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## JERICHO UNDERHILL PARK DISTRICT REPORT

Mills Riverside Park continues to attract visitors within our two towns and well beyond. Our "people counter" on the bridge indicates that our busiest month is July with an average of 450 folks per day. Numbers drop off slightly but remain strong right through the winter months. The park offers recreational year round opportunities, quiet nature walks, community events and so much more. The Jericho Underhill Park District owns and manages this 216-acre property. We are responsible for ensuring the careful balance of public enjoyment along with maintaining important wildlife habitats. These habitats include the dense vegetation along the Browns River, a pond, open meadow and forested hillside. Trails were designed to accommodate a variety of recreational uses but also, to avoid habitats that would be adversely impacted by human presence. To that effect, the top third of the park has no trails and remains home to black bear, fisher, deer and other wildlife. The growing popularity of the park accentuates the need to revisit our management plan and make sure that we are following the language embodied in the conservation easement that protects Mills Riverside Park in perpetuity.

The popularity of Mills Riverside Park also demands better maintenance of our existing trails, more frequent mowing of certain sections, a more robust portelet presence and so forth. Despite these increased expenses, we have been able to keep our Park District budget level funded for a number of years. However, this changed in February when we discovered that our covered bridge, the only entrance to the park, had serious problems. We spent \$6000 last February for the bridge company, Blow and Cote Inc., to help stabilize our covered bridge for the next few years. The projected cost for a permanent solution will be \$100,000. This work will take several months to complete and will necessitate a temporary bridge for pedestrian access to the park. We increased our budget this year and anticipate doing so for the next two years to build our bridge fund reserve.

It is a sincere pleasure to witness the joy that so many experience when they visit Mills Riverside Park. We are pleased to announce that we will be celebrating our 20th Anniversary on August 8th, 2020 with the community. This day will be filled with activities for all ages and will culminate with a Lantern Parade in the early evening. Many local school children will be involved in creating these imaginative lanterns towards the end of the school year. We will update you as more details are finalized. Please check our website and Facebook page for park information along with Front Porch Forum. The Park District meets the first and third Wednesday of every month at the Rawson Library's project room at 7:00 p.m. The public is always invited. We also want to thank the many volunteer helpers who make this park such a special place. Interested in volunteering? Just contact us.

The Jericho Underhill Park District Board of Trustees is comprised of seven hardworking members who are dedicated to managing Mills Riverside Park. Sadly, Anne Lavigne stepped down, leaving a vacancy from Jericho.

Livy Strong Chairperson   Judie Jones Vice-Chair   Jim Massingham Secretary   Carol Smith Treasurer  
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