

Proposed Smyk Property Bequest

We can all applaud the generosity of the Smyks, their love of Stratham and their desire for their property to remain with the town, intact as they loved it.

However, this bequest is a bad idea for Stratham from a financial perspective.

1. It is under-endowed.
 - a. It will cost the town significantly more to maintain the property than the endowment can produce in income.
 - b. The prevailing scenario of the study committee is to tear the house down and fill in the pool to avoid maintenance and liability. An additional upfront expense.
2. It will cost the town at least \$20,000 per year to maintain it. \$20,000 that could be supporting our schools, supporting our town expenses and defraying our property taxes.
 - a. Alternately, if the estate trustee sells the property to a developer and four \$750,000 homes were built on the property, the total annual opportunity cost of this project could be \$80,000 per year or more.
3. Once we accept the gift, we cannot resell it if it turns out to be a bad idea. It would revert to the Smyk's estate. *This has all the hallmarks of the Bartlett Cushman house mistake.*

It is a bad idea from a town use perspective.

1. This is a very small addition to the town's overall green space.
2. This a bad location for public gatherings at the end of the terrible intersection of Bunker Hill and Portsmouth Avenue.
3. The current restrictions on the gift would not allow more ball fields or use other than as a small park right along a busy road.

The gift is bound up with considerable restrictions.

1. While we can appreciate the Smyk's intentions to give guidance regarding the future use of a gift, the current restrictions would hamstring the management and use of the property.
2. If Stratham declines the gift, the trustees of the Smyk estate know (or will discover) that no other non-profit wants this property with restrictions either. It will be a continuing expense and headache to those trustees.
3. At a bare minimum, the town should re-negotiate the conditions under which the gift would be more acceptable: right to sell property after a period of time (10-20 years), remove restrictions regarding trees, wooden swing sets and nature of replacement pavilion. Stratham need not fear another commercial property here, as it is zoned Professional Residential.

The best choice is to refuse the bequest and allow the Estate Trustees to sell it to a developer for residential homes.

1. There is continuing demand for residential properties in Stratham.
2. This would maximize the revenue for the town.