



## Battle of Rhode Island Association

Butts Hill Fort Restoration Committee



Mr Richard Rainer  
Town Administrator  
Town of Portsmouth

Subject: Butts Hill Fort Restoration Committee (BHFR) short-term and long-term vegetation maintenance plans for Butts Hill Fort Area (Town Lot 71 & Lot 72).

In keeping with previous Portsmouth Town Council position as “supportive of historic preservation for the Butts Hill Fort complex, with the important reservation that the Town not be unduly burdened with improvement costs that will be passed on to the taxpayer (RIMAP 2009) and Portsmouth Comprehensive Community Plan goals and objectives enclosed in HCR-1 and HCR-2 especially, the BHFR makes a good faith commitment to be responsible for vegetation management on the seven-acre site of Butts Hill Fort in area that the committee cleans up and improves beyond any areas currently maintained by Portsmouth Public Works.

Background: Our 2022 volunteer clearing operations focused primarily on the inside of the Butts Hill Fort, and we worked in concert with DPW to carefully manage removals of debris and invasive undergrowth, which by all accounts has greatly enhanced the esthetic appearance of the complex, and also the size and usefulness of the inner works green space.

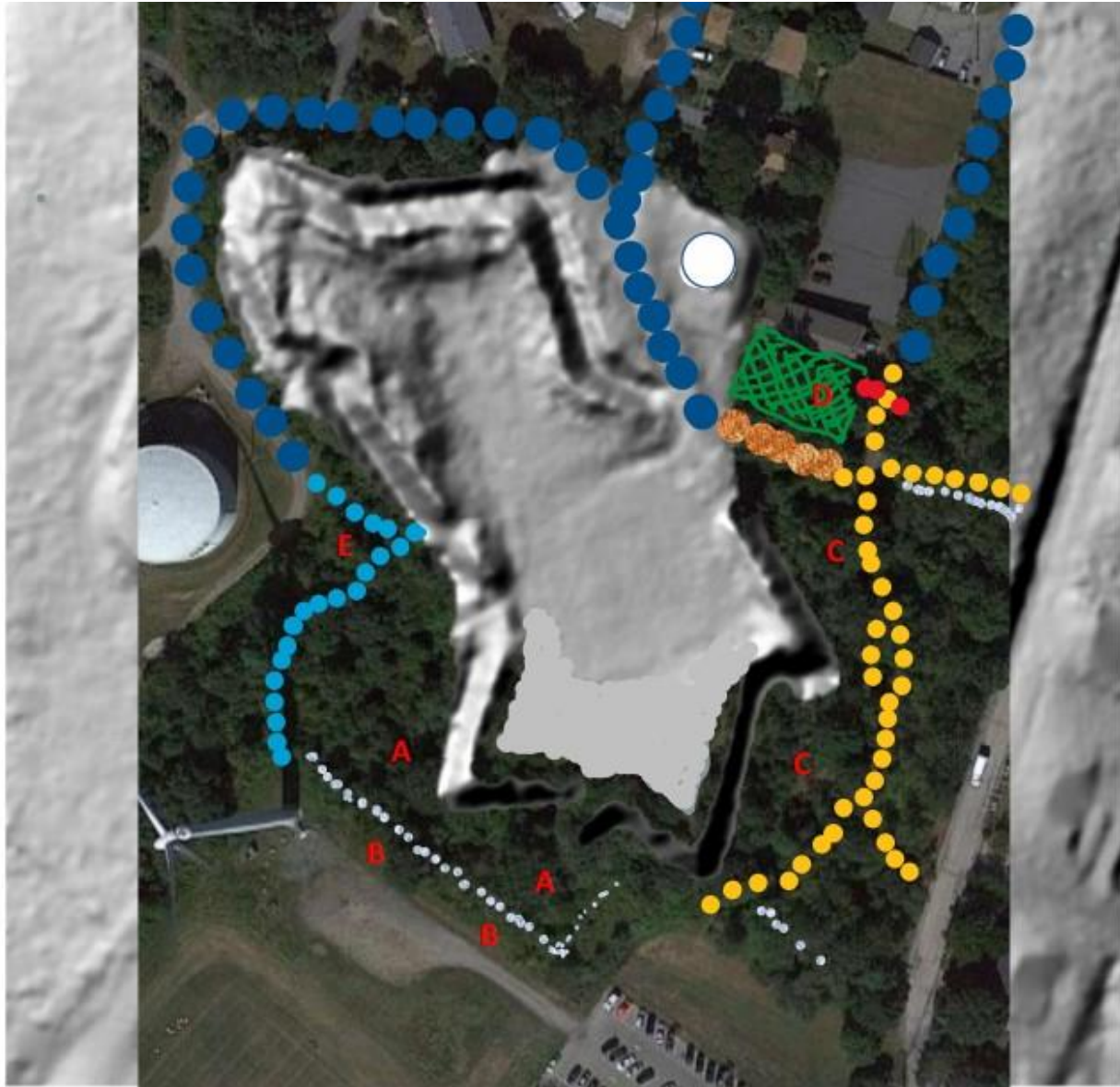
Our immediate 2023 goal is to move out before heaviest Spring growth periods in order to clean up selected spaces for better public visibility, better hiking access and enjoyment in the lead up to this Summer’s Centennial celebration of Butts Hill Fort’s 1923 original dedication. This tribute to the leadership and philanthropy of Dr Roderick Terry, dovetails with Aug 29 2023, 245<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1778 Battle of Rhode Island proper.

**Near Term:** Request approval to use BHFR Committee’s 501(c)3 financial and human resources, in the form of our public-minded volunteers, as well as our funds to support logistics on removals in the form of 30-foot dumpsters, and other specialized professional equipment where appropriate to efficiently clear out the brush, invasives and decades-worth of debris and litter immediately outside the earthwork perimeter, in the general flat terrain spaces surrounding the perennial 240-year old earthworks. We would take pains not to penetrate the ground or further disturb terrain which are currently overgrown and impassable due to vines and other invasives, but we would be cutting them out where it makes professional sense to do so. Moreover, we will plan to use manual weed whacker teams to prevent growth throughout 2023 calendar year, and as long as necessary until a more permanent plan is in execution. We believe the BHFR has the internal resources and manpower to accomplish this, akin to public groups which do similar public volunteer service at Fort Adams and elsewhere.



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//PRM

v1. Jan 2023

### Map Legend

-  Roads Existing (Paved)
  -  Earle Street (Dirt Road)
  -  Pile of Debris/Dyer Road Block
  -  Paths Existing Perennial
  -  Paths Semi-Existing/Easy to Cut
  -  Stone Walls
  -  "Fort Butts Green" (Map 28, Lot 72)
- A,B..E** Area Targets For 2023



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The Committee-produced area map above shows the targets as inside currently existing pathways to the edges of the surrounding ditches to the South and South East, (Areas “C”) to include inside and outside the long stone wall that runs along the wind turbine pea gravel lot (Areas “A” and “B”), as well as the Butts Hill Fort Green (Lot 72) shown as area “D”.

The shoulder (areas “B” along the outside stone wall) are not currently maintained, and could use a clean up regardless. Moreover this area would be cleaned up at no expense to the Town or Education Department’s adjacent areas which are currently very well maintained.

**Mid-Long Term:** The BHFR and 501(c)3 Battle of Rhode Island Association (BoRIA) have contracted a Landscape Architect Master Plan which is being finalized that will formally present the long term proposed concepts on the entire complex, to include a full vegetation, archeology and arborist vegetation selection and management plans going forward, in keeping with National Park Service (See example), Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission on long term alternatives and best practices on historic preservation.



**NPS Sustainable Earthworks Management Guidance, Stones River Example** Stones River National Battlefield, Murfreesboro, TN

Ultimately, the BHFR, via BoRIA, which is gathering fairly substantial financial resources to date, will establish an endowment-funded land management trust sufficient to maintain any restoration plans that are finally vetted and approved as the permanent end state. We believe this is also in keeping with the stated goals of the Portsmouth Comprehensive Community Plan.

In, summary, the purpose of this letter is to request Town permission to plan and execute Near term Spring clearing in general (as specified), but starting as soon as 4 March 2023 weekend.

Thank you again for your support and consideration of this initiative.

VR/ Paul R Murphy, 16 Prospect Lane, Portsmouth RI, 401-297-6437  
Co-Director, Butts Hill Fort Restoration Committee, BoRIA



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## Attachment 1

### PORTSMOUTH COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

Draft – 20200225 - Edits For Planning Board Public Hearing 2

**Fort Butts - An earthwork redoubt dating from the Revolutionary War. The fort was occupied successively by British, Hessian, and American troops and anchored the American northern line during the Battle of Rhode Island (1778). It offers today the same commanding view of the central bay that made it such a strategic location during the Revolutionary War. The fort is located north of the tennis courts at Portsmouth High School.**

**Table 2.1- Recreational Facility Features and Use Limitations Recreational Facility Name Area (≈.Acres) Principal Features Use Limitations Historic Parks:**

**Fort Butts 7 ♣ Hiking paths ♣ Scenic views**

**POLICY R-1.2 Continue to provide for high-quality maintenance of current public recreation areas and facilities.**

Action R-1.2a: Develop long-term maintenance plans for all town-owned recreation facilities.

Action R-1.2b: **Pursue stewardship of recreational facilities through “friends of” groups and work with sports leagues to enhance maintenance efforts.**

Action R-1.2c: Maintain existing CRMC and public-designated rights-of-way to the shore to keep them clear and safe for all users.

Action R-1.2d: Pursue state, federal, and private funding opportunities for recreation facilities maintenance.

**PORTSMOUTH COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN 3-19 3.5.1 GOAL HCR-1 Achieve a self-sustaining level of public awareness in promoting historic and cultural heritage as a vital part of Portsmouth’s community character and quality of life.**

**POLICY HCR-1.1 Support the education of students, residents and visitors alike in the importance of preserving the historic and cultural heritage of Portsmouth.**

Action HCR-1.1a: Develop and encourage a local history element into the curricula of Portsmouth’s school system.

Action HCR-1.1b: Pursue funding for the Portsmouth Free Public Library specifically earmarked to expanding the local history resources section.

Action HCR-1.1c: Continue to work with the Portsmouth Historical Society and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission to provide educational programs to the public.

Action HCR-1.1d: Promote tourism in Portsmouth through consideration of the establishment of a Heritage Trail and/or similar efforts.



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Action HCR-1.1e: Task the Town Council with promoting historic and cultural awareness by issuing proclamations, declarations, resolutions and other public announcements of a historic nature on a regular basis.

### **POLICY HCR-2.3 Maintain financial support for historic preservation activities, arts and cultural organizations and neighborhood associations.**

Action HCR-2.3a: Pursue a private partner such as the Portsmouth Historical Society to act as the principle entity responsible for conducting an annual status report of all the historic and cultural sites, structures and landscapes listed above in this plan. Seek a permanent line item in the annual Town Budget along with an auditing process to ensure the Society has the financial resources necessary to carry out this task.

### **ELEMENT 3 – HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**GOAL HCR-1 Achieve a self-sustaining level of public awareness in promoting historic and cultural heritage as a vital part of Portsmouth’s community character and quality of life.**

**HCR-1.1 Support the education of students, residents and visitors alike in the importance of preserving the historic and cultural heritage of Portsmouth.** (Related Po: SF-1.13, NH/CC-1.4)

**HCR-1.2 Promote and encourage all public, private and non-profit entities engaged in historic preservation activities in Portsmouth at all levels of effort.** (Related Policies: NH/CC-1.4)

**HCR-1.3 Foster civic participation and community engagement through enhanced access to Portsmouth’s rich historic and cultural resources.** (Related Policies: SF 1.13, NH/CC-1.4)

**GOAL HCR-2 Produce an effective set of policies and programs that insure the protection and preservation of Portsmouth’s historic sites, structures and landscapes.**

**HCR-2.2 Preserve Portsmouth’s historic landscapes, including farms and agricultural lands, as essential elements of our community character, economic vitality and quality of life.** (Related Policies: NR-1.4, ED-2.1, AG-2.1, LU-6.1, LU-1.1, ED-2.5)

**HCR-2.3 Maintain financial support for historic preservation activities, arts and cultural organizations and neighborhood associations.** (Related Policies: NH/CC-1.4)