

January 10, 2023 Underwood Public Forum Email Comments

11/14/22

Mary McCrann

Good morning! I am reaching out to share feedback about the proposed Underwood Park improvements since public comment was not taken at the September 2022 Town Council meeting. My feedback is based on my time living in Falmouth where my husband and I are raising three children and spending countless hours at Underwood Park. To provide some background, I have over 20 years of experience in Land Use & Environmental Planning and Community Development including preparing Open Space and Recreation Plans for communities all over New England.

I understand and appreciate all of the hard work that the Parks and Community Programs Advisory Committee has put into moving this proposal and plan forward. It takes a lot of diligence and patience to move project proposals forward. I am very supportive of the playground and any park improvements, but object to adding up to thirty parking spaces and consequently parked cars on the Brown property. I also understand that this issue has been talked about and debated for years and that the plan for adding parking in this location and making them grass paver parking spaces was somewhat of a compromise. I believe that the program of adding parking spaces is inconsistent with the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan and will take away from one of the most special resources in this part of town.

As you know, Underwood Park is located in an area of Falmouth where it is the only playground area and open space for playing any type of game/sport or passive recreation. I am aware that the parking lots for Town Landing Market and the beach area fill up in the summer on certain days. But not everyday and not all summer. The parking is never full at any other time of year and there is always availability. Do you spend time at Underwood Park? Have you chatted with people that use the park? People that I have spoken with frustrated and disappointed to learn about the parking space plan. People would love to see more playground amenities (swings, maybe a half court basketball set up) – not a lot more, just a few items.

Lets support the opportunity to use Underwood Park and the Brown Property for everyone in the community in a variety of active and passive recreational ways. I am not in favor of the added parking spaces and ask that you please reconsider this option and eliminate it from further discussion. There are many, many more ways to spend \$186,610 of the Oceanview/Natural Gas TIF funding other than installing thirty parking spaces at the Brown property. As for Underwood Park and the Brown Property, currently as open space in the community, when its gone, its gone... and with so little usable open space in this area of Town, I think doubling down to protect and preserve it as an asset to the community is a much more viable path that would support and meet the goals of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan and the desire of residents. I would be happy to chat with you on the phone or meet with you in person to discuss my feedback in more detail if you would like. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you regarding your thoughts on this outreach.

Sincerely,

Mary McCrann

5 Raymond Road

Falmouth, ME

11/14/22

Ashlan Oberholtzer

Good Afternoon Town Council Members,

I am reaching out to share feedback about the proposed Underwood Park improvements since public comment was not taken at the September 2022 Town Council meeting. My feedback is based on the last decade living in Falmouth and utilizing Underwood Park with my children and friends in the area.

I am very supportive of improving the playground at Underwood Park and the main entry drive to improve traffic flow. I have concerns and am opposed to the addition of up to 30 parking spaces in this area. The town landing parking lot on the intersection of Johnson Rd and Foreside Rd is rarely full and only on occasional summer days. There is also street parking on Foreside Rd which seems to adequately serve the area. This parking expansion is also unnecessary given the walkability of the neighborhood.

Underwood Park is the only green space for residents in this area to enjoy open recreation in addition to the playground. Just last week I reached out to Falmouth Parks and Recreation to request soccer goals, etc be placed at the park as many adults and kids in the area play and love sports. I also appreciate what the town has done with Huston Park and improving basketball courts. There are many residents and children that would utilize and benefit from this type of enhanced recreational space. There are many better options to utilize this area other than parking. I am disappointed to hear this wonderful space may be underutilized as seasonal, overflow parking.

I ask the town council to please reconsider the additional parking and follow the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. Please consider enhancing Underwood Park to encourage outdoor activity and enjoyment for the neighborhood and community.

Sincerely,

Ashlan Oberholtzer
30 Johnson Rd

12/12/22

Liz Crafford

Dear Maggie,

I saw your announcement about the Underwood Park Improvements Forum in the latest Falmouth Focus newsletter, and wanted to send you a few comments.

For what it's worth, I grew up in Falmouth just down the street from Town Landing Market, and quite vividly remember the day in the 1970s when the Fire Department decided to burn down Underwood School to practice their firefighting skills. Let's just say that when the wind picked up, it got really exciting really fast!

While I now live in Washington, DC, I regularly visit my 94-yr-old mom who still lives at our house on Mariner Lane, and my husband and I are hoping to retire to Falmouth in a few years time. While I'm visiting I usually go jogging on Rt 88 past the park, and I dearly wish there was a place where adults could work out in addition to a play structure for kids.

In my neighborhood in DC we have a terrific local park with a set of workout stations made by a company called Playworld. It's called 'Energi Total Body Fitness System'. Our version has five stations, each double-sided, for ten different sets of exercises. I think it's called the 'Energi Complete 5-Station system', and you can see it here.

<https://playworld.com/products/complete-5-station-system>

I have been working out at it several days a week for the last eight years, and I really miss having something similar I can walk to when I'm visiting Maine. I would think such an exercise system would be appreciated by many residents on the foreshore, and Underwood Park seems like the perfect place for such a thing. Our park also has a popular soccer field and a playground for kids.

I'm sorry I can't join you in person for the meeting in January, although we do expect to be there later in January and would be happy to talk with anyone in person at that time if that is helpful.

Many thanks for considering my ideas.

Regards,

Liz Jones Crafford (Falmouth High School, 1980)

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Liz Crafford
Kalmia Rd NW DC

12/13/22
John Kirkham

Hello to all

The status of Underwood Park has been on my mind for a few years. The plans to be discussed in January seem pretty underwhelming. Is there a pathway to thinking bigger about that space, opening up discussion to investing / improving it more?

The park land is broad and flat, but the ground is rutted and pockmarked, poor quality for a playing field. Can we discuss what work is needed to make the field safely playable?

The open space is encroached from all sides by scrubby trees and brush - especially the northwest portion - and that brush is loaded with ticks and brown tail moth caterpillars. Ask me how I know! Can we discuss thinning it out to a more natural state (like Pine Grove Preserve) and/or clearing the land

back to the property lines, reclaiming the park space? More space would be great. Fewer ticks and caterpillar hairs - also great.

The current playground equipment is small, generic, and sad. Adding a few swings and one more green plastic thing... will still leave it generic and sad. How about opening up the playground to additional bids / design ideas, publicize the opportunity, perhaps solicit sponsorship ideas from local businesses ("XYZ playground at Underwood Park")?

And the cluster of trees in the middle, on the old property line, they break up the space without providing usable shade or any other redeeming features. It's just more tick/caterpillar habitat. Can those trees be cut and chipped into playground surface, or otherwise disposed of?

I bring this all up by email so that it's not coming out of the blue at the meeting on Jan 10th. Thank you for reading this far! I know that others have opinions on the space as well.

John

12/13/22

Joan Havens

I hope you won't improve it the way PINEGROVE was "IMPROVED." That once lovely woods now resembles a war zone. Please don't subject Underwood to the same mindless destruction.

Joan Havens

12/13/22

Amy Meader

Hello Maggie,

Back in 2017, our son (5th grade at the time) wrote this letter to Theo Holtwijk's attention (which I read at a public meeting).

He's now in 10th grade, we've moved nearby to 27 Underwood Rd and his strong interest still very much applies today 🏀

Best,

Amy Meader

27 Underwood Rd

Falmouth

"Dear Mr. Holtwijk:

I believe Underwood Park should have a basketball court because there are a lot of people who like to play basketball, but they don't have a hoop! Also, it could inspire more people to play. And finally because you could do different things besides basketball on it.

I believe Underwood Park should have a basketball court because first of all, people who like to play basketball who don't have a hoop could play more. Imagine if you couldn't go outside every day and play your favorite sport because the nearest hoop is 5 miles away. How would you feel? Probably terrible. If there was a basketball court in Underwood Park, people around there wouldn't face that problem.

Another reason why Underwood Park should have a basketball hoop is because it could inspire more people to play. For example, if somebody is walking by the park, they might see a game going on. When they see the game going on, they might think it looks fun when they see the players smiling as they run up and down the court. Then within minutes, a new basketball player is on the court having the time of his or her life. Finally, my last reason why Underwood Park should have a basketball court is because you could do different things besides basketball on it. People all ages can enjoy it, even if you...sport. 3 year-olds can ride around on it on their tricycles. 5 year-olds can scooter and take their first bicycle ride without training wheels. Then even adults can jog around the edges to get healthier. Just to name a few. Also, you could play some street hockey on it too if you get some goals with on it. There's so many possibilities!

Really, all I think Underwood Park needs right now is a basketball court. IT has a playground, lots of field, and even plenty of parking. If this park had a basketball court, it would finally be complete. Finally.

Sincerely,

Jace D. Meader
5th Grade"

12/26/22
Susan Hall

Dear Ms. Fleming:

I'm writing to give my input on Underwood Park. All I ask is that it be kept as natural as possible. Pine Grove Forest, in my opinion and that of many others, was completely destructive. My husband and I are horrified about Pine Grove. We don't need to protect people from dangerous trees!

I'm not sure why Underwood needs to be "improved."

Susan Hall, 18 Justamere Rd.

1/9/2023
Kristen Farnham

Hello Maggie –

I had hoped to attend the community meeting on Jan 10 about Underwood Park but now have a conflict. I am hoping to share a few thoughts with you and hope that you might pass them along to the people who are considering improvements.

1. I would advocate for the addition on pickleball courts/tennis courts and a paddle tennis court. These would provide year round wellness and recreational opportunities for residents.
2. I hope that the forest behind the park is not given the same treatment as Pine Grove. I am in there often and do not see any extreme safety concerns that would require such a drastic thinning.

Thank you!
Kristen Farnham
11 Madokawando Landing
Falmouth ME 04105

1/09/23
Mary McCrann

Hi Maggie!

Hope you had a nice weekend. I have a night meeting for work tomorrow... I am hoping to still make it to as much of the Underwood Park meeting as I possibly can. I would like to make additional comment, but was hoping to listen/see the information presented by the landscape architect first. I do have some additional public comment for you from two of my children. I asked them "what do you think should be done to improve the playground at Underwood Park?"

Winnie - Age 4

- the playground needs to be bigger.
- there should be a bridge that connects one side to the other where there is another twisty slide and shade that you can sit under at the top.
- there should be swings
- there should be monkey bars

Max - Age 10

- they should make it bigger and add a tire swing

Thank you!
Mary McCrann
5 Raymond Road
Falmouth, ME 04105

1/10/22
Alexis Bender

Hi, Maggie,

I live on Arborside Drive, off Johnson Rd, and my family of 4 and I frequently (year round) walk trails between FNP and Valley, as well as Underwood Park. I'm unable to attend tonight's meeting, but will provide some feedback below.

We love the park space: my girls played on that playground daily when they were little and now as teens use it as a meeting point for walks with friends, as do I. My suggestions (with input from my 15- and 17-year old daughters) are as follows:

- 1- **Swings**. Little kids love them, teens, and adults too. Swings are awesome.
- 2- A **court** (pickleball/tennis)
- 3- More **trees/benches** pairings. I used to live in France, and well thought-out trees (shade trees/native/not messy; placed in view of said courts and play equipment- also some more private toward the edges for the property) with benches beneath provide **opportunities for people to connect**. The French even write songs about their public benches. It's a thing. Also people love to dedicate benches so fundraising for benches should be easier than other park amenities.
- 4- I'm not sure of the historical significance of the former house pavers, but they are sneaky for tripping people and skinning knees. I think they should be removed, and the whole area needs overseeding and more signs about cleaning up after your dog.

I'm available to discuss further, and would love a recap on tonight's meeting if that is available somewhere, either a video or transcript.

Thank you so much for working on our park; it's a neighborhood gem and worth the effort!

Alexis Bender, Chris Bender, Kate Bender, Lainey Bender
5 Arborside

Joan Havens
1/10/23

I would attend the meeting tonight if I were not out of town. Please do not allow Underwood Park to be "improved" the way Pinegrove Woods was "improved." The latter is now unsightly and depressing.

Thank you.

Joan Havens

1/11/23
Mary McCrann

Hi Maggie,

I just wanted to follow up on the meeting last night about Underwood Park. Thank you to the Town of Falmouth for hosting it. I apologize that I was so late - I had a Planning Board meeting

for work that went until 7:30pm. I ended up missing most of the meeting but caught some of the group report outs. Some questions I had for you:

What is the next step in the process?

When is the next meeting to discuss this?

Will we be sent any draft documents prepared by Aceto?

Who decides what will/won't be included in any changes to Underwood Park?

Once the consultant drafts a plan, who reviews this? Is it the Planning Board and Town Council?
Just Town Council?

Who else should we be reaching out to in Town about our public feedback regarding Underwood Park? Who are you sharing the feedback with?

Is all the public comment being shared with Aceto Landscaping? If not, may I have their contact information?

Is there a citizen committee/Advisory Committee associated with this project that I could serve on? If so, I would like to please. I am happy to fill out an application.

I would also like to submit the additional public comment:

- Please add some additional playground amenities like swings, a bigger play structure and some benches to sit on.
- This is a neighborhood park. Its not the Community Park. Its not a State Park. Adding tons of amenities and considering things like a dog park, pickleball, community gardens is all overly programmed/misguided for a park that is a small, neighborhood place to enjoy. There are other places in towns for these amenities.
- I reviewed the 2005 Greening Falmouth Study, the 2009 report discussing Underwood Park/Parking, the 2016 Gorrill Palmer Town Landing Parking Study, the Town's Comp Plan and the Town's Open Space Plan. There is no evidence or planning for adding parking spots to the Brown Property. In fact, even way back in 2009, the majority of people that participated did not support parking on the Brown Property. I see nothing in these reports that supports taking Town owned open space/land and turning it into parking spaces.

What I do see is (this is just a small snippet of information I pulled together):

- 2005 Greening Falmouth "Improve the usefulness of town owned properties with high conservation value by increasing their size."
- 2016 Town Landing Parking Study "both the home owner and the boat owner surveys show that there is the perception of adequate parking supply" AND "Overall, both the home owner and boat owner surveys show that there is a perception of an adequate parking supply."
- Comp Plan Goals and Policies for Open Space - there is so much language in this plan and the Open Space Plan about promoting and protecting availability of outdoor recreation opportunities, maintaining existing recreation facilities, preserving natural open space and allowing for passive recreation, actively acquire additional open space to focus primarily on acquiring land that provides connectivity to large parcels for the purpose of benefiting humans and wildlife with a secondary focus on acquiring more large continuous tracks.

At this point in the Underwood Park discussion, I would like to ask Town Staff to take any further discussion about adding parking spaces to the Brown Property off the table completely. I am frustrated and disappointed that the Town is even putting this option out there to the public. It is confusing and misleading and inconsistent with every single Town document that I can find. Why are parking spaces even being discussed? If you must discuss this, let's vet every single other option out there of which there are plenty. The focus should be on preserving this amazing community resource for what it is, a small, loved, neighborhood park and playground.

Also, just to reiterate - my comments and feedback come from my 20+ years of experience in working with communities throughout New England to prepare Open Space Plans, Master Plans, Community Development Plans and Affordable Housing studies.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Mary McCrann
5 Raymond Road
Falmouth, ME

1/11/2023
Mary McCrann

Hi Maggie,

One more thing I forgot to mention. One of the groups mentioned that maybe a few grass paver parking spaces would be a good compromise. Adding any parking to the Brown Property is not a compromise... it's an inconsistent move on the Town's part to go against a lot of hard work and good planning to preserve open space. Please don't add any parking there - at all.

Thank you,

Mary