

**Junction Village Open Space
Task Force**
Meeting Minutes
March 24, 2022
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 March 24, 2022, and held a virtual online public meeting via <https://zoom.us>.

Members present: Harry Bartlett, Christa Collins, Sue Felshin (clerk), Carlene Hempel (chair), Steve Irza.

Also present: William Murray, PLACES Associates; Elizabeth Rust, Director, Regional Housing Services Office (RHSO); Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning and Land Management for the Town of Concord.

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Hempel at 5:04 p.m.

Minutes:

On a motion made by Ms. Felshin and seconded by Mr. Bartlett, the minutes of Feb. 10, 2022, were unanimously approved as amended, by a roll call vote.

Recap of FinCom hearing:

The Chair reported that the Finance Committee was generally receptive to the Junction Village open space proposal, although one member questioned the value of “another” park in addition to the Gerow land. [Mr. Murray joined the meeting at 5:07pm.] When asked the anticipated full cost of developing the Junction Village land as open space across all years, the Chair provided the then-current estimate of \$1.5 million, which the FinCom seemed to think was a large ask.

Mr. Murray has since provided the Task Force with an updated figure of \$728,000. He cautioned the Task Force that the updated number is based on 2021 estimates and construction costs are rising; he suggested it would be prudent to estimate “under a million”. Ms. Rust commented that it is widely known that there is currently instability in the construction market currently.

Task Force members inquired why the cost has reduced so substantially. Mr. Murray answered that the story walk has been removed although directional and interpretive signs are still included, but the primary driver of the reduced estimate is the simplified plan, with much reduced pavement, fewer side trails, fewer benches, smaller overlooks, and less imported materials. The Chair will draft a letter to send to the FinCom regarding the reduced cost estimate and the reason for the change and will send the draft to Task Force members for review with any comments to be shared only with the Chair. The Task Force discussed sources for the total budget. In addition to requesting money from the CPC in future years, the Task Force could

write grant applications and seek private funding. [Ms. Rasmussen joined the meeting at 5:15pm.]

Ms. Rust noted that FinCom may discuss the project and vote on a recommendation on Thursday, March 31, so a letter to the FinCom must go out quickly to be received in time.

It was noted that private fundraising doesn't have to be spent within a particular time frame. The Task Force could wait until the plan is more developed to raise money. Mr. Irza volunteered to put together a budget that could be presented to private foundations. Ms. Rasmussen noted that this project is unusual because the land will be owned by Concord Housing Development Corporation, not the Town; municipalities can't seek certain grants but these restrictions may not operate in this case. The Chair will give an estimate of \$1 million in her letter to the FinCom.

A Task Force member asked why the amount for invasive species removal is reduced from \$45K to \$29K in the budget. Mr. Murray answered that the first year's cost will be substantially paid for by the Grantham Group. It was suggested to include the total figure for all three years in the budget and to list the in-kind donation separately so that the in-kind donation is visibly recorded.

The Task Force turned to discussing the design for the open space. A Task Force member recommended considering the purpose of the open space when considering how to allocate the budget, how the community relates to the open space, the history of the space, and how to support people on prison property; the area is fairly industrial with a natural appeal which is less important in comparison to community significance, and the programming of the space shouldn't be undervalued in comparison to the natural aspect. Other members noted community support for removing invasives and for the natural significance of the space. Ms. Rasmussen noted that the prison/reformatory goal to turn lives around, and since a habitat is being restored as well, the project can be interpreted as "restorative for all", i.e., restorative justice, and restoring nature by removing invasives and restoring habitat. A Task Force member suggested that it might be appropriate to name the area Restorative Park. Another commented that a lot of Task Force work to date has been about the budget and the natural work but the Task Force needs to keep stories and community in mind. Another agreed but noted that some other constituencies care about nature first. A Task Force member noted that their personal interest is primarily in the aspect of open space protection.

Planning for upcoming site walk on Saturday, March 24:

The Chair noted that Natural Resource Commission members have been invited to the upcoming site walk. She reported that the river section was flagged the previous week to show the proposed path around the entire site including two overlooks.

The Chair asked who will attend the site walk on behalf of the Task Force and collected responses. The Chair will attend, Mr. Bartlett, Mr. Irza, Ms. Felshin, possibly Mr. Murray; Ms. Rasmussen is unable to attend. The Task Force discussed the target audience; the site walk was arranged for the sake of the NRC but will be a public meeting and anyone can attend; however, the site walk has not been broadly publicized. Another site walk could be held if there turned out

to be public interest in it. The Chair will notify the FinCom about the site walk and will also notify community members who have previously expressed an interest in a site walk. She requested a map or handout. Mr. Murray will send a file and said the minimal readable printout is 11x17". Ms. Rust offered to print copies.

Planning for April 6 public forum:

The Chair described the plan: Mr. Murray will present the new concept plan. Everyone will be fluent with the revised budget numbers. The public is likely to be interested in a final list of what species will be planted but such decisions aren't finalized in a concept plan. The Task Force will note that the path and lookouts have been moved back from river. After the site walk, Task Force members will have a better idea about the view of the river from the path and the overlooks. She raised the question of whether a slide presentation should be prepared. Ms. Rasmussen suggested slides of the refined plan, and perhaps some photos from the site walk, which should preferably be photos taken with a real camera rather than just a phone for the sake of image quality. Mr. Murray noted that he plans to emphasize compliance, permits, pollinator health, natural materials, stormwater, and habitat protection, all features that will interest the NRC, and he will also go over the more people-oriented aspects for the meadow.

The Chair requested an update on the status of the assisted living facility project. Ms. Rust reported that the project is on hold while the Grantham Group tries to close their financing gap of some millions of dollars. They will need a bridge loan between construction and occupancy. They have pushed their profit off into the operations stage, which demonstrates that they're committed to the project. If people ask about the project at the Task Force's public forum, the Task Force can say they're working on their financing, and when this is ready, it will take 6-9 months to get a building permit. It would be impractical to begin work on the open space before the assisted living project commences. If it gets delayed, the CPC can hold any funds voted by the Town until the assisted living project is ready to start. In the unlikely case the assisted living project were to be cancelled, CPC funds would be returned to the CPC. The Grantham Group must do some delineating work before work on the open space can begin, plus if the assisted living project failed, the Town probably wouldn't want to go ahead with the open space project. Also, the open space work should take advantage of the Grantham earth moving machinery being on site.

Adjournment:

Upon a motion made by Ms. Felshin and seconded by Mr. Irza, the Task Force adjourned at 5:52 pm with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Felshin (clerk)