

PETITIONER'S ARTICLE DESCRIPTION

Town Meeting

Since Town Meeting is responsible for approving the operating budget of the Golf Enterprise Fund, this warrant article proposes an approach to Town Meeting contributing to the process of considering land use of 120 acres of Putterham Meadows. Brookline Recreation Department Director Leigh Jackson stated "there has been some public pressure recently around the golf course and whether it should be a golf course or not." She stated that from a staff perspective, "it is fair and open for discussion in terms of the politics and town meeting and it's not for the staff to determine that it's a golf course." She stated that "we just really see it as a beautiful incredible asset to the Community," and "we are making the best use of it as a golf course that we can, while also putting into plan opening up more to the Community." [1]

Previous Uses of Putterham Meadows

On January 26, 1924 - roughly 10 years before the Brookline municipal golf course was launched - the Brookline Chronicle noted in an article about a proposed golf course "[the land] was acquired for the purpose of providing a large recreation centre [sic] when that part of the town was developed;" and a golf course was not specified. [2]

Putterham Meadows as "a tract of meadows and swamps, woods, a brook and a marshy pond" once served as a bird sanctuary in which "a large variety of species should be found there" (noted the Boston Globe in 1926). [3] In 1929, the president of the club objected to the creation of a town golf course stating "We have the interest that every nature lover feels in a beautiful tract of largely unspoiled woods, and more specifically we are interested because for several years we have been maintaining a bird sanctuary there and we should be very sorry to be obliged for any reason to abandon it." [4]

Putterham Meadows once had a bridle path. "Through its many acres runs a tortuous bridle-path, wide enough for horse and man to walk without fear or risk of collision. Up hill and down, through thick forest and past blooming meadow land it goes, leaving the civilized and macadamized atmosphere of Hammond Street on one end and merging again into the limit of cultivation on Newton Street on the other." [5] According to the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, "This path ran for about a mile from Hammond Street to the intersection of Newton and South Streets, roughly following the modern property line between the town land and The Country Club." [6]

Massachusetts Article 97

The land currently used as the Robert T. Lynch Golf Course is protected from development or alternate use by Massachusetts Article 97. But, a range of recreational or conservation options is possible within Article 97. Article 97 states "the people shall have the right to clean air and water, freedom from excessive and unnecessary noise, and the natural, scenic, historic, and

esthetic qualities of their environment; and the protection of the people in their right to the conservation, development and utilization of the agricultural, mineral, forest, water, air and other natural resources is hereby declared to be a public purpose.”

Brookline’s Outdoor Recreation Needs

Brookline residents in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space 2019 Strategic Master Plan Survey ranked the following facilities/services as most important to their household: 1. Parks and playgrounds 2. Trails and pathways 3. Nature sanctuaries ~~4. Athletic fields~~, with the Municipal 18-hole Golf Course ranked as the 21st highest priority out of 21. [7]

The Brookline Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan Report from June 2021 “recommends that Brookline strive to achieve a Town-wide canopy goal of 49.1% coverage over the coming decade which will require the planting of 900 trees on public and private land each year for the next 10 years” and that “Several Town properties did show loss of canopy from 2014 to 2020 including... Putterham Meadows Golf Course (Tree clearing for driving range construction).” [8]

~~The Park and Recreation Commission, with whom Director of Parks and Open Space Alexandra Vecchio and Director of Recreation Leigh Jackson were in agreement, noted “Currently, Brookline has a deficit of athletic fields. An increased inventory of athletic field space is required to meet the specific athletic and fitness needs of the community. The athletic fields in Brookline see nearly 30,000 hours of regular scheduled use over the course of a given year, not including additional usage by the Green Dog off-leash program, or walk-in, casual usage. Many groups are turned away each year and permit requests are denied due to lack of athletic field space.” [9]~~

Town Meeting passed Warrant Article 31 in November 2019 by an almost unanimous margin of 191-YES, 1 NO, which requested that the Town of Brookline resolve to "Prioritize safe, space-efficient, and energy-efficient movement of people and goods over the movement and parking of private vehicles when designing and improving our public ways, with particular focus on high-traffic routes, connectivity and directness.” [10] The northern end of the Robert T. Lynch Municipal Golf Course is less than a mile from the Chestnut Hill T stop. A multi-use path **using the existing golf cart paths** around the perimeter of the golf course could improve a micro-mobility user’s commute between the Baker School and the Brookline High School significantly.

~~Town Meeting overwhelmingly passed Warrant Article 30, a “Resolution calling for a preliminary study of options for locating a public outdoor swimming facility for Brookline residents” in the 2019 Annual Town Meeting and in 2018 there were 82,000 user days at the Evelyn Kirrane Aquatics Center; and thus far no location for the outdoor pool has been chosen. [11], [12]~~

~~Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in the U.S. [13] Brookline currently has 17 courts with a plan to add 10 more. [14] In 1931 the Putterham Community Improvement Association did not~~

~~know about pickleball at the time, but they did ask for tennis courts at Putterham Meadows as part of the new golf course development. [15]~~

The Lawton Park Community Garden (23 beds, 0.1 acres) has approximately 65 people on its waiting list and the Community Gardens at Larz Anderson (103 beds, 1.7 acres) has a 2 year waiting list. [16]

Robert T. Lynch Municipal Golf Course

In a memorandum in response to Warrant Articles 23 and 24 from the Spring 2022 Town Meeting, Alexandra Vecchio, Director of Parks and Open Space and Erin Chute Gallentine, Commissioner of Public Works state on page 5 that "For many years, the town has not used pesticides or herbicides in treatments of our fields." [17] The Robert T. Lynch Municipal Golf Course is not subject to this policy. [18] It is common for golf courses to use these treatments. [30]

If 22% of Brookline's open space was no longer treated as space open to the public, then the current 8.8 acres per 1000 residents would fall even shorter of the standard of 10 acres per 1000 residents. [19]

The Robert T. Lynch Municipal Golf Course overflows into approximately 2.7 acres (15%) of the 17.23 acres passive use Dane Park. [20]

In FY21, 31,175 rounds of golf were played at the Robert T. Lynch Municipal Golf Course (120 acres) and in 2020, the Arnold Arboretum (281 acres) had 2-3 million visits. [21], [22]

For each year during 2013-2021, the 9 hole Pine Meadows Golf Club in the Town of Lexington had a higher net revenue than the 18 hole Robert T. Lynch Municipal Golf Course. [23]

Golf Course Master Plan

The Golf Course Landscape Master Plan Design Review Committee is currently in the preliminary phases of creating a site wide plan. In a July 2022 meeting, now former Park and Recreation Commissioner Wendy Sheridan Ames "cited her vote of December 10, 2019, where she supported the option of moving forward with the master plan for the golf course and the club house. These plans included an analysis of whether a 9-hole course could fit here and alternatively this could be an 18-hole course and could the land reconfigured to be used for other purposes. She thinks what is being presented is a terrific plan though she is disappointed that there has been a lack of attention to the original intention of the Park and Recreation Commission regarding freeing up the perimeter land.

She is concern[ed] about the amount of weight being put on the survey results as the survey went out to golfers and was not promoted through the Recreation or other town departments where you might have had additional comments from non-golfers. She thinks it is a terrific study but not reflective of what the entire community wants." [24]

In March 2022, the committee conducted a survey which included the following distribution channels: Brookline Golf Course Email Distribution List, brooklinegolf.com, Brookline Recreation Website, Friends of Putterham Woods, Friends of Dane Park, Greenspace Alliance, Brookline Neighborhood Alliance, North Brookline Neighborhood Association, Emerson Garden Association. [25]

Additional stakeholders such as Mothers Out Front, the Brookline High School Environmental Action Club, Brookline school PTOs, the Charles River Watershed Association, Climate Action Brookline, and other recreational groups were not specifically invited to participate in the survey.

The Golf Course Landscape Master Plan Design survey had the following survey responses (576 total):

Do you play golf? Yes 89.41%, No 10.59%

Gender (Optional): 81.37% Male, 18.63% Female

Town of Residence 1. Brookline: 33.85% 2. Boston: 20.66% 3. Newton: 10.59% 4. West Roxbury: 6.77% 5. Needham: 5.56% 6. Dedham: 2.26 % 7. Others: 20.32%. [25]

The Golf Course Landscape Master Plan Design Review January 2022 slides state “the plan will take into account the footprint of the 18 hole golf course and efforts should be to minimize its footprint on the property to create more recreational or environmental sustainable area.” [26]

The Golf Course Landscape Master Plan Design Review March 2022 slides state that when considering other recreational activities, “THESE ACTIVITIES CAN NOT JEOPARDIZE THE ABILITY TO OFFER 18 HOLES OF GOLF.” [27]

The Preliminary Master Plan Presentation states that “the site is primarily used for golf and driving range. Limited use by the majority of resident[s] who don’t play golf” and recommends the following community access options:

- “Add an event pavilion adjacent to upper parking area.
- Establish foot trails through Putterham Woods with connection to Dane Park.
- Improve and expand parking.
- Add shorter tees to promote beginner and youth use of the course.
- Consider off season use of range as a dog park.
- Develop ‘Course Closed’ footpath with interior loops for walking, running XC skiing and sledding.
- Consider the addition of tennis or pickleball courts” [28]

This Warrant Article asks the Parks and Recreation Commission to be more inclusive when creating its plan for the 120 acres of open space. Additional stakeholders should be included in the process. The hard constraint of an 18 hole golf course should be relaxed to explore what is possible for this space. The land is protected by Article 97 and cannot be “used for other purposes than originally intended without approval by the Conservation Commission or the Park and Recreation Commission, the Board of Selectmen, and Town Meeting, plus a two-thirds vote

of both houses of the Massachusetts legislature.” [29] This Warrant Article does not make any recommendations to use the land for housing or commercial development.

SOURCES

[1] [Brookline Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes](#)

[Date: June 14, 2022](#)

[2] “Propose Town Golf Course : Park Board Delays Plan for Putterham Meadow”, The Chronicle, Brookline, 26 January 1924, page 4.

https://brookline.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=golf&i=f&by=1924&bdd=1920&d=01011920-12311929&m=between&ord=k1&fn=brookline_chronicle_usa_massachusetts_brookline_19240126_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=2914

[3] “Brookline”, The Boston Globe, 2 October 1926, page 5

<https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/image/431168773/?terms=%22putterham%20meadows%22&match=1>

[4] “Golf Project Going Ahead, Board is Now Negotiating for Exchange of Land, Two Architects Have Made Tentative Layouts for Municipal Links”, Brookline Chronicle, 24 October 1929, page 1.

https://brookline.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=golf&i=f&by=1929&bdd=1920&d=01011920-12311929&m=between&ord=k1&fn=brookline_chronicle_usa_massachusetts_brookline_19291024_english_1&df=1&dt=10&cid=2914

[5] “Fall Foliage in the Parks, The Parks as Spots to See and Places to Play, The Excelling and Contrasting Beauties of Riverdale Parkway and Putterham Meadows”, The Brookline Chronicle, 28 October 1916, page 12.

https://brookline.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=%22putterham%20meadows%22&i=f&d=01011870-12311960&m=between&ord=k1&fn=the_chronicle_usa_massachusetts_brookline_19161028_english_12&df=1&dt=1&cid=2914

[6] Lazar, Marian, “An Historic Profile : Putterham Meadows”, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, Fall 2004, page 5. <http://www.brooklinegreenspace.org/pdf/FallGreen04.pdf>

[7] Town of Brookline, Massachusetts

[Parks Open Space and Recreation Strategic Master Plan 2020](#) (page 342)

[8] [Brookline Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan June 2021](#)

[9] [Athletic Playing Field Deficit Solution Summary and FAQs 03-30-2022.pdf](#)

[10] Town of Brookline, Massachusetts

<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/20106/November-19-2019-Special-Town-Meeting-Warrant>

[11] Town of Brookline, Massachusetts

<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/18847/WARRANT-2019-Annual-Town-Meeting>

[12] 2018-80,000 user days at Evelyn Kirrane Aquatics Center provided by Leigh Jackson, Director of Recreation in 2022 email conversations

[13] Randall, Laura, "Noisy, silly, friendly pickleball – America's fastest growing sport", The Christian Science Monitor, 6 July 2022

<https://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/2022/0706/Noisy-silly-friendly-pickleball-America-s-fastest-growing-sport#:~:text=amuse%20their%20children.,%E2%80%9CIt%20is%20the%20fastest%20growing%20sport%20in%20the%20U.S.%20And,4.8%20million%20players%2C%20she%20says.>

[14] Court numbers provided by Craig Corcoran in 2022 email conversations

[15] Regarding the Putterham Community Improvement Association

"Hold Banquet Next Tuesday, Second Annual Affair of Putterham Group", Brookline Chronicle, 14 May 1931, page 4

https://brookline.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=%22putterham%20meadows%22&i=f&by=1931&bdd=1930&d=01011930-12311939&m=between&ord=k1&fn=brookline-chronicle-usa-massachusetts_brookline_19310514_english_4&df=1&dt=3&cid=2014

[16] 2022 Email conversations with Ellisa Yanover and Barbara Westley

[17] Alexandra Vecchio, Director of Parks and Open Space, and Eric Chute Gallentine, Commissioner of Public Works, Memo regarding Warrant Articles 23 and 24, March 29, 2022

[18] Murphy, Mike, Brookline Golf Course Robert T. Lynch Municipal 2022 Agricultural Plan

[19] 557 acres / 63191 people * 1000 = 8.8 acres per 1000 residents

[20] [Parks Open Space and Recreation Strategic Master Plan 2020](#) (page 226)

[21] From 2022 email conversation with Justin Lawson, Golf Course General Manager
"In FY21 there were 31,175 rounds played. About 8.2% were resident rounds."

[22] "2020 Annual Report, The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University"

<https://arboretum.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2020-annual-report.pdf>

[23] Numbers derived from online sources and 2022 conversations with Melinda Spencer, Administrative Manager Town of Lexington, Recreation and Community Programs. See Google Sheet

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/14Be9Jhd6wbz4oX2KFJnmj5xwf09Oq3dsZsLdoe9NkCU/edit?usp=sharing>

[24] "Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes" 12 July 2022.

https://www.brooklinema.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/_07122022-10868

[25] Brookline Golf Course : Golf Course Landscape Master Plan Design Review Committee March 16, 2022 Meeting slides, "Resident / Golfer Survey: Some early results Preview" slides 8-16 https://www.brooklinegolf.com/images/Golf_Course_DRC/DRC_Mar1622_Meeting.pdf

[26] Meeting January 26, 2022 - BROOKLINE GOLF COURSE Golf Course Landscape Master Plan Design Review Committee, slide 6

https://www.brooklinegolf.com/images/Golf_Course_DRC/DRC_Kickoff_Meeting_Presentation-compressed.pdf

[27] Meeting March 2, 2022 - BROOKLINE GOLF COURSE Golf Course Landscape Master Plan Design Review Committee, slide 8

https://www.brooklinegolf.com/images/Golf_Course_DRC/DRC_Mar222_Meeting_Slide_Deck.pdf

[28] Robert T. Lynch Golf Course Preliminary Master Plan Presentation, May 17, 2022, Slides 45-46

https://www.brooklinegolf.com/images/Golf_Course_DRC/Brookline_GC_PRELIM_MP_presentation_final_5-17-22_Minimum.pdf

[29] Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, "Open Space Protection in Brookline: An Introduction to Terminology" <http://www.brooklinegreenspace.org/pdf/060114Land%20Protection%20Terms.pdf>

[30] Uteuova, Aliya, "'Botox for your lawn': the controversial use of pesticides on golf courses" The Guardian, 6 August 2022,

https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/06/pesticides-golf-courses-health-problems?CMP=share_btn_link