

## I. OVERVIEW

### A. PURPOSE OF THE DISCUSSION & BACKGROUND

This memo presents the draft plan and the information that led to its creation for the Selectboard's consideration. Prior to completing work on the Memorial Park Master Plan, BRPD and the Stowe Department of Parks and Recreation want to review the draft site plan with the Selectboard to gather your comments and get your agreement that the plan is progressing in a way that is acceptable to the Selectboard, with conditions or suggestions if needed, before completing work on the project.

The attached table highlights each of the important elements of the site plan and indicates why they are included in the plan and why they are located as they are within the park. Site plans for the master plan, as presented in phases, are also attached.

### B. PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) INPUT

The PAC met five times to review over ten different alternate site plan layouts; each one brought the PAC closer to consensus on a preferred layout. At the last meeting, those members of the PAC that were present (all but two members) unanimously endorsed the three phase site plan that is presented in this memo.

### C. DEED RESTRICTIONS

During the course of reviewing and researching existing information on Memorial Park, several individuals have mentioned that there are existing deed restrictions on the use of Memorial Park. Our research and that of the Town Manager's office, which has included reviewing the existing deeds for the park land, has not found evidence of any deed restrictions that would limit or not allow the future use of the park as envisioned in this site plan.

### D. PHASING

The PAC recommended during its discussion of the various alternatives that the final site plan be presented as a phased development. They thought that a phased plan could be more readily understood and embraced by the community. The phasing would show how the overall plan would evolve over time, with the park at each phase operating as an integrated whole while it evolved into the next phase.

Each phase addresses certain needs of the community. The first phase includes issues that are most pressing and should be addressed soonest, such as Jackson Arena, user safety, the development of a skateboard park, and access to the open, "back" area of the park. The second phase addresses secondary issues that are still important but not quite as critical, such as the future of the David Gale Recreation Center, the reconstruction of existing, aging park facilities and the future of the Old Congregational Church.. The Third phase addresses potential future needs, those that are currently discussed as being advantageous, but for which there is no data that conclusively documents the

need for the facility, even though there is a strong desire for them and the land set aside for their use.

## II. INFLUENCES ON THE PLAN

### A. Existing Permits

The Town currently has a local Development Review Board (DRB) permit and an Act 250 permit to construct a new ice arena in the general location of the existing Jackson Arena. These existing permits have great value and should not be discarded lightly. BRPD thinks that obtaining new permits to construct an ice arena elsewhere, either in or outside of Memorial Park, would cost the Town in excess of \$100,000, with no guarantee that they could be obtained without additional conditions that could require the expenditure of many more tax dollars. Consequently, BRPD has placed great weight on the use of the existing permits.

Even so, PAC members have indicated that there could be some reduction in the support facilities in the proposed new ice arena that could either reduce the total square footage or overall construction costs of the structure that could be accommodated within the limits of the existing permit.

Adding additional structures into the park that will increase the overall indoor square footage of space, the overall square footage of impervious surface in the park, or the average number of vehicles that enter the park on a daily basis or during a peak hour, would require a new permit from the Town's DRB and the Act 250 Board. Thus, BRPD believes that it would not be prudent to pursue a second large building in park until the first new building allowed by the existing permits is in place.

### B. EXISTING USES

Most of the existing uses in Memorial Park each appear to be well used by Stowe residents and/or visitors. These facilities have been included in the Master Plan. Those that have not been used as much by the community as a whole or were strongly recommended to be removed during the initial work on the park program, such as the baseball field, have not been included in the final phases of the plan. They have, however, been included in early phases, so that there is time to consider the relocation of the facilities further and to plan for financing and relocation details if the relocation recommendation is eventually implemented.

### C. COMMUNITY NEEDS

BRPD gauged community needs and desires for recreational facilities by:

- The use of existing facilities,
- The Town voting record on previous issues that related to recreation or Memorial Park, and
- Selectboard decisions.

BRPD kept these factors in mind as it worked with the community to develop the park program.

## D. NATURAL RESOURCES

BRPD incorporated the information in the Natural resource inventory prepared for Memorial Park by Lamoureux & Dickinson into all of the base plans used during the development of both the park program and the site plans.

## E. NON-SEQUENTIAL ACTIONS

As much as possible, BRPD and the Stowe Parks and Recreation Department wanted the master plan to include as many non-sequential actions as possible. The goal was to have as many different portions of the master plan as possible be capable of proceeding independently of other actions, so that if one action could not be accomplished, it wouldn't hold up the implementation of other elements of the plan.

## III. PHASE 1

### A. ELEMENTS

Phase 1 includes the following park elements:

- A new ice arena as permitted, with minor modifications, by the Town current permits;
- The combination of the existing Little League and high school softball field in the location of the existing softball field and possible addition of field lights;
- A new skateboard park;
- A new sand volleyball court;
- New crosswalks and sidewalks at the existing entrance to the park and along the interior drive designed to improve pedestrian mobility
- Parking lot and vehicular circulation upgrades;
- A new picnic area;
- An expanded memorial garden;
- Stream and stream bank restoration along Simmons Brook;
- New walking trails;
- New trees and other plantings;
- Consolidation of the maintenance area; and
- Improved public access to the rear of the park.

The Phase 1 plan shows the location of these elements within the park and Table 1 provides background information on the reasons why these elements are included in the park and why they are located as they are.

### B. ISSUES

1. Jackson Arena: The existing Jackson Arena requires approximately \$2 million in repairs to allow it to continue to operate as it has without the need to shovel the roof of snow. Almost all of these repairs will essentially be unnoticeable, so that the arena will continue to look as it does now. It would be possible to build a similar replacement arena that would have a much longer life span, an improved appearance, and updated facilities for the same or possibly less money. However, an open

air rink may not be competitive in surrounding rinks or in attracting ice tournaments to Stowe. Saving and repairing the existing Jackson Arena does not make economic sense for the Town; sentimentality appears to be the only reason to keep and repair the existing facility.

In order to allow for the future construction of an updated indoor recreation facility to replace the Gale Center, included in phase 2 of the site plan, those portions of the existing second floor of the arena plans dedicated to non-ice indoor recreation should be eliminated from the final plans and held in reserve for eventual use in a new recreation center. This move will minimize the changes that will be needed to the existing permits and maximize the chances of proceeding with the plan without significant modification to the permits.

2. Skateboard Park: There appears to be ample support within the community for the addition of a skateboard park to the Town's recreation facilities. In examining the various locations for a such a facility, BRPD came to the same conclusion that the Skateboard Coalition reached, that Memorial Park is the most logical place for the facility, because it is central, easy to reach, very visible, close to the Village, and close to other recreational facilities.

3. Parking: At several PAC meetings, there has been discussion about the tight parking situation in Memorial Park and that more parking is needed. BRPD disagrees with this conclusion. It is true that the front parking area close to the elementary school is sometimes full, but there are many other parking places still available at other locations in the park. The master plan attempts to make better use of the existing parking spaces by:

- Paving some of the parking areas so that the actually parking spaces can be delineated;
- Relocating some of the park activities so that they are more easily accessible from alternate parking locations further into the park; and
- Making the overflow parking in the back area of the park, close to the existing maintenance area, more easily accessible.

BRPD believes that these measures will resolve the parking issues for the present and move the need for more parking spaces to the last phase of the master plan.

## IV. PHASE 2

### A. ELEMENTS

Phase 2 includes the following park elements:

- A new, relocated indoor Recreation Center to replace the existing Gale Center;
- A relocated regulation size basketball court;
- A small water feature for play;
- Reconstructed tennis courts in the same location;
- A new picnic shelter;
- A new shared use path linking to the Thomas Lane cul-de-sac constructed by the adjacent land owner;
- Additional walking trails;
- Additional tree plantings;

- New wetland and natural stormwater management area construction;
- A reconfigured entrance road to provide easier drop offs at the new Recreation Center; and
- The incorporation of the sled hill property into the park.

The Phase 2 plan shows the location of these elements within the park and Table 1 provides background information on the reasons why these elements are included in the park and why they are located as they are.

## B. ISSUES

1. David Gale Center: The existing David Gale Recreation Center is in need of continual repairs for roof leaks and other problems that make its continued use expensive. Additionally, the Recreation Department is currently in need of additional indoor recreation space, having reached maximum use of nearby school facilities. It also projects this need to steadily grow. In order to make maximum use of tax dollars and to accommodate current and future needs, the existing Gale Center should be eventually removed from the park after a new facility has been constructed. The new facility would include the square footage of the existing Gale Center and the recreational space removed from the new ice arena in phase 1 to create a one story building that is approximately 5,000 square feet (SF). BRPD believes that this facility can be built within the limits of the existing permits with just minor amendments. (More information on permits is included in Section IV.C.)

2. The Old Congregational Church: There are definitely mixed opinions on the appropriate future of the Old Congregational Church (the Rotary Barn) within the Town. At this point, it is not possible to gauge the amount of support that exists for reusing the structure somewhere within the park. As currently planned, the Old Congregational Church could either be incorporated as a portion of the new indoor Recreation Center or its structural components could be reused as the picnic shelter. BRPD suggests that the fate of the structure continue to be placed on hold for a set amount of time, terminating with the planned start of planning and design for the new Gale Center, during which supporters would be encouraged to raise the necessary funds to restore the building and allow for its reuse in the park. If the funds are raised, it would be a good indicator of public support and the structure could be reused as part of the new recreation center. If the full funding is not raised, then the funds that were raised could be used to help salvage the structural elements and reassemble them as the picnic shelter.

3. The Sled Hill: The downhill run of the sled hill is currently outside of the park. Public sentiment, as gauged by comments from PAC members and during public work sessions for this project, is strong for inclusion of the hill into the park. BRPD believes that the Town should explore the eventual purchase of the property or obtain a public access easement for recreation purposes over the sledding hill portion of the property.

4. Second Access from Depot Street: BRPD does not think that a second access road from Depot Street will be required to implement the elements of either phase 1 or phase 2. The second access point would, however, help the overall vehicular and pedestrian flow in the park. If the permits needed to construct this roadway can be obtained, then it could be constructed as a welcome addition. If public funds are needed to construct the road, they should be allocated to its construction only after the other elements of phases 1 and 2 are in place. A second access road will almost certainly be needed to implement the major elements included in phase 3.

## V. PHASE 3

### A. ELEMENTS

Phase 3 includes the following park elements:

- A large indoor field house;
- Additional parking near the field house;
- Relocation of the Maintenance outside of the park;
- Additional parking in the front of the park close to the tennis courts;
- Relocation of high school baseball and softball to the High School (or other location outside of the park);
- A possible third entrance to the park from Stowe Hollow Road; and
- Additional trees plantings.

### B. ISSUES

Phase 3 includes those long term additions to the park. The need for these facilities should be continually monitored into the future.

## VI. FINALIZING THE PLAN

Once the Selectboard has commented on the draft site plans and agreed that the plan is moving in the right direction, BRPD will refine the layout of the site as needed to take into account:

- The Selectboard's comments;
- Permit requirements, including information gained from talks with the Act 250 commissioners about the plan,
- Cost implications of the initial estimate of probable construction costs that BRPD will prepare for the plan; and
- Additional comments from the PAC.

When this work is done, BRPD will present the final plan to the Selectboard for their formal acceptance.