

## Burlington Sculpture Park taking shape

By **Veer Mudambi** / [Burlington@wickedlocal.com](mailto:Burlington@wickedlocal.com)

Posted Jul 15, 2020 at 12:01 AM

Updated Jul 15, 2020 at 5:42 PM

“An art museum with no wall and no staff.” This is the idea that Jon Sachs brought before the town of Burlington in 2016.

Four years later, one of Sachs’ self-described “wacky ideas” is taking shape. On July 14, the Department of Public Works installed the concrete bases for six sculptures near the intersection of Bedford and Center streets. The sculpture park will be located across the street from the town common, in an open space between the Police Department and Grandview Farm.

The six works, approved in March, were initially planned to be unveiled in June, with an accompanying outdoor celebration. The onset of the COVID crisis resulted in delays but “surprisingly less than we thought it would,” said Sachs, now chairman of the sculpture park subcommittee. “The biggest effect is no public event until the situation is under control.”

However, as residents are still visiting the town common in small groups, there is no reason they cannot enjoy the works, he said. Selectmen agreed, and the sculptures will be installed throughout the summer as they arrive. The current goal is one by the end of the month, between two and four in August and the rest by September.

Each work is on a two-year loan - starting from the day of installation - with a stipend paid to the sculptor. While the original plan had been to rotate pieces in and out, over the course of planning, “we’ve all grown attached to them and hope to make them permanent,” said Sachs.

After the loan period, the town will have the option to purchase the sculptures. How many and which ones depends on the funds available - which will come from donations - as each has its individual price.

The project arose from Master Plan Steering Committee discussions about Burlington's lack of a focused town center, and Sachs proposed the idea as a way to also raise the town's arts and culture profile. Bob Buckley, Kristine Brown, and Sonia Rollins were the idea's first supporters, but the key step forward was taken when Bob Buckley got the Nordblom development company to donate the initial funding to make it happen.

Future plans for the sculpture park depend largely on public reaction, which judging from the enthusiasm during planning, Sachs expects to be very positive. One possibility is expanding across the street into the town common or Simonds Park. The larger sections of the common are primarily reserved as event spaces but there is an abundance of small areas around the edges to place a sculpture without disruption.

The current space outside the common came with a different issue - in January, the Historical Commission contended that the sculptures fell under the category of permanent structures, prohibited in that area. The project went forward after Selectmen passed down a decision overriding the commission. While Sachs said he is happy with the board's decisions, part of the reason he advocated for the sculpture park in the first place is because he understands the commission's concerns.

The Historical Commission is sensitive to any proposed changes, he explained, because there are so few historical structures. "We don't have the kind of history Lexington and Concord have, and our town center, while pleasant, doesn't have the lovely 1890s buildings that you see in other towns," said Sachs. "We can't go back and have an 1890s town center Victorian building," he said, joking.

So, if history does not provide Burlington with its own character, the town should be able to reinvent itself, he said. "When you talk to people in the Greater Boston area there's only one thing that comes to mind [about Burlington] and that's the mall," said Sachs. The sculpture park, he hopes, will give the town a new identity. "I would really like to not live in a town known only for the mall."