

Town Report: Presentation of “Person of the Year”

It’s June so that means it’s Annual Town Meeting Time.

One of the fun/enjoyable parts of our jobs as Select Board Members is selecting who the Annual Town Report should be dedicated to.

We are fortunate to live in a wonderful community, where so many people care about Camden and volunteer their time, energy, and creativity to this community...

People who want the best for all of us *today* – but also for future generations...

People who understand what makes Camden such a special place...and who treasure what makes Camden Camden.

In a moment, we are going to hear Parks & Recreation Director Landon Fake give us a progress report on the Ragged Mountain Redevelopment Project.

We wouldn’t have a Ragged Mountain Redevelopment Project if it wasn’t for the Ragged Mountain Recreation Area Redevelopment Committee.

That’s why the Select Board has dedicated the 2014 Annual Report to The Ragged Mountain Redevelopment Committee as Camden’s “Person of the Year.”

It is time to celebrate this extraordinary group of people whose vision, energy, determination, and love of Camden took the idea of redeveloping Ragged Mountain and turned it into a reality.

Many of you are in the room tonight and we are glad that you could be here. Before we ask you to come forward to accept our thanks, let’s look at this retrospective that Dave Ridley did to capture some of your activities .

It seems like “just yesterday” (ha ha!), when the Select Board appointed a committee to develop a plan to improve the Snow Bowl facilities, increase year-round usage, and build long-term financial sustainability for Ragged Mountain.

The original members of the Redevelopment Committee were Rick Knowlton and Bob Gordon as the Co-Chairs, Don Gross, Frank Morong, Molly Mulhern, John Scholz, Mort Strom, and non-voting members Jeff Kuller, Beth Ward, and Fitzzy Fitzcharles. With that appointment, this core group was on its way to making more Snow Bowl history!

The Committee and its work groups have spanned 7 years. Unlike some committees where people sign up and then move on, you picked up steam, and more people joined in! (People know a good thing when they see it!)

Accomplishing your assignment involved planning, design, community education, and no small amount of money: \$6.5 million.

The Redevelopment Committee, working with the Capital Campaign Committee, the Ragged Mountain Foundation, and the Parks & Recreation Committee, took up the challenge to raise \$4.5 million in private funds.

As we all know, the plan was if you reached the \$4.5 million private fundraising goal, the Town would ask voters to consider a \$2 million matching bond issue.

Raising \$4.5 million in private funds would be tough in the best of circumstances. But this project started just as the national recession hit.

Worse than that, the Committee and the community faced the tragic loss of two leading forces: Parks & Recreation Director Jeff Kuller, and Building Committee Chair Don Gross. This was a deep loss to our community.

But... You took a landslide of obstacles and turned them into a “mountain of possibilities.”

The campaign stretched on longer than planned, but you persevered – and you made it fun for the whole community along the way.

Then on September 25, 2013 not only did you reach goal you *exceeded it!*

As promised, on November 5, 2013, Camden voters also exceeded expectations and approved the \$2 million bond issue by nearly 5 to 1 (1124 to 239).

Without a moment to spare, site work for the redevelopment project began March 17 – the day after the Snow Bowl closed for the season. Next winter, skiing at the Snow Bowl will be a totally new experience thanks to your efforts!

We dedicate this Annual Report to the Ragged Mountain Redevelopment Committee with profound thanks. We recognize your *many* years of community service and we are proud of your incredible achievement.

We also want to thank Co-chairs Rick Knowlton and Bob Gordon for your steady leadership, spirited drive, and unwavering dedication. Your work, and the efforts of the entire committee, strengthen us as a community, and ensures Ragged Mountain and the Snow Bowl will continue to be a special place for generations.

While your original charge has been fulfilled and *you have turned the project over to the Town to manage and get it done*, I understand you all are willing to continue to work with the Town staff as advisors and to help where needed. I am very, very glad to hear that and appreciate that very much.

During the campaign, you came up with a number of slogans and giving opportunities such as “Give a Lift” and “A Mountain of Possibilities.”

You all too a mountain of obstacles and showed the community Possibilities” and this sure did give us “a Lift.” So back at you: As another way to say thank you and recognize you for all you have done for our community, we are going to give you a lift and ***dedicate a chair in your honor.***

We know that you will enjoy the ride!

Thank you all – and congratulations!