

**Symmes Advisory Committee Public Use Working Group  
Meeting Minutes, 7 January 2003  
Symmes Hospital Conference Room**

**Members Attending:** Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Steve Frigand, Suzi Lubar, Deborah O'Donnell, Brian Rehrig (Chair)

**Also in Attendance:** Teresa DeBenedictis (Acting Director of Public Works), Dave Crispin (BSC Group), Nina Fisher (CATS), Michelle Hassler (Arlington Cemetery Commission), Carolyn Kenney (CATS), Julie Rackliffe Lucey (CATS)

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM.

**Status of SAC Process**

Brian Rehrig distributed a package of materials to attendees which included a Status Report of the SAC to the Arlington Board of Selectmen and the most recent site planning alternatives for the Symmes project presented by the VHB Consultant Team. Brian reported that, after nearly a month off, the Symmes Advisory Committee would be meeting on Thursday to review a winnowed set of site planning alternatives. He also reported that the general direction of the SAC and ARB had been to explore leaving the Summer Street woods undeveloped and to leave placeholders for a Community Wellness Center and Skyline Park.

**Rescheduling of Symmes Public Forum**

Brian Rehrig announced that the Symmes Public Forum had been rescheduled for 13 February 2003. At this Forum, the VHB Consulting Team is expected to present three different site use alternatives for public comment.

**Activity Report by CATS**

Deborah O'Donnell reported that the Coalition for A Treehouse at Symmes was concerned that the area proposed by the VHB Consultant Team for the Wellness/Community Center was not large enough to accommodate the combined program. CATS members also questioned the advisability of combining the community and wellness functions, explaining that complications may be generated by combining public uses and commercial/medical uses in a single facility. Julie Rackliffe Lucey and Nina Fisher announced that they were starting a new children's play group at the Fox Library named the Puddlestompers Program.

**Community Wellness Center Issues:**

**1) Advisors to Attend 21 February PUWG Meeting**

Brian Rehrig suggested that a short list of advisors be invited to attend the next PUWG meeting to lend their expertise on community and wellness centers in the Boston area. Brian's prospective list included representatives from HealthPoint, YMCA of Greater Boston, and an independent community center development consultant. Meeting participants also suggested possible advisors from Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and the Lexington Children's Place.

**2) Schedule Visits to Wellness and Community Center Facilities**

Brian Rehrig reported that he was planning to schedule site visits for members of the SAC Public Use and Medical Use Working Groups to tour wellness and community center facilities in the area. The facilities suggested were HealthPoint, a YMCA, Healthtrax, Wellspace and the Harwich Community Center.

**Memorial Grove Presentation**

Dave Crispin, a Civil Engineer at the BSC Group, presented a memorial grove development proposal for the Summer Street woods parcel of the Symmes site. The proposal showed an interment capacity for cremains of 9,000-18,000 which, at the current demand, translates to between 100 and 150 years. Mr. Crispin also presented several images of existing cemeteries and memorial groves showing the wide range of possible environments and memorials.

Michelle Hassler and Teresa DeBenedictis spoke in support of the memorial grove proposal, pointing out that the proposal would greatly improve the parcel as public open space, that the venture would be financially sound for the Town, that no new personnel and equipment would be required, and that the facility could work in cooperation with Arlington's Mt Pleasant cemetery offering memorial services at the existing Chapel.

### **Open Space Protection Recommendations**

Brian Rehrig suggested that the Working Group begin thinking about the long-term protection of open space at the Symmes site. Depending on the proposed use for the open space, conservation restrictions may be necessary to insure it's protection.

### **Next Meeting**

Working Group members discussed the rescheduling of the next meeting of the Symmes Public Use Working Group, which had been set for 7 PM on Tuesday, 21 January 2003 at Symmes. Brian Rehrig volunteered to explore other meeting date options and report an alternative date to the Working Group via e-mail.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.