

**Junction Village Open Space
Task Force
Meeting Minutes
June 24, 2021
Online Zoom Video Session**

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 June 24, 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; William (Bill) Murray of PLACES; Sam Williams of Concord Prison Outreach; 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. Mr. Hartman moved to accept the minutes as written. Mr. Bartlett seconded. The roll call vote was Mr. Bartlett, yes; Ms. Felshin, yes; Mr. Hartman, yes; and Ms. Hempel, yes.

Discussion with PLACES representative William Murray about next steps

The Chair had forwarded to Mr. Murray the list of ideas from the previous meeting's brainstorming. The Task Force members discussed the "triangle" portion of the property, giving Mr. Murray their ideas for possible design of the site. Comments included: pollinator meadow, accessible trail past the meadow and assisted living facility to the river; active uses of the triangle have been formally rejected by the Concord Housing Development Corporation; raised bed plantings, at seating height. Mr. Murray raised the idea of a plaza by the rail trail with granite slabs as seats and interpretive signage as a transition/entry from the rail trail to the site.

The question was raised as to a possible name for the site. Ms. Rasmussen noted that the Town doesn't usually name things for people although there have been cases of naming things in response to a donation. Ms. Rust added that the open space is not part of the assisted living facility's leased land so the Grantham Group has no input on a name.

Mr. Murray explained his process for working with the Task Force: the current step is brainstorming, after which he will present three concepts for the Task Force to discuss, pick and choose from, and/or reject. He welcomed divergent views from Task Force members since it

gives him more directions to go in for different concepts. He needs to know what's acceptable, unacceptable, inconceivable, down slope or inaccessible, etc.; for example, there are not likely to be many opportunities along the river for a trail. He raised the idea of a loop trail, perhaps with a circle inside it and prominent views over the river in at least one location. The work will include clearing invasive plants, which will involve an invasives cleanup plan for entire site irrespective of design concepts. He will make plans for what will be built, then detailed plans to give to builder and the Grantham Group so that their paths connect. If the Grantham Group hasn't planned their paths yet, locations can be suggested to them.

The Task Force discussed the nature of paths. Mr. Murray advocated for paved paths as they are cheaper to maintain and safer for strollers, etc. He advised against stone dust which requires a lot of maintenance. Ms. Rasmussen noted that paths must be at least 5 feet wide to make it possible to plow in winter. A Task Force member suggested making the primary path wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass. Mr. Murray said we would contact the Department of Public Works to find out the minimum turning radius for plowing.

The Chair summarized the previous brainstorming regarding interpretive panels: Task Force members all want to acknowledge three things: 1. The history as a mustering site just before the Civil War, 2. The reformatory and prison as economic engines for the community, 3. The wild and scenic river, the Nashoba Brook, and the natural elements of the site.

[Ms. Collins joined the meeting at 5:33.]

Mr. Murray asked about structures. He considers pavilions to be somewhat out of place in natural settings and notes that they collect graffiti and require maintenance; he prefers stone which is natural and lasts. He noted that Grantham is likely to have their own gazebo.

More brainstorming brought up a sitting area by the pine grove, bike stands, parking, shade trees, a view to the river, a ring of granite blocks for seating. Ms. Rasmussen suggested bike stands at the north and south ends of the site; because of topography and wetlands, they would have to be accessed via the Grantham driveway off Winthrop Street. There is no place on the site for parking.

The Chair invited other attendees to add ideas. Mr. Williams echoed the three themes mentioned earlier: Civil War-related history, the reformatory / social justice, and the natural theme, and also to reflect the town of Concord as a whole.

Brainstorming continued: temporary art exhibits, a story or poetry walk that can be permanent or interchanged over time. Possible transitions into the site: a pergola, a narrow space that opens up, or walls. Interpretive panels could tie the site to others around town. Ms. Rasmussen suggested that a panel could replicate the outline of tents in metal, at the historical location of encampment fires. Signage as art. Signage toward the river could be more natural in form. There are many artifacts from the Civil War mustering site, including maps, that local historians are willing to share and that could be reproduced for interpretive signage. No formal path down to the river. Perhaps a place for boaters to tie up but there may not be a good landing spot, the current is a little stiff, and there may be better places not on the Junction Village Open Space site.

Mr. Murray inquired about the budget. There is no set budget and funds will have to be acquired through the Community Preservation Committee or other Town funds, and possibly some fund-raising. Implementation could be carried out in phases.

The Chair reported on a meeting with Jeffrey Quick of the Department of Correction. The DoC will want a fence, probably a continuous fence, from the edge of their property all the way to the river to keep people off the path that goes along river past their solar field to the prison. They noted no other restrictions.

The Chair inquired as to next steps. Mr. Murray invited Task Force members to email him with additional ideas including pictures. He will come back to the Task Force with concepts.

Guest speaker Sam Williams of Concord Prison Outreach

Mr. Williams is the new executive director of Concord Prison Outreach (CPO). He spoke with the Task Force on the social justice angle of the site and Unitarian Universalist connections to the prison. He explained that CPO has existed for over 50 years, partnering with dozens of faith-based organizations and MCI Concord. He noted the history of the reformatory. Malcolm X spent some time in the prison from 1947–8 and was involved in prison education programs. In his later life he was deeply interested in social justice, reexamining the social dynamics of the 1960s, and what it means to treat people fairly. Mr. Williams finds that Concord has a deep interest in social justice, broader than only for prison reform. He would be interested in a Junction Village Open Space site that would remind people who visit of what the land represents. He described the “(un)seen” exhibit on display at ConcordArt from June 17 to August 15, including storytelling, photography, and imaging, as an example of interpretation that could inform interpretive signage for the Junction Village site: It includes images of landscapes, prisons across the country, and portraits of “forgotten” people, and the artist uses technology and media to tell stories in a modern way. He compared the cemetery adjacent to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail with 212 prisoners buried there, marked only by numbers, no names, as another example of “unseen” people and noted that someone added names and American flags to a few stones, telling a story of value of social justice, democracy, and liberation that resonates with why Concord is Concord.

Ms. Rasmussen asked whether it would be beneficial for the Task Force to reach out to families of prisoners who might come out and walk through the site—whether they might wish to give input on how they might like to use the site or have it interpreted for others. Mr. Williams noted that it would be challenging to contact families since their information is private.

A Task Force member asked whether there are any programs that might allow prisoners to contribute to the site, for example, metalwork or gardening. Mr. Williams said he could check on current programs.

Public Comment

There was no additional public comment.

Adjournment

The next scheduled meeting will take place at 5 p.m. on July 22 on the Town's Zoom channel or in person.

Mr. Hartman moved to adjourn. Ms. Collins seconded and all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Felshin