



TOWN OF CONCORD
Office of the Town Manager
22 Monument Square – Concord, MA 01742
www.concordma.gov – (978) 318-3000

Kate Hodges, Deputy Town Manager
khodges@concordma.gov
Ryan Kane, Recreation Director
rkane@concordma.gov
Ryan Orr, Facilities Director
rorr@concordma.gov

August 4, 2020

GEROW PARK – COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Town of Concord, through the offices of the Town Manager, Recreation and Facilities & Parks held a public meeting on July 28, 2020 via zoom for interested members of the community. The goals for the meeting included the ability to provide a historical synopsis of the project, including various iterations of design and focus and to update the community on what the team believes to be the final design for Phases I and II (a) slated to commence in the Fall of 2020. Additionally, an update on the Warner's Pond dredging project was also provided to the group from the Division of Natural Resources (DNR).

The meeting began at 7 pm and was recorded for reference and broadcasting on Minuteman Media Network (MMN).

Town Staff Presenting Included:

Kate Hodges, Deputy Town Manager
Ryan Kane, Recreation Director
Ryan Orr, Facilities Director
Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning and Land Management
Delia Kaye, Natural Resources Director

I. TIMELINE REVIEW

- A. July 2018: Closed on property purchase, deed and title recorded.
- B. August 28, 2018: Master Planning Commences; Public Forum #1, Initial Discussion Image Revealed.
 - Forum was conducted at the site; the Gerow home was still present at the time. The team used the home as staging area, including restrooms for those in attendance. Many members of the Town's Hosing groups toured the home at the same time.
 - The meeting had over 100 people in attendance and was led by the Town's project manager, Ron Hedrick from Greenman Peterson Inc. (GPI).
 - An initial discussion plan was revealed which focused on a way to get into the property and how to navigate the existing driveway slope and sharp corners from Commonwealth Ave. (This is before the commitment to subdivide the lot for future affordable housing) The idea was to enter into the existing driveway and continue down a vegetative path into the main park. However, the existing conditions showed a steep and narrow gravel road and the need to build up the roadway with additional fill to ensure proper drainage and safety upon exiting, which was paramount.
 - In initial plan called for a robust parking plan and turnaround area along the northern side, adjacent to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT).
 - Other initial amenities included: a small bathing beach with sandy shore area, a pavilion or band shell area, woodland blazed trails and multiple ADA walkways. In order to bring people to the water's edge, the team proposed an intricate fishing pier on the



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eastern shore and a canoe/kayak launch on the western edge. The plan was to have an overwater boardwalk connecting the two. The bathing beach was included in the initial iteration in order to allow GPI to hire the ESS group, who were hired by and partnered with the DNR for work related to the Warner's Pond dredging study. We asked ESS to



provide a preliminary cost analysis for potential dredging relative to the bathing area proposed, assuming that this may be the most expensive part of the project.

C. August 2018 – December 2018: Additional Information Sessions & Forums Held.

- A total of 3 on-site meetings and 2 additional forums at the Town House.
- Majority of participants were dissatisfied with the amount of parking, asphalt and the park's perceived intrusion into the wooded areas. The team knew that a revision was needed that had the minimum amount of parking allowable by the traffic study, reduced the impacts on the woodland areas and included a large green space/meadow area for quiet enjoyment and reflection.
- Bicycle and Vehicle traffic was observed and that data was used for the new parking numbers we would submit for our permit
- The idea of a pavilion and the composting toilet remained and we began to look at the soil samples and town/state regulations relative to toilets, water and electrical needs.



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- It was determined that we would need a 1.5” water line into the restroom area; the line could be taken from the street’s edge and run via conduit under the newly proposed driveway.

D. December 2018 – January 2019: Community Feedback via Online Survey

- An online survey consisting of 5 pointed questions and one ‘additional comments’ box was released in December of 2018. Printed copies of the survey were placed at Harvey Wheeler, each of the elementary schools, the Town House, Beede Center and Hunt Gym. Links to the survey were posted in the Town Manager’s Report, on social media and in/on the Town’s website.
- 2,872 individual responses (meaning 2,872 separate IP addresses) were received; 730 paper/emailed responses were received. A total of 3,602 responses were collected.

E. January 2019: Survey Analysis

- Q1 – What are the most desirable amenities wanted?
 - Blazed trails for walking (76%)
 - Picnic Areas, covered and uncovered (70%)
 - Canoe/Kayak launch (70%)
 - Restroom Facility (65%)
 - Boardwalk along shore’s edge (55%)
- Q2 – Types of Trails?
 - Slightly modified trails free of brush & debris (80%)
- Q3 – Interest in Swimming?
 - Interested in developing if *minimal* economic impact (72%)
 - Interested and would *support increased* taxes to do so (15%)
- Q4 – What is the primary reason you will visit Gerow?
 - Trail exploration and nature enjoyment (87%)
 - Quiet Relaxation (70%)
 - Use of boardwalk/boating (65%)
- Q5 – Swimming if cost is \$2M + (based on ESS’ estimate)?
 - No longer interested (52%)
 - Interested, but only if my household tax bill remains the same (23%)
 - Very interested and would support increased taxes (12%)
- Additional Comments included the following themes:
 - ADA Accessibility, trails and walkways, boating access
 - Importance of accessing the water’s edge including fishing and boating access
 - Dog Areas – many said don’t allow dogs, an equal number asked that we do
 - Children’s play equipment with fencing (keep dogs out)
 - More parking
 - Area for recreation programs, warming shelter for winter activities



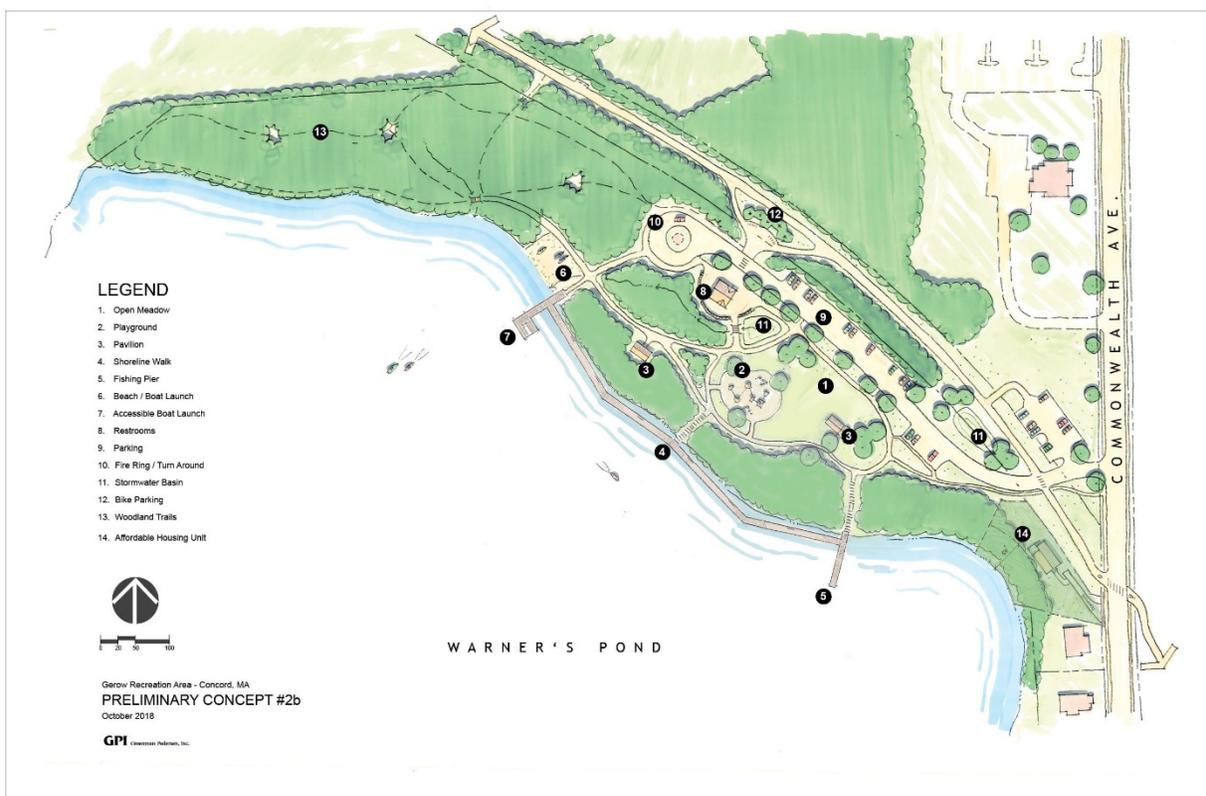
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- Barn area or pavilion for rental and family gatherings

F. February 2019: Updated Plan Revealed & House Lot Subdivided

- Updated plan reduced parking, eliminated parking turnaround, moved bathroom and shade structures together and further into the park creating a meadow and open space in the park's center.
- Reposition the driveway; Agreement for crossover of State land (BFRT) in order to reposition the driveway so house lot could be subdivided.
- Subdivided lot of approximately ¼ acre 'gifted' to the Concord Housing Authority.



G. Spring 2019 : Presentation to SB, CPC, Staff Review

- Redefined path and layout, site grading, beach/canoe launch area, restroom.
- Better defined relationship of piers to water; discontinued boardwalk as DNR stated that the Natural Resources Commission would not permit it.
- Ensure ADA pathways were compliant; presented to Disability Committee for feedback.

H. Summer 2019 – Fall 2019: Shift from Master Plan to Phase I design (April 2019)

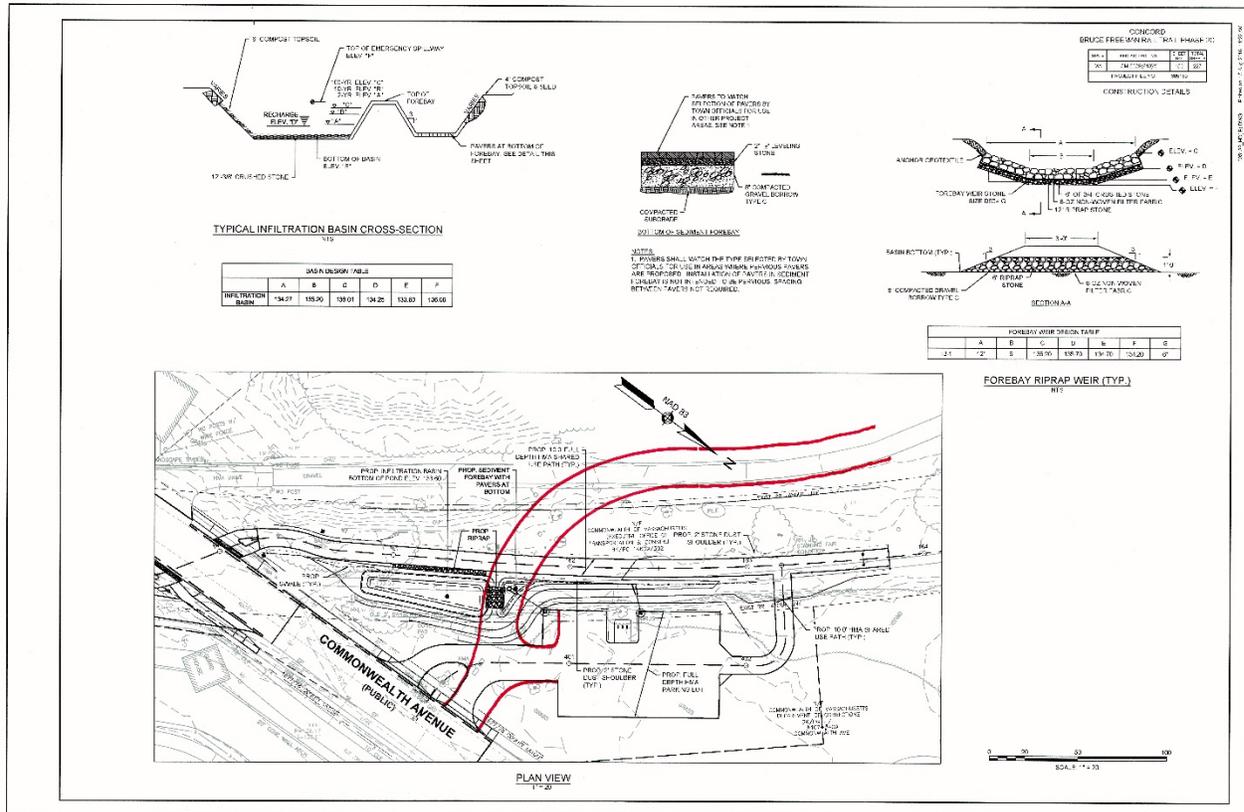
- Site Analysis & Composting Toilet Facility Design
- Collected and analyzed soil samples
- Conducted wetland flagging, installed site markers and areas of delineation



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- Began storm water management analysis and parking/traffic study conclusion
- Composting toilet design to review by Board of Health; plumbing variance sought from State
- ROW Agreement signed between State DOT and Town of Concord for driveway crossover.



I. February 28, 2020: Formal Town Staff Review

- Plumbing variance not granted; Board of Health order to have 75% septic for hand washing and gray water system. Public Health Director needs to have a leach field between 60%-75% capacity, leach field needs to be 50' – 75' from edge of wetlands; all Title 5 requirements must be met. Plumbing code (CMR), Title 248-10, 2017
 - Cost of 75% septic system estimated at +/- \$65K
 - Compost Toilet Units +/- \$60K
 - Cost of 100% septic system +/- \$75K-\$80K
- Full septic determined to be most cost effective solution rather than \$105K on a 75% system and composting units vs. \$80K for a fully functioning system.
- Savings of approximately \$60K-\$70K depending on permitting and inflation.



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- Title 5 (310 CMR 15.289 (3)(a)(3)) was reviewed and site engineers determined that doing both was cost prohibitive and would ultimately increase the amount of land and trees which would need clearing.

J. May 8, 2020: NOI Hearing with NRC (ongoing); 90% Construction Plans Outlined



II. Warner's Pond Dredging Update

Delia Kaye, Natural Resources Director reviewed the Warner's Pond Watershed Management Plan and the Dredging Study and Feasibility Analysis that was conducted by ESS Group over the past several years.

The plan highlights included:

- The idea of limited dredging to improve ecological health and recreational opportunities was identified in the 2012 Watershed Management Plan.
- A Dredging Feasibility Study to undertake sediment testing, develop conceptual dredging plans, conceptual plans to upgrade the Commonwealth boat launch and parking area, and prepare cost estimates was completed in 2018
- Since 1980, the Pond has filled in dramatically and the open water for boating and fishing has diminished greatly.
- 95% of the Pond's watershed is outside of Concord's Town limits; reducing nutrient and sediment loading (which have led to the pond's condition) is challenging.
- The volume of water within the Pond cycles every 24-hours, which makes methods of nutrient and sediment control other than dredging unlikely to succeed.



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- Two dredge areas were identified by ESS group to improve Pond health and recreational opportunities; it is cost prohibitive to dredge the entire Pond.
- Overall, in addition to the cost of a beach area, it is thought that swimming even after dredging would not be pleasant because the most of the Pond will still have a mucky bottom.
- The overall dredging is estimated to cost approximately \$2.5 M (including improvements to the Warner’s Pond boat launch and parking area off Commonwealth Avenue) and will be a mix of Capital and CPC funding over a period of three years, FY21 is year 2 of funding.

A. Dredging Areas: once complete, the overall health of the Pond ecosystem is expected to be improved for 50+ years.



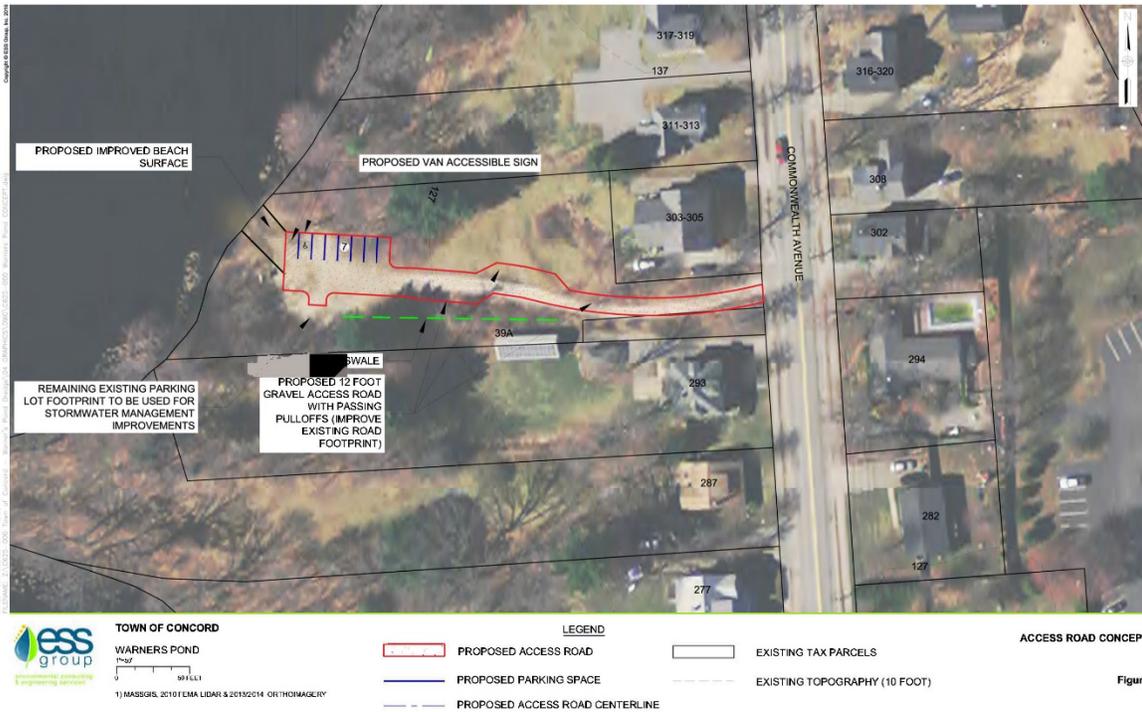


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B. Commonwealth Ave. Public Boat Launch Improvements

- Widen roadway
- Dedicated parking, including ADA spots
- Signage and better, more formalized, access to the pond area



III. FINANCIAL INFORMATION, APPROPRIATIONS AND EXPENSES TO DATE

An overview of the Gerow Park funding was provided to the group regarding past and present funds, which have either been expended or allocated to the project.

PURPOSE	FY19	FY20	FY20 <i>(revised)</i>	FY21	FY21 <i>(revised)</i>
Acquisition*					
Capital	\$2.5 M				
CPC	\$500,000				
Phase I Design & Construction					
Capital		\$600,000**	\$1.2 M		
CPC		\$200,000	\$200,000		
Phase I Construction					
Capital				\$600,000	\$ 0
CPC				\$500,000	\$500,000



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**\$3M was allocated for the acquisition of the property via Articles 24 and 25, ATM 2018. The articles, combined, were for ‘the purchase of the property and to make improvements to allow for public access and master planning efforts.’ The Town closed on the property 7/15/18 for \$2.7 M; the remaining \$300,000 was used to complete: the required phase I environment study, property surveys and wetland flagging, install boundary markers, begin the park master plan and recycle the existing home and home utilities on site.*

***Article 7, ATM 2019 allocated \$1.4 M to “Park Improvements.” It was initially thought that \$600,000 would be allocated to both the Gerow and White Pond projects as they were to commence on or about 7/1/00 and run concurrently. However, the COVID-19 Pandemic has changed the Town’s focus and it was determined that the \$600,000 previously allocated to the White Pond project would be allocated to Gerow since that project was already underway. The White Pond project, while still moving forward, will be delayed for a period of nine to twelve months pending Town Meeting appropriations in FY21 and FY22. The \$600,000 appropriated to the Gerow project in the original ATM 2020 (FY21) budget has since been reduced to \$0.*

IV. Other Staff Comments

Ryan Kane, Recreation Director and Ryan Orr, Facilities Director gave a brief synopsis of their programming, maintenance and landscaping plans. Funding to perform both routine and preventative maintenance has been captured in the FY21 Park and Playground Budget which is overseen by the Deputy Town Manager and the Facilities Director.

V. Conclusion

A number of comments and questions from the general public and members of certain boards and committees were asked and answered. Questions surrounding the number of proposed parking spaces in the park, specifically, was discussed at length. Town staff remarked that they need to adhere to the traffic study data and have the least amount of parking that was deemed acceptable by both the Town entities and the consultant hired to spearhead the permitting of the project.

The meeting concluded at 8:40 PM.