



Parks Commissioners:
Emily Donaldson (2027)
Andrew Brewer (2028)
Kassia Randzio, Chair (2029)
Jessa Barnard (2030)
Rebecca Copans (2031)

Alec Ellsworth (Parks Director)

Parks Commission
Wednesday, August 5th, 2026 / 6:00 PM
Location: Walking Meeting. Meet at Summer St. Park

Mission: The Parks Commission advances a long-term vision to ensure that parks, gardens, greenways, and natural areas are vital to Montpelier's community identity and are forever available for the enjoyment of all.

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners: Andrew, Kassia, Rebecca, Jessa, Emily

Staff: Alec, Keir

Public: Diane and Dick Muller, Mike Gaines, Linda Young, Julie Smart, Linda Suter, Numa

6:07 Commissioner Introductions

6:08 August 5th Agenda, June 15th Minutes. Jessa moves to approve, Emily seconds. Unanimous.

6:09 Public Comment for items not on the agenda. N/A

6:10 Summer St. Park

- Alec shared overview of conversations with neighbors about Summer Street Park over the past couple of years, and recent work completed: tree pruning, scraggly shrub removal, planted a tulip poplar that will grow quite large and a couple other saplings to fill gaps anticipated as existing shade trees age
- Four Norway Maples anchor the corners of the park. Non-native, and old. Provide valued shade, but need to plan for these trees to age-out and possible removal.
- Right Of Way at the back of the park (in front of house) needs to be resolved. With this resolved, park can be expanded to the bottom of the steps. The ROW area used to be road/driveway, so is hard packed and challenging for trees to grow in that area. Three adjacent landowners would need to be part of that agreement.
- Neighbors appreciate about the park now:
 - Big trees. Plant more trees now so that there continues to be big shade. The shade trees cool the neighborhood.
 - Grassy area used for picnics, neighborhood gatherings, bocce, soccer
 - People are on the benches a lot. Shows the need for more benches/seating areas. Maybe Adirondack chairs where people can gather.
 - Used a lot by younger kids, especially as homes turn over in the neighborhood and there are more young families.

Parks Commissioners:

Emily Donaldson (2027)

Andrew Brewer (2028)

Kassia Randzio, Chair (2029)

Jessa Barnard (2030)

Rebecca Copans (2031)

Alec Ellsworth (Parks Director)

- Like that the area inside the trees is a flexibly used area, doesn't have a lot of infrastructure, so it's a "blank slate" for multiple purposes and uses, which is nice to keep that way.
- The park has a formal feel, in part because of the architecture of the houses surrounding the park. But the park itself also has a relaxed, informal feel because it doesn't have a lot of infrastructure. Want to keep that informal feeling.
- History: Before trees grew up, there were kids ballplaying in the park, and broken windows on adjacent houses. That's when the city ordinance was added to prohibit ballplaying. But neighbors don't feel that's an issue now, and the ordinance could be amended.
- Ideas/changes for the future:
 - Add a swing or a swing set. Suggested that anything like this be a rope swing from a tree or natural material to fit with the character of the park, rather than a built swing set.
 - More benches/seating areas. Could be benches in each of the back corners. Want to retain open area in the middle.
 - Sarah Hoffmeier (Tree Board) drafted some park plans. Generally like the plans, but do not like the paths through the middle of the park. Prefer to keep the middle of the park open. The current path (near benches) isn't really necessary and could be removed, but does help define the area as a park rather than the house's lawn.
 - Plant something prettier around the benches
 - Plant a variety of trees, diversify to resist impacts of climate change. Like flowering trees, but primary species should be large shade trees.
- Challenges:
 - ROW is hard packed material, so challenging to plant trees in this area.
 - Some very occasional sleeping in the park, but not a nuisance for neighbors
 - Water off the hill (upper left side), diverts into driveways, suggest a rain garden in that corner of the park to purposefully collect some of this water. Could include a seating area. Would need maintenance, which could be challenging for staff, but neighbors are currently quite engaged to help.
 - People think most of the park (behind the benches near the road) is the front yard of the back house. Opportunity to add more benches farther back, add some sitting stones, etc.

6:47: Walk to visit 127 Elm St.

- Alec gave overview of 127 Elm as a FEMA buyout. Any construction will need to be approved by Vermont Emergency Management. During buyout process, former owner and neighbors provided some guidance on future of the park, were hoping for access into the river, but that won't be possible due to steep drop.
- First phase: demolition of the house (complete), fence along the river, ramp into the cellar hole.
- Second phase: create a distinct entrance, plant trees, cap the cellar hole with granite slabs (some saved from demolition) to be bench seating.
- Challenges:

Parks Commissioners:

Emily Donaldson (2027)

Andrew Brewer (2028)

Kassia Randzio, Chair (2029)

Jessa Barnard (2030)

Rebecca Copans (2031)

Alec Ellsworth (Parks Director)

- No current barrier between the park and the river.
- Feels like the park spills into the street. Could benefit from vegetation or fencing to make a barrier by the street, but a barrier could also make the park feel private rather than public. Solution could be a partial fence/barrier with a wide open area as well. This could possibly be a raised bed or hill/berm so that it's an earthen barrier by the street and could be planted.
- With fence by river and/or barrier by street, should retain sight lines so that the park isn't hidden from view for open, safe feeling
- Site needs a name. Suggested a water resilience theme. Numa suggested Juniper and Ivy Park (names of the two kids who lived in the buyout home).
- Ideas:
 - Plant shade trees. The neighborhood doesn't have much shade, and this could be a valuable cooler shady area.
 - When the cellar hole is capped with granite, portions of the granite could be carved. This could even be interactive things like a chess board carved into the granite.
 - Should include a sign with the story of the house and river
 - Fence not just to the edge of the park, but to the edge of the adjacent neighbors' houses

7:15 Discussed (but did not walk to) Mill Pond Park

- There is a dock planned to be installed. Parks staff have materials, and will build soon.
- The seating area is being put back together
- Park is being maintained regularly

7:28 Agenda items, date, and location for next month's meeting.

- Potential topics:
 - Rebecca is working on installing poop buckets, recruiting volunteers to help maintain them
 - Fires – policy is no fires except in designated areas, so need to designate where fires are/aren't allowed. Challenge of people starting fires but not completely putting out fires.
 - Historic Commission wants to talk with Parks Commission about the viewshed from the Hubbard Tower and visibility of the tower from downtown
 - Southern portion of new trail is open, Alec planning a ribbon cutting in September. Was suggested that this be a potluck.
 - Low income firewood program
 - Edibles
 - Will discuss dog policy October and November (not September)
- **Next meeting: September 15th at 6:00pm**

7:42: Adjourned by unanimous consent