

## **FY 2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **Park and Recreation Commission**

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

Patricia M. Carey, Director  
Robyn Fink, Assistant Director  
Brendan Croak, 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'15 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 \$268,000 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 \$280,000 in revenue for the cost of running those programs, and fee-based services, including Field Maintenance and Athletic Field lights fees;
- Commission conducted annual review of program fees, ensuring that all direct costs were covered by the fees paid by residents who participate in programs;
- 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 \$66,000 was collected, which was an increase from prior years due to the increase in the Field Maintenance Fee effective January 2014. 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, and many Needham residents donated funds in support of the 2015 summer Arts in the Parks concert series;
- Town Meeting continued to support the Athletic Facility Improvement Fund to prepare for future capital improvements on athletic fields and the Memorial Park building, and the balance after May 2015 Town Meeting was just under \$2 million;
- Director served as staff liaison to the Community Preservation Committee;
- Projects funded from Community Preservation Funds in FY'15 include the design funds for a new Rosemary Pool and building; construction funds for revitalized Eastman trail and athletic fields at Newman; construction funds for site improvements at Mills Field; design funds for revitalized boat launch to Charles River on South Street at Dedham Avenue; and construction funds for the new rail trail;

- Director spoke at a hearing at the State House in support of Community Preservation funding for recreation projects. Director served on a panel at the annual MA Municipal Association to provide input on the benefits of CPA funds.

### **Community Benefits**

- Final design plans for the rail trail were developed with DPW Engineering. The Bay Colony Rail Trail Association continued to fundraise and donated funds towards the cost of construction. Rep. Garlick coordinated construction funds through MA Department of Transportation. An application for a state trails grant was submitted, with the hope of receiving funds in FY'16. In the Spring of 2015, the rails and ties were removed from the route, and the area informally graded to begin use of the trail. Construction of the completed trail is anticipated in Fall 2015;
- BETA was hired to design a renovated all-person trail around the Needham Reservoir on Dedham Avenue. Public meetings were held for input at the initial phase of design, and after the major design concepts were developed. The Needham Commission on Disabilities provided input on the design plans. The project will go into permitting in FY'16 and it is hoped that construction funds will be available in FY'17;
- Weston and Sampson was hired to design improvements to the athletic fields at Newman and the Eastman trail at Newman. CPA funds for construction were approved at May 2015 Annual Town Meeting, and the project will begin in early FY'16;
- Continued to work with the MWRA on the creation of a pedestrian path along the two sections of the Sudbury Aqueduct in Needham;
- Discussions continued on the future of Rosemary Pool and the possible year-round uses of the building and site. Initial design funds were awarded at May 2015 from CPA funds. It is anticipated a design consultant will be hired in Summer 2015 to move the project forward, with an anticipated new pool in Summer 2018. The Chairman of the Commission presented an update on the project at the Needham Heights Association;
- Participated in the Town-Wide Facilities Study project, insuring that recreation and park facilities were featured in the long-term plan;
- Part-time playground maintenance specialist was hired to perform weekly maintenance tasks at each site;
- Youth Services' Project Van provided a summer carnival day at Cricketeer Adventure program, and worked on a park clean-up project at Perry Park with DPW Parks and Forestry;

- Held Field Scheduling Summits, with sport league officials for thirteenth 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;
- Discussions began on transferring the middle school Youth Center program from the Health Department to Park and Recreation;
- Small repair projects were done at the Cricket building and Ridge Hill garage, including replacement of overhead doors, to insure their safety for on-going use as summer program sites;
- 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;
- 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, and works with community groups to do clean-up projects throughout the year;
- Trash left behind at parks, athletic fields, school sites, tennis courts, playgrounds and trails continues to be a discussion, and educational campaigns continue to encourage residents to pick-up trash at any of these sites. Director worked with RTS Director to gather additional information on solar compacted trash receptacles;
- Continued implementation of projects listed in completed Trails Master Plan;
- Assisted MA Division of Conservation and Recreation with final design plans to improve recreation path from Highland Avenue to 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, parallel to the Charles River;

- Director and five colleagues were invited to meet with the incoming Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs at the State House, as he prepared for his new role and sought to understand the collaboration between municipal recreation and park departments as the state;

### **Personal Benefits**

- Department is part of national campaign to get “Kids into Nature.” More than 100,000 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;
- Participated in discussions with Board of Health and Health Department on concussion awareness and possible regulations for coaches participating in concussion awareness training. Youth sports organizations were involved in discussions;
- Free trail walks were held at proposed rail trail, proposed Aqueduct trail, Rosemary trail, Eastman trail, and Town Forest. A special Tykes Hike was held at Reservoir;
- Worked on concept with DPW to improve safety of parking lot at DeFazio Park;
- Welcomed the Needham Library Foundation’s donation of a Little Free Library Box at Perry Park, in addition to the one already located at Greene’s Field, providing reading material at the park for children;
- 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;
- Assistant Director worked with YMCA and Youth Services on annual “Needham Unplugged”, including one family night without homework, meetings or events;
- Director joined Needham Baseball and Softball, and other youth sports programs, at an introductory meeting with the Positive Coaching Alliance;
- 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.