



# Lakeside Benches -- A Call for Policy





## **FOLQ supports the appointment of a Town Committee**

To develop a policy on lakeside benches that recognizes the following:

- The criterion for installing any additional bench should be the long-term integrity of our lake parklands – a decision made apart from any individual requests.
- Bench memorials, when authorized, should follow a protocol with clear criteria and protocol that is applied equally to all citizens who have shown an interest.

# First a Little History:



Twenty years ago, lakeside benches looked like this. They were aging structures that needed to be replaced.





### **WCNA (Wakefield Center Neighborhood Association)**

Around the year 2000, WCNA initiated bench replacement in the Lower Common and Upper Common. They chose a traditional Victorian bench design to blend with the Band Stand. These benches were financed by the organization's fundraising activity. Memorial plaques were not used.





## **FOLQ Focused on the benches in the rest of the lake perimeter**

In 2003, FOLQ adopted the bench replacement task for the remaining areas of the lake. With authorization from the Board of Selectmen, FOLQ allowed families to purchase memorial benches to finance the replacement effort. WCNA's bench design was used by FOLQ as well, lending design continuity around the whole lake perimeter.





With very little marketing, there was an amazing response from families who wanted to memorialize loved ones. By 2005, all the remaining benches approximately 50 in all, had been adopted by memorial donors.





## The the bench replacement program was a broad success.

- Park landscapes were enhanced .
- The town was spared the cost of replacement.
- The memorial plaques brought comfort to the donor families.

*(Above, Phil McCarthy is reading memorial statements during a dedication ceremony)*





## **But Success and Completion brought New Problems**

- Demand for memorial benches continued.
- Those calling FOLQ were told the replacement program was complete.
- Further inquiries were referred to Town Hall, but were not always handled in the same way, due to no specific town policy.

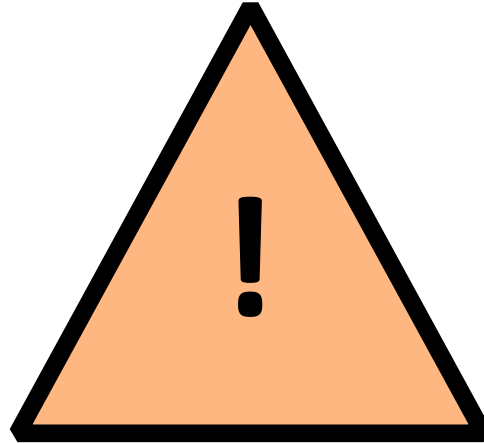


# With No Policy and High Demand - Benches Kept Coming Anyway

- They came with different levels of authorization, and some with none.
- They created a an environment of chaotic design.
- And many potential donors were left on the sidelines.







Policy Vacuum on Benches  
=  
Long-term Risk for the Lake Environment



# RISKS



Memorial Structures have extreme permanency. They are very difficult to remove, or even move to meet future needs.



Without a policy, natural sympathy for families tends to overshadow other concerns in placing new permanent benches. It is very difficult to say 'no' to grieving families in a given instance.



The dynamics of the above factors will inevitably lead over time to overcrowding parklands with benches and structures.



Rogue benches and design chaos will continue.



Lack of a clear policy results in families being treated differently when requesting a memorial bench.





## **FOLQ supports the appointment of a Town Committee on Benches**

We have confidence that a committee of civic minded citizens can address these issues by:

- Carefully considering long-term needs of the lake.
- Being aware of the unique permanence of any memorial structures.
- Considering the relatively small square footage of green space around the lake.
- Providing clear criteria and protocol for any additional memorial or plaques.





Thank You for Protecting our Lake Heritage