

**Junction Village Open Space  
Task Force  
Meeting Minutes  
May 20, 2021  
Online Zoom Video Session**

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Pursuant to a notice and agenda filed with the Town Clerk, the Junction Village Open Space Task Force met at 5:00 p.m. on May 20, 2021, and held a virtual online public meeting via <https://zoom.us>.

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

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); Linda Escobedo, Select Board liaison; and members of the public.

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

Minutes

The Task Force reviewed the draft minutes for the meeting of March 25, 2021. Ms. Collins moved to accept the minutes as written. Mr. Hartman seconded and all voted in favor. The roll call vote was Mr. Bartlett, yes; Ms. Collins, yes; Ms. Felshin, yes; Mr. Hartman, yes; and Ms. Hempel, yes.

Discussion of RFQ for landscape architect services

Ms. Rust reported that a landscape architect firm has been found, which is PLACES. The Concord Housing Development Corporation voted in favor of contracting this firm. The project lead will be Bill Murray who did earlier work on the site, along with another landscape architect. Ms. Rust advised the Task Force to have ideas ready for PLACES when they come on board in June. Ms. Hempel volunteered to compile ideas based on brainstorming at Task Force meetings and community ideas from the report on a prior public forum.

Debrief from last month's history session about the site and next steps

The Chair noted that she received many enthusiastic comments from people about how great this session with historians was. Discussion included: The existing assisted living facility should be considered when thinking about the project. The project should draw residents in from both the existing and the planned assisted living facilities. It was noted that Nancy Crowley, formerly of the Concord Park assisted living facility, has expressed an interest in helping with Junction Village open space planning. A Task Force member has reached out to Rodnell Collins, a nephew of Malcolm X who lives in the Malcolm X house in Boston. Mr. Collins runs the Malcolm X Foundation and said he may be interested in supporting the commemoration of

Malcolm X's stay in Concord Reformatory, perhaps with funding or fund raising. The Task Force should write them a formal letter. A local physician, Patricia Ruze, is working on laying a brick for every prisoner who has died while at reformatory. Ms. Rasmussen noted that she has spoken with Dr. Ruze and suggested a location near where a rail spur led to the prison, making it easier to see the rail itself while honoring prisoners and improving the visual character of that stretch. While not part of the Junction Village, the Task Force could integrate this into discussions. She also noted that Jeffrey Quick is in charge of facilities oversight with the Department of Corrections and is the the best contact for the DoC.

#### Discussion of possible guidelines/guidance for interpretive panels

Ms. Rasmussen said that there are no official guidelines for signage. She has examples of different kinds of signs. [See attachment.] The purpose and goal of the signs affect the types of signs to use. The cost of signage should be included in the application to the Community Preservation Committee. Discussion included: Site-specific signs would be better but more expensive. In addition to the types of signs just viewed, signs could be granite or bricks. There could be a kiosk, like a trail head kiosk, perhaps close to the river with panel that opens. Brister's Hill has stones with words cut into them. The Task Force could ask the landscape architect firm to bring the Task Force an array of ideas; they may have array of designs from previous projects. The style of the signage should align with Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) signage. The Chair asked Task Force members to take photos of examples that they come across.

#### Discussion of committee members' ideas for the site, intended as guidance and background for the design firm

Discussion generated many ideas:

- Capture our centuries of interesting history with a historical continuum of some kind.
- Capture history with a path through time: start with Native American history, then 18th century (if any on this site), then 19th (pre-Civil War encampment, reformatory), then 20th (MCI Concord, Malcolm X, Mother Theresa), then current uses.
- We could organize displays around culture, history, and nature; cover Malcolm X under culture, cover the pre-Civil War encampment and Native American history, then the river and how the area has been used to talk about the environment.
- The prison dominates the landscape and weighs on how race relations have been part of this place for hundreds of years, including through the prison's effect on the census. Malcolm X's story is a "tougher story" than Martin Luther King, Jr.'s.
- Run toward the more difficult aspects of the area's history rather than away: the history of the prisons as economic engines and their progressive programs like learn-to-work, Malcolm X, Harvard's experimentation on prisoners.
- Concord is well known for writers, but not this area of Concord.
- Capture a continuum from more natural parts of site to more designed parts of the site.
- Incorporate an interpretive panel of natural features, e.g., sumac.
- Ensure accessibility, including that the confluence of the Nashoba Brook and Assabet River is accessible or at least visible.

- Make sure there aren't just accessible paths but also accessible access into a gazebo (if any).
- Nighttime lighting may not be appropriate for an open space site.
- Consider registering the pollinator meadow as a monarch waystation (<https://monarchwatch.org/waystations/>).
- Erect bat boxes to reduce mosquitoes and help bats.
- Capture the Assabet's Wild and Scenic Status, the beaver population, how important rivers are and have been.
- Incorporate public art somewhere, of a type that works with nature.
- Incorporate place-oriented programmable events such as poetry readings, drum circles.
- Incorporate a natural seating area, with old granite, old stumps, or something.
- Incorporate both natural parts and less natural parts to serve people of varied abilities, according to the specifics of the site.
- Incorporate the suggestion of Fowler branch librarian Dorrie Karlin to mount pages of a library book on pedestals for children to read while being active. Expand this idea with a children's book on one side of a path and grownup history on the other side of a path. Include QR codes to allow access to further information.
- Rather than trying to incorporate all interesting facets into the Junction Village site, coordinate with and integrate all the public sites in the immediate area, e.g., the Gerow land and the BFRT, to reduce duplication and to provide a broader and better tourist experience.
- A canoe pullout as previously suggested may be too buggy for effective use.
- Consider flooding and climate change in terms of path washouts, location of any furnishings.
- Would a swing set count as active recreation (which is not allowed according to the terms of the open space), for example in the triangle?
- Incorporate some trees from the tree list for Concord Carlisle High School's freshman tree project, especially trees that make poor street trees like black walnuts and horse chestnuts that drop nuts on people and cars. Because the site is large, there is room for a wide-spreading tree such as a beech tree.
- Plant an allée of disease-resistant American elm trees along a section of path with signage relating it to the American elms that used to line both sides of Commonwealth Ave.

Ms. Rasmussen added that shade should include built elements in addition to trees; the pollinator meadow could have raised bed garden for town residents including assisted living residents; it could be fragrant, have different heights, invite birds to nest; there is a pathway in Europe with photosensitive glass that provides nighttime lighting.

Ms. Rust noted that she is part of the MCI prison outreach organization, which has expanded to all DoC sites over time, and wondered if there could be any partnership with this organization. The Chair asked for contact information to formally invite the organization to a Task Force meeting.

Ms. Escobedo emphasized engaging residents of assisted living and contacting Mr. Quick of the DoC to see if he might suggest other noteworthy historical aspects.

Ms. Rust noted that the landscape architect should be on board for the Task Force's next meeting on June 24. She will be in touch with the DoC contact and will contact the assisted living developer, Grantham Group, to see if they wish to speak with the Task Force.

#### Public Comment

Pam Rockwell of 1810 Main St. commented that mothers with strollers who visit the prison might use the BFRT in the future. They could be a constituent group of visitors who might want to stop in the triangle area. The Task Force should think of the site not just as wheelchair accessible, but accessible and inviting for strollers and really young children. She recommended that the Task Force convey to the landscape architect that signs should be changeable. She noted that it gets dark early in winter so if the site is completely unlit, it will lose a lot of evening value.

#### Adjournment

There was a discussion of whether the next meeting might be held in person. The next scheduled meeting will take place at 5 p.m. on June 24 on the Town's Zoom channel or in person.

Ms. Felshin moved to adjourn. Mr. Hartman seconded and all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sue Felshin

#### Attachments

1. Signage examples.