



Jericho Underhill Park District P. O. Box 164 Underhill, VT 05489

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November 4, 2022

Dan Steinbauer, Chair
Bob Stone
Patricia Richards
Underhill Selectboard
Town of Underhill
P.O.Box 120
Underhill, VT. 05489

Dear Selectboard members,

After seeking the advice of engineers and with careful consideration, the Jericho Underhill Park District board of trustees has decided to **not** rebuild the covered bridge at this time. The existing abutments are sufficient to support the newer deck and side rails for pedestrian traffic and occasional light vehicular use. If we were to add the superstructure (roof and walls), we would need to replace the original abutments and that would cost over \$300,000. This work would also take three to four months. Therefore, a temporary span would be important so that visitors could continue to enjoy the park. The cost for a pedestrian alternative bridge is estimated at \$62,000. Another complication is that any new abutments may also require the Park District to extend the bridge by many feet to meet newer state regulations. So, a new deck and more months of park bridge work would be involved. Therefore, the need to “cover” the existing pressure treated deck is simply not essential. The original abutments are more than satisfactory to support the newer deck and park traffic. Based on all of these factors, the Park District board has decided not to move forward with adding a “cover” to the existing bridge. At some future point, we certainly hope to add the special entry to the park that only a covered bridge can bring.

Having reached the decision **not** to pursue a bridge rebuild, the Park District is now focusing on our entrance and exit driveways and the parking lot which includes the front lawn. Throughout the year, cars utilize all available space for access and parking. There are potholes that develop quickly and large muddy areas on the grass lawn. Routine regrading is necessary to maintain the driveways and keep them safe. The grass front lawn, used for the Farmers’ Market and other activities, gets heavily rutted. The Park District stakes these “mud bogs” out so that cars refrain from driving through them. Poor drainage with standing water is a significant cause. Our plan is to greatly improve the

driveways and water drainage by crowning the road surface and directing water off our grass lawn as detailed in this ARPA funding proposal.

The Park District Board of Trustees is concentrating on providing a safe and pleasant experience for all park visitors. As Mills Riverside Park grows in popularity year to year, our entrance receives considerable damage. It is our hope that the ARPA funding request will be successful. Our proposal has been sent to the ARPA committee.

Sincerely,
Livy

Livy Strong
Chairperson

**MILLS RIVERSIDE PARK ARPA DRIVEWAY FUNDING
PROPOSAL**
31 October 2022

Submitted to Jericho & Underhill Select Boards for consideration by the board members of the Jericho Underhill Park District

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I. Mills Riverside Park

Acquired in 1999 by the local land trust with ownership transferred to the newly formed Jericho Underhill Park District in 2000, Mills Riverside Park has become a natural, gathering hub for both towns. This extraordinary land stands as a testament to the commitment that our community places on the value of conservation and outdoor enjoyment.. In addition to dispersed, public recreation, the park also hosts multiple sport teams, scout troops, area schools, family celebrations and more. The Park District schedules five summer concerts every year and hosts the very popular Farmers' Market.

Mills Riverside Park is managed by the Jericho Underhill Park District (JUPD) which is composed of representatives from the Towns of Jericho and Underhill - and is funded by town assessments, revenue from field and pavilion reservations, donations and grants.

II. ARPA Funding Request

ARPA funding documentation specifically identifies parks as services that build stronger neighborhoods and communities by providing public recreation spaces that promote healthy environments and outdoor socialization. With this conclusion, they authorized the use of funding for repair or maintenance of these public facilities. The research that was drawn upon to develop the Final Rule of applicable funding agreed with this sentiment and added that "lack of these features in a neighborhood could dampen physical activity and contribute to health conditions like obesity that are risk factors for more severe COVID-19 health outcomes"

The State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) Final Rule explicitly states "This also includes using funds for increased repair or maintenance needs to respond to significantly greater use of public facilities during the pandemic (e.g., increased use of parks resulting in damage or increased need for maintenance). Some commenters expressed support for the ability to use funds for these purposes. Treasury is maintaining these enumerated eligible uses in the Final Rule and clarified that capital expenditures such as technology infrastructure to adapt government operations to the pandemic (e.g. video to case management systems or data sharing resources), conferencing software, improvements to reduce government backlogs, or meet increased maintenance needs are eligible. " It then goes on to say under the Capital Expenditures section of Administrative needs that, "Capital expenditures, in certain cases, can be appropriate to the public health and economic impacts of the pandemic, in addition to responsive programs and services. Like other eligible uses of SLFRF funds in this category, capital expenditures should be a related and reasonably proportional response to a public health or negative economic impact of the pandemic." ¹

On the importance of parks, The American Public Health Association writes "People of all ages and abilities enjoy higher levels of health and well-being when they have nature nearby in parks, gardens, greenways, naturalized schoolyards and playgrounds, and natural landscaping around homes and workplaces. Access to nature has been related to lower levels of mortality and illness, higher levels of outdoor physical activity, restoration from stress, a greater sense of well-being, and greater social capital."²

¹ SLFRF Final Rule, Administrative Needs Caused or Exacerbated by the Pandemic pg 190-192.

² American Public Health Association, Improving Health and Wellness through Access to Nature (November 5, 2013),

Since the beginning of Covid, Mills Riverside Park has experienced a **31% daily increase in use** across the bridge. This amounts to about 77 extra visitors per day³. This does not include the increased traffic that does not cross the bridge for events such as the farmers' market. We are asking to be considered for ARPA funding on the basis of:

- We are open, free of charge to the public, dawn to dusk, seven days a week, 365 days a year.
- As the research cited above indicates, having open access to outdoor recreation has far reaching public health benefits for all community members regardless of age or household income.
- We have seen a large increase of visitors since the pandemic, with indications pointing to this trend continuing.
- More use is directly proportional to maintenance costs.
- We have made compliance a big part of our mission and the funding we are asking for will help us ensure this mission continues successfully.

While we hope that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, we believe that a greater investment in this vital community infrastructure will benefit everyone. We are asking for funding to ensure that we can continue to be American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant and responsible stewards of the land.

III. ARPA Funding Goals

While we have many projects that meet the intent of the ARPA and ADA funding, we are asking the Jericho and Underhill Select Boards to allocate what we believe to be an appropriate amount of their respective ARPA funding to upgrade our driveways, parking lot and front lawn.

The number of cars in the parking area regularly exceeds the allocated spaces causing visitors to park on the field and along our driveways. The farmers' market alone draws 260 cars a week for the duration of the good weather, adding about 5200 cars total on the lawn/driveway over the season. The soccer leagues add even more cars on game Sundays, well over a hundred, that regularly need to park on the grass. This increased traffic during the warmer months deteriorates the lawn. For most of the spring and fall and anytime there's heavy rain we have to put cones or barriers up so that car traffic avoids muddy areas and does not contribute to deeper ruts on our soft ground. With no water diversion in place, we are forced to move the cones and wait for the area to dry out. Doing this puts us in a constant state of adjusting parking to the drier or in better shape areas. We believe that some upfront cost to expand and "fix" the parking area and driveway will lower the annual operating/maintenance costs for both and create a better experience for park visitors.

³ Based on available data, which is available on request. No interpolation, regression, imputation, or substitution was used to fill in missing data.



Our current average annual budget for scheduled maintenance is: \$3000

Our current average annual cost for emergency maintenance is: \$3500

We would also like to point out that our emergency maintenance is not to make the entrance look nice, but make the drive and lawn area passable enough that cars can make it out to the road after their visit. This includes grading & adding gravel to impassable spots only.

We are asking for funding to address the following areas (map for visual reference below):

Red / purple area - This area is where the low point should be but instead is a high point so the water is funneled to the purple area where it sits. We want to remove soil from this area to raise the level in the purple area, which will funnel water towards the natural low spots and add more gravel as needed.

Black line, black box - This area is a proposed culvert and holding pond. Combined with the work on the previous area, this should greatly reduce water in the field area.

Brown - Problem water area, however if the previous two items are addressed this area should have much fewer issues.

Blue area - Low spot, excess dirt from the red area could build this up.

Yellow area - Pave similar to the exit section of paving. A lot easier to work with from a plowing / grading perspective. This work would be done at a future time and is not part of this funding. We just wanted to make sure that community suggestions have been heard.



We hope that it is noticed by both towns that the JUPD has already made accessibility and public health a priority well before the announcement of the ARPA funding. This is reflected in redoing our website with a focus on ADA compliance, increasing restroom facilities, trail maintenance, and dog waste stations - all improvements that allow members of our community to recreate at the park safely and sustainably. This single injection of funds will go a significant way towards helping us complete this important project in a timely manner.

With the Jericho and Underhill Select Board's ARPA funding support, we can help ensure that the park remains accessible, safe and enjoyable, and for many years to come.

ARPA Funding requested: \$43,000.00, broken up by Town in line with current budget percentages.

Jericho:	\$26,660
Underhill:	\$16,340

Cost Breakdown:

Driveway entry from stone pillars to parking lot, 10 loads material, grading & trucking: \$8000

Existing parking, 10 loads material, grading & trucking: \$10,000

Exit from parking to Route 15, 10 loads material grading & trucking: \$8,000

New proposed parking area: \$12,000

10 loads material grading, adding culvert at first corner: \$5,000

In addition to better parking and by extension a better park experience, it is also expected that this work will reduce our emergency maintenance cost. These improvements will not outright eliminate maintenance for the driveway (~\$6500 in 2021) as we still have to grade occasionally. But we believe that it will cut down significantly on the amount of emergency maintenance which is most often caused by standing water. With a conservative 50% targeted maintenance savings, and 3% inflation year after year, we expect a return on Investment in ~10 years.

IV. Oversight and Controls

The seven-member Board of Trustees of the Jericho Underhill Park District is responsible for all management activity at Mills Riverside Park. Public engagement is an important feature. Our board meetings are always open to the public. The website is ADA compliant and includes a great deal of information about the park as well as important documents. The Purchasing Policy requires that bids be sought for any park work that exceeds \$5000. Therefore, improvements to the driveways, parking area and front lawn will be put out for a bid. Board members are responsible for ensuring that all work agrees with the bid language. In addition, board members will also strive to reduce any disruptions to parking while improvements are being made. Publicity about planned upgrades will also alert park visitors to changes. We look forward to offering our community a better experience when visiting the park with these enhancements.

If awarded, this Mills Riverside Park public accessibility parking project will be administered as any other large endeavor accomplished by the Jericho Underhill Park District. A sub-committee will be established to oversee all work.. This sub-committee will report to the greater JUPD board and information will be conveyed, as well, through the JUPD website and social media. Both towns are welcome to send representatives or view the minutes from the JUPD meetings to ensure that the ARPA funding is allocated in accordance with the guidelines above.

We believe the following groups would greatly benefit from the upgrade:

- Jericho Residents
- Underhill Residents
- UJFD
- Richmond Rescue
- Jericho Trails Committee
- Underhill Recreations Committee
- Adjoining communities
- Mansfield United Soccer Club (Browns River Soccer Club)
- Chittenden County Soccer School
- MMU Girls Lacrosse
- MMU Boys Lacrosse
- Jericho Elementary
- Underhill ID BRMS
- MMU

- Cambridge Elementary
- Richmond Elementary
- Jericho Underhill Scout Troop 627
- Cambridge Cub Scout troop 839
- Pack 620 Tigers and Wolves
- 20-25 Rental Groups
- Crystal Sorrell yoga
- Studio 2n Photography
- Farmers Market
- National Guard

APPENDIX A: Letters of Support –



October 10, 2022

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of the Jericho Underhill Park District's (JUPD) funding request to restore & improve the driveways and parking areas at Mills Riverside Park. This work would allow the park to more fully use their lawn parking, control erosion & increase community use.

I am the Manager of the Jericho Farmers Market (JFM), which is generously hosted by the JUPD for our weekly summer event. Our market serves as a shopping location, community gathering place & business incubator for our community. On a busy summer afternoon, the market will see between 600-700 community members come through our gates to access fresh, local foods and other locally produced products. We run programming for children and expand food access for SNAP eligible members of our community. Improvements at Mills Riverside Park will allow us to better be able to serve our community in all of these various ways.

The proposed improvements to the parking areas would directly support the JFM as well as the broader work of the JUPD. Our market is located along the roadside, in an area that is used for parking during the rest of the week. Currently this causes crowding in parking areas, as those attending the JFM and those using Mills Riverside Park for other recreational activities have to share a limited amount of parking space. These improvements would expand parking opportunities when the park is at its busiest, allowing for ease of parking for both JFM and other JUPD activities simultaneously.

I would strongly support the JUPD's funding request, as it would ease and expand access to the park for all community members, especially on busy summer afternoons.

Thank you,
Elizabeth

Elizabeth King
Market Manager
Jericho Farmers Market



Mills Riverside Park Support

September 30, 2022

Hello,

The Mansfield United Soccer Club (MUSC) is writing in support of the Jericho Underhill Park District's efforts to maintain facilities at Mills Riverside Park. Our soccer club serves the surrounding Jericho, Underhill, Richmond, Huntington and Bolton communities, currently our membership is close to 400 hundred families. The Mills Riverside Park venue and its playing fields are our home fields.

Our families and players are both grateful and proud to have this venue be our home field. The club plays at several other venues around the state competing in the Vermont Soccer League, there are many great facilities, but we are always excited to bring opposing clubs to our home fields. The location resting under the watch of Mount Mansfield, we feel is the best in the state. When opposing clubs look to confirm field location ours is called out by "Oh yeah, the fields with that awesome view of Mount Mansfield."

Our player's ages run from 4yrs old in our rec programs to 19yrs in our club program and for all these playing fields provides the feeling of "Yes, we are at our fields, ready to play and to have some fun." The success of our program, due in part to the great venue, has put a strain on our hosts. Club use along with lots of other community activity puts the access road and parking area under an increased amount of use that probably surpasses original use plans. As a non-profit entity ourselves we know all too well the challenges with keeping up with these unforeseen costs but know as well that safety must always be a priority.

As a club and as a community we whole heartedly support their efforts to ensure that the park can continue to safely host the growing use of such a valuable asset to our club and community.

Respectfully,

Emmet Manning
President
Mansfield United Soccer Club