

**Strawberry Lake Park - Property of  
The Strawberry Point Bluffs Homeowners Association and  
The Strawberry Hill Estates Homeowners Association**

## **Historical Background**

The original design of the Park included a volleyball court, barbeque grills, a fire pit, a metal boat ramp, a small sand beach, a simple playscape with swings and a slide, and parking barriers for delineating parking areas on Gallagher and preventing cars from driving into the beach and picnic areas.

In the three years from 1987 to 1990, residents invested money and labor in improvements to the Park. Those improvements replaced the rusting metal ramp with a concrete ramp and ramp approach; installed erosion-preventing timbers in the sand on the beach; and built a sea wall between the beach and the boat ramp. Residents paid a one-time special assessment which funded the cost of having a commercial company install the boat ramp, and which purchased materials for the erosion barrier and sea wall. The labor for the barrier and sea wall was supplied by a small army of resident volunteers who accomplished the work over two weekends.

## **Today**

Since 1990, there have been no major improvements to the Park. The Park Access Committee has taken responsibility for recurring maintenance items at the Park during the 22 year since, e.g.: picnic tables, raft, dock, sand and gravel, new swings, road grading, repair of boat launch, annual contracts for a porta-toilet and lawn maintenance. Aside from these maintenance activities, there have been no major changes to the Park in two decades.

During those past two decades, the socio-demographics of the neighborhood have changed. The residents who have been here for all those years have gotten older, and the new residents face a different family and child-raising experience with additional demands on their leisure time for things like more-demanding jobs, soccer, band, sports, boy and girl scouts, and other after-school activities that compete for their attention. The net result of these changes is a loss of the "volunteerism" that once invigorated the neighborhood with activities like building a sea wall, helping at the Spring Beach Cleanup, organizing and attending an Annual Pig Roast, volunteering for the Park Access Committee, running for positions on the Boards of Directors.

Have we observed this lack of involvement and concluded that the residents don't care about the Park? No! We interpret these changes as meaning that residents don't participate because they either cannot (age, strength, health) or simply don't have any discretionary time to devote to yet-another volunteer activity.

Now, 22 years after making improvements to the Park, those improvements -- and the features that preceded them -- are nearing the end of their useful life. The barbeque pits are rusting out. The sea wall north of the boat ramp is leaning precariously and should be replaced. The waterfront south of the boat ramp is receding rapidly and needs a sea wall to prevent further

erosion. The playscape is old, unsafe, and falling apart. The boat ramp, although still serviceable, has cracked in places and needs attention from a qualified professional.

## **The Future**

Also during those 22 years, funding for the recurring annual maintenance activities described above has come from the annual Pontoon Boat Lottery, and it has remained unchanged. Aside from the fee for liability insurance that is shared by the two Associations, the Park has been funded solely by the donations of the 12 pontoon owners of \$250 each, for a total of \$3000 per year.

The financial analysis of expenditures indicates that since 2005, expenses have actually averaged closer to \$6500 considering the deferred maintenance that Todd's Services donated in 2008. Again however, these expenditures were only for the bare minimum recurring maintenance required at the beach, not for any the major repairs looming, nor for building a reserve for improvements.

Therefore, the \$3000 barely covers the cost of one of our youth mowing the grass, the porta-toilet, and sand for the beach and volley ball court. It will never provide enough money for any major repairs nor for the major expenses that are looming.

## **Funding Necessary - Recommendation**

The Joint Parks Committee recommends that there be a permanent annual homeowners dues increase for each household in the neighborhood. Responding to neighborhood comment, the Committee recommends a dues increase of \$12.50/month for one year, then \$8.33/month for four additional years, then \$4.16 monthly for subsequent years with the last reduction subject to a vote. This monthly fee would be payable annually, and equates to \$150 for the first year, \$100 for years 2-4, and a reduction to \$50 annually after a vote by the Association members. This would be in addition to the Associations' respective current dues. The additional money for the first few years will address the years of deferred maintenance and allow us to catch up. Note: The Parks Committee began this proposal work in 2012, so we are another year behind on deferred maintenance. These funds will be considered targeted revenue for the Park, to be managed and expended by the Joint Park Committee in accordance with the proposed budget and the Committee's Roles and Responsibilities. These dues will allow the Park to perform the regular maintenance listed in the attached budget as well as implement by 2015 the major maintenance, e.g.:

- Erosion prevention south of boat ramp;
- Replacement of seawall north of boat ramp;
- Replacement of playscape;
- Docks to protect seawall south of boat ramp.

It is recommended that the dues increase begin in 2013, with payment by August 1, 2013. For years 2014 and beyond, the dues increase is payable by the dates specified in the respective

Bylaws of each of the Associations and in accordance with the process in the bylaws, e.g., to the Association Treasurer. The Association Treasurers will transfer funds in 2013 by September 1, and in subsequent years by with funds transferred to the Parks Committee account by June 1<sup>st</sup>.

We hope for enthusiastic support of this expense to support our beautiful beach and park.