

**Junction Village Open Space
Task Force**
Meeting Minutes
April 22, 2021
Online Zoom Video Session

Pursuant to a notice and agenda filed with the Town Clerk, the Planning Board met at 5:00 p.m. on April 22, 2021, and held a virtual online public meeting via <https://zoom.us>.

Members present: Harry Bartlett, Christa Collins, Sue Felshin, Carlene Hempel

Members absent: Robert Hartman

Also present: Peter Lowitt, liaison from the Concord Housing Development Corporation (CHDC); Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning and Land Management for the Town of Concord; Elizabeth Rust, Director, Regional Housing Services Office (RHSO), invited guests, and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order by Carlene Hempel at 5:02 p.m.

Guest speakers from the Concord Museum and Concord Free Public Library discuss the site's historical importance

Ms. Hempel stated the purposes of the meeting: to introduce the Task Force to the invited guests and to begin to understand what the property is and where it comes from, which the invited guests, who are historians, can help the committee with. Ms. Hempel introduced the Task Force members, Ms. Rust, and (in absentia) Ms. Rasmussen to the historians.

Ms. Collins described the Junction Village Open Space site to the invitees. She noted that at a public forum some years prior, walking trails were a popular option. Community gardens were not a top choice and would require raised beds. Other options from the public forum included wildlife overlooks, and fishing access. Passive recreation was the top use identified.

Ms. Rust gave the timeline for the project: in the near term, the Task Force will produce design and cost estimates for open space. CPA funding will be applied for, projected for submission in September to be voted on at the Annual Town Meeting of 2022. [Ms. Rasmussen joined the meeting at 5:14.] Building would start in about a year, and take about a year.

Ms. Hempel introduced the invited historians:

Joel Bohy: An expert on the late 1800s.

Rick Freese:

Anke Voss:

David Wood: Of the Concord Museum.

Ms. Hempel said the Task Force is still looking for a historian of Native American history. Mr.

Wood recommended Shirley Blank.

Mr. Freese told the Task Force about the site's history leading up to the Civil War. The "Camp Massachusetts" encampment on and around the site of the present MCI Concord was the largest military mobilization in the U.S. since the War of 1812, and took place for three days starting on Sept. 7, 1859. Mr. Freeze provided much interesting information and Mr. Wood and Mr. Bohy added some details. The historians and Task Force brainstormed about ways to memorialize the encampment: avoid giving too much detail for the audience, take advantage of the landscape, scatter materials around, use Winslow Homer's illustrations, use the name "Camp Massachusetts", etc.

Ms. Voss spoke about the history of the Concord Reformatory, which opened in 1878. Inmates had the option to work in local businesses, making a direct connection with Concordians. In the 20th century, now as MCI Concord, the prison housed Malcolm X who at that time starting his transformation toward Islam. Later, Harvard University experimented on prisons. The prison has been an important employer in Concord, and has had an effect on housing in and around the prison.

Audience member Pam Rockwell, of 1810 Main St., asked how the "Camp Massachusetts" site was connected to the current Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and Warners Pond and whether interpretation would cross Commonwealth Ave. Mr. Freese noted that further research is required to more accurately located the camp headquarters.

A Task Force member inquired why the specific location was chosen for the prison. Mr. Bohy noted that Concord has a nearby train station as well as a county courthouse. Ms. Rasmussen added that the Charlestown prison was overcrowded and the reformatory branch could bring people to a hotel located across from what is now the superintendent's building; the prison contributed to the growth of West Concord through a need for housing and supplies.

Ellen Quackenbush of 206 Prairie St. said that the West Concord Union Church was the church for prisoners and Damon Mill workers, which the church took great pride in.

It was noted that connections could be widened to the pail factory and a lead pipe factory and possibly earlier manufacturing, the late 19th / early 20th century agricultural reform movement with a connection to the Joseph Derby farm, the 20th century designation of the Assabet River as a Wild and Scenic River of which there are very few in New England, the broader Concord abolitionist movement. Mr. Wood stated that there was a forge in the area, Hammersmith's, around 1665–1670.

Minutes

Due to a miscommunication, minutes were not circulated before the meeting. Approval of minutes was postponed until the following meeting.

Update on the Request for Quote process

Ms. Rust reported that there were no responses, putting the intended timeline in jeopardy. The Task Force brainstormed about more ways to seek out quotes. Ms. Rust will follow up with suggested parties.

Ms. Rasmussen pointed out that due to the delay in hiring a landscape architect, it will not be possible to host a public meeting in June. It was decided to postpone discussion of Task Force members' ideas for the site until the May meeting, by which time a landscape architect will hopefully be on board. Ms. Rasmussen was asked if the Task Force should be considering any design guidelines or Concord branding, in order to relate to other sites. Ms. Rasmussen noted that there as a a concept for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and that it might be possible to use the same palette; signage should follow national park standards for panels (height, etc.). She brought up an OARS panel on the Assabet near the BFRT and some other examples that the Task Force could examine for ideas.

Public Comment

Pam Rockwell asked whether the project would include any parking or boat access. She was answered that there will be no parking and that there may be boat access from the river but that there will not be a boat launch.

Adjournment

The next schedule meeting will take place at 5 p.m. on May 27 on the Town's Zoom channel.

Ms. Collins moved to adjourn. Ms. Felshin seconded and all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Felshin

Attachments

1. Map of the Junction Village site: Junction Village -Open space planning 12.12.17.docx



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Junction Village

Open Space Master Plan

Objective: Complete an Open Space Master Plan for the Junction Village property as detailed and defined in the 2016 Junction Village Open Space Planning Study, ideally by April 2018, through advancing the plans, discussions and agreements of prior efforts.

Scope: The Open Space Master Plan addresses trails, habitat protection and advancement, and access. The Plan includes scope for 6.68 acres of resource area identified for the conservation restriction, as well as the 1.43 of open space often called the 'triangle' or 'meadow'.

The master plan should include a tree inventory, invasive species remediation plan, location and design of trails, meadow, benches, bike racks, and informational signage. It includes any grading required for the paths, and additional vegetation or plantings. A description of the conservation values of the proposed resource area should also be included.

The pedestrian sidewalk and path along the driveway and from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail across the natural meadow to the walking path within the resource area open to the general public.

The master plan would include specifications, estimated costs, phasing recommendations, as appropriate, and a long-term maintenance plan with associated costs.

The Master Plan will provide enough information to secure funding for construction and installation, and to develop a Conservation Restriction. It satisfies the Site Planting Plan requirement in the Comprehensive Permit and includes preparation of a Baseline Documentation Report of the restricted land to be conducted in accordance with MassAudubon's Massachusetts Conservation Restriction Stewardship Manual (March 2006), or as approved by the Division of Natural Resources.

The Master Plan will provide enough information for the next efforts which include securing funding for construction and installation, defining the Conservation Restriction (including a metes and bounds survey), and providing input to the Ground Lease.

While these survey requirements are listed here, they will be considered in a later phase. The property must be surveyed, and the surveyed plan stamped by a Professional Licensed Surveyor depicting the bearings and distances of the property boundary, treeline, meadow and proposed trails, existing emergency access easement on the Department of Corrections prison property, the proposed drainage easement area and the proposed conservation restriction boundary. The plan shall also capture bounds after they have been set. The plan set shall also verify the proposed emergency access and proposed drainage line up with the appropriate easements.

Next Steps: The CHDC will engage the services of a landscape architect with specialties in designing in ecologically sensitive areas, as well as trails, meadows, and recreational facilities to prepare a master plan for the open space uses of the site. The consultant must be familiar with Open Space planning from a municipal perspective, and is ideally someone who has worked in and with Concord in the past. The consultant will work closely with the project stakeholders for development of the plan.

The funds for this effort are provided through previously appropriated CPA funds for Junction Village, hopefully in the \$10k-\$15k range. The residential portion of the project will not receive funding for years, and so the CHDC does not want to over-spend at this stage.