

FY 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

Park and Recreation Commission

Cynthia J. Chaston, Chairman
David C. DiCicco, Vice Chairman
Thomas M. Jacob, Member
Michael J. Retzky, Member
Matthew M. Toolan, Member

Patricia M. Carey, Director
Karen A. Peirce, Assistant Director
Nicole DiCicco, Recreation Supervisor
Kristen Wright, Administrative Specialist

PURPOSE

Empowered by Chapter 45 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Park and Recreation Commission:

- Provides balanced, year-round recreation programming and leisure services for all ages.
- Serves as steward of over 300 acres of public parkland including the Town Forest; and schedules recreation and athletic facilities.
- Manages Rosemary Pool and Lake as the principal aquatic recreation facility.
- Provides long-range open space and recreation planning.
- Coordinates and provides support services for many community organizations.
- Provides youth leadership training and volunteer resource development.

The five members of the Park and Recreation Commission are elected to three-year terms. The Commission typically meets on the second and fourth Mondays of each month.

FY'14 HIGHLIGHTS

The benefits of Park and Recreation services, in communities across the country, are endless, and the Needham Park and Recreation Commission is proud of the partnerships it has developed with many in the Town to enhance the lives of all Needham residents.

The National Recreation and Park Association has conducted research on three core principles that include *Conservation*: protecting open space, connecting children to nature, and engaging

communities in conservation practices; *Health and Wellness*: leading the community to improved health and wellness through parks and recreation; and *Social Equity*: ensuring all people have access to the benefits of parks and recreation. Needham Park and Recreation continues to strive to meet these three pillars through services, programs and facilities.

Economic Benefits

- Commission waived Summer Program and Rosemary Pool fees of over \$28,000 for Needham individuals and families in need of assistance, to enable all to have access to recreation and leisure activities, a slight decrease from prior years;
- Commission generated almost \$290,000 in revenue that was deposited into the Town's General Fund;
- Department offered programs through the use of a revolving fund fees, generating more than \$290,000 in revenue for the cost of running those programs, and fee-based services, including Field Maintenance and Athletic Field lights fees;
- Through funds provided from the estate of Harold J. Street, III new signs were purchased to show the entrances to trails, and will be installed by trail volunteers;
- Commission conducted annual review of program fees, ensuring that all direct costs were covered by the fees paid by residents who participate in programs;
- Commission and Memorial Park Trustees raised the Field Maintenance Fee for sports organizations who regularly use fields from \$5/participant/season to \$10/participant/season as of 1/1/14;
- Assisted with field maintenance projects financed through Field Maintenance Fee, paid by groups using town-owned athletic fields, allowing the DPW Parks and Forestry Division to reduce the damage to fields from overuse. More than \$63,000 was collected, which was an increase from prior years due to the increase in the Field Maintenance Fee effective 1/14. In addition, fees charged for organizations holding clinics on athletic fields generated more than \$22,000;
- Louise Condon Realty, Needham Exchange Club, Dedham Institute for Savings Bank, Middlesex Savings Bank, Tom Nutile Band, Needham Business Association, and many Needham residents donated funds in support of the 2014 summer Arts in the Parks concert series. The series commemorated the memory of long-time participant Roy Nutile, who led his band in the first Arts in the Parks concert in 1975;
- Town Meeting continued to support the Athletic Facility Improvement Fund to prepare for future capital improvements on athletic fields, and the balance after May 2014 Town Meeting was more than \$940,000;

- Director served as staff liaison to the Community Preservation Committee;
- Received approval for a new part-time position for playground maintenance, with funding to begin in FY'15;
- Commission supported efforts at the State House to change the text of the Community Preservation Act legislation, to allow use of CPA funds for capital projects on properties already owned by the Town, plus to provide opportunities for additional state funds to be added to the Community Preservation Fund. This effort resulted in an additional \$400,000 being provided to Needham's CPA fund;
- The Greene's Field fundraising group continued to raise funds, in addition to the original \$180,000, and many donors are featured on the signs and the boardwalk as you enter the new destination playground in Needham's center. The opening celebration was held in October;
- Projects funded from Community Preservation Funds in FY'14 include the insurance for the Rail Trail, as well as design funds for Town parks – Town Common and Memorial Park.

Community Benefits

- Worked with Weston & Sampson on the feasibility study of Rosemary Pool and the site. Commission hosted a well-attended "blue sky" meeting to provide residents the opportunities to share their thoughts on aquatics in Needham, and a few months later, hosted a large public meeting outlining the information developed on those various options;
- After several months reviewing the results of the Weston & Sampson study, Commission determined to focus on rebuilding an outdoor pool at the Rosemary site, with building and parking lot upgrades, and featuring year-round opportunities;
- The reconstruction of the park at Walker-Gordon Field was completed, with a new 90' diamond, a new playground, a walking path and passive recreation area, and parking lot improvements;
- The reconstruction of the park at Greene's Field was completed, with a new 60' diamond and small multi-purpose field, a new basketball court, new trees in the passive end of the park, and a new playground area with features for toddlers and older youth;
- Added poured-in-place surfacing at the Needham Public Schools' pre-school playground at Newman;
- Worked with the Selectmen and Town Manager to enter a lease agreement for use of the unused rail line between High Rock Street and the Charles River, with short-term insurance provided by CPA funding. Bay Colony Rail Trail Association continued to raise funds and work with the Town to create the design for what will become the Rail Trail;

- Worked with the MWRA to study the possibility of creating a pedestrian path along the two sections of the Sudbury Aqueduct in Needham;
- Participated in the Town-Wide Facilities Study project, insuring that recreation and park facilities were featured in the long-term plan;
- The Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association named Rep. Denise Garlick as its Legislator of the Year, based on a nomination from Park and Recreation for her long-time support for recreation in Needham;
- Youth Services' Project Van provided a summer carnival day at Cricketeer Adventure program, and worked on a park clean-up project at Claxton Field with DPW Parks and Forestry;
- Held Field Scheduling Summits, with sport league officials for twelfth year, regarding annual use of athletic fields, and continued long-term project on working with leagues to revise field scheduling policies to relieve overuse of fields and to benefit participants;
- Celebrated the contributions of the DPW to Park and Recreation facilities and projects with "Touch the Trucks," an annual community event;
- Worked with resident sponsored committee studying the concept of a community center.

Environmental Benefits

- Director served on Town's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Committee with the Town Manager, Parks and Forestry Superintendent, Health Director, Conservation Agent, and Supervisor of Custodians, assisting with enforcement of IPM Plan and Child Safety Act;
- Continued implementation of goals in Open Space and Recreation Plan, and have funds to begin an update of the Plan;
- Director and Assistant Director worked with Trails Advisory Group with representatives of Conservation Commission and staff, DPW Parks and Forestry, and Park and Recreation Commission. Assistant Director serves as Trails Coordinator, assisting boards with jurisdiction over Needham's trails;
- Seventeen Trails Stewards regularly walk designated sections of trails at eight locations, assisting with light maintenance and reporting issues to Trails Coordinator;
- Assistant Director coordinated park and trail clean-up projects in the spring and fall, with more than 2,000 pounds of trash picked up;

- Assistant Director worked with a variety of organizations and individuals on park improvement and/or clean-up projects. Completed projects include, the Needham High Habitat for Humanity Club at the Rosemary Camp property, hanging trail signs, painting the camphouse, picking up trash, and blazing a new trail connection; Eagle Scout Andrew Bejian's project to clear the Rosemary Lake trail and installing a kiosk at the trail head; and Eagle Scout William Gallagher's project to create bog bridges on the Mitchell Woods trail, and add a kiosk and bench. These volunteer projects typically also received donated materials or materials purchased through fundraising efforts, saving the Town thousands of dollars on labor and costs;
- To honor the Town's efforts on field maintenance, the NE Sports Turf Managers Association held their annual summer meeting at DeFazio Park, and featured the Needham field maintenance program that is organic, with a few minor exceptions;
- Continued implementation of projects listed in completed Trails Master Plan;
- Assisted MA Division of Conservation and Recreation with design plans to improve recreation path from Highland Avenue to 4th Avenue, parallel to the Charles River.

Personal Benefits

- Department is part of national campaign to get "Kids into Nature." More than 80,000 annual hours have been tracked at Park and Recreation sponsored programs;
- Extra emphasis has been placed on focusing on fitness in Park and Recreation programs, as well as insuring that nature is incorporated or featured in programs. Opportunities from farming to skateboarding were added to the programs offered by the department;
- Provided educational materials to youth sports programs on concussion awareness, in conjunction with the Needham Health Department;
- ADA parking spaces were formalized in the recently updated parking lot at DeFazio Park;
- Celebrated the opening of Center at the Heights, moving some of the Park and Recreation programs for senior citizens to the new facility;
- Welcomed the Needham Library Foundation's donation of a Little Free Library Box at Greene's Field, providing reading material at the park for children;
- Assistant Director served as the Town's representative on the Needham Commission on Disabilities;
- Held successful annual Spooky Walk in collaboration with Needham Business Association and annual Fishing Derby at the Reservoir with the support of local fishing organizations. The Assistant Director serves as the Advisor to the High School Fishing Club;

- Assistant Director worked with YMCA and Youth Services on annual “Needham Unplugged”, including one family night without homework, meetings or events;
- Director, Assistant Director and Recreation Supervisor attended workshops and seminars, including bringing children back into nature; social media; playground safety and ADA requirements; the concerns related to overweight children and obesity; harassment and bullying; the study of youth sports; integrated pest management; customer service; safe pool operations; creative programming; funding resources; and training of staff.