

Notes from Ft Needham Park Public Meeting
Feb 28, 2013
United Memorial Church
Approx. 40 People in Attendance

There was a short presentation by staff on the Open Space plan for parks that is being developed in HRM and the Urban Forest Master Plan that was passed by council in September 2012 (<http://www.halifax.ca/RealPropertyPlanning/UFMP/>). There was also discussion about the upcoming 100th anniversary of the Halifax Explosion (2017) and opportunities for commemorative projects.

Participants were asked to work in small groups to identify maintenance issues, short term projects, long term projects and questions. Staff will review the issues identified and develop a work plan. Participants were also asked to identify whether they would like to be part of an ongoing group that would guide projects in the park.

Maintenance

- Maintenance – drainage, too many baby swings, more picnic tables, off leash signage, hedges to define area, plaques for Bell Tower (signage), dog bags (regular replenishment, dispenser), more dispensers for dog bags
- More garbage bags
- Field is wet
- Brush and tree thinning (not sure we want this but annual cleanup of the bushy area would be good)
- Trees and better maintenance
- Resurface/surface road from Novalea to prevent washouts
- Clear underbrush
- Cut out undergrowth and tree trimming
- Remove backstop for ball diamond
- Fix erosion on path (roll and dip) drainage to control water that drains downhill and across sidewalk creating an ice rink in winter
- Statue just S. of tennis courts frost-heaved (tilting)
- Drainage/washout issues at S.W. corner path
- Northwest – improve paths and visibility but keep trees
- Bell Tower and lighting will probably need some maintenance in the next year (LED's)
- More garbage pails
- Off leash dogs – signs are confusing - how is area defined
- Better path to Needham Centre, from Union St.
- Improve path to make it safer with steps from Union
- A trash can near the bleachers
- A trash can near off leash area
- Maintenance at tennis courts
- Volunteer based ice rink on tennis courts
- Picnic tables

- Shade for playground
- Attention to the explosion monument – plaques missing, interpretive panel facing wrong way, dogs pooping on it, wreaths left blowing ugly until I call in August

Short Term Goals

- More trees for shade
- Playground for older kids
- Bandstand
- Edible plant/berry landscaping
- Natural playground (rocks, logs, climbing trees)
- Family area with fire pit, benches, picnic (around coast area)
- Lighting
- Community art storytelling spontaneous performance
- Cobb oven like Dartmouth common
- Expand and improve the playground area
- Band stand
- Hedges to border Off Leash area
- Edible and heritage landscaping along pathways
- Hints about what the original fort was like
- Bandstand in previous rose garden
- Shade trees and picnic tables
- Playground (small Isleville-like with water park)
- Play area for small and older children
- Sand pit shade area
- Picnic table
- Trees
- Encourage concert use of N end of park
- Remove wading pool
- Willow trees in swampy area west of playground
- Keep dogs off the explosion monument
- Better definition of off leash areas through map (or something)
- Trees are valuable – should we have some sort of adopt a tree program
- History/info at S.W. path entrance
- Covered picnic tables and a few more park benches
- Playground area could use a water sprinkler system for children (similar to one at Sebastian St)
- Fireworks/Harbour viewing platform
- Access point through hill from Novalea (live steps)
- Put up matching goal posts on the other end so we can play soccer, football, rugby
- Extend trail to connect around the west side of the field – tennis courts to dog park
- Public education for plant identification trees by playground and tennis court (trees we can climb (like those by the monument))

- More picnic tables (near trees and playground)
- A play structure for older kids
- Consider shallow wading pool instead of splash pad
- Install steps from monument Union Street (all the way up)
- West side hill – more trees (urban forest) or terraced urban garden)

Long Term Projects

- Community food forest
- Commission public art piece to commemorate Capt. Cooke – make something that could double as a play structure
- Community garden, orchard by the bunker
- “Garden area” location of original explosion monument
- Better signage to indicate what the monument is about – tap into Federal funds leading up to 100th anniv. – establish a committee especially for this?
- Preserve green space: do not erode park use
- Washroom
- Bring back the rose garden and gravel path (south end)
- More lighting
- Bathroom facilities
- Community food forest – edible fruit and nut trees = so good
- Community garden “incubator, community food farm”
- Encourage sports
- Interpretive signage – stories about people – Cooke, etc. – 2017 project
- Plant trees all over the (wet) sports field
- Sports field is good
- Make it more wheelchair accessible and welcoming
- HRM website – ID pts if historic interest
- Drainage!
- Removal of Japanese knotwood
- More trees – flowering or nut
- Develop rose garden – tables, walkways
- Better historical designations
- Improve playground
- Home turf sports facility
- Clean up area below northern parking lot viewpoint

Questions

- How much does the locker room get used?
- Unused statue base near ball diamond?
- No need for an actual building for historical interpretation, keep the greenery
- Wild bits – keep them wild. The birds, berries/muck are great!

- Washrooms?
- I like the naturalized spaces in the southwest corner! Good for teaching kids about native plants/insects. Don't "sanitize" it! Good for wildlife – native birds
- Wild space - keep it. May flowers, etc.
- It's mostly great already!
- 5 yrs. – Halifax Explosion – 150 years
- Bandstand
- Park system vs. ?? (Bigelow)
- Live in the City (livable)
- Urban forest master plan

Email Responses

- More park benches
- More garbage cans
- Picnic tables in wooded areas
- Drainage is poor on field and gravel path to Novalea entrance (2)
- Repave tennis court
- No concerts on Sunday afternoons
- Improve access at north end
- Path from Union St was improved for all season use
- Active planting of indigenous trees
- Get rid of Japanese knotweed
- Improve the garden area at south end of park
- Fix the plaque on the cairn for Captain Cook
- Increase park patrol
- Have the Memorial Bells ring every 15 minutes between 11am and 8 pm