

1. Introduction:

- a. Formation of the committee: A committee to formulate a master plan for Fern Park in the hamlet of Inlet New York was formed in September 2017. The chair of the committee was Lynn Durkin and core members included Adele Burnett, Aimee Van Wie, Ted Christodaro, Tim Brownsell, Mitch Lee, Devlin Hennessy, Mike Bartolotti, and Ray Kopp. Later members included Robin Hill and Steve Schanely. Meetings were held monthly and were open to the public. Notes and other documents are available at www.townofinlet.org.
- b. Mission Statement: The mission of the committee was to present the collective vision of the community as a tool for building on the current assets of Fern Park in a way that all action items and future improvement suggestions were prioritized, doable and maintainable.

2. Goals:

- a. Seek and provide feedback on the current state of Fern Park.
- b. Develop a collaborative future vision for Fern Park's design and use that will provide diverse, high quality parks and recreation opportunities for the Town of Inlet.
- c. Seek to expand and maximize the recreational and program options offered throughout the park.
- d. Provide suggestions to enhance the marketing and outreach efforts to Fern Park's users in order to communicate the many different program, recreation and open space opportunities that Fern Park offers.
- e. Ensure that all of Fern Park's assets are planned for as well as maintained within the Town of Inlet's budget.

3. Process: The committee used a blend of monthly meetings, previously gathered information and an online survey to gather information from the public to formulate an outline for the future of the park.

- a. 1998 Survey and results
- b. Town Master Plan/Fern Park specific
- c. 2004 Master Plan from Parks Department
- d. 2017 Fern Park Assets Update
- e. Blue sky ideas from previous discussions
- f. HamCoMaps.net
- g. Arrowhead Park Master Plan
- h. Survey Monkey for an online survey for a full year
 - i. People who filled out the survey were asked if they were residents or visitors. They were asked if they knew Fern Park existed, and if yes did they know all that it had to offer. If they were familiar with Fern Park, they were asked how often they used it and for what activities.
 - ii.

4. Quick Wins: The attention created by the initiation of the Master Plan focused attention on the park and triggered some immediate responses. These included:

- a. Installation of a water fountain
 - b. Beginning the process of creating new trail maps
 - c. Trail simplification and maintenance by town, Black Fly Challenge and donated time
 - d. Installation of new trails signs
 - e. Trail issue feedback loop
 - f. New Fern Park entrance sign
 - g. Addition of 11 maple trees along the baseball field and replacement of memorial tree
5. Executive Summary:
- a. Fern Park is the “Undiscovered Jewel” of Inlet:
 - i. Arrowhead Park gets attention, as it should.
 - ii. In general, the public is sometimes confused between the two parks and not totally aware of the amenities in Fern Park. Fern Park should be promoted more. (Forming this committee has put a spotlight on Fern Park and has increased it’s usage.)
 - iii. Fern Park is a wonderful place for the nature and activities enthusiast (non-mechanized), for children, adults and dogs of all ages. It is a goal of this master plan to keep it that way.
 - b. There are funding requirements:
 - i. Capital, donation, grants or Town budget (for playground equipment, cover picnic area/play area, fences for the dog park or the baseball field, etc.), and operational maintenance.
 - ii. Funding amounts and sources were not reviewed by this committee.
 - c. Survey Summary:
 - i. Multi Use Trails: Maintain them and provide accurate maps
 - ii. Playground: Provide shade and newer equipment
 - iii. Pavilion: If it is ever moved, make the hockey rink regulation sized, insulate it, refrigerate it, and use arched trusses for indoor basketball.
 - iv. Baseball/Softball Field: Make the field regulation size, provide movable outfield fences, safer dugouts and better base paths
 - v. Outdoor Basketball Court: Improve the court surface and mark it for Pickle ball
 - vi. Picnic Area: Add grills and provide picnic tables year round
 - vii. Fenced Dog Park: Provide movable fences and benches
 - viii. Sledding Hill: Advertise it, provide lights and music occasionally
 - ix. Parking: Provide Handicapped parking
 - x. WiFi: Provide free access throughout the park
 - xi. Open Space: Maintain the entire park
6. Background:
- a. Natural Features: The flat space, which now includes parking, a baseball field and a pavilion started out as a floodplain of the central branch of the Moose River. Most of the area within Fern Park is mountainous and consists of a trail system used for hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing and snowshoeing. It is a

mixture of granite and quartz that was carved 7000 – 10000 years ago. The entire landscape is filled with glacial erratics (large boulders) some of which are as large as 30 feet in diameter. The forest which grew up on this glacial cut, started as White Pine, Spruce. This soft wood was harvested in the mid-nineteenth century and transported by the central branch of the Moose River, now known as the Fulton Chain of Lakes to be milled for lumber, tannin and paper. The forest that grew back in 1900 was a mixture of Maple, Beech and Spruce. This second growth forest has been culled for firewood and lumber twice since. Once in 1955 and again in 2015. From the 1930s through the 1970s and again currently maple sap was tapped from trees along the lower and mid-range ridge for local consumption.

b. History: A full history of Fern Park can be found in a document written by Charles Herr titled “The Fulton Chain: Early Settlement, Roads, Steamboats, Railroads and Hotels.”

i. Timeline:

1. 1892 – Galvin
2. 1892 – Finch Pryn
3. 1904 – Munson
4. 1926 – Kennwell
5. 1930 - Loomis – a bar and baseball field with very large wooden bleacher area.
6. 1963 - Town of Inlet used the location for the town’s highway garage. Only one small storage shed was ever built and used for that purpose.
7. 1973 - The town started using the trails for cross country skiing, with help from Walter Schmid who owned a ski shop on South Shore Road.
8. 1975 – The town began to rebuild the major (???) league baseball field with a new wooden backstop and bleachers.
9. 1976 - A tower and paved runway was installed for firemen’s field day training.
10. 1982 - Work started on an ice rink pavilion, which was modified over the next four years until completion.
11. 1985 - New backstop fencing for the baseball field was installed and basketball courts were added.
12. 2000 - A sledding hill with lighting was installed.
13. 2013 - A municipal sewer plant for downtown was installed.
14. 2016 - The baseball field was re-cut to make a softball field.
15. 2019 - A row of Maple trees was planted along the outfield.

ii. The space has been used for:

1. Ping Pong Ball Drop since 1977
2. Rain location for Summer Concert Series since 1983
3. Inlet Fall Festival since 1993
4. Black Fly Challenge Finish Line Every other year since 1996

5. Circus space for four years by the American Legion (years?)
 6. Fireman's Field Days 4 years (years?)
 7. Cardboard Sled Race since 2011
 8. Women's Softball League since 2015
 9. Youth Snowmobile Races 2015-2017
 10. Renaissance festival 2017
 11. Cycle Adirondacks 2-night stay August 2018
 12. Weddings
 13. Ski Races (years?)
 14. Ice Hockey League (?)
 15. Legion Major League Baseball (years?)
 16. Black Powder Rifle Shooting Range
 17. Various organizations
7. Stakeholders:
 - a. Taxpayers
 - b. Visitors
 - c. Inlet School prior to 2019
 - d. Town officials and maintenance personnel
 - e. CAP21
 - f. Volunteers
 - g. Residents neighboring Fern Park
 - h. Users of all ages
 8. Potential Funding Sources:
 - a. Town
 - b. Grants (with help from CAP-21)
 - i. NY
 - ii. Federal
 - iii. Private
 - c. Other
 - i. Black Fly Challenge
 - ii. Fundraising
 - iii. One-time grants (i.e. Cycle ADK, People For Bikes)
 9. Potential Labor Sources:
 - a. Existing employees or new hire
 - b. Labor hired specifically for a project
 - c. Volunteers
 - d. Southern Adirondack Trails Alliance (SATA)
 - e. Black Fly Challenge (BFC)
 - f. CASART (Central Adirondack Search and Rescue Team)
 - g. Adirondack Mountain Club
 - h. NYS DEC
 - i. Barnstormers
 10. Criteria for Improvement:
 - a. Maintainability

- b. Space use and interconnection between certain potential improvements and activities
- c. Insurance considerations
- d. Funding needs
- e. Same importance as Arrowhead Park
- f. Staffing and budget

11. Focus Factors for Park Improvements / Survey Results

a. Trails

- i. Issues: The area that garnered the most response (26%) was related to the condition of the current multi use trails. These trails serve many purposes throughout the seasons. They can be used for-hiking, biking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, or dog walking. The responses were mostly concerning the maintenance of the trails and the related signs and maps.
- ii. Actions: There has currently been a great deal of activity related to these trails and this activity needs to continue. Most of the main trails have been cleared and re-graded and some bridges have been rebuilt. Some of the trails have also been charted by GPS and new maps will be produced. The town needs to continue to partner with groups like the Black Fly Challenge to develop biking trails that will best use the terrain. Signage needs to continue to be developed and maps need to be provided and to continually be kept up to date as trails are changed or added. *There have been discussions on moving the snowmobile trail off Gilbert Road and through Fern Park instead. Safety concerns will continue to prevent this action.
- iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department
- iv. Consequences of Inaction: The trails will fall into disrepair and the public will not use them.

b. Playground:

- i. Issues: Approximately 11% of respondents identified a need for more or better playground equipment as well as more shade for the playground
- ii. Actions: More trees have been planted around the current playground. A youth fitness area was also suggested as well as a climbing wall and balance beam. It was also suggested that the existing fire tower could also be incorporated.
- iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department, Inlet Youth Commission
- iv. Consequences of Inaction: Families with young children may not spend much time in the park.

c. Pavilion:

- i. Issues: The Pavilion is a multi-use building that was built in the early 1980's. Its uses include ice skating, ice hockey and a warming room in the winter and a basketball/pickle ball court in the summer, restrooms and general covered open area. A good deal of the comments regarding

this building were related to its use as an ice skating and hockey rink which is currently weather dependent.

- ii. Actions: If there was ever an opportunity to move or rebuild the pavilion suggestions would for better insulation, refrigeration for skating, make it regulation size for hockey, make it clear span so the roof height is appropriate for basketball in the summer.
 - iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department
 - iv. Consequences of Inaction: Miss an opportunity to make this a draw for public skating, youth hockey, basketball and other activities.
- d. Baseball/Softball Field:
- i. Issues: The field may need to be relocated if the pavilion is moved. The field is not regulation size for either Little League or softball. There are no outfield fences. The base paths are not even and the grass needs to be better maintained
 - ii. Actions: Provide moveable outfield fencing. Make the field regulation size. Add more bleachers, a scoreboard, team benches and generally improve the condition of the field
 - iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department
 - iv. Potential Consequences of Inaction: There are safety issues with the field in its current state and there is no chance for league play.
- e. Outdoor Basketball Court:
- i. Issue: Current surface is rough and uneven.
 - ii. Action: Level and blacktop the court. Mark and maintain the area. Add lines for pickleball and set times for play.
 - iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department
 - iv. Potential Consequences of Inaction:
- f. Picnic Area:
- i. Issue: Area not used for picnicking.
 - ii. Actions: Add grills. Provide a covered area. Leave picnic tables out year round.
 - iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department
 - iv. Potential Consequences of Inaction:
- g. Fenced Dog Park:
- i. Issue: There is currently no fenced area to allow dogs to run.
 - ii. Action: Designate an area with moveable fencing, clean up station and benches. Provide manpower for maintenance.
 - iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department
 - iv. Potential Consequences of Inaction:
- h. Sledding Hill:
- i. Issue: Not many people are aware that there is a sledding hill in Inlet.
 - ii. Actions: Highlight the hill in print and social media. Provide colored lights and music on designated nights.
 - iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department, Inlet Information Office, Tourist Office

iv. Potential Consequences of Inaction:

i. Parking:

i. Issue: Parking needs to be better utilized.

ii. Actions: A plan needs to be developed and documented for large events. Fern Park needs to be used more for overflow parking for trailers from the boat launch and snowmobile trailers. There needs to be more handicapped parking for events held in the park.

iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department

iv. Potential Consequences of Inaction:

j. WiFi:

i. Issue: Coverage is inconsistent.

ii. Action: Provide free full-time coverage throughout the park and maintain it.

iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department

iv. Potential Consequences of Inaction:

k. Open Space:

i. Issue: Maintenance

ii. Action: Provide adequate manpower to maintain the area.

iii. Group(s) Responsible for Implementation: Inlet Parks Department, Inlet Town Board

iv. Potential Consequences of Inaction: Degradation of the area. Poor maintenance reflects negatively on the town.

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