

January 8, 2011

**FOLQ's Position Regarding Recent Installation of Oversized Utility Poles
at Colonel Connelly Park**

Friends of Lake Quannapowitt (FOLQ) wants the public record to reflect its opposition to the recent installation of oversized utility poles at Colonel Connelly Park located at the head of Lake Quannapowitt. As an organization charged with the protection of the lake, we were stunned when the poles appeared without any public notice, consultation or warning. Therefore, the FOLQ Board of Directors wants the public to be aware of its concerns, and to place those concerns in historical perspective.

FOLQ was founded twenty years ago with the mission of “promoting long-term protection and enhancement of Lake Quannapowitt and its surrounding public lands.” It is the organization’s responsibility to speak up when development encroaches upon the lake environment. This is one of those times.

FOLQ has prominently sponsored the transformation of the head of the lake through various initiatives. This site was once an eyesore, characterized by a rundown restaurant, potholed parking lots, rusting iron fences and overgrown hedges. This same area has now become a place of beauty and civic pride. With its magnificent vista of our lake and, in the distance across the open water, the town of Wakefield, this newly renovated location provides the town with a previously untapped recreational area that includes defined pathways, an expansive lawn area and a completely overhauled playground. In addition, a brick plaza containing custom engraved bricks and a beautiful lighted flag pole are now major attractions. For many, the brick plaza is a place of solace as many of the bricks were donated in memorial of lost loved ones.

This transformation did not happen suddenly or magically. Improvements took more than ten years of intensive work. The changes grew out of the combined efforts of not only FOLQ, but other civic organizations, local businesses, state and corporate grants, as well as the efforts of dedicated town officials and staff. The transformation succeeded because

literally thousands of people donated their financial support and their time over the course of a decade. There are many, many stakeholders in this little piece of land.

The design for the Gertrude Spaulding and Colonel Connelly parks emerged from many town-wide consultations and open hearings. The focal point of the park design had always been to open up the area to public use and utilize the amazing view – something most communities cannot buy with any amount of money. From the very beginning, an important goal was to put underground the unsightly power lines in a fashion similar to those servicing the Wakefield Common or downtown Main Street. Strategically, the park projects had to be divided into smaller manageable segments that were more achievable in the short term, yet were consistent with the long term goal. In fact, the recent completion of the playground area in Colonel Connelly Park positioned us to address the utility pole problem. But before we could catch our breath, new poles, twice the size of the older ones, suddenly appeared in Colonel Connelly Park, without apparent notice to citizens or, as we have learned, most public officials. It is our understanding, based on the limited information that has been disseminated on this matter, that the new poles were installed to satisfy the power needs of a single customer – an out of state corporation that will be setting up shop in Wakefield.

FOLQ supports efforts to bring productive businesses into our community. We salute WMGLD for assisting such development. However, we strongly feel that providing services to new customers should not come at the cost of degrading valuable town resources, such as the newly renovated and much treasured parks located at the head of Lake Quannapowitt.

FOLQ is looking for a constructive dialogue to resolve this problem in an expeditious manner that both restores the parks and honors the prior efforts of those that worked to breathe new life in them. We hope that the public meeting being hosted by the WMGLD will be a first step in this process and are thankful for the the public's opportunity to air their concerns. Anyone with concerns related to this issue is welcome to attend. This meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 18th at 7:00 p.m., in the first floor conference room at the Wakefield Town Hall located at 1 Lafayette Street.

We feel confident that this unfortunate situation can be rectified. There is no reason that the needs of a single customer cannot be reconciled with those of the hundreds of citizens who expended years of work, planning, and fundraising to beautify the head of the lake as well as the thousands who now enjoy a wonderfully restored area. From a spirit of cooperation we should be able to fashion a solution acceptable to both.

Respectfully submitted. Board of Directors of Friends of Lake Quannapowitt, Inc.
