

Newton League of Women Voters COMMENTS

Project Name: Farlow Park Restoration and Rehabilitation (Pond, Bridge and Irrigation)

Category: Rehabilitate/Restore Historic Resources

Our Comments for the CPC:

Farlow Park was the first park in the City, and its design and bridge were iconic and are now historic. Restoring the bridge and pond would benefit neighbors, surrounding schools, churches, seniors living in the housing nearby and the nearby hotel. The proponents have been refining this proposal for a decade and would return a large, lovely recreation area to the neighborhood.

It would be helpful to have plans included for maintenance of both the pond/bridge and of the skating ice. We note that there are no funds for ongoing maintenance mentioned in the proposal, and while we heard that Parks & Recreation would assume this ongoing cost, we would like it to be made explicit.

Questions:

If the well and irrigation system are to be realized, would that mean ripping up the park grounds for pipes? Will the irrigation be for the grassy areas of the park, or for Bigelow School? Who will maintain the irrigation? Is the irrigation system necessary?

It is clear the bridge is too low to skate under – how realistic is the vision for a skating area on the pond? Is it possible to extend the ramps to the footbridge in order to get the necessary height that the original bridge had, and to skate under?

In improving the current plantings by returning to ones closer to the original plans – will the proponents be using plants known now to be invasive, native, low maintenance, exotic? Plants that fit into an historic preservation plan? What are the planting plans?

The proposal uses “Adirondack-style” v. “Victorian style” for the restored footbridge. Which is correct? Best to use the correct term consistently.

As the Friends of Farlow Park are co-sponsors, it would be helpful to know more about them or the organization. 3 people are listed as Community Contacts. Is there a Board, how many members, what is their mission, why are they not listed as financial contributors?

\$61,600 CPA funded project management- Carol Schein (\$5600), and “Independent Project Manager” - who will that be, how many man-hours, at what rate?

Annual Operations and Maintenance budget lists only \$690 for electricity. Skate pond maintenance? Cleaning 1-2 times a year done by Friends of Park volunteers? We suggest that annual operations and maintenance of the park, pond, bridge, plantings etc. will be more than this. Having a breakdown of who will do what in the future (mowing, pond, irrigation, cleanups etc) will be helpful.

From: "sue rasala" <srasala@gmail.com>
To: aingerson@newtonma.gov, aleary@newtonma.gov
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2014 10:04:03 PM
Subject: Opposed to Farlow Park Historic Restoration (Pond & Bridge, and Irrigation)

To the CPC,

Thank you for this opportunity to explain our opposition to the restoration of the ponds to Farlow Park.

We are concerned about the safety of children. The proposal states that the ponds will be 18 inches deep. In keeping with the historic landscape plan no barriers, not even prickly bushes, will surround the open water.

Farlow Park is a small neighborhood open space. At one time people may have walked IN the park and enjoyed the fresh air. Today a few people picnic, exercise their pets, or visit in the park, but many more people cross THROUGH the park. Underwood elementary school children and their families, groups of Bigelow Middle School students, and (mostly) adult Boston commuters use the park as a pedestrian route TO a school or bus stop.

The proposal to restore the historic ponds is carefully written and has many signatures of support. I wonder how many supporters were aware that there will be NO barriers around the ponds. If the ponds are built they will be open and inviting around the clock to wild animals (geese, raccoons, skunks,...) and to humans (waders, wanderers, mischief makers,...) They will also be breeding grounds for mosquitos.

Most concerning to us is that on hot summer days the ponds could be an "attractive nuisance" to young children. A drowning would be rare, but one would be too many. Children have drowned in their own homes with caregivers present.

We oppose spending tax money to CREATE a public safety hazard. We prefer to see the nearly \$500,000 spent for either SAFE open spaces or housing.

Sincerely,

Sue M Rasala
s.rasala@gmail.com

Richard A Rasala
r.rasala@gmail.com

From: "sue rasala" <srasala@gmail.com>
To: aingerson@newtonma.gov, aleary@newtonma.gov
Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2014 1:53:10 PM
Subject: Please attach this email to my email of 2/21/14 opposing the Restoration of Farlow Park .

We live at 285 Tremont St, Newton 02458.

Sue M Rasala
srasala@gmail.com

Richard A Rasala
r.rasala@gmail.com

Thanks,
Sue

Judith & Paul Quain
83 Eldredge St. Newton MA 02458

Feb 23, 2014
To: Newton CPA
From: Paul & Judith Quain
Re: Restoration of Farlow Park Pond

We, as long-time residents of Newton Corner and daily users of Farlow Park, object to the proposed restoration of Farlow Park Pond for the following reasons:

- **Health hazard of run-off of harmful bacteria into water**— Currently, dogs are allowed in the park. As long as this continues, harmful bacteria from animal fecal matter can run into the pond when it rains. Also, a standing body of water with surrounding manicured grass attracts Canadian Geese who become a nuisance and pollute the grass and water with droppings. This will require constant cleanup and supervision.

- **A standing body of water will be a breeding ground for mosquitos**

- **Danger to toddlers**— Drowning can happen very quickly and in less than 1 inch of water. According to a study conducted in 2013 by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death for children between 1 and 4.

- **Leaves and Debris in Pond**

At the last hearing of the Newton Historical Commission, "the friends of Farlow Park" talked rather casually about raking the leaves off the pond once or twice. In our experience, a plethora of leaves and debris will be blown into the proposed pond. This process will continue for a couple of months and one or two 'skimmings' of the pond will not be adequate and will be costly.

- **Supervision of pond and park would be difficult and costly**— One only has to look at the gazebo by the Parks and Recreation building to see how vandalism and a disregard for property is an ongoing problem. One can only imagine what the pond might contain after a night of teenage drinking, not to mention the additional litter. A big question is who and how much will it cost to maintain and supervise this pond area on a daily basis.

- **The pond would eliminate much of the grassy areas that children use to play.**

- **Proposed additional fencing**— This would be unsightly, ruin the spirit of the open space and corrupt the original design of the park. Keeping children out of the park is counter-productive to use of the space.

- **Traffic and parking**— Making the park an attraction (especially for skating) will only increase the already existing parking problems in the neighborhood.

We would like to see a land use study of Farlow Park and how the restoration of the pond will impact people who use the park. We would also like some review of the plan by those who live in the immediate neighborhood.

We have lived by the park for over thirty-seven years and no one has ever queried us regarding this proposal. In our opinion, it is a romantic and unrealistic notion to step back in time and create a park that is unsustainable and a potential hazard for children in our current culture. The population in Newton has more than quadrupled since the park was created in 1883, and to restore the attraction of a pond would only create chaos in this modern age of the car and traffic congestion. Today, cars routinely ignore stop signs at Church and Eldredge Streets and more traffic would only increase the risk to pedestrian safety.

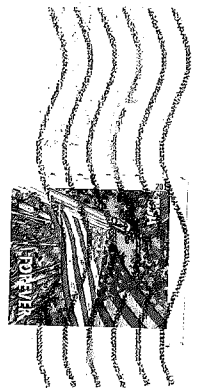
We feel that this proposal to restore Farlow Park is too expensive, unhealthy and disruptive to the quality of life in this neighborhood of Newton Corner.

Sincerely,

Judith Quinn
Paul Quinn

QUAIN
83 ELDREDGE ST
NEWTON, MA 02458

BOSTON MA 021
24 FEB 2014 PM 4 L



ALICE E. INGERSON
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION MANAGER
C/O NEWTON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPT.
CITY HALL
1000 COMMONWEALTH AVE.
NEWTON, MA 02459

02459140088

02459140088

From: "Ann H. Sharp" <annah.sharp@gmail.com>
To: aingerson@newtonma.gov
Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2014 3:53:31 PM
Subject: Farlow Park Restoration proposal

To the CPC,

I agree with the following concerns raised by Sue Rasala:

Thank you for this opportunity to explain our opposition to the restoration of the ponds to Farlow Park.

We are concerned about the safety of children. The proposal states that the ponds will be 18 inches deep. In keeping with the historic landscape plan no barriers, not even prickly bushes, will surround the open water.

Farlow Park is a small neighborhood open space. At one time people may have walked IN the park and enjoyed the fresh air. Today a few people picnic, exercise their pets, or visit in the park, but many more people cross THROUGH the park. Underwood elementary school children and their families, groups of Bigelow Middle School students, and (mostly) adult Boston commuters use the park as a pedestrian route TO a school or bus stop.

The proposal to restore the historic ponds is carefully written and has many signatures of support. I wonder how many supporters were aware that there will be NO barriers around the ponds. If the ponds are built they will be open and inviting around the clock to wild animals (geese, raccoons, skunks,...) and to humans (waders, wanderers, mischief makers,...) They will also be breeding grounds for mosquitos.

Most concerning to us is that on hot summer days the ponds could be an "attractive nuisance" to young children. A drowning would be rare, but one would be too many. Children have drowned in their own homes with caregivers present.

We oppose spending tax money to CREATE a public safety hazard. We prefer to see the nearly \$500,000 spent for either SAFE open spaces or housing.

I hope you will take these concerns to heart.

Sincerely,

Ann Sharp

annah.sharp@gmail.com

36 Fairmont Ave.
Newton, MA 02458

When responding, please be aware that the Massachusetts Secretary of State has determined that most email is public record and therefore cannot be kept confidential.

From: "Arlene Bandes" <arlene@arlenebandes.com>
To: aingerson@newtonma.gov
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 10:55:18 AM
Subject: Proposal for restored ponds at Farlow Park

As a former Underwood teacher and a grandmother of a toddler, I have some serious safety concerns about the proposed restoration of the ponds to Farlow Park.

I love being near water and as a birder, hiker and outdoor enthusiast, my first thought was that the creation of ponds would be great. As I thought about the issue in more depth, I realized that there are serious implications. Besides my safety concerns, I am also worried about the potential of creating breeding pools for mosquitos and congregations of Canada geese.

Thank you for taking my concerns into consideration

Arlene Bandes
225 Cypress Street
Newton Centre, MA

When responding, please be aware that the Massachusetts Secretary of State has determined that most email is public record and therefore cannot be kept confidential.

Maja M. Giles
267 Tremont Street
Newton MA 02458

February 24, 2014

To: Alice E. Ingerson
Community Preservation Program Manager
Re: Proposal for Farlow Park Pond

I am a Newton resident with two young children (7 year old & a 1 year old) who lives two blocks from Underwood Elementary School and Farlow Park. My concerns regarding the restoration of the pond at Farlow Park are numerous. In no particular order of importance they are as follows:

* ***Human health risk issues associated with run off containing harmful bacteria from dog fecal matter.*** Currently Farlow Park functions as a dog walking and play area. As long as it continues to serve this population I am absolutely against a body of water existing in this area where many children and adults will undoubtedly come into contact with the contaminated water.

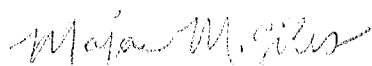
* ***Human and pet health risks associated with inhabiting waterfowl.*** A standing body of water will attract waterfowl which pose considerable concern for resident's health. Brookline Reservoir, Jamaica Pond, the Boston Public Gardens, Greenough Blvd/ Charles River & other local water areas are over populated with waterfowl— Canadian geese in particular. Although there are numerous signs posted that inform visitors to refrain from feeding birds, these public safety rules are most often ignored and seldom enforced. Feeding geese and other waterfowl discourages birds from migrating during colder seasons and encourages year round habitation which leads to over crowding and disease. Goose droppings also make enjoyment of the green areas virtually impossible.

* ***Noise & environmental pollution.*** The pond would most likely become a year round attraction drawing more people than usual to the park. Presuming it became an ice-skating pond during the coldest months, people beyond the local perimeter would conceivably come for recreational enjoyment which would lead to noise pollution and possibly environmental pollution. I don't believe Farlow Park could support the large numbers of visitors that would be attracted to the area. The two trash barrels that are currently at the far end of the Underwood Playground are overflowing almost every day with waste products from snack containers, beverage bottles, and food wrappers.

* ***Shortage of parking leading to traffic congestion and potential pedestrian hazards.*** The newly restored park would attract more visitors than there is available parking. Vehicular congestion would increase noise and environmental pollution and pose an increased risk to pedestrians in an already busy area.

The idea of restoring Farlow Park to its' original design with ornamental pond and bridge is romantic and picturesque but unrealistic given Newton's current population. It may have worked in 1881 but, in my opinion, Farlow Park with a pond cannot sustain our modern lifestyle of snack-toting children, the great number of dog owners, and increased traffic with limited parking.

Sincerely,



MAJA GILES
267 TREMONT ST
NEWTON MA 02458

BOSTON MA 021

24 FEB 2014 PM 2 L



ALICE E. INGERSON
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION
PROGRAM MANAGER
NEWTON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPT.
CITY HALL
1000 COMMONWEALTH AVE.
NEWTON, MA 02459

02459140099

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February 24, 2014

Ms. Alice Ingerson
Newton Community Preservation Program
Planning and Development Department
1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Ms. Ingerson,

I am writing to raise several concerns about the Farlow Park pond and bridge restoration project that is currently pending before the Community Preservation Committee. Although I was unable to attend the public hearing held in January, I have read the current proposal as well as its history since 2005.

My concerns deal with safety and maintenance.

--Safety - Water is a magnet for children and, although the pond would only be 18 inches deep, children certainly can drown in water of that depth. Unlike the Auburndale Park by the Charles River, City Hall pond or the pond in the Newton Cemetery (all shown on the slide show presented during the public hearing) this small body of water would be very close to a school and in a very open area. Children walk home on their own every day from Underwood. Also Eliot Church rents space to both a nursery school and a dance school so families with small children are coming and going frequently. The pond would be very close to the Eliot Church parking lot. Although the slide show said that the findings of Weston and Sampson Engineers was that "we have determined that the restoration of Farlow Pond does not pose undue safety concerns", what does that really mean?

--Maintenance – Who will be responsible (and pay for) the maintenance of the pond and the surrounding area? Again, having a pond in the park would draw more people to the park, especially in the nice weather and, inevitably more trash. The nearby gazebo, although lovely when first built, has been vandalized and is now in disrepair. Without rigorous maintenance I worry that the pond and new bridge could also draw vandals and even become a health hazard.

Although I am not an abutter to Farlow Park, I am a long-time member of Eliot Church so have been in the park many times. I ask that the Committee ensure that issues of safety and maintenance are carefully and fully addressed as this project is considered for funding.

Sincerely,

Susan E. Nason
28 Roosevelt Road
Newton, MA 02459

From: "Steve Carter" <sjkcs48@yahoo.com>
To: aingerson@newtonma.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 12:19:04 AM
Subject: Farlow Park Pond and Bridge - Written Comments

Dear Ms. Ingerson,

Thank you for conducting the January 22, 2014 open meeting and for allowing me and others to provide comments about the Farlow Park Pond and Bridge proposal. I was encouraged to hear CPC members voice many of the same concerns that I have with this project.

Although the proponents provided responses to some of the concerns raised, I was not completely satisfied with the responses. Therefore, I am documenting my remaining concerns.

POND USAGE - The proponents have talked about the possibility for skating on the frozen pond, but no one has addressed whether people will be allowed to wade in the pond in good weather. Although the pond will be only "18 inches deep", this may be enough to attract children and adults as a place to cool off on those hot summer days and nights. Will the City be required to install signs, describing what is and what isn't allowed? Any signage would detract from the beauty of today's park. I am also concerned that the level of late night activity will increase. Will we see more vandalism, like what we have seen with the gazebo?

MAINTENANCE - Although the Parks and Recreation Department has stated that the additional maintenance required could be covered, given that the Friends of Farlow Park has said volunteers would clear debris, the pond and bridge are two more items being added to a long list of resources that the Parks and Recreation Department is asked to maintain. At what point is their operating budget pushed to the limit where long existing resources are neglected as new items are added. It is great to hear that the current Friends of Farlow Park are willing to help with maintenance, but will this organization still exist in 5 or 10 years, and will the future members still offer to help with maintenance, or will the City be responsible for it all?

GEESE - Thankfully, Farlow Park has not attracted geese and we can enjoy using the park without suffering the consequences of the geese. I am concerned that a water source will attract the geese, even with many leashed dogs running around.

NEIGHBORHOOD/PUBLIC SUPPORT - I respect the fact that the proponents submitted a petition with many names in support of the project, but I am concerned that those that signed the petition may not have been provided all of the pertinent project details, based on the wording on the top of each petition page. The petition reads as follows: "I support the proposal to the Community Preservation Committee to bring back the historic pond and bridge to Farlow Park and the construction of a new irrigation system for the Underwood School Playground (the new irrigation system will be fed by well water and save the School Department approximately \$4000 a year in water costs)." What is missing from the petition is that the project is making a "CPA request (for) \$476,780, (with a) total cost (of) \$582,380". Those that signed the petition were told the potential savings, but I am not sure they were told the total cost of the project.

I will also comment that in reviewing the names of those that signed the petition I noticed many names that appear more than once and may have been counted twice.

POND DRAINING - Although I have been following this project for many years, it wasn't until the January 22 meeting did I hear that there are plans to drain the pond twice a year. It may have been stated earlier, but I missed it. I am concerned about the process for draining this much water. Where will the water go? Will it feed into our sewer lines and the City will be charged MWRA fees? I am not an engineer, but if it is drained in a different manner, will abutters need to be concerned that the draining will cause basements to flood?

ORIGINAL POND - I am a firm believer that we should learn from our past. Although I and others have done research, no one seems to know why the city made the decision to drain the pond in the 1950's. This seems like a fundamental question that should be answered, before the City proceeds to spend a significant sum to restore the pond.

I want to thank you again for allowing me to provide my comments about this project. Although I do agree that the proponents have put many hours into this project and on paper it may look like a good thing, I do not think money and resources should be spent on a pond in Farlow Park. Despite being called a "naysayer" at the January 22 meeting, for the sake of due diligence, concerns should be addressed now, before a decision is made regarding the allocation of additional funding.

Sincerely,

Steven Carter
48 Eldredge St.
Newton, MA 02458

617-332-7632

When responding, please be aware that the Massachusetts Secretary of State has determined that most email is public record and therefore cannot be kept confidential.

From: "The Rands" <pwrand@comcast.net>
To: aingerson@newtonma.gov, "Will Rand" <pwrand@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 9:08:32 AM
Subject: Proposal for pond/bridge restoration at Farlow Park

To the CPC Committee,

As a nay-sayer from the previous public hearing on this proposal, I wish to reiterate my opposition to this project.

With a serious need for open space in Newton, I feel that covering up part of a usable grassy area with a pond of dubious value is not the best use of our dollars. The idea of creating a possibly hazardous area requiring unknown amounts of maintenance makes no sense. The ponds were originally done with the park itself nearly twice the size which it now occupies. Underwood School playground has since taken much of the former park space.

The bridge is too expensive; these funds could go toward increasing the amount of subsidized housing in our city.

Respectfully yours,

Patricia G. Rand
17 Belmont St.
Newton Corner, 02458

617 965 5608

When responding, please be aware that the Massachusetts Secretary of State has determined that most email is public record and therefore cannot be kept confidential.

From: Steve Carter [mailto:sjkcs48@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, April 11, 2014 6:38 PM
To: Alice Ingerson for the Community Preservation Committee
Subject: **Farlow Park Pond & Bridge – [Additional] Written Comments**

Dear Ms. Ingerson,

As discussed, I am requesting that this email be included in the pre-meeting packet for the 04/30/14 CPC meeting.

I attended the 03/20/14 CPC meeting which included a working session regarding the Farlow Park Pond & Bridge Project. I was pleased to see that all members insisted that the project proponents develop a multi-year plan for the maintenance of the pond and bridge. Although I would agree that new construction should not require much maintenance for the first few years, but as you know this project is a combination of new construction and restoration of a pond bed that has been covered for 60 years. I understand that the tests performed appear to show that the pond base is solid in spots, however the true condition will not be known until all of the soil is removed from the pond area.

Maintenance costs must also be sufficient to cover unexpected situations, especially when it comes to vandalism. Unfortunately, graffiti and other forms of vandalism is a serious problem, as we can clearly see with the damages to the gazebo on the grounds of the Parks and Recreation Department facility.

At a recent Newton Corner Advisory Committee meeting, the Friends of Farlow Park made a presentation to the committee and interested citizens, requesting that the NCAC allocate CDBG funds for this project. At this meeting I asked whether swimming/wading would be allowed in the pond. The response I received was unclear. I understand that the Parks and Recreation Department has said that this pond will not have a "spray" device, but the cool water may be inviting to humans and animals on hot days. One member of the Friends of Farlow responded to my question by stating that there would be plantings around the border of the pond which would discourage anyone from entering the water. Other members disagreed and said that there were no plans for any plantings along the pond. The response that was agreed upon was that this project would not encourage swimming/wading and it would up to the Parks and Recreation Department to regulate activity in and around the pond. Does this mean that Parks and Recreation will be installing signs and enforcing regulations? Is this department prepared to take on this additional responsibility?

I also asked what the process will be for the once or twice per year drainage of the pond. I was told "there is a main-hole nearby", presumably to allow for drainage as would storm drains. I am not comfortable with that assumption. This "drainage system" probably hasn't been used or even inspected in 60 years. Will there be additional start-up expenses in this regard, or will this also be the responsibility of on-going maintenance?

I trust that you agree that these are important questions that should be addressed prior to approving additional funding.

Sincerely,

Steve Carter
48 Eldredge Street
617-332-7632