

Litchfield Garden Club Skating Rink Project

For many years during the winter months, residents of the town of Litchfield used a frozen pond on West Street as a skating rink. In the mid-1980's a new CVS Pharmacy Building was constructed on that parcel of land. To continue the skating tradition, Litchfield Bancorp donated a portable skating rink to the town, which was installed on South Plains Road near the existing soccer fields.

Residents preferred a more central location for the rink. In 2003, it was moved directly behind the Town Hall on West Street. After a few additional years of use, Litchfield's Department of Public Works (DPW) began discussing the need to replace the deteriorating rink. Enter Justin Cosgrove whose grandfather Henry Brun worked for the DPW. A member of Boy Scout Troop #29 in Bantam CT, Justin needed a project to acquire his Eagle Scout Award. Under the direction of his scoutmaster (and Dad) Jim Cosgrove and his mentor Craig Miner, Justin designed a plan that replaced the existing rink by moving it further north on the Town Hall property to an elevated site. He also sketched out seating, a fire pit, shoe cubbies & plantings around the newly installed skating rink.

The application for the necessary approvals and permits was filed on January 25, 2006 on behalf of Justin. During the Summer and Fall of 2006, Justin led the project by utilizing his leadership and fundraising skills. His scoutmaster and entire troop took part. The town cleared the wooded property to install the skating rink. The cost of materials for the wooden benches was covered by individual donors whose names are engraved on brass plaques on each seat. Scoutmaster Cosgrove's carpentry skills were put to use by creating the large wooden shoe cubbies.

For the landscaping part of the project, residents donated perennials and ornamental grasses from their gardens to create substantial 75 foot beds laid out in a triangular pattern. Putnam Tennis Courts donated free use of their machinery (operated by Jim Cosgrove) for an entire day. Litchfield Hills Nursery donated (at cost) eight mature arborvitae. Litchfield Horticulture Center donated shrubs at cost. Ducotey Bros Lawn Service donated free mulch and top soil. Town approval of the completed project was granted in January 2007 and the skating rink officially re-opened. Justin Cosgrove received his Eagle Scout award on January 4, 2008.

In 2019, another group stepped up to provide a much-needed restoration of the skating rink area. Beginning on August 29th, the Projects/Civic Beautification Committee of The Litchfield Garden Club, co-chaired by Lynne Sherman and Dale Ryan, planned a refurbishment of the structures surrounding the skating rink. The scope of the project included replacing the four wooden benches on the east side of the rink, replacing the four wooden benches in the fire pit area and replacing the large wooden shoe cubbies at the entrance.

Project approvals from town officials were sought by Mrs. Sherman beginning in September. Litchfield First Selectman Leo Paul was contacted for approval, followed by Raz Alexe, Public Works Director/Town Engineer and Mitchell Bodnar, Grounds Supervisor, both from the Department of Public Works.

With the necessary approvals to refurbish the benches and shoe cubbies in place, Mrs. Sherman and Mrs. Ryan met with Michael Smith of Woodmaster Builders on December 12th to explore the area and

submit a project cost estimate. The contract was signed, the weather cooperated and the three-day project was completed on December 17th.

Twenty-nine year old Justin Cosgrove would be proud that his vision has been preserved. He has been serving in the United States Navy for the past six years and currently serves as Petty Officer 3rd class on the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush.

