

Park and Recreation Commission Meeting

September 9, 2025 at 7:00pm

Present: Chris Gerstel (Chair), Cynthia Chaston (Member), James Rosenbaum (Member), Dina Hannigan (Member) via zoom, Stacey Mulroy (Director)

Absent: Michelle Geddes (Vice Chair)

Guests: Meryl Nistler, Alisa Skatrud (Vice Chair, Needham School Committee)

Call to Order

Mr. Gerstel called the meeting to order at 7:00pm on September 9th, 2025.

Open Forum Public Comment

None

Meeting Guests

Alisa Skatrud, the Vice Chair of the Needham School Committee, attended the meeting to hear the Commission's discussion on the Pollard Middle School project and answer any questions that they may have. Ms. Skatrud explained that she has been engaging in discussions around town to hear from residents how construction at different sites will affect user groups and their needs. She would like to make sure the feasibility of the project is meeting the full potential of everyone's needs before it moves into the design phase. Mr. Gerstel thanked Ms. Skatrud for being in attendance and stated it would be most beneficial to go over the timeline of meetings that have occurred thus far to make sure the Commission is up to date. They first began discussion on the School Committee and Permanent Public Building Committee (PPBC) meetings that took place on Tuesday September 2nd, 2025. Members of the School Committee discussed their educational plans and the seven options that will be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), which were adopted unanimously by all School Committee members, as well as Needham Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Dan Gutekanst, with a proclamation by Mr. Michael O'Brien, the chair of the School Committee. This went directly to discussion by the PPBC that night. Ms. Skatrud clarified that the larger document including the educational plan that the School Committee voted on, as well as the seven options that will be looked at in the second phase of feasibility were sent over to the MSBA on September 3rd, 2025. The letter that the Park and Recreation Commission wrote was also included in the document that was sent to the MSBA. Looking forward, Mr. Gerstel shared that there would be two meetings held on Wednesday, September 10th, 2025, including a chairs meeting, as well as a Pollard Middle School project meeting. Discussion then moved into any comments or concerns the School Committee may have. Ms. Skatrud explained that it is important to know that the project is only in the feasibility stage, which includes understanding and unpacking which sites will or will not work, and for what reasons. Ms. Skatrud also

expressed that it would be beneficial for all groups who are a part of the project to continue to maintain an open mind to possibilities. The Commission engaged in discussions with Ms. Skatrud regarding residents being divided on whether they support the Pollard Middle School project at the DeFazio site or not, the feasibility of each site, and the timeline of decisions going forward. The Commission also shared their point of view of the Pollard Middle School project being built at the DeFazio site and how they anticipate it affecting both individual user groups, as well as the town as a whole.

Director's Report

Ms. Mulroy informed the Commission that staff are almost done gathering the final numbers from the pool and camps during the summer 2025 season. The department does not yet have numbers for court badges as the season runs through the end of October. Ms. Mulroy stated that she has been working on gathering numbers for daily passes sold for the pool since 2023. Once those numbers are calculated, they will be added to the Director's Report for a future meeting. Ms. Mulroy anticipated that these numbers will be a pleasant surprise for the town and will likely be higher than they may have predicted they would be. Ms. Chaston inquired whether the system that the pool utilizes tracks if passes were purchased by residents vs. non-residents. Ms. Mulroy explained that it does. She also explained there is potential for error in some of these numbers as they are all being entered by pool staff upon purchase. As well, after 5:00pm at the pool, there was a discount fee in which the non-resident price was the same as the normal resident price, causing possibility of data being misinterpreted. Overall, however, the data provides a good idea of daily pass purchase trends. Ms. Mulroy also shared that the company the department has contracted for the pool, Weston & Sampson, had come that day to start the process of closing the pool, and would return the next day September 10th, 2025, to put the covers on. Ms. Mulroy also shared that there have been some large issues with Weston & Sampson, and they are hesitant about letting them open the pool next season and re-upping their contract. The department will continue to provide updates on this matter to the Commission.

In terms of what the department is working on currently, Ms. Mulroy shared that registration for Fall programming begins Wednesday September 10th, 2025, at 12:00pm for all residents, except for seniors who are able to come in at 9:00am. Fall Family Day will be on October 25th, 2025, and will include the Spooky Walk, as well as many other activities for families to participate in. It will mostly occur between the Town Common and Greene's Field, except for some programming that will occur at the Needham Public Library. The department is currently trying to work out the schedule for the day so that it is accessible to all who want to participate, and people can participate in as many activities as they would like to. Ms. Chaston inquired about police presence on the day of the event. Ms. Mulroy explained that the department's Assistant Director, Ms. Corrigan, has already touched base with the police department about detailing, and the presence of police officers at the event in the case that they are not able to fulfill a detail. The department is also currently revamping their Kid's Night Out events. Kid's Night Out occurs once a month on a Friday in October, November, and December. Parents are able to bring their

children to the Rosemary Recreation Complex on this night, where they will be able to participate in a theme night with crafts, movies, and dinner. Ms. Mulroy did share that there are other organizations also putting on these types of events, but they hope with their revamping of it, people will register with Park and Recreation. The last issue the department is facing regarding programming, is finding a supplier of gingerbread houses for their gingerbread house event. The last company they bought from is no longer selling gingerbread houses. They are hopeful that they will find someone to buy the supplies from for this event and expect that the event will run smoothly.

In terms of capital projects, Ms. Mulroy touched upon Claxton Field, explaining that there was a meeting a couple of days prior where it was decided that the opening of Claxton would be delayed longer than expected. There are a number of large patches on the field in which the sod has not taken. Opening the field before this has happened would cause more damage, and in turn cause it to be closed very soon after. The re-opening for Claxton was originally intended to be on September 1st, however, it has been moved to at least the middle of September and user groups have been informed. There is potential for the opening date to be later than that, however, they are unsure as to when it will be at the moment. Mr. Gerstel inquired whether everything else at Claxton was in good shape, which Ms. Mulroy confirmed was the case, it is just the sod that they are waiting on. Ms. Mulroy also reported on the tennis courts, which she said looked great. At the Needham High School courts, Ms. Mulroy reported that there is a staircase that they are looking to make more ADA accessible and also safer for use. Since they are already on-site, it makes more sense to fix those stairs now, rather than at a later date. The contacting group working on the tennis courts will also be constructing a platform on the hill over Memorial Park for people to watch football games. This will allow those who utilize mobility devices, access to be able to watch football games.

Discussion Items

- A) Commission Policies and Goals – The Commission discussed approving policies and goals, specifically multi-purpose room policies, appeal policies, and parking policies at fields. Ms. Mulroy will get the information together regarding these topics, and the Commission will discuss at a future meeting.
- B) Capital Plan – The Commission discussed making their priority list for capital project, and where disc golf will stand on that list. Ms. Mulroy will get the information together regarding these topics, and the Commission will discuss at a future meeting.

Action Items

- A) Special Event Approvals - None
- B) Policy Approvals – None
- C) Fee Approvals – None
- D) Meeting Minute Approvals – None

Chairs Update and Issues Not Reasonably anticipated by Chair within 48 Hours

Mr. Gerstel would like to extend an invitation to a Park and Recreation Commission meeting to the new Town of Needham Assistant Athletic Director. The Commission also extended a welcome to the new Town of Needham Deputy Town Manager, Liz LaRosee. They also discussed Ms. LaRosee's background in recreation and expressed excitement to work with her.

Topics for Future Meetings

- The Pollard Middle School Project
- Policies and goals
- Capital Plan
- Parking

Next Meetings

September 15th, 2025

Adjournment

Cindy Chaston made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm. James Rosenbaum seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote of 3-0 as follows: Cindy Chaston – yes, James Rosenbaum – yes, Chris Gerstel – yes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Steeves

Administrative Assistant