



Middle Road,
Ellington, CT

The Jacob Roger Poulin Foundation
J4COB'S PARK
Because **EVERYONE** Should Get to Play

Planning and Zoning Commission

Special Meeting

October 9th, 2018, 7:00 pm

Ellington High School Auditorium

37 Maple Street, Ellington, CT 06029



The Jacob Roger Poulin Foundation (JRPF)

- Established on October 4th, 2016
- Designated a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charity by the IRS
- Our purpose, as stated in our Articles of Incorporation
“... to memorialize the life of Jacob Roger Poulin and his hard fought battle with childhood brain cancer, with a mission to build a park in the Town of Ellington, CT.”

The Jacob Roger Poulin Foundation was established within hours of Jacob's passing. Jacob's dad said to me, "This can't be all that Jacob's life was meant to be. We have to do something; something to share his life with everyone." We talked, and decided we would build a park in his honor and memory. But where to begin. A close friend, now our Treasurer, filed all the necessary documentation with the State and IRS on October 4; three days after our beautiful baby boy had passed away. Knowing that we had a this awesome purpose to push us forward, helped us get through some of the most terrible moments of our lives.

501(c)(3): The IRS has designated the JRPF as a 501(C)(3) nonprofit public charity. They don't give out this designation lightly, as the designation has a lot of power and responsibility that comes with it. We were granted this designation because of the trust the IRS has in our organizational structure, and the purpose behind why we established the JRPF.

Purpose: As stated in our Articles of Incorporation, our purpose is "... To memorialize the life of Jacob Roger Poulin and his hard fought battle with childhood brain cancer, with a mission to build a park in the Town of Ellington, CT."



J4cob's Park

- Jacob's Favorite Things
- All-Inclusive Vision for J4cob's Park



Favorite things: Loved Hockey, and as an active, athletic four year-old-boy, he naturally loved American Ninja Warrior. So, we are including a three-season dek hockey rink, and an American Ninja Warrior influenced playground. I'll get into more of those each in a minute.

Vision: As we thought about what we wanted J4cob's Park to be, we envisioned, that at any stage of J4cob's life, whether as an active and healthy young child, or as the wheel-chair bound cancer patient he became, or the first professional hockey playing, American Ninja Warrior that he was supposed to be, there would be something at J4cob's Park that would have appealed to him, would have made him feel like he had a place where he belonged. In this way, we want to provide a place where everyone feels like they belong.



Why J4cob's Park in Ellington

- The Town and Community of Ellington, Connecticut
- Our Businesses



Ellington: We wanted to build J4cob's Park in Ellington because our town is the best town with the best people. We had so much support while Jacob was sick, and it hasn't stopped. But consider for a moment, May 24th, 2016; the fundraiser held at Kloter Farm's to help our family after Jacob had been in the hospital for just under two months; many of you attended. It was a wonderful moment of true community (a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interest, and goals) a night that many will never forget. That fundraiser, which was held for just three hours at the Kloter's Ice Cream Barn was epic; over \$12,000 was raised for our family. Talk about an amazing community. How could we chose anywhere, any community but ours, this one, to build and donate J4cob's Park?

Why we need this in Ellington? On Facebook, a resident said that, growing up in Ellington, she ALWAYS had to go to neighboring towns to do extra-curricular activities. There was nothing for her to do here. Now that she's raising her own children here, she'd love to be able to stay in town for these extra activities. Wow. So what DO we have to offer our residents? What do we have to bring people TO Ellington, to see how awesome our town is? When you have outsiders visiting your town for a kid-related or recreational activity, they inevitably visit businesses; they'll stay for a coffee and treat at LuAnns, or lunch at Cold Creek, or stop by Kloter for some ice cream and stop in to see the furniture options, or grab dinner at Ellington Pizza after a ball game. What do we have to drive up revenue?

J4cob's Park offers an answer to all of those questions.



Location – Why Middle Road?

- Informed the Town of our intentions
- Worked to find the most suitable location
- Began planning and designing



My husband Steve, our President, called the Town and told them our story. He told them we wanted to build and donate a park in honor of our amazing little boy. We were met with compassion, sympathy, and a desire to help us with our mission.

The first two properties that were suggested were Batz Property, the topography and current uses of which weren't suitable for a park with excessive site clearing and preparation necessary, and Pinney Street. At that time, Pinney Street looks much the way it does now. We were excited to move forward with this location. However, after formal, informal, and special meetings with the First Selectwoman, Public Works Department, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Inland Wetlands Agency, it became clear that Pinney Street would not be adequate to contain both a dek hockey rink and a playground. The intent of J4cob's Park is to have everything in one place; Not J4cob's Park, and J4cob's Park annex. We were then told about Middle Road and the Town's plan to develop a portion of it for recreational purposes.

When movies portray the sun bursting through the clouds and harps playing beautiful music, that's how I remember this moment. This location was, and still is, perfect for J4cob's Park. The Town's plan was to build a full-sized baseball field and two multi-purpose fields. However, we were told to propose a design for what we were planning, and the Town would take it into consideration and potentially modify their plan. And so, here we are today, discussing J4cob's Park.



What's in J4cob's Park

- **Dek hockey rink**
 - 50 x 100 foot enclosed rink
 - Smooth rubber surface floated over concrete
 - No lights



50 x 100 foot enclosed hockey rink. For context, an NHL sized rink is 200 feet long x 85 feet wide; this rink is about a quarter of the size of a full-size rink. Further, it's less than a 10th of the size of a football field.

Smooth Rubber Surface floated over concrete. This provides people to use inline skates or run and is much more quiet than what people think.

No lights; park closes at dusks as with other recreational facilities that do not have lights.

Renewable sponsorship opportunities exist on the inside of the rink boards that will continue to generate revenue.



What's in J4cob's Park (continued)

- An American Ninja Warrior Influenced Playground
- Inclusive by design
- Areas for all ages
 - 6-24 months
 - 2-5 years
 - 5-12 years
 - 13-adult



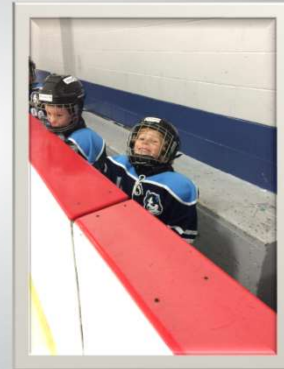
American Ninja Warrior; the show is about overcoming obstacles on the course and in life. It's about supporting people. It's about wanting the best for every person and knowing that they are capable of great things. Ninja warrior training teaches kids – and adults – that it's okay and expected that you're going to fail sometimes, but that's not the important part. The focus is on getting up each and every time you've fallen down and having more determination to reach your goal than ever. That's why this playground is going to be influenced by the show. It's not going to have the steel construction that you see on the show, because it's all going to be "playground certified equipment", but it's going to have pieces of equipment that challenge kids and people to think of new ways to play; new ways to think about and overcome obstacles.

We want the playground at J4cob's Park to have something for everyone and to be as inclusive as possible. Inclusivity is not about having ramps for those in wheelchairs or using walkers to be able to get to where their friends were 30 seconds ago, or to arrive at the peak of the equipment just to pointlessly spin a steering wheel. When people in wheelchairs were asked how they want to play, the overwhelming feedback was that they want to be included in play and to influence the play of their peers. This can include shaking a balance obstacle a friend is using, spinning or being spun on a carousel, or even helping a friend scale a wall by offering physical support. It could also be rocking or being rocked on a large seesaw or having a contest to see who can "hang" the longest.



What's in J4cob's Park (continued)

- Walking track
- Community Grieving Garden
- Wall of Recognition
- Possible solar powered video wall, updated with new scavenger hunts in park



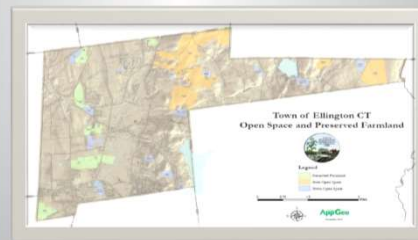
We're also not just talking about inclusive for all-abilities; we want this to be inclusive for all-ages as well. For the adult section, the equipment will be geared a little bit more towards fitness, as well as the quarter mile walking track encompassing J4cob's Park. We would love to also include other elements that inspire community building too, such as a grieving garden for those interested to help maintain and contribute their passions and eventually a pavilion to allow to people to come together and have small celebrations.

For example, for Jacob's 2nd birthday party, we had a wonderful party at Nevers Park. It was great to have this amenity available to us ... in South Windsor. Fast forward to October 1, 2017, the first anniversary of Jacob's passing, we had a dedication ceremony of sorts at Middle Road. We put up a large sign during our ceremony, which per zoning regulations, we took down when our "event" was over. Then we met at Brookside for lunch and cake, as it was also Jacob's father's birthday as well. To have all these things in one place, bringing all ages and abilities together as one community, ... I think it's a wonderful step towards what an awesome small town is about; supporting each other.



Aligns with Town Priorities

- Compliant with Section 8.3.2 in Ellington's Zoning Regulations
- Helps Fulfill Ellington's Plan of Conservation and Development
 - "T" Properties is defined as "Town Open Space", not Protected Farmland.



I won't read and speak to each of the Standards for Granting Special Permit, though for the reference of the audience, they are Section 8.3.2 in Ellington's Zoning Regulations.

The "T" Properties is defined in the Plan of Conservation and Development as Town Open Space; not Protected Farmland. This project contributes to fulfilling the 3rd Preservation Goal of the POCD, which is to preserve and enhance recreational assets in order to accommodate the needs of Ellington's growing population.

1. The location and size of the proposed structures and intensity of the use in relation to the size of the lot will be in harmony with the orderly development of the area and compatible with other existing uses.
2. The kind, size and height of the structures on the lot will not hinder or discourage the appropriate use of adjoining property or diminish the value thereof.
3. The proposed use will not adversely alter the essential characteristics of the area or adversely affect the property value of the neighborhood.
4. The parking facilities will be adequate and properly located, and the entrance/exit driveways are laid out to achieve maximum safety, and the existing public roadways are adequate in width and condition to handle

future traffic.

5. The proposed plans provide for the conservation of natural features, drainage basins and the protection of the environment of the area.
6. The physical design elements of the proposed development including road patterns shall be attractive and suitable in relation to the site's characteristics and the style of the other buildings and development in the immediate area.
7. The proposed building materials and other design aspects of the building's architecture, together with proposed landscaping, lighting, and signage, are appropriate with respect to the surrounding neighborhood.
8. The proposed use will not have any detrimental effect on public health, safety, convenience and property values.
9. The proposed use shall have easy accessibility for fire apparatus, ambulances and police vehicles. The Commission may require to have constructed to Town specifications certain thoroughfares in the development for such purposes.
10. There are adequate utilities, including water supply and sewerage disposal, to support the proposed use.



Concerns

- **Safety**
 - Traffic
- **Park Usage**
 - Noisy, lights, drug and alcohol use
- **Cost**
 - Higher Taxes because of maintenance
- **Property Values**
 - Parks add value – other options do not

Safety

With regard to traffic, Middle Road is a connector road; it is designed to be a pass-thru road, connecting two other major roads, to decrease congestion. This is evidenced by the fact that houses built after 1960 must be offset 55 feet from the as opposed to the normal 35 feet, to allow for resident safety.

Park Usage

I've read comments that some people are concerned that a hockey rink will bring in males between the ages of 18-45 who will be loudly loitering after hockey games, drinking and doing drugs until all hours of the morning. Let me reiterate that, while anyone is certainly welcome to use this rink, it is only a 50 x 100 foot dek hockey rink; it's not big enough to host any adult leagues. And there are no lights; the park will be closed at dusk as is standard for any park in town without lights. Further, as far as noise goes, we are talking about children shooting a rubber ball, running on a rubber surface, enclosed by high density polyurethane boards. This is not a DECK. This is safer street hockey for children.

Cost

I've read concerns about future costs and the Foundation's ability to stay viable and some people suggesting that the town sign a contract with the foundation to pay for future maintenance costs. Let me be clear, the Jacob Roger Poulin Foundation isn't going anywhere. The IRS has the utmost confidence in our abilities, as evidenced by the 501(c)(3) designation. If we have any say in anything, we will never let J4cob's Park fall into disrepair.

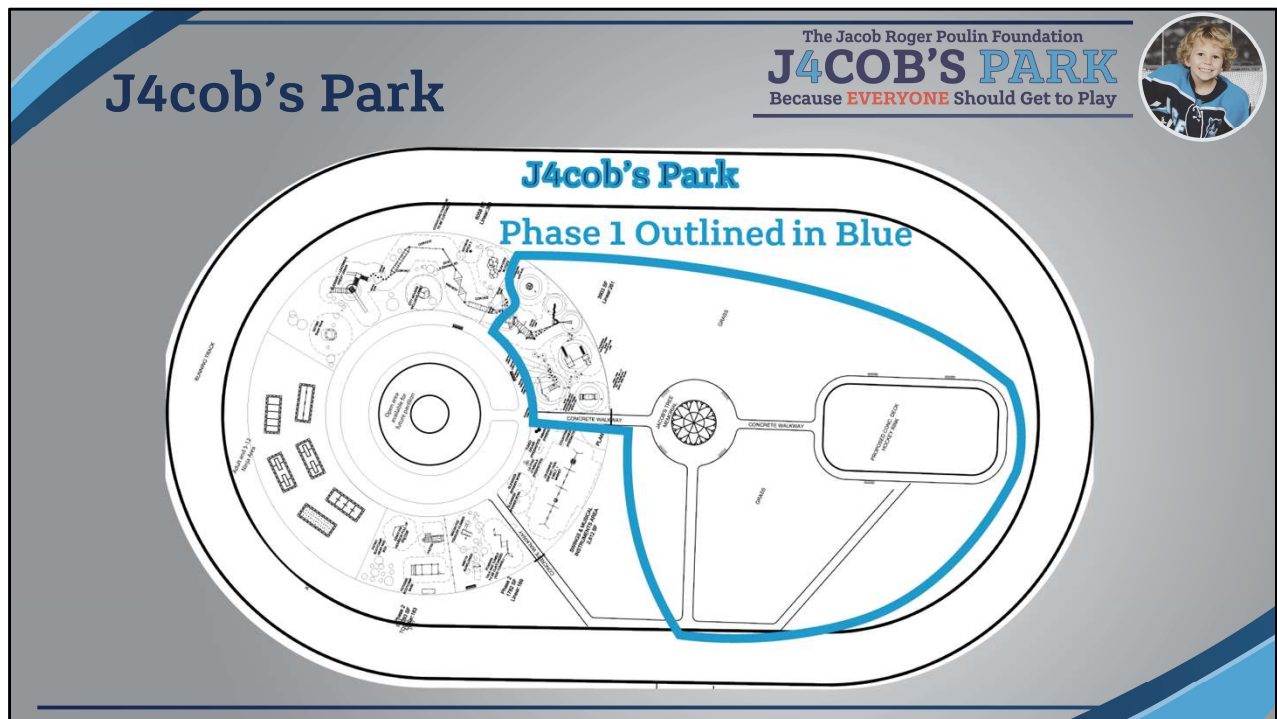
However, we will not sign a contract obligating the foundation to maintain a town asset, when we're already donated that three quarters of a million dollar asset TO the town.

Property Values

Any legitimate real estate agent will tell you that a park increases property values; more often, more people are willing to pay more to live near a park. If you know a real estate agent that speaks contrary to that, will be challenged to find statistical evidence to support their statement.

A study by The Trust for Public Land, "revealed that excellent parks tend to add 15 percent to the value of a proximate dwelling, meaning within 500 yards." Another conclusion drawn by the TPL, is "Numerous studies have shown that the more webs of human relationships a neighborhood has, the stronger, safer, and more successful it is. Any institution that promotes this kind of community cohesion ... adds value to a neighborhood and, by extension, to the whole city. "

The other options that are allowable for properties zoned as Rural/Agricultural Residential, a special use permit like the one being requested tonight, are municipal buildings for large equipment, public or private schools, college dorms, cemeteries, including those for religious groups, other community buildings and churches, hospitals, commercial camps, golf courses, communication towers, and airplane landing strips. Any one of these other options almost certainly would decrease the neighboring property values.



When we heard that there was such a strong negative reaction to the overall project, we were completely blindsided. As a side, personal note, it isn't easy to constantly draft and rework commentary about your precious child who has left this world to soon, especially when you consider how brutal the last six months of his life were. Reliving and putting words to these moments over and over again, to try to thoughtfully express why this is such a necessary endeavor, is ruthless. However, because we want the world to know about the little boy they may not have been fortunate enough to meet, it's something I've done over and over and over, and will continue to do until the day I die and get to see, and touch, and hear the voice of my amazing baby boy again.

Regardless of my emotional investment in this project, this is an amazing project that so many people have supported. We have tried every way possible to get the word out into the world about Jacob and the park we're building in his memory and honor. There have been articles written in the Hartford Courant, the Journal Inquirer, the Reminder, the Courant Community, Ellington Patch, and our Ellington Events Magazine. We've been on Lori's public access show, on NBC 30 a few times, and on national tv on a little-known show called American Ninja Warrior. We also have a pretty active social media presence, as well as a website with loads of information, all the ways we can be contacted for questions, as well as subscriber emails for updates about the Foundation. Further, many town entities, businesses, and individual groups have either collaborated with us directly or held independent fundraisers; the Rugged Farm, the Triathlon, and both JRP 3v3 Soccer

Tourneys have been hosted by the Recreation Department (by the way; thank you to everyone who came out yesterday to make another over \$8,000 event); Ellington Agway, Anytime Fitness, and the Lions Club worked together on a fitness and mothers day event to benefit the JRPF; the Lions Club selected the JRPF as their charity for a golf tournament they ran with the Somers Lion's Club. The Mom's Club of Ellington held a Mom Prom fundraiser that benefitted the JRPF. We've had Girl and Boy Scout groups and countless lemonade stands raising money for Jacob's Park. Luann's chose the JRPF as one of their first #DonationCreation charities. We had a booth at the 2017 Ellington Volunteer Fireman's Carnival. A neighborhood near Brookside Park hosted a Glow-Run AT Brookside Park and donated what they raised. I spoke with 100 high school students last year at the volunteer group organized by the Town called Rise Above. A few local churches teamed up and held a Glow Dance for teens and donated the proceeds to us. These are only a small portion of the Local events held to benefit the Jacob Roger Poulin Foundation. Forgive me for finding it hard to believe, that an entire neighborhood had no idea what has been planned for well over a year.



Everyone has some battle going on, and most of the time you have no idea what they face day in and day out. That's why we need a place where kids, people, can go, and no matter what they're battling, they can feel ..., wanted. If even just for a moment, a place they can feel normal. A place to take them away from their struggles, where they can just ... play. Like a kid. Because everyone should get to play. As much as this is a park being donated to the Town of Ellington in honor and memory of our sweet boy, it's much more a recreational asset for the entire community to enjoy. Because of who Jacob was, and the support we received while he battled every moment of every day for six months, we think this is the right thing to do. It's the right thing for Ellington.