

# **ALGONQUIN HISTORIC COMMISSION**

## **MINUTES FOR SPECIAL**

### **MEETING**

**Saturday, February 26, 2022,**

**9:30 A.M.**

**Held at Historic Village Hall - 2 South Main St. – Algonquin**

#### **Call to order - Establish Quorum –**

Present: Chairman Jolitz; and Members Donahue, Wyskochil, Dombrowski, Himes, and Lewis; Steve Konters of Hitchcock Design Group and Katie Gock, Village of Algonquin

#### **DISCUSSION AND DESIGN INPUT FOR THE MINERAL SPRINGS SITE;**

Everyone was given a large packet of about 50 pages, of many past communications (going back to 2015) with village staff concerning this topic, also dozens of vintage photos of both the Mineral Spring and Bridge at this Main Entrance to the Park, and some past events held in the park , from the Centennial celebration in 1935, to baseball games in the 1940's , and even including some 3,000 people enjoying the “Sunday in the Park “ event at Founders Days 1977. Also Included were some design drawings previously suggested and proposed for the Mineral Spring Site.

Chairman Jolitz stated that this project has been in consideration for over 10 years. It has constantly been put off and on hold, and the Commission, Garden Club and other concerned parties and many residents are excited to finally see some action on the project.

Steve Konters stated that Hitchcock Design Group is in charge of planning for the redevelopment/improvement of Towne Park. He has been given the task by the village to include as a side project, the Mineral Spring site area. His purpose today is to come to the Commission and see what was important for the commission and find out additional details about the history of the site and design ideas for the spring area. Member Dombrowski asked what is the budget for the project. Steve Konters said that they need to first come up with a concept before they can develop a budget. Dombrowski questioned why it can't be a part of the overall Towne Park project and is very concerned that it will be overlooked by the village yet again. She stated that the Mineral Spring is an integral part of the park and should be included in the overall Towne Park design. Additionally, the foot bridge over the creek at this South East corner of the park is very important and connected it more to the downtown, especially for people walking to the park. Steve Konters said it was always taken into consideration, but was considered a different sub project by the Village board. The bridge itself might be problematic in that there are federal and state regulations that complicate and could make the construction of the bridge more expensive. Because the area lies in the flood plain they would need to add fill to raise the bridge.

Regulations also state that area filled would have to be offset in a different area and that the offset could have be up to 1.5 times the size of the fill. So, it could be costly. Commissioners felt there were other places in town that pedestrian bridges were built with limited amounts of fill. Jolitz cited examples such as the long arched shaped bridge over Algonquin Rd just west of the bypass, and the pedestrian walkways in wetland areas, such as built last year near Neubert school, that are built on a structure of piers and not supported by land fill.

Jolitz stated that the village adopted a Preservation Code ordinance in 1998 which village residents and business owners are expected to follow and have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars complying with the requirements of the code and preservation and maintenance of structures. Member Himes, Dombrowski, and Lewis agreed. It was said that many people in town strongly feel that it is about time the village “lead by example” on the matter of the preservation of a historic place in Old Town with the Mineral Spring and not make a farce of the code. Steve Konters then asked that we remain cordial. Stating they are here to gain our input and learn the importance of the spring site. Dombrowski said that it can again be a focal point of the park as it once was and should be considered as such, being every bit as important, likely even much more important due to its historic significance, than the River/Creek Walk project, which the Commission also supports.

Jolitz, Himes, Lewis and all other commissioners all strongly feel the lack of creek bridge at this south east corner of the park, is not making it a truly pedestrian friendly area like it used to be when it was the primary entrance to the park. Commissioners also felt the park should be a passive use park. Other parks in the Village can be the site of amenities like ball courts, etc. Steve Konters stated that an active sports type of park is not the direction that the plans are going. Jolitz said the design of the park should contain more benches and tables along the creek for seating as it had in the past. Jolitz stated he has personally witnessed on several occasions, people walking to the north end of Jefferson Street, often after having dinner on Main street or with ice cream in hand (we will soon have Two ice-cream shops on South main St) , they look into the park and asked how do we get into the park to take a walk, but when told the entrance is down at the parking lot area at the west end of Washington Street, they decide it is too far to walk and turn around and head back to the Municipal Parking Lot where they stated they are parked. If the village seriously wants to promote Old Town to the fullest extent, as a true pedestrian friendly place to walk, clearly a direct entrance back in this corner of the park is a critical element.

Member Wyskochil stated that as he sees it, concerning the Mineral Spring’s cement Stairs, Bench, Cap, and area around the site is there are three parts: restoration, repair, and enhancement. With enhancement being an important part, following restoration. He felt this park has been kicked down the road for too long. This site has a long history going back to the Native Americans and if the village wants to pursue diversity and inclusion, it would do well to include the restoration of the spring in its overall plan.

Jolitz stated that the spring has long been the cornerstone of the park and should become it again with a foot bridge and archway (perhaps with TOWNE PARK lettering in the arch), and some other enhancements like an appropriate vintage looking bike rack and planters and other design elements including informational signage. Historically speaking, this area has been the Main entrance to the area for 150 years. Commissioners also stated that past arguments that the spring is too far deteriorated and cannot be restored are not valid. The city of Chicago has restored fountains, and other cement landmarks. There are people who specialize in the restoration of concrete, rather than just replacing it. It is an opportunity to make the site a highlight in village once again. Member Donahue said that she would also like to have a bridge back on this south east side area of the park where there was one. She said that there are perhaps grants available for restoration etc and she would be willing to help in in any way she could. Perhaps this is the village's chance to get another award for the park (like it did with the construction of the Angel Town project).

Katie Gock stated that having Hitchcock involved will help us navigate the process of designing the park. They will be an important intermediary between the village and commission, and lead to a better understanding between the village and the community. The Village does not want to concrete over the park and make it a bunch of courts. The village wants to honor the history of the park and current usage. Dombrowski asked whether the board was involved with the decision in including/excluding Mineral Spring in the overall design. Stephen Konters stated that the scope of the project was decided by staff. Katie Gock stated that it was a Village cross department decision. The design will be presented to the Village on March 8 and in a community meeting on the sixteenth. Donahue asked whether the design group had been involved in a similar restoration project before. Steve Konters said that the group had done work in Chicago and in other communities similar to this in Algonquin. Chairman Jolitz said that Algonquin's Historic Old Town District is very small in size so that stakes are high. He apologized for his and any impassioned comments on the topics, but wanted to make sure all involved with this project realize how important this Site and Towne Park is for the village. It is the ONLY site in our Historic Downtown that can be directly traced back to the Native Americans that once roamed our area and our first settlers, in addition to its significant role in our village for over 175 years.

## **AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION – PUBLIC COMMENT**

Julie Minos, owner of Hand Made on Main, has been here for 50 years. The spring and park mean a lot to her. She hopes that the project will honor the history and function of the park.

Patti Jo Thompson stated she lived in a Landmark Status building in Chicago where the cement steps needed to be repaired rather be replaced due to landmark

considerations. The steps were Restored and it actually ended up costing less than replacement would have, and they are still in great shape more than 10 years later.

Janice Slonkey is the current President of the Algonquin Garden Club. She stated that the members of the Garden Club have been fighting this same battle for many years and share the frustrations of residents over the condition of the site and recent changes in Towne Park. The club members share the sentiments and opinions expressed by the Commissioners and they fully support the Historic Commission's design ideas and concerns for the Mineral Spring and this part of the park, that was always the main entrance point. Chairman Jolitz lauded and thanked the Members of the Garden Club for all their hard work, including putting plantings at this site and many others in Village over the many decades of their service to the village and its residents for the beautification of our village.

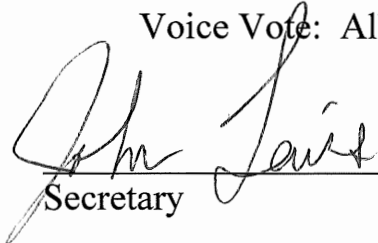
It was not by accident that the Algonquin Women's Club selected adding the enhancements of a cement Bench and Stairs in 1916 to this special site as their very first service project by that organization. They also realized that the Mineral Spring is the reason that we have the park to enjoy.

Chairman Jolitz thanked Steve Konters and Katie Gock for this opportunity to provide information concerning this important matter about what is likely the most important historic site in our Village.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Jolitz moved and Member Donahue Seconded.

Voice Vote: All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 10:30 am.

  
Secretary

  
Date Approved