

City Moves Ahead With Revitalization of Salter Grove

BY FRIENDS OF SALTER GROVE

Friends of Salter Grove (FoSG) was formed in February 2016 to restore and enhance its namesake, a scenic but neglected community asset on Narragansett Bay. A website (friendsofsaltergrove.org) was simultaneously launched to publicize and document the activities of this volunteer group of area residents. From the beginning, members have collaborated in fostering community and government involvement to improve the park.

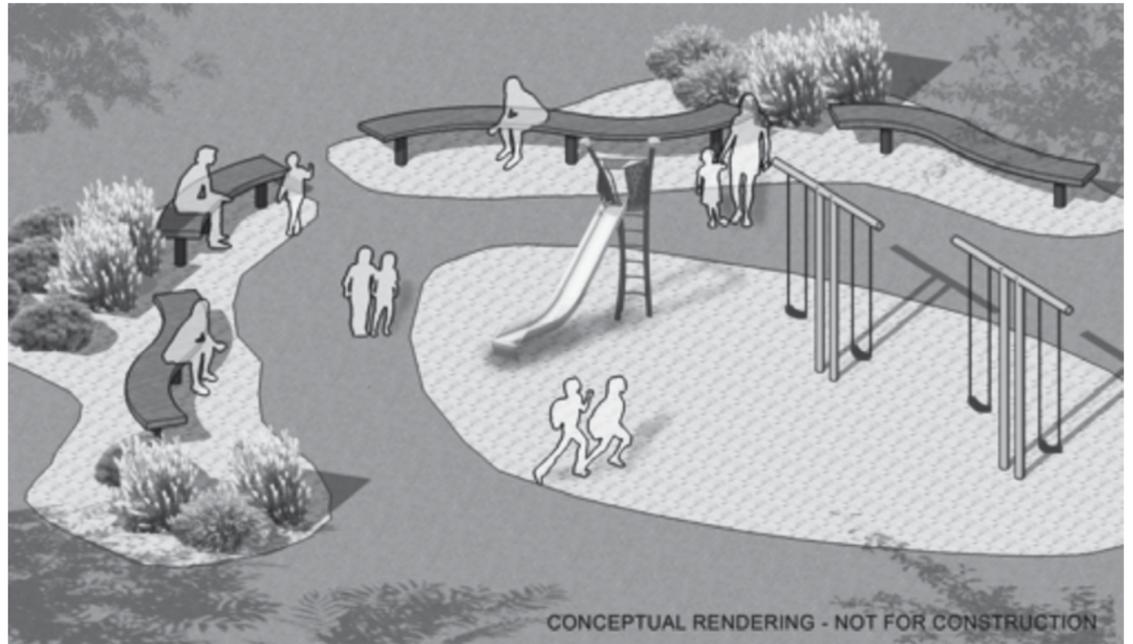
Neighborhood meetings hosted by FoSG at the Pilgrim Senior Center (April and October 2017) and an online survey (April 2017) clearly identified the two improvements most important to the community: repairing the causeway to provide safe passage between the park and the breakwater, and replacing the 40-year-old playground to serve families with young children.

Repairing the causeway requires substantial funding, as well as cooperation among multiple governmental agencies. The park, officially known as George B. Salter Memorial Grove, is owned by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), but the City of Warwick is responsible for its maintenance. Moreover, structural changes within two hundred feet of the shoreline must comply with regulations set by the RI Coastal Resources Management Council.

Following two years of advocacy by FoSG, supported by state and municipal representatives, the City of Warwick posted a Request for Proposals to repair the causeway and briefed contractors. Three bids were submitted in early April, and the recommended contractor awaits approval at the City Council meeting on May 7. The budget of \$200,000 provided by DEM is probably insufficient for a long-term solution, but it should provide safe and dry passage to the breakwater at least until the next extraordinary storm surge.

Proposed Playground for Salter Grove — A Work in Progress.

FoSG completed its first phase of fundraising in the last quarter of 2017, boosted by the sale of raffle tickets for prizes kindly donated by Pawtuxet Village businesses. Many learned about FoSG firsthand from members who sold tickets door-to-door throughout the Gaspee Plateau neighborhood. Proceeds from the raffle, generous and ongoing online donations by friends and neighbors in the community (friendsofsaltergrove.org/donations), and a legislative grant



The proposed new playground is professionally designed to be safe and inviting. While encouraging joyful play, it is also meant to be visually attractive and in harmony with its semi-natural surroundings.

combined to exceed the original goal of \$6,000 by one-third.

Two swing sets (one is ADA-compliant) have been purchased and turned over to the City of Warwick, but they will not be installed until all playground equipment is in hand. Hopefully, the playground will be completed this year, thanks to a \$100,000 community recreation grant recently awarded by DEM to the City of Warwick at FoSG's instigation.

FoSG has engaged in other activities beneficial to the development of Salter Grove. The park consists of diverse terrestrial and aquatic habitats, where wild plants and animals are easily observed, so it is ideal for teaching environmental science. Since 2016, FoSG has collaborated with the science program at St. Peter School to facilitate field trips for elementary students. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment signal a new generation of stewards for Salter Grove.

A partnership with Save The Bay usefully increased the frequency of cleanup events, resulting in the removal of well over a ton of trash from the park since March 2016—no small feat since everything was collected and removed by hand. Unscheduled but frequent patrolling by FoSG members in the park, and on the breakwater, have served to model anti-littering behavior to visitors.

Two successive grants from the New England Grassroots Environment Fund (NEGEF) allowed FoSG to accelerate its action plan. Education and

community outreach were strengthened with the purchase of field guides, basic tools for nature trail maintenance, anti-littering signage, and publicity materials. Importantly, the NEGEF awards validated FoSG's efforts to sustain an ecological resource important to Warwick and Rhode Island.

FoSG has also acted to alleviate safety concerns raised at the neighborhood meetings. The Warwick Police department was asked to assess the level of illegal activity at Salter Grove. After 100 directed patrols and numerous covert observations during June through August of 2017, officers of the Community Police Unit did not encounter any activity that warranted arrest. The officers also made an important point: "Greater usage of the park by local residents would be the greatest deterrent to illegal activities."

To involve families with children in the park's enhancement, FoSG organized potlucks on two Saturdays in July and September of 2017. However, much more needs to be done to repopulate the park with strollers and the daily sounds of children having fun. Stay-at-home-parents with young children are welcomed to join FoSG as supporting members to help make this happen. Salter Grove has always been treasured for family recreation, and now with progress being made on causeway repair and playground renovation, this traditional usage of the park should be revived. ❖

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Your donation can be made in honor of someone, as a family gift or as a tribute to someone special. Your sponsorship will help us defray the cost and maintenance of the flags. Sponsor names will be listed on our website.

Complete and mail this form with a check or money order to: PVA, P.O. Box 8626, Warwick, RI 02888. *Please write the word "flags" at the bottom of your check.* THANK YOU!

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Phone: _____

Email: _____

In honor or in memory of:

Quantity of flags: 1 (\$15) 2 (\$25) Other _____

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