

Foss Park Community Concerns: Identified Priorities, Request for Explanation of Management/Access/Funding Plan, and Request for Schematic Design Winter Meetings

To: Mayor Joe Curtatone and DCR Commissioner Leo Roy

Date: 12/6/18

We are writing to urge the City and DCR to act on a list of priorities for the renovation of Foss Park, both in the short and longer term.

We are a coalition of stakeholders representing:

- **Neighbors:** Fellsway West abutters, Friends of Foss Park, Mystic Tenants Association, Winter Hill Neighborhood Association, East Somerville Main Streets, and community residents.
- **Nearby non-profits and schools:** The Welcome Project, Teen Empowerment, Next Wave/Full Circle, Little Busy Bodies Childcare Center, Elizabeth Peabody House, and the Immigrant Service Providers Network.
- **Athletic leagues:** Somerville Pop Warner Football & Cheerleading, Somerville Youth Soccer, Parkour, Somerville Youth Softball, Somerville Babe Ruth, and Somerville Youth Ultimate Frisbee.
- **Environmental Advocates:** Green and Open Somerville, Somerville's Friends of the Urban Forest, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership (STEP), and Somerville Mayor's Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change
- **Local Elected Officials:** Board of Aldermen and Somerville School Committee
- **State Representatives:** Mike Connolly, Christine Barber, Denise Provost, and Pat Jehlen

We have met twice and have held smaller meetings within stakeholder groups. Those meetings included one on 11/15 that involved 22 people representing 10 different park stakeholders and one on 12/1 with about 60 people representing the stakeholder groups mentioned above. The Welcome Project facilitated the 12/1 meeting and had translators available. Complete notes from these meetings can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/133jDMzmgCMXC1yhG38HHSuIAzfVyKDfdllGkiGEKrz8/edit?ts=5c0962ca#heading=h.qiwdyrib1a60>

Our first high-level request is that the City to **hire a landscape architect (or carry out the work internally if/as capacity allows) that will undertake a community-driven schematic design process over the winter** consistently of at least three meetings, working in conjunction with the engineers and designers from DCR who will be planning the construction drawings for the field. We believe that, over the course of meetings held in January, February, and March, a consultant can gather community feedback. This can inform a schematic design, which is a rough outline of features of a fully renovated park.

Work may then begin **on schedule** for the field installation, and continue in phases with other parts of the park, as funding allows, without the worry that the first phase will limit options for future phases. This will enable construction of the planned field to begin on schedule, while still allowing for community participation. This process needs to be funded immediately so that work can begin this winter and not delay subsequent work.

A second high-level request is that the City **share with the Board of Aldermen and the public the plan for funding for this phase and subsequent Foss renovation, along with the plan for facility maintenance and management and determination of responsibility about the maintenance, replacement schedule and cost, and any other expenses and/or needs that this field will create**. The latter particularly affects athletic field users who are affected by permitting costs and policies. A facility management plan also very much affects abutters. We recognize that the neighbors who live on Fellsway West and neighboring blocks, while fewer in number than all other park users, are affected the most on

issues such as parking, trash accumulation, and basic maintenance such as snow removal on walking paths. Their concerns have lingered for many, many years and require special attention.

In combination with these two high-level goals, the following issues were prioritized during our 12/1 meeting.

Unanimous priorities:

- Carry out a continued planning process that includes community feedback, as referenced above.
- Improve access to the park, including improvement of the infrastructure for pedestrians, addition of crosswalks across McGrath, addition of bike lanes and creation of a dedicated bus lane on Broadway, increase in bus service, and installation of speed bumps, addition of wayfinding signs, and improved enforcement of speed limits on Fellsway West.
- Improve oversight and move management of park to City, including work to make sure park is clean and maintained year round.
- Improve restrooms, possibly as part of concession building near fields.

Very High Priorities (30 or more votes):

- Improve access to neighborhoods, including crosswalk access to/from park, integrate pedestrian paths to Assembly Square, connect Foss planning to Kensington underpass discussion. (41 votes)
- Repair and add more drinking water fountains (41 votes)
- Rebuild the playground so that it is not rusty, so it has modern play structures, and so that it is not next to the highway (40 votes)
- Ensure that the park continues to be accessible and explain who is prioritized for access to fields (37 votes)
- Maintain unstructured greenspace (31 votes)
- Renovate the pool (30 votes)
- Add more picnic areas and benches (30 votes)

High Priorities (20 to 30 votes):

- Create protective barriers along Mystic Ave, such as a wall or a line of trees/shrubs on Mystic, Fellsway West, and McGrath. Keep and protect all of the current trees during construction and plant additional native trees and plants around the field. (Recommendations for barriers with 93/McGrath were developed during a recent STEP/Tufts CAFEH/Welcome Project and MAPC sponsored community design charrette to address noise and air pollution along I-93.) (28 votes)
- Address environmental concerns: replace any green space taken away within six months, address changes to carbon footprint and heat island (27 votes)
- City and state to convene a separate committee for the turf and grass discussion (27 votes)
- Review all usage and field management issues (including consideration of areas for spectators, goal posts) and forward thinking of park lifespan (26 votes)
- Create play or fitness elements for teens, adults, and seniors (25 votes)
- Create stage or performance space, areas for local artists, areas for pop-up market, and/or areas with electrical access (23 votes)
- Increase enforcement or implement a social work approach that's focused on addressing challenge of unhoused individuals staying in park (23 votes)
- Create indoor sports facility/community center, enabling more winter fitness, e.g. ice skating (22 votes)
- Improve irrigation system & drainage (21 votes)
- Create business where the pool house is and along Broadway, e.g. concession stands (20 votes)
- Avoid disrupting neighbors with limited noise amplification, lights that only cover park (e.g. Winter Hill School), lights of right temperature (20 votes)

Additional Priorities (3 to 18 votes)

- Create food forest (edible/fruit-bearing trees, shrubs), community gardens, re-building ecosystem - including educational elements and signage (18 vote)
- Use natural landscaping and native plants (17 votes)
- Implement better parking regulation and enforcement on Fellsway West (17 votes – **number one issue to neighbors**)
- Move any buildings to I-93 side to block noise and air pollution (11 votes)
- Carry out renovations on a schedule that maintains use of park / piece-by-piece (10 votes)
- Take down fences and don't install any new fences (9 votes)
- Keep real grass on baseball/softball fields (9 votes)
- Build off-leash dog area (7 votes)
- Move basketball courts to Broadway side (6 votes)
- Create more grass and open greenspace (6 votes)
- Update the baseball/softball fields (3 votes)

Please consider and respond to our petition as soon as possible.

Signed,

- Ian Adelman, Winter Hill Neighborhood Association
- Andrew Arbaugh, States/Aves neighbor
- Jen Atwood, East Somerville Main Streets
- Emily and David Bannister, Fellsway West
- Mike Connolly, State Representative
- Julia Dahlin, neighbor, teacher at Next Wave/Full Circle schools
- Roger Desrochers, Somerville Pop Warner
- David Dinklage, 47 Columbus Ave
- Chris Dwan, Somerville's Friends of the Urban Forest
- Ben Echevarria, The Welcome Project
- Scott Farrell, Winter Hill Neighborhood Association and Gilman Square Neighborhood Association
- Ruth Foreman, Winter Hill neighbor
- Dominic Lachowicz, Winter Hill neighbor
- Mary and Dwight Lancaster, Fellsway West
- Theresa MacVicar, Winter Hill neighbor
- Clio Macrakis, 47 Columbus Ave
- Mary Mangan, Winter Hill Neighborhood Association
- Stephen Moore, Sewall Street, Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change
- Dan O'Sullivan, Somerville Little League Board Member
- Ellin Reisner, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership
- Renee Scott, Green & Open Somerville
- Dominique Stassart, Green & Open Somerville
- Beverly Schwartz, Somerville Pop Warner
- Erika Tarlin, Winter Hill Neighborhood Association
- Jake Wilson, Somerville Youth Soccer League
- Ginhee Ungar, Fellsway West
- Peter Ungar, Fellsway West & Friends of Foss Park
- Dave Zraket, Somerville Youth Hockey