

Mariners Park Unrealized

Just over three years ago, at a Town of Liberty Grove meeting, Town Chairman John Lowry, proposed the purchase of the Mariners Park property for just under \$1.5 million. However, prior to the vote of assembled town residents, Chairman Lowry made two very significant declarations: 1) The property, if purchased, would be a “blank slate” and 2) “The people would decide the use of the property.” With those assurances, the residents voted in favor of the land purchase.

In spring of 2019, the Town undertook a survey to determine the taxpayer’s desires for the property. The Town designed, implemented, and tallied the results of the survey. The Town Board declared the survey results accurate. The top 4 choices of the 644 survey respondents were:

- 1) public park with walking paths and benches
- 2) Refurbish existing docks for public use
- 3) A pavilion for public use (small)
- 4) A safe harbor with a launch ramp only

Apparently, Chairman Lowry and the Board did not accept the survey results as the peoples’ choices because little has been accomplished since then. Instead, an ad hoc committee, chaired by a Board member, was appointed, and met for over a year without developing a comprehensive plan for the park. They did, however, create a temporary parking area, but omitted a park sign. People don’t even know the park exists!

Citizens, in a constructive effort, had previously presented a conceptual park plan to the Town and Property and Parks Committee. The plan, prepared by a professional landscape architect, incorporating each of the top survey recommendations and more. The Property and Parks Committee never considered the plan, and the ad hoc committee rejected it in its entirety. So much for the people deciding the features and uses of the property. It appears the board, not the voters, will decide the park’s fate. However, voters control the Town’s purse strings and they have the power to approve, or reject, the Town’s annual budget. Perhaps it’s time for voters to tighten the purse strings until the Town Chairman and Board keep their promises to the voters?