

MEETING MINUTES—AZALEA PARK—MARCH 7, 2024

In attendance: Susan Adams, Gail Abromowicz, Marc McMurphy, Joan O'Connor, Maegan Gagne, Diane Kendal, Scott Osgood and Kay Reynolds.

Welcome new members and committee purpose: new members (Gail, Maegan Kay and Marc) were welcomed. The new members will bring input from town organizations and committees that reflect similar views as to the importance of Azalea Park.

Susan noted the significant **changes to the park.**

- *An original design of the park shows features initially designed by the Army Corps and *Streamworks*.
- *The concrete sections on the river have fallen into the river.
- *The riverbank near the rope swing has eroded.
- *The need is to bring the park back from the early 1900's.

Army Corps engineers and local engineers had helped on the park, beginning in 2015. Unfortunately, the two that helped retired and Army Corps' priority changed as well as their funding.

Over the years, back to 2015, many Henniker people have been helping rejuvenate the park, including work at the site and providing funding.

Critical future work includes clearing out invasives, work on the pathways, scheduling a secondary handicap path, removing weeds and small trees and designing an amphitheater for music and classes.

The committee's engineer, Tom Ballestero, a professor at UNH and river restoration expert, has studied the need for the stream restoration work. He has come to the site yearly to review the changes on the riverbank and parking lot along the elementary school and library. In 2022, the erosion had taken away the pins he had put in five years prior to monitor erosion. The change is a very dangerous outcome along the riverbank and park path. The concrete section, built over 100 years ago, has collapsed and is creating a dangerous place for people going into the water by using the rope swing.

PROJECT SCOPE: There are new considerations for the financial needs of the park. The initial efforts to consider are to address the concrete section at the river. In order for safe areas, the edge of the park will need more soil and stabilizing plantings. The fences along the concrete area which were removed by vandals will be brought back. Between the removal of the protective fencing, the park received extensive use during the Covid years. This added to the erosion.

The initial work will require fundraising with an initial cost of \$40,000 for engineering and permitting. We have \$20,000 in our account. Additional funding would be through grants. Susan reported that the Leander Cogswell Trust (not related to the town's Cogswell Trust from which we can draw interest) is a source for grant money to the park. Thirty years ago they awarded approximately \$10,000 to Azalea Park.

Additional work in the future would be to design and build four **bend-way** weirs at the edge which would prevent the current from eroding the riverbank. The Army Corps would oversee the proper construction for the weirs. These weirs would also allow people to walk on them and provide a very good place for fishing. Several members asked if the weirs should be included in initial work to protect the repairs to the riverbank.

Additional work at the park included the construction of a **rain garden** along the east side of the elementary school for rain coming off the flat roof into the parking lot along with a drain pipe through the parking lot to bring the water through the park and into the river. We received an ARM grant from DES to do this work. Scott and Sachie Howard provided the written reviews required for five years.

Funding: It is true that the Town has never funded Azalea Park. The Town Road Agent gave an estimate of \$2,100 in 2021. Now Tom Ballestero suggests a cost of \$20,000-\$40,000.

No ARPA funding has been made available. (Note: the ARPA funding is left to the Board of Selectmen.) Overall costs for the project are estimated at \$80,000. We currently have \$20,000 available. Marc suggested that we expand our view of the park and how it relates to the Town. Diane Kendall noted suggestions for gaining support for the park, needing to bring attention to the park from the bottom up. She also suggested bringing needs to the Capitol Improvement Program and getting local support during events at Community Park.

OLD BUSINESS

Memorial Bench Request: It was voted unanimously to offer a metal picnic table instead of a bench for a memorial request.

NEW BUSINESS

Spring Clean-up will be Saturday, April 20th. from 9:00-11:00 with a rain date of April 27th. Susan will contact the NEC Wrestling Team for their help. Mulch will be provided from Cousineau. (\$250.00 in the past). Marc suggested that could come from Town funds. It was voted unanimously to spend up to \$400.00 for the mulch.

NEXT MEETING THURSDAY, APRIL 18TH. FROM 4:00-5:00 P.M.

GRANGE HALL