

Roberts Property
Public Comments Collected from Emails
Archive up to April, 2005

I like the idea of making this field, but worry about all the people who use the area to walk their dogs now. Will they still do this if it becomes baseball fields? And what about the people who use the road for their soap box derby races? They shut down the road so no one can use it, will they stop people from using the fields. I think that everyone should get access to the area.

I had just read the piece in the Hartford Courant concerning discussions for the use of the Roberts's property and would like to offer my suggestion for the use of the area. I believe the property, combined with the Birge Pond/Hoppers area, can best be utilized as a golf course. The course could be similar to Goodwin Golf Course in Hartford with walking trails through the course along with picnic and play areas next to a pond. In the winter, a light show is set up around the course and the public, for a fee, can drive through and view the show. Areas for sports fields can possibly also be incorporated into the area. I believe this may take more upfront monies, but the golf course would also be a source of income to the city.

Whatever goes there, I think that the plan should consider all of the city acreage that abuts it including the Hoppers/Birge pond area. Even if the funding is not available at this time, I think that a Master Plan for the area would benefit the community. A few years back, I had been an advocate of a public golf course in this area for two reasons. The first is that a golf course would generate revenue for maintenance of the property and for activities other than golf. The other reason was that a golf course with walking trails around it would attract and allow people of all different ages to use it. It would have attracted new residents. I don't golf but I would have loved if my kids had a municipal golf course and surrounding activities to occupy their time. My nephews live in Simsbury and they have always enjoyed the Simsbury Farms Complex, even working there as they got older. I think that the golf course idea will always be fought so now I would like to see an attractive layout of necessary playing fields along with safe walking trails (like Sessions Woods). Make the kettles accessible so that the ATM drivers don't scare people away as soon as they set foot on the property. Make the Roberts Property/Hoppers Birge Pond area a destination point for our community. Any plan will require revenue to maintain the property. Would a mini golf course generate much cash? There are many different approaches but I would like to see one that allows Bristol residents of all ages to safely enjoy this beautiful property!

The city invested \$1.3 million in this land. It has value as a future school site, since the majority of residential development in that area, which would truly give you a

neighborhood school, while also having space to incorporate fields and other passive and active recreational needs and trails for everyone's use.

I will be unable to make the Hearing tonight, but want to acknowledge information that the Chamber had received during discussions and surveys on recreational needs in our community, the request for additional slo pitch softball, a home for the soap box group, with possible other uses for the site during the winter months, maybe sledding, baseball and soccer fields, possible an integrated walking of bike trail into the hoppers area. The other use which might have a place is possibly a community gardening area, they seem to work in other communities and a small area could be opened for individuals looking to plant small gardens. Although I think there may well be a need for skateboard recreation I don't think this location would fit because of the distance from the center of the city. Most of these kids would need to walk, and I don't think that area lends itself a good network of sidewalks to get there. Thanks for your consideration.

I read in the Bristol Press that we could email you suggestions. Perhaps others have asked for a softball field, but I wanted to make certain that the suggestion be made. As an active member of the Little League organization, I can state that we are short a softball field. The Park Department is wonderful about allowing us to use Wilson Field; however, after a heavy rainfall, Wilson is not always playable. Even with the three Little Leagues in town, we are still short fields when Wilson isn't playable. (Casey Field is an adult softball field, and the measurements aren't right for youth softball.) This summer, we had to move one of our District tournament games to Berlin because we didn't have a playable field for our upper division players. Thanks for your consideration and for the time that you are giving to this project.

I would like to express my views on the development of the Roberts property. It is a beautiful site and I have spent many hours there enjoying the open spaces and the woods trails with my daughter and our dog, whether we are there alone or in the company of other dog owners, it is almost always enjoyable for all. I hope some space can be set aside for the many Bristolites and their dogs who frequent the property. The vast majority of people we have come into contact there are responsible working citizens who care enough about their dogs to make the effort to make sure they have plenty of exercise in a safe environment. Socialization for the canines and their owners is a nice side benefit. It is not unusual for me to see dog owners picking up trash discarded by others, because we don't want our dogs picking up something which could hurt them. Our regular visits to the Roberts property is one of the benefits of living in Bristol that we really enjoy. I hope we don't lose them-we'll be heartbroken!

I wish to suggest that the Roberts property be used for cluster homes for seniors.

Ellen Zoppo-Chairwoman
Roberts Property Committee
c/o Bristol City Hall
111 North Main Street
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October 18, 2004

To the Members of the Robert's Property Committee,

Good evening. Unfortunately due to a schedule conflict, I will be out of town on business and unable to attend the October 20th Public Hearing on the planned development of the Robert's Property. I have attended a couple of the Wednesday meetings and would first like to commend each member for their commitment to finding the most suitable use for the property.

I would like take this time to offer my input as to the direction the city should take in developing this parcel. As a resident of Bristol for over 40 years, I treasure the park system that we have. I believe it would be a tribute to some of Bristol's earlier benefactors if we continue to develop property in such a fashion that it preserves the natural beauty of the area. Preserving this parcel as a passive recreational facility will benefit not only Bristol's current residents but future residents as well. Open space is a valuable resource and to set aside this area adjacent to the Hoppers would truly be a gift.

I see the expansive property as offering a variety of options as far as usage. With the agreement with the West Cemetery, the current entrance location appears to be set and easily accessible. Local residents are already aware that this is a school district, so safety concerns are minimized in comparison to a newly developed location.

West of and adjacent to the parking lot, I would suggest locating four basketball courts, side by side, slightly below grade and with proper drainage. The courts could be flooded during the winter and used for ice skating. I have seen them placed this way at other parks.

The northwest corner offers a perfect location for a ball field or two, with all of the homerun balls being collected on the hill which rises beyond it. This orientation will minimize the potential for errant balls throughout the rest of the property and provide additional fields for city kids.

Moving to the southwest corner, a broad open area should be available to visitors for an impromptu soccer or touch football game, Frisbee or kite flying. The adjacent hills could be used for winter sledding, alleviating some of the overflow and significantly reducing the unsafe and dangerous on-street parking at nearby Nelson's Field.

As we swing around to the southeast corner, an area should be set aside to provide residents with access to the Hoppers. The existing trail system should be displayed and at a future date, expanded so that residents and visitors can enjoy the natural beauty of this area and observe the hoppers up close. Now that Birge's Pond has been dredged, we have another treasure in our own backyard, a place for family's to experience the outdoors, with either binoculars or a camera, fishing pole or a canoe. I am sure the Park Department could coordinate some functions with the Hopper's Committee, Barnes Nature Preserve and Indian Rock, to co-sponsor some nature awareness programs for the city's children. I can also see the addition of cross-country trails throughout both sites for use in winter. I am not a skier but the trails, along with a sledding hill, would allow the residents to use the facility for winter recreation as well. Access to the Hoppers from the Robert's property will help to deal with the parking limitations near the pond itself.

Along the eastern boundary, more open space with a walking circuit similar to that at Rockwell Park would be well received. A more challenging course could be designed around the entire property. As a nearby resident, I am amazed at the number of people using this area on weekends either as a family or on an individual basis. With today's demanding schedules and life's frantic pace, it is a pleasure to enjoy the solitude of a peaceful walk alone or with a pet. I believe everyone familiar with the area would agree that there is definitely a need to maintain a substantial percentage of this property for passive recreation.

With the expansive parcel that makes up the Robert's Property site, a significant buffer between the nearby homes and this park should be a major consideration. Since Councilwoman Ellen Zoppo has worked so tirelessly on enacting noise ordinances in the area, it should be clearly stated that the use of any public address system be within the limits of that same ordinance and that a curfew be established that restricts it's use during the evenings and on weekends. It would be preferable that any lighting be restricted to the parking area for safety and security purposes only.

This project could represent one of Bristol's finest investments. As long as the lines of communication remain open and the resident's ideas are heard and incorporated, this park will prove to be an asset for the city and its residents. I applaud the committee on their work and their request for public input and ask them to continue working in Bristol's best interest.

Respectfully Submitted,

We may not be able to attend this evening's public hearing on above-named property but I would like to discuss the use of this parcel. As often as we can my husband and I go walking there with our schnauzer (who loves to go leashless). For some, it is a social hour for those who gather together and discuss their dogs and for others, like ourselves, we can get some walking in while making our dog happy.

We would like to:

-Either leave property exactly as it is or,

-Have a paved parking lot and some leveled trails (rockless).
Thank you so much for your time.

I just want to put in my 2 cents worth on the Roberts property. It seems to me that the people wanting to walk their dogs and keep the area open are being somewhat selfish. The property is basically flat with few adjacent residential neighbors which makes it perfect as a sports complex with plenty of parking and room for some open space. What these people don't want to bring up is the fact that there is plenty of open space 1 mile east of there at Nelson's Field. Maybe the city could fence in an area to accomodate dogs and their owners.

I was unable to attend the meeting on Wednesday October 20th regarding the use of the Robert's Property. I reside at [deleted number] James P. Casey Rd. which is just on other side of Peacedale Cemetery from the property. I read in The Hartford Courant that the majority of people at the meeting suggested leaving the property as a dog park. I have no strong feeling about how the property should be used but am concerned about the parking situation there. Many evenings cars are parked on the sidewalk making it difficult to get past if going out for a walk which we often do. My suggestion is, no matter what is done with the property, that there should be adequate parking provided as the current situation is less than desirable. I would appreciate it if you would take my suggestion into consideration when making a recommendation of how the property should be used.

I know everyone is very busy with the coaching, training and general volunteering that you all do..... but take the time to make a difference on this matter that the city is soliciting feedback on. Wow.. after reading the Hartford Courant today 10/21 Page B3. They initial feedback states they could consider using the Roberts Property that the city shelled out millions for as a dog park. If you folks think that is as inappropriate as I do please email Ellen Zoppo (she wants your input) and let her know how you feel about this. I can tell you that their is definitely not a surplus of Playing fields in the city. If anyone was to discuss this with John Novakowski (Bristol Bd of Ed) or Ed Swicklas (Bristol Parks) they would tell you what a struggle it is to reserve fields in this City, never mind rest and rehab them.

In the spring and fall of the past several years The Bristol Soccer Club did not have anywhere near enough fields to accommodate our sixty plus teams.Practice times during the week was the worst part of the problem. This was even when we excessively used our own facility at Emmett Street every day of the week. When the city and our own fields are used continuously there is no time for renovations/ improvements. That leads to a long term reduction in the overall quality of the playing surfaces. It can be a vicious cycle that we do not want to get into.

Please provide your feedback to Ellen and the other City councilors on this subject. We need to stay positive but let them know what you think. You can contact the councilors and the mayor by going to www.ci.bristol.ct.us. From there click on City Information.

Then city council, and the email addresses are there. Thanks for your help and stay involved.

Interesting meeting last evening...very informative and well-run, I might add. Public participation goes a whole lot easier when the public is brought into the process from the beginning. An observation: one of the potential benefits of not "over-developing" the property (by which, I assume, most people mean creating lots of formal playing fields to the exclusion of more informal activities) is that the dog-walkers, trail hikers, disc golfers, etc. are likely to feel a somewhat greater sense of "ownership" of the place and, as such, may be more willing to help keep it well-maintained.

I agree that the use of the property for dog walking is a waste of Bristol resources. I am a volunteer with the Bristol Blaze Baseball Club, an non-profit organization dedicated to the development of youths through the game of baseball. I have been all over the country for tournaments and have seen how other towns benefit with the use of baseball and softball fields to bring in business to local merchants with tournaments, along with the overwhelming need in this town for more fields as well. Bristol should be the mecca of Sports in Connecticut. We have Giamatti L.L. ESPN and a lot of tradition in this town. The Bristol Blaze would like to work in conjunction with the town of Bristol in developing these fields and bringing tournaments into Bristol for city organizations like little leagues girls softball as well as senior league and travel baseball. The Blaze can also help with up keep of fields, and providing summer activities free for Bristol's youth. I see only positive things if we use the resources that the Blaze and the City have. We would like to bring back to this town what once had. That's strong civic pride through sports.

I would like to talk to you about the proposed Dog Park at the corner of Perkins and James P Casey rd. As a long time resident of Bristol and a long time dog owner and lover I can think of nothing better to make of this property than a dog park. I have been frequenting the area over the past year or so, and have been astonished at the amount of dog owners that use the area and really appreciate the space. It is increasingly difficult to Find a place that you can let a dog run free and really enjoy being a dog. It has also become a great place for people to gather and socialize were they might not otherwise. A dog park would be a very low impact on the environment also. All that would be necessary to make it work is a decent parking area, that could be made from the materials that are already at the site. Also a better fence along the James P Casey side would be a great asset but not that important. There is not much more that would need to be done. Maybe some receptacles for refuse such as dog waste and coffee cups. It also works well to supply some small plastic bags for dog waste, and of course some persuasion to get people to use them. I think this would become a peer pressure thing and everyone would learn to comply. I personally have been involved in many dog sports and activities over the years and would love the opportunity to share them with you and anyone necessary to help with this project. I am currently am member of Connecticut Frequent Flyers FlyBall

Club, Connecticut Yankee Dog and Disc Club which is a Frisbee club, Canine Cadre Dog Obedience Club. I am also preparing one of my three Dog to be a Delta Society Therapy Dog, once we past a test in a few months we will be visiting area nursing homes and hospitals. Having a place like the dog park will make it possible to spread the word about the things I am involved in and hopefully get others involved. I would be willing to bring to the area an assortment of activities and programs. I am sure that people that have dogs would enjoy a place like a dog park. I am surprised at the number of resident that use the area already, and I think a lot of them would be willing to help make it happen.

Thanks for facilitating the Roberts Property Committee public hearing last evening. We were most impressed by how the forum was conducted, and learned a great deal about the potential of the site and the dynamics that surround it. It was a pleasure to finally meet you and members of the board. Joe Proud and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to recommend disc golf as potential low impact activity that could easily be worked into the area. We're prepared to provide a detailed presentation at a subsequent Robert's Property Committee meeting to further the concept as you suggested after the conclusion of last evening's forum. We were impressed with the strong sentiment clamored by residents to keep the unified parcel as a natural undeveloped expanse that is already distinguished from other recreational sites. Unlike a traditional "ball" golf course, a disc golf course would support the environmental values expressed at the forum simply because it is designed into the context of the landscape without the need to make alterations to the terrain, and because no irrigation or chemicals are needed to maintain it. We're also most intrigued by the notion to consider exploring the adjacent Hoppers area as a possible location for some or all of the holes of a disc golf course. An additional low/non impact use for the area would help preserve the character of the "kettles" while giving it another base of support interested in keeping the area in a natural undeveloped state. The "baskets" (Pole-Hole disc golf targets) at Wickham Park are slated for removal and storage for the off-season on Sunday November 14th. We'd be delighted to offer a guided tour of the course, and while it could conceivably occur after this date, we prefer to show it to interested members of the committee in an active state if possible. For those unable to attend our guided tour, an online "virtual" tour is available that shows how the course and individual holes fit within various areas of Wickham Park.

I saw the article this morning in the Bristol Press and I thought I would give some suggestions to the property. Let's try and put some family orientated things in the park. Mini Golf would be great, tons of room up there for an 18-hole course, plus its something Bristol is lacking. I truly believe that the dog runs should still be kept up there, or we are going to have some very disappointed pet owners that bring their dogs up there everyday to run.

I believe the property should be looked at for a possible school location with a recreation area attached, this would allow the city to move forward with the cost being supported by the state, and could be a bonus on maintenance of the facility and the roads. You may be

able to tie in the school with active nature and science programs utilizing the other Hoppers land as a walking trail and or outside science lab/ I know this is a different approach to the original concept, but with all the cost of renovating our original parks, and the cost of modernizing our school facilities, this would be a much better model for ongoing maintenance and also original Capital Cost. A meeting with the Board of Ed. to discuss the concept would a least start the process.

You do a great job running a meeting! Everyone got to have their say in a timely manner and you summarized the points so succinctly. Personally, I would support using my tax dollars for that land to be improved for passive/active recreation in most any form as long as there are walking trails around that would attract all ages. (With the exception of a dog park!) Why can't people exercise their dogs using a leash as they do at Sessions Woods? My favorite idea is that of Don Shaffrick's...have everything that everyone wants, supported by the revenue of a Golf Course. With respect to fields that are needed in town, will the project manager be doing an inventory of current fields and determine shortages that can be backed by facts? Thanks for all your hard work!

Couldn't the property just be maintained a park space much the way it is now for use by the public for picnics, walks, etc? I would love to see a paved rollerblading/running/walking trail go through it, much like West Hartford Reservoir which is a VERY popular multi-use location due to the combination of paved trail, unpaved trail and open space. People use the paved trail for biking; it's great for walking with a stroller and still being able to enjoy nature instead of walking on a busy street, running, rollerblading and walking dogs. With the addition of a bigger parking lot for easy access to the space, plant trees for some shade, and a paved loop trail, it could be a beautiful space for people to walk, play, picnic, walk their dogs, etc. There isn't much park space in Bristol for kite flying, frisbee playing and gatherings that isn't accompanied by a noisy playground and/or swimming pool, and there certainly isn't a paved place to take walks with strollers, rollerblade and bike that isn't accompanied by cars in Bristol. While there are trails at Sessions Woods, they are not paved, which is not friendly to anything with wheels except mountain bikes (and I don't think those are allowed there). A paved trail through the property could be Bristol's answer to the Farmington rail trail (and the "rail trail" movement in general). I have personally used the West Hartford Reservoir's paved trails for years, and have travelled there from Bristol to use it. I know of numerous other people from a multitude of surrounding towns that also use the space in West Hartford for the paved trail. Many of these people meet at the trail, enjoy an hour or 2 doing their various activities there, then stay local to eat, have coffee, shop, etc. Leaving the property as a park with a paved loop trail going through it might also end up drawing users from other towns and therefore possibly even increasing local business. Also, maybe more Bristol residents would be more inclined to exercise with a walk or jog around the park, or get out for a walk with their children if there was a quiet, beautiful paved place to do so--and healthy, happy residents can only be good for the town!

It was already stated that the property couldn't be used as a golf course because the soil is not conducive to the type of landscape needed to maintain a course. I certainly do not want to pay thousands of dollars a year to maintain a golf course that is only used by a few residents.

I would like to offer some suggestions for the Roberts open space land that is now the City of Bristol's. I have used the land many times for walking with my dog, as well as, hiking in the Hoppers. I have some comments and suggestions that I hope will prove useful.

- ❑ Bristol is such a developed city that to leave this land as a "natural space" would be a real bonus for the people of the city.
- ❑ I feel the land should be used in a way to benefit the most people and in a diverse way. Obviously, people should be able to continue to use this as a retreat for themselves and their dogs.
- ❑ Building a golf course on this land does not benefit all residents - only those who play golf. A golf course does not leave this land as a "natural space". Also, a golf course would be environmentally unfriendly and could do damage to the delicate hopper's ecosystem.

My suggestions for the land are as follows:

Allow dogs and their owners to utilize the park in some manner similar to how they do now.

Build basketball courts and other fields that can be used for school recreation - The fields at the Chippens Hill Middle School don't even seem to be regulation size for softball or baseball.

Build a playscape similar to Page Park (It doesn't have to be nearly as big). Mothers and families with young children do not have a park nearby with a playground (I have been to Rockwell park with my baby and have felt inherently unsafe!). Chippens Hill is becoming more and more developed mostly with exclusive homes creating a high tax base. Many of these homeowners have young children who would benefit from a playground being built here. Lastly, the trails here are poorly marked and cared for. This park could be an excellent place for recreation and also for enjoying the beautiful woodland environment that is here. Trail maps should be made up, or signs, so people would know where they are going. This is a large parcel of property that could benefit from multi-use. A golf course is not the right answer for this land.

I would like to see the City of Bristol use the land to generate a renewable income stream into the city economy. With the tremendous interest in Golf, a municipal Golf Course would make the property a gorgeous park like setting, while generating much needed

revenue for the city. Bristol could sponsor the High School Golf teams, as well as run mens and womens leagues, sponsor special events as fundraisers and initiate many other programs that are currently going to Farmington and New Britain municipal courses. We are loosing millions of dollars to our neighbors, and now we have the opportunity to put Bristol back on the map! Thank you.

For years I have been reading and hearing about redevelopment in Bristol. It is time for Bristol to consider the Senior population; they deserve to be rewarded because they contributed to what Bristol is all about, today. What happened to the plan building a walkway/bicycle trail from Rockwell Park to Lake Compounce? Now a new plan to build a sports/entertainment complex in downtown Bristol.

What about the Roberts property!

- A suggested “Dog Run”. A statement in an article on 2/17/05 stated “We need a dog park in town”. Who is going to pick up all the poops. There is trouble in Rockwell Park now.
- A “Child-oriented” complex. The majority of parents work all week long. So when would the complex be used. Again nothing for Seniors.
- An “Ice Skating Ring”. Yes this could be fun but very, very expensive to maintain. Again, only a few Seniors would be able to use it.
- A “Disc Golf course”. Again, not ideal sports for Seniors – Many SR’s have problems throwing an object.
- A “Soap Derby Track”. Again, not for Seniors to use.
- A “Playing Field”. Bristol does not need another ball field. Many Fields need help now and are not used.
- A “Playground”. Children have their own playground in their backyard – just ride up and down some streets.

Here are my suggestions – For Young and Old

- Seniors would use Bicycle/walking trails. Check out the Farmington Canal Rail Trail and Farmington Valley Trail, both trails have history.
- **Golf Course** would be used by people of all ages. A golf course protects wild life such as – Red Fox, Red Tail Hawk, Rabbits, and all kind of Birds, Deer’s. (I have seen them). A Public Golf course is more affordable to play on. Golf is played today by young and old. It is exercise for all and brings in revenue for the City and employment.

In an article on 2/4/05 Bristol Press “Couture said that the firm won’t be studying the possibility of putting a golf course at the Hoppers, a plan gunned down by voters in the 1980s”. Enough is enough, that was about 20 years ago. People who voted against a golf course and were in their 40th or older are now 60 years or older. Golf today is for young and old. Time changes just like technology. Seniors now want to learn how to use the computer which was unheard of 20 years ago. Golfer today in their 20th were little children 20 years ago. Little children are playing golf today, something unheard of 20 years ago. **Wake up Bristol.**

In an article in 2002 Bristol Press, Melanie Dumont wrote about the Hoppers “we were greeted by four all-terrain vehicles. I’m glad that we moved out of their way quickly. I am not a golfer, but I do know that the revenue from a golf course could pay for the maintenance of walking trails.

In an article 1/31/02 Bristol Press, Ward said “the Hoppers, purchased during the 1980s, ought to be “for all the people of the city to enjoy the environment” and not just a select few who happen to live nearby. Golf is “growing by leaps and bounds,” he said, and the city lacks a municipal facility for it. Many nearby towns and cities have taxpayer-owned courses. (All surrounding Bristol towns have a golf course(s)).

In an article 1/25/05 Bristol Press – National Sports pg B2, “A good start for Woods”. Tiger Woods helps a Senior with her golf swing in Lake Buena Vista, FL.

Statistics from the National Golf Foundation

- There are 26.7 million golfers age 12 and over in the US
- More than 40% of all US golfers are between the ages of 18 and 39
- Seniors age 50 and over comprise of 27%
- Junior age 12-17 categories at 21%
- Female golfers make up 19% of the US golfer population
- At the end of 2000, there were 707 courses under construction in the US and 1049 in planning.
- The average 18-hole daily fee golf course employs 13 full-time and brings in about \$992,000 in total revenues.

I am a Senior. I am a golfer, bicyclist, hiker/walker (White Mountains) and bowler. I have to go out of town to do my activity. I have hiked the Hoppers, but was very disappointed because I had a hard time finding the Kettles. The Kettles look like a big ditch which I see all over in the White Mountains in New Hampshire. **Building a Golf course can preserve history. Golf courses are very sensitive to its environment.**
