

April 10th meeting of Blair Square Committee

Present: Kevin Conley, Shaw Lively, Peter Barbieri, Martha Ellis, Jamie Errickson, Mark Ahronian, Gretchen Prieve

Guests Reagan Harrold ? from Beals and Thomas, Inge Daniels landscape architect and consultant

Absent: Walter McGrath, Herb Brockert

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 PM .

The purpose of the meeting was to report back on feedback from various interested parties on the conceptual design presented at the last meeting by Inge Daniels.

Comments from Mark Ahronian regarding Selectman input.

Mark relayed input from the previously elected Selectboard (Jay Marsden, Kevin Conley and Mark). They recommend that any Veterans Memorial continue to be centrally located in front of Town Hall. Their view was that Blair Square evolves to be the Town Commons green space and not dedicated to any one group. Their recommendation is that the proposed drawing of a memorial could be accommodated in front of Town Hall and that a flagpole would be appropriate for Blair Square .

Mark's comment on the concept is to maximize open space for gathering and potentially consider relocating the trail to one side or the other to help add to that.

Kevin Connolly reported on feedback from Chief Cassidy, Chief Stone and DPW Head Shawn Reese .
His full notes are included as an attachment.

Their suggestions were mainly around safety considerations of sight lines, bollards, curbing, signage.

Specific additional comments from Shawn Reese included there would be no problem with lawn maintenance in the section from Central to Exchange St, and he offered the services of his crews to remove trees, brush and other debris to help create the open space.

Peter Barbieri shared some economic development ideas.

One is to ensure that kiosk/signage highlight the merchants and services available throughout downtown to direct people entering Holliston through the trail .

He mentioned the success of the Ashland Corner Park weekend events and noted the need for water and electric to be extended through the green space to support that.

He reiterated his strong support for a structure containing bathrooms and noted that he had a developer who would donate a caboose and other donated services for septic to support that.

This generated extended discussion on how to support bathrooms. There are many ideas and suggestions to be worked out. They range from temporary Porta Johns to support larger events, seasonal Porta Johns in line with those placed at other park locations, to a permanent structure.

Concerns regarding a permanent structure included maintenance, safety and monitoring, and overall fit with the design and use concept. Chairman Errickson related the Natick experience that they are no longer building bathrooms at their parks because it is a constant challenge to clean and maintain them. He also noted there may be issues digging into the abandoned rail bed of contamination and suitability.

Gretchen Prieve shared feedback from the Friends of Holliston Trails 501C3 organization.

they have concerns over permanent or even seasonal bathroom structures in the northern end of the park , preferring it to be more open . Along those lines they are cautious on how much hard scape would be added there, as well as the amount of tree cutting and clearing , preferring a more natural feel aligned with the rest of the trail.

Martha from Holliston Trails Committee shared their request for a shade and seating structure and presented photos of options. There is a concern that the present gazebo is not included in the new concept as they feel there is a need for sheltered seating.

Shaw Lively representing the Parks and Recreation Commission summarized discussion held by the commission on April 3rd. The commission is generally very favorable to the plan and the concept. Significant concerns were registered on:

1. Daily and seasonal maintenance of the grounds including mowing, trimming, watering and weeding plantings, and trash. There are challenges today accomplishing that at the existing parks facilities with current town resources available for that.
2. The commission believes there is a need for bathrooms but has serious concerns regarding erecting a permanent structure given the challenges experienced today with permanent bathroom structures at Stoddard and goodwill. These include daily cleaning, vandalism and harboring illegal activities, daily opening and closing, and in this location visual aesthetic concerns.

Reagan Harrold representing Beals and Thomas related that she has been aware of this project for a number of years and did some early work years ago. She also shared an annotated satellite photo of the proposed project area with elevations and current structures. A PDF is attached. Beals and Thomas has committed to supporting this project pro bono through further refinement from concept to final design.

There was some group brainstorming on ways to tie the Square and Casey's Crossing property more into the history of the town including the legacy of the footwear production, the importance of the train station and the train to commerce in Holliston .

Key next steps were identified :

It was felt that the discussion on bathrooms needed to be escalated to the Selectboard . Kevin Conley will seek agenda time at an upcoming meeting for that discussion.

With the selectman's perspective shared by Mark Ahronian it was felt that the coordination with the veterans on memorial sites needed to be formalized . The suggestion was a separate discussion with the Selectboard/veterans representatives so they could share their current views and consensus could be reached .

A date for the next meeting was not chosen pending the outcome of the above two discussions that will affect design

The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 PM

Attcahmenst:

PDF – Beals and Thomas Site drawing overlay

Kevin Conley notes from Chief Stone, Chief Connolly, and DPW