

FY 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Park and Recreation Commission

Matthew M. Toolan, Chairman
Christopher J. Gerstel, Vice Chairman
Cynthia J. Chaston, Member
David C. DiCicco, Member
Michelle S. Geddes, Member

Patricia M. Carey, Director
Robyn Fink, Assistant Director
Sarah Mallard, 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'16 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 \$31,000 for Needham individuals and families in need of assistance, to enable all to have access to recreation and leisure activities, a slight increase from prior years;
- Commission generated almost \$247,000 in revenue that was deposited into the Town's General Fund;
- Department offered programs through the use of a revolving fund fees, generating almost \$290,000 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;
- Louise Condon Realty, Needham Exchange Club, Dedham Institute for Savings Bank, Middlesex Savings Bank, Roche Bros, Copley Motorcars, Rep. Denise Garlick, and many Needham residents donated funds in support of the 2016 summer Arts in the Parks concert series. Parent Talk was the generous donor for the 2016 Children's Theatre performances;
- Town Meeting continued to support the Athletic Facility Improvement Fund to prepare for future capital improvements on athletic fields and other related projects including the Memorial Park Building, and the balance after May 2016 Town Meeting was approximately \$2 million;
- Director served as staff liaison to the Community Preservation Committee;
- Projects funded from Community Preservation Funds in FY'16 include the second phase of design funds for a new Rosemary Recreation Complex; design funds for removal of sediment in Rosemary Lake; drainage improvements to Memorial Park; and the Student Conservation Association trail renovation projects. The Director attended that 15th anniversary celebration of the Community Preservation Act at the State House.

Community Benefits

- They Bay Colony Rail Trail officially opened in Spring 2016, with a celebration honoring all the individual donors contributing through the Bay Colony Rail Trail Association, state funds appropriated through the assistance of Rep. Denise Garlick, and Town funds appropriated through the Community Preservation Fund. Signs were installed, and future projects include the creation of formal parking, a connection to Chestnut Street, and eventually, connection to Dover and Medfield;
- Design tasks continued on the Reservoir All-Person Trail and the process for permitting began, with the hope that construction funds will be available in FY'18 for construction of the trail and fishing docks for people of all physical abilities;
- With the design from Weston and Sampson, the new fields at Newman were built with appropriate drainage and new wetlands restoration areas. In addition, the Eastman Conservation Trail was rebuilt with boardwalks and stone dust surfaces, an amphitheater and outdoor classroom;
- Continued to work with the MWRA on the creation of a pedestrian path along the two sections of the Sudbury Aqueduct in Needham, with one section coordinated through the campuses of Babson College and Olin College;
- BH+A was hired by the PPBC to design the new Rosemary Recreation Complex. After numerous iterations with indoor and outdoor pools, the Park and Recreation Commission finally determined that two smaller pools would be built within the frame of the existing pool, providing a fitness pool and a recreation pool. In addition, a spray park would be added adjacent to the pool, the bathhouse would be rebuilt on the lower level, and a second floor would feature a multi-purpose room for year-round recreation, as well as office space for the Park and Recreation Department and the Health Department. Town Meeting approved the second phase of design funds at the May 2016 Town Meeting, through a Community Preservation appropriation. The complex permitting phase will be undertaken in FY'17, with the hope that construction funds will be awarded in May 2017 Town Meeting. It is hoped that the new facility will open in Summer 2018;
- The Park and Recreation Commission held "Meet the Commissioner" events at Rosemary Pool to gain input from pool patrons on important issues related to new design options;
- Part-time playground maintenance specialist performed 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 DeFazio Park tot-lot with DPW Parks and Forestry;

- Held Field Scheduling Summits, with sport league officials for 14th 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;
- The middle school Youth Center program was transferred from the Health Department to Park and Recreation, and TGIF (Teens, Games, Infinite Fun) was created for fun, monthly Friday nights. Activities included bubble soccer, obstacle courses, laser tag, table games, music/DJ, and lots of time to create new friends;
- Summer staff pre-season training included an active participation presentation by CT Camp Guys, in collaboration with Westwood and Norwood;
- Small repair projects were done at the Ridge Hill garage, to insure safety for on-going use as summer program sites;
- Assisted MA Division of Conservation and Recreation with construction of ADA trail from Highland Avenue to 2nd Avenue, connecting to the Barnes Trail along with Charles River;
- Worked with resident sponsored committee studying the concept of a community center;
- Department added Instagram to the social media outlets, with a page for the department and a separate page for TGIF. Information provided on the department’s Facebook page increased;
- Assistant Director served on the Youth Resource Network to help address specific needs of school-age youth and families that reside and/or attend public schools in Needham.

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 1,200 pounds of trash picked up, and works with community groups to do clean-up projects throughout the year;
- “Take a Hike” free trail walks offered in the spring and fall, including the new Bay Colony Rail Trail, the new Eastman trail, and the Ridge Hill Esker Trail;
- 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;
- Continued implementation of projects listed in completed Trails Master Plan.

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, with the numbers increasing each year;
- 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 and an effort is underway to create an easy-to-use tracking system for coaches training;
- Worked on concept with DPW to improve safety of parking lot at DeFazio Park;
- 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;
- New program offerings included Terrier Sports Dodgeball for 8-11 year olds; TGIF events for middle school; and extreme volleyball on trampolines for middle school;
- Assistant Director and Administrative Specialist joined Employee Engagement committees, as part of a Town initiative supported by the Town Manager to ensure all employees feel engaged in their workplace and that they consistently contribute to the future of Team Needham;

- 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.