trail and Connectors and on to Trestle View Park and the Winnepesaukee River Trail, which will then extend on to Meredith, New Hampshire.

What a wonderful way to pay homage to a Franklin establishment that has served the city in such an extraordinary way for the past century. Think of all the generations that have used the swings, the ballfields, the tennis courts, the ice skating rinks, the kiddie pool and all the picnics. There are many memories that have been made here by Franklinites that will stay with them for their lifetimes.

Security and Safety Issues

Signage stating the park rules and safety issues (warning of possible damage/harm from foul balls etc.) must be installed in prominent places throughout the park. Installation of these signs would be a great help to the Police Department when they are patrolling the park.

Increasing safety lighting throughout park to discourage vandalism and inappropriate behavior will make it easier for the police to see what is happening in all areas of the park.

Installation of a gate at the entrance to the cottage and tennis court that limits entrance to "authorized personnel only" will also keep cars from being parked on the grass.

The current single lane road makes it difficult to go into and out of the park. Widening the road between the two parking lots will enable two-way traffic. The new road design would address the need to have the road angled away from the Little League #2 baseball field

Install alarms and possibly surveillance cameras on the Little League concession stand and bathroom that would alert the police to tampering.

Fencing and Parking Issues

The old split rail fence is dangerous and an eyesore. Install new fencing around all fields.

Pursue the acquisition and removal of the white building across the street from the Proulx Community Center. This would create parking space and allow the creation of another entrance thus greatly improving the traffic flow in and out of Odell Park.

To create symmetry and flow the chain link fencing around park should be replaced with fencing to match Trestle View Park

Parking at the park is haphazard at best. Lining the parking lots would better utilize the limited parking space. The removal of the old bathrooms at the softball field would also increase parking.

Caretaker's Cottage and Other Historical Concerns

The roof and soffits of the caretaker's cottage are in immediate need of repair or replacement.

The garage behind the cottage needs to be restored and possibly used for storage of park equipment.

The cottage porch needs to be leveled and the porch railings need to be restored.

There are several broken windows at the cottage that need replacement.

Paint cottage, porch and trim.

Remove the old pump house.

Rebuild the footbridge that once existed between the park area and downtown. Restoration of this bridge would facilitate the sense of community and inclusiveness that is so important to the success of a community.

Summary and Recommendations

Franklin is a caring and enthusiastic community whose unrealized potential makes it an exciting place to live. We are extraordinarily lucky to have such a beautiful park in the center of the town. Because of its location, size, and versatility it has the possibility of becoming the heart of the community.

Because of the limited funding available to the Recreation Department and the scope of the projects detailed here, this committee strongly recommends that the Franklin City Council endorse the formation of a non-profit organization which would work in partnership with the City Council and include members and other volunteers from all areas and aspects of the community. It would be the responsibility of the organization to obtain the necessary funding (through grants, park trust funds, fundraising, etc.) and oversee the completion of the various projects. Making Odell Park a place all our citizens can feel a part of and be proud of is a fitting tribute to the character, heart, and heritage of Franklin.

Odell Park Centennial Committee

<i>Linda LaFever</i>	<i>Chair</i>
<i>Kevin Avard</i>	<i>Parks and Recreation Committee Chair, City Council</i>
<i>Tom Charbono</i>	<i>Parks and Recreation Department</i>
<i>Glenn Morrill</i>	<i>Heritage Commission Historical Society Conservation Commission</i>
<i>Skip Dubois</i>	<i>School District</i>
<i>Dana Andrews</i>	<i>School District</i>
<i>Jackie O'Rourke</i>	<i>Trails</i>
<i>Steve Rousseau</i>	<i>Little League</i>
<i>Glen Laramie</i>	<i>Softball</i>
<i>Don Gagnon</i>	<i>Boy Scouts</i>
<i>Steve Barton</i>	<i>Lassie League</i>

***Partial List of City and Community
Resources and Partners***

City

*Heritage Commission
Parks and Rec
MSD
Conservation Commission
Police
Fire
Planning
Library*

Community

*Schools
Trails Assoc.
Little League
Lassie League
Franklin-Tilton Falcons
Men's Softball
Chamber of Commerce
Choose Franklin
Opera House
Outing Club
Boy/Girl Scouts
TRIP Center
Babe Ruth
Historic Society
Casey Family Services
Rotary Club
Kwanis
Elks
VFW
Peabody Home
FBIDC
LRGH and Franklin Regional Hospital
Franklin Savings Bank*