

FY 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

Park and Recreation Commission

Christopher R. Dollase, Chairman
Cynthia J. Chaston, Vice Chairman
William R. Dermody, Member
Brian S. Nadler, Member
Philip V. Robey, Member

Patricia M. Carey, Director
Karen A. Peirce, Assistant Director
Nikki Witham, Administrative Specialist
Nicole DiCicco, Department Assistant

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 meets on the second and fourth Mondays of each month.

FY'08 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. Fiscal Year 2008 was an extremely busy year at Park and Recreation!

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;
- With Conservation Commission, submitted draft of Open Space and Recreation Plan to the state. The plan was accepted with some suggestions for additional information.
- Completed Trails Master Plan.
- Worked with Trust for Public Land, researching the possibility of purchasing part of the McCracken Farm property, which eventually was sold to a private homeowner;
- Improvements were made at Rosemary Pool. Pipes bringing water from the pool to the filter room were replaced, preventing any leakage of chlorinated water into the lake. Entrance areas were resurfaced, to move water into the drainage system. Lights were replaced on the main floor of the bathhouse, reducing the amount of energy required;
- Assistant Director worked with a variety of organizations and individuals on park clean-up projects, and established a long-term relationship with Olin College students who do periodic projects;
- Provided information to the Friends of Needham Woods and Water for their private project with the Landscape Institute from Harvard's Arnold Arboretum school.
- Continued to educate residents on the possible solutions to decreasing the Canada Geese population through humane methods.

Economic Benefits

- Commission waived Summer Program and Rosemary Pool fees of more than \$20,000 for Needham individuals and families in need of assistance, to enable all to have access to recreation and leisure activities;
- Commission generated almost \$300,000 in revenue that was deposited into the Town's General Fund.
- Commission conducted annual review of program fees, ensuring that all direct costs were covered by the fees paid by residents who participate in programs;
- Updated the Town's Commonwealth Capital Score, increasing the point value. The score is required in applications for state and federal grants;

- Provided staff assistance to the Community Preservation Committee;
- Parent Talk donated financial support for the summer Children's Theatre program;
- The Needham Golf Club donated tables and chairs to Rosemary Pool, valued at \$200;
- Through the stewardship of Sue and Ed Gagnon, the department received a matching gift donation from the Boston Foundation and Polaroid for the Carleton Pavilion;
- Needham Cultural Council, Louise Condon Realty, Needham Exchange Club, Dedham Institute for Savings Bank, Middlesex Savings Bank, Tom Nutile Band, Needham Business Association, and RCN and many Needham residents donated funds in support of the 2008 summer Arts in the Parks concert series;
- Assisted with field maintenance projects financed through Field Maintenance Fee, from groups using town-owned athletic fields, allowing the DPW Parks and Forestry Division to reduce the damage to fields from overuse;
- Department offered programs through the use of a revolving fund fees, generating more than \$165,000 in revenue for the cost of running those programs, and fee-based services;

Community Benefits

- The Needham Sports Council continued their amazing fundraising campaign for the Fields of Dreams. They hired Gale Associates to design the renovations at Memorial Park and DeFazio Park, based on the previously approved Master Plan. Over the winter, RAD Sports was hired as the contractor, and the groundbreaking at Memorial Park was held in May, and work began at DeFazio later in June. In all, the Sports Council worked towards raising more than \$5 million privately for this project;
- Northeastern University allowed use of their track at the Dedham campus for the Needham High School Boys and Girls track teams in the spring, due to the temporary loss of the Town's track, which will be relocated to DeFazio Park in Summer 2008;
- Applied for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant for the renovation of the tennis courts at Mills Field, and updated the Town's Commonwealth Capital Score application. The Town was not awarded the grant;
- Developed material for Town's new website for Park and Recreation, Memorial Park and Community Preservation, going live in Fall 2007;
- Accepted the gift of playground and park renovations at three parks, with an estimated value of over \$200,000 for equipment and labor. Parent Talk helped design and raise funds for the renovation of Mills Playground; the Exchange Club helped design and raise funds for the renovation of Claxton Playground; and Hanover

Company and Cabot, Cabot and Forbes helped design renovations to the Riverside Playground and park;

- The theme of the new Mills Playground is “Needham Rockets.” The colors depict the Needham High athletic teams, and the events celebrate space and Needham’s own astronaut Suni Williams who also attended the grand opening celebration. Students in the 5th grade at Newman, who worked on projects with Ms. Williams while she was on the space station raised funds to purchase space themed books, and write their own space ABC book. The books were laminated and placed on the park benches. The lamination was donated by Needham resident John Brennan and Pinnacle Printing;
- The Commission on Disabilities provided grants to the playground projects at Claxton and Mills to increase the accessibility at each playground site;
- Department continued to work with School Department on safe playgrounds;
- Director assisted with the study of Town Hall and its renovation, and with design for new Public Services Administration Building which will be the eventual home of the Park and Recreation Department;
- Began renovation of Claxton Bathrooms;
- Assistant Director participated on Eat Well/Be Fit, Needham Committee, including offering a nature scavenger hunt at the Reservoir during the week of walk events called Needham Springs Into Action Week;
- Held Field Scheduling Summits, for sixth year, with sport league officials 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;
- Assistant Director named Chair of the Wellness Subcommittee for Needham’s Tercentennial in 2011;

Personal Benefits

- Commission participated in Geocache activity in Town Forest and approved a pilot program for night time Geocache;
- Fitness was a key component for many programs. The “Swim Around the World” program was created for Rosemary Pool. A new walking program as created at the

Linden Chambers Senior Housing. Additional tennis lesson classes were offered, including the return of Tennis Tykes;

- Assistant Director attended the Safe Route to Schools Forum offered by the state to encourage walking and providing ideas for making neighborhoods more walk-friendly;
- Interns from the University of Georgia and Ursuline Academy provided a combined 18 weeks of service offered at no cost to the Town. David Meropol worked with the summer programs, providing assistance with programming ideas. Caroline Crawford assisted with the research on Needham's trails, and walked all existing Town trails;
- Assistant Director served as the Town's representative on the Needham Commission on Disabilities;
- Assistant Director oversaw enhanced summer staff training, with assistance of MBMB and DPW on safety issues. All summer staff were trained on ways to enhance fitness of participants and Assistant Director attended state training on "The Right to Know";
- 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;
- Provided assistance to the first annual New Years Needham events;
- Assistant Director spoke to Retired Men's Club on the recreational opportunities for seniors;
- Assistant Director and Director spoke at Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association annual conference with a representative of the MA Department of Public Health, providing information on programs that promote fitness and health for youth;
- Assistant Director oversaw development of new program offerings, including Summer Sprouts for 3 year olds, canoe clinics on Rosemary Lake; Youth Candlepin Bowling League; Turkey Hunt at Broadmeadow; and Historical Walks with the Needham Historical Society;
- Assistant Director worked with YMCA and Youth Commission on annual "Needham Unplugged", including one family night without homework, meetings or events;
- Director and/or Assistant Director attended workshops and seminars, including landfill reuse, playground safety and ADA requirements, the concerns related to overweight children and obesity; the study of youth sports, integrated pest management, customer service, the building of natural and artificial athletic fields, safe pool operations, creative programming, funding resources and training of staff;

- Director continued to write monthly newsletter article for the Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association that provides information to elected and appointed board members on Park and Recreation boards;
- Assistant Director worked with the Art Institute in Brookline to help create a new logo for the Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association.