

Gouveia Park Historical Narrative August 2023

History:

Gouveia Park, located at 1300 Albany Post Road, Croton-on-Hudson, NY, was gifted to the Village of Croton-on-Hudson in 2015. It was a gift from John and Laurel Gouveia. The house on the property was built in 1967, and the Gouveias bought the property in 1984. The Village Board of Trustees approved the gift on November 25, 2013 ([Resolution](#)). The Village accepted the Gift of the 15.69-acre property and house along with a \$1,000,000 endowment and agreed to the terms and conditions outlined in [Ms. Gouveia's Will](#).

The terms and conditions include:

1. The real property shall be preserved and maintained, and its principal use by a park which shall be open to the public
2. The park shall be named Gouveia Park and designated in Memory of Laurel and John Gouveia.
3. A large brass sign shall be installed at each entrance to the park stating the park's name.
4. The metal statues, the mailbox and bench with two children and horse shall remain and be maintained.

Ms. Gouveia stated in her will that it is her preference that the entire real property be used as a park. However, it is “acceptable to me and will not violate my terms and conditions if the owner wishes to build on the real property or lease an existing building on the property, or make changes to any of the existing buildings, or demolish any existing outbuildings, provided the park-like setting is maintained for a public and park-like purpose.”

It is important to note that according to Ms. Gouveia's Will that if the Village decided not to accept the gift of the property and \$1,000,000 that she would have bequeathed it to Westchester County (2nd), Hudson River Presbytery (3rd) or another organization that was willing to accept the gift with her terms. **Ms. Gouveia desired that her property be a gift for public use, and therefore, the property would have come off the Village Tax rolls no matter what entity accepted the gift.**

Before accepting the gift, the Village hired TriState Engineering (TSE) to do an Environmental Phase 1 Site Assessment on the property:

[Final Report Part 1](#)

[Final Report Part 2](#)

Based on these reports, Ms. Gouveia worked on the property to remedy some of the issues called out, including removing a trailer, replacing an oil tank, roof repairs, and electrical repairs. That is noted in the Resolution passed by the Board on November 25, 2013.

Ad Hoc Committees and Community Engagement

In October of 2014, before the acceptance of the gift, the Village Board created an Ad Hoc Committee to advise the Village "on recommendations for all the potential, compatible uses for the facilities and grounds located at 1300 Albany Post Road." The Committee issued a [report](#) and recommendations, including upgrades to accessibility and parking, signage, fencing, utilities, security, landscaping, and recommendations to continue community involvement in exploring uses.

Initial Improvements were made to the park, and opened for passive public use in 2017. The house on the property was fenced off and has not been in use since the acquisition of the gift.

In April 2018, another Ad Hoc Committee was formed to recommend public uses for the property. This Committee spent months talking to many stakeholders and built upon the 2015 Committee report. Their [report](#) had the following recommendations and created the Vision for Gouveia Park to be as follows:

“The Committee proposes that the Village of Croton on Hudson would be best served if the Gouveia House were to become a Center for Art and Culture...**Inside the house**, the Committee proposes the following activities: art exhibitions, musical events of all kinds, including group singing, solo performances, rehearsals, recitals, and concerts. Play readings, comedy improv events, poetry slams, performances, open mic nights, and stand-up comedy. Pop-up events highlighting particular artisans’ works or seasonal-type boutiques where items can be purchased. Classes, seminars, and workshops in photography, painting, music, literature, and film-making. Book clubs, lectures, special fundraising events, writers/artists/actors retreats, auditions, meditation retreats, mindfulness classes, community meetings of all kinds, including grassroots organizations, Scouts, Board meetings, School district meetings, and private parties like weddings, reunions, showers, etc.

Outside activities would include restoring existing trails and extending them, establishing a sculpture garden, constructing a natural playground, planting the meadow for bird/butterfly/bee habitation, farmer’s markets, concerts, theater readings and performances, seasonal fairs, landscaping workshops and demonstrations, outdoor films, and a possible dark sky destination. In the warmer summer months, classes and workshops could also move outdoors. Some of these activities will be free to the public, others will be paid events. Paid events will help to meet financial obligations.

If the **outdoor buildings** are developed, they can be used as art studios and/or performance spaces housing art classes, art exhibitions, scenery-building workshops, and experimental theater events. The Committee also proposes that some outdoor projects can be undertaken by the community - providing yet another opportunity to connect with friends and neighbors in a deeply satisfying way. Clearing and creating trails, constructing a natural playground, and planting a sculpture garden are all such opportunities.”

The 2019 Committee also made the following recommendations for next steps:

1. Creation of a Friends of Gouveia Park to drive fundraising efforts for the park and apply for and administer grants. They noted that they came across a number of public grants that could be possible revenue sources for Gouveia.
2. Hire an Architect to plan the conversion of the Gouveia residence to a public-use building.
3. Continue public conversations around the property.

Uses Explored

The Village has explored the following uses of the property over the years:

1. Renting out the main house to an individual renter to generate revenue from the property. It was determined that this proposal was not in the spirit of the gift of the park and its designation as parkland.
2. RFI to attract a business (must be open to public use) was created and advertised by the Village
 - a. [RFI June 2022](#) - there were no interested parties.
 - b. [RFI January 2023](#) - there was one interested party, but it was determined the financial obligation of renovating the interior was too great for the interested property.
3. Recreation Department Offices moved to the ground floor of the Main House. The DPW has done initial sketches for converting the interior of the building.
 - a. [Sketch 1](#)
 - b. [Sketch 2](#)

The 1st floor will be designated for the Department of Recreation, including seating for four employees and a public service counter. These plans include adding an elevator for

accessibility. The 2nd floor will be a community space. The 1530 square feet of space will be available for Recreation programming and other public art and cultural events, including community rentals, art exhibits, and conferences.

From these three uses only the moving of the Recreation Department to Gouveia is viable. Moving the Recreation Department to the space would facilitate onsite management of the park to further the community's vision of robust arts & recreational programming.

Updated Research and Conversations

Actions and research have been done since the Spring of 2023.

- The Village Board of Trustees endorsed the creation of Friends of Croton Parks. This group could fundraise independently from the Village to support Croton Parks, including Gouveia Park. This was a direct recommendation of the 2019 AdHoc Committee. A public appeal has been made for the formation of such a group.
- May 2023 DPW has created [new estimates](#) of the exterior work that needs to be done on the property, including a loop road, parking improvements, drainage, and lighting improvements. (\$410K)
- Trustee Horowitz and the Village Manager met with NYS Parks to discuss applying for the [EPF Grant](#). The result of that conversation was that the Village was not ready to apply for such a grant, and it was recommended that the Village pursue a [Master Plan for the Park](#). “We just look at whether plans for the project exist, like a master plan or feasibility study. Master planning is a public process. It’s up to the Village how it wants

to structure the document and who it wants to involve in the creation of the document.

The Village can hire a consultant or attempt to do it internally.”

- NYS Parks also recommended that the Village could pursue funding for such a study through the [Hudson Valley Greenway Grant Program](#).
- Trustee Horowitz created a list of [proposed projects](#) on the property that could be grant funded and sent it to the Recreation Advisory Committee for review.
- Trustee Horowitz has researched the possibility of the Gouveia house being listed on the National Registry of Historic Homes and the implications of this decision—via email [correspondence](#).
- Trustee Simon [received recommendations](#) for the City Park Alliance for competent firms to Consult with for Gouveia.

Current Financials

The property was donated with an endowment of \$1M; of that original endowment, approximately \$736,000 is left. The endowment funds continue to generate interest credited to the endowment. Since acquiring the property, the following improvements have been made by the Village at the cost of \$315,926.11 to the property:

- Installation of a Security Fence Around the House: \$1,274.00
- Upper Parking Lot Creation, driveway widening, and resurfacing: \$209,592.30
- Tree work on the property: \$45,239.12
- Installation of meter pit on property: \$11,524.43
- Installation of an alarm system on property: \$8,976.00
- Miscellaneous repairs & engineering services: \$39,320.26

Appendix

Environmental Assessment Report 9.21.11

[Final Report Part 1](#)

[Final Report Part 2](#)

[Resolution for the Accepting the Gift of Gouveia Property](#)

[Laurel Gouveia's Will Outlining Terms and Conditions of the gift](#)

[2015 Ad Hoc Committee Report](#)

[Cost Estimates for renovating the interior for rental](#)

[2019 Ad Hoc Committee Report](#)

[RFI Issued June 2022](#)

[RFI Issued January 2023](#)