

**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Minutes of Meeting
February 10, 2014**

- PRESENT:** Michael J. Retzky, Chairman
Cynthia J. Chaston, Vice Chairman
David C. DiCicco, Member
Thomas M. Jacob, Member
Matthew M. Toolan, Member
Patricia M. Carey, Director
- ABSENT:** Karen A. Peirce, Assistant Director
- GUESTS:** Needham Community Center – Katy Dirks, Jo-Anne Ochalla, Yasue Keyes,
and Polly Danielewski
YMCA – Janet Jankowiak, Connie Kaufman
Cricket Neighbor – Dan Shapiro

Mr. Retzky called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM in the Charles River Room at the Public Services Administration Building.

1. **Minutes of Meeting: January 27, 2014:** Mrs. Chaston made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2014 meeting. Mr. Jacob seconded the motion and it was passed.
2. **Director's Report:** The Commission reviewed the written report submitted by Ms. Carey. The final text draft of the Board of Health's concussion survey was reviewed. It will be put into Survey Monkey format and sent to youth league officials. Mr. Jacob acknowledged the donation of Caren Carpenter and asked which programs would use the books. Ms. Carey explained that they would be used at Mini-Evergreen, Cricketeer, Kidzart and Kids Off Broadway.
3. **Assistant Director's Report:** None presented.
4. **Discussion Items**
 - a. **Rosemary Pool Study – Commission Review and Discussion:** Mr. Retzky outlined the process for the discussion. He asked that each Commissioner review his/her thoughts and questions. No votes would be taken, as more input from the public will be needed. Using his background in business, Mr. Toolan read the full report with a vision of finding what would be the most viable option, particularly in relation to an outdoor pool that has about a 2 month use. He asked if the Commission should look at the options as a full unit, or discuss the pool, the building and the site separately for what each could provide. Mr. Toolan does not believe that Option 2 is more than a "Band-aid" project, and that a different option would likely provide more of what the residents have requested. The discussion on the indoor pool should continue, though it might be more viable as part of an upcoming school project or through some type of public-private partnership. He felt that an indoor pool at Rosemary would be too small for competitive uses. Mr. DiCicco stated his support for having an outdoor pool, but did not see Option 2 as appropriate choice, or Option 1 which eliminated the pool. Throughout the study,

he heard residents' support for the Rosemary site, and even though it is a challenging site, he supports rebuilding an outdoor pool at Rosemary. Mr. DiCicco believes that program fees can offset changes to the building and help offset costs of operating the outdoor pool. He stated his support for additional programming space for Park and Recreation programs, as the department continues to lose space they have used in the schools in prior years. He believes that the site is too challenging for an indoor pool, and the operation costs are high and not easily recovered. He has talked to some organizations that have used bubbles, and does not believe that the high maintenance costs are appropriate for Rosemary. Mr. DiCicco also stated his support for appropriate parking and for year-round use of the site. Initially, Mr. DiCicco supports the pool in Option 3 and the building in Option 4. Mrs. Chaston feels the cost of reclaiming the lake for swimming are too high in Option 1 and that Option 2 is too small. She supports having an outdoor pool, but as the others have stated, is concerned about the costs to build. She asked if CPA funds would be an option. Mrs. Chaston also noted the central location of the Rosemary site, as well as its proximity to other Town amenities. Mrs. Chaston does not see that an indoor pool would fit at Rosemary, and is not comfortable with the bubble option over the outdoor pool. She asked if a year-round building would change the plans for the Cricket building. Mr. Retzky noted that the Cricket building had a regular use, and needed to be updated for the uses that would not change, including having restrooms for users at the park. Mrs. Chaston initially supports Option 3 or 4 with a year-round use of the building. She stated that more study would be needed on an indoor option in Town. She understands that many residents would like to have the indoor pool, but it is a major undertaking for the Town. Mr. Toolan noted that the surveys indicate a number of people want the indoor pool, and the emphasis is on a competitive pool. Rosemary Pool's focus has been as a recreation pool. Mr. Retzky noted that the study focuses on the Rosemary site only, so the stated need for an indoor pool isn't discounted, but it doesn't appear appropriate for this site. Mr. Jacob stated his concern for the costs and the "appetite" for the community to fund a pool project. He has informally spoken to members of other boards, individually, and heard support for the project. Mr. Jacob described the differences between "need" and "want" and feels that a pool is a "want" but one that has existed in Town for many years, so he supports replacing it and continuing with an outdoor pool. He does not feel the site is appropriate for an indoor pool, so discussions should continue about another site or another way of an indoor pool being built in the Town. Option 1 doesn't provide an outdoor pool and Option 2 doesn't seem financially appropriate, so some combination of parts of Option 3 and 4 for the pool and parking, and Option 4 for the building. Mr. Toolan suggested adding other outdoor components to encourage more use of the site. Ms. Carey noted that the original plans for the site included more outdoor options, and an additional floor to the building for either a patio or indoor space. It also considered ice skating in the pool, but later found that the water did not freeze well, and the rubber mats on the deck were destroying the wood. Mr. DiCicco would like to have the adjacent camp property better connected to the Rosemary site, too. Mr. Retzky reviewed the report, and looked at what he didn't want to happen. He doesn't want the Town to eliminate an outdoor pool. He doesn't want the Town to do a minor renovation that doesn't make enough changes. He doesn't want to rebuild the pool in the lake, as he believes there are less challenges on the ground. Mr. Retzky supports increasing program space with a year round building that would be part of the "campus" of Town buildings in the area. An indoor pool does not seem to fit at Rosemary, so would need to be located somewhere else, and the costs would need to be fully studied. He noted that the Town-wide Facilities study is underway and will find that the Town is "land starved" and in need of purchasing additional land. The Commission discussed funding options, including some portion being requested through CPA funds. Mr. Retzky noted that he heard throughout

the study that it was important to build the pool correctly and not do a partial job. Ms. Carey's concept for the site is to focus on a recreation pool with ability to adjust the pool for some competitive use. Her preference is for the pool to remain in the lake, so that more land is available for other uses, plus it would be more challenging for the staff to guard the pool and what would now be an open lake site. She would also like to add a splash park near the pool, but with the ability to fence off the pool, so that the splash pad could be used in May and September, as well as during the season. She would also like the parking area to be built in a way that some portion could be used for skating in the winter. Ms. Carey believes that an indoor pool should be at a different location, and that preferably it would be built and operated by a private entity as it is a major business, with large operating costs. Mr. Toolan stated that the Park and Recreation Commission should guide the process for what the solution will finally be for an indoor pool. Mr. Jacob noted that he believed the calculations for "water closets" did not seem accurate for Options 3 and 4. Ms. Carey noted that he had asked that question prior to the meeting, and Weston and Sampson had responded that the size of the pool in Option 3 had been misstated in the report. It is actually 13,600 square feet, as opposed to the stated 19,700 square feet of surface water.

Mr. Retzky invited others attending the meeting to make comments or ask questions. Jo-Anne Ochalla from Needham Community Center stated that members of their board had read the report and met over the weekend. Their board was excited that the discussion was moving forward. They also discussed the need to balance recreation and competition, and having a year-round recreation site would be welcome. They support having a year-round building, but hope that the space would be shared with others including the Health Department, Youth Services, Needham High Athletics and Needham Public Schools Community Education. Option 4 A seemed most appropriate, but she also suggested that the other portions of Option 4 become a separate Option 5. An indoor pool will need leadership to move it to becoming a realistic project. If there is a gap in funding, efforts would be undertaken to help fundraise. Katy Dirks from Needham Community Center also offered some thoughts. She hoped the Commission would be collaborative and allow others to use the year-round building. She is concerned with sophomores being offered open campus, so suggested the building could be a location for cold lunches for the students. The Health Department is doing a lot of work on substance abuse and suicides, and the year-round building could provide a space that could solve those problems. Janet Jankowiak from the YMCA board hopes that there will be collaboration, and that the goal for the community is to have as many people participating in healthy activities as possible. The YMCA is currently doing what it can, with limited resources. They remain committed to finding a parcel of land for a new facility, with hopefully a new pool and gym, depending on the size of the lot, and that collaboration will be critical as there is a limited amount of land available. Resident Dan Shapiro noted the concerns over the construction costs, but stated that the Commission hasn't outlined any "far out" plans. By setting their vision, support will be there and the community will be proud of the new asset, especially if a variety of needs are met.

- b. **Soccer Club – Memorial Day Weekend Tournament:** Ms. Carey has talked with Soccer Club Executive Director Mark Miskin since the last Commission meeting, and he is putting together a more detailed report of how the fields are actually used over the weekend, plus outlining the funds they contribute to the community throughout the year from the Tournament proceeds. The Commission is looking to come to an agreement that follows the policy but also acknowledges the contributions of the Soccer Club. To avoid confusion, the Commission will

need to insure that it is not an optional payment in the future, but a required fee for hosting part of the Tournament in Needham.

- c. **FY'15 Operating/Capital Budgets:** Mrs. Chaston and Ms. Carey attended a recent Finance Committee meeting. The funding request was reviewed, and mostly centered on whether the new plan for playground maintenance will have sufficient funding. The Finance Committee discussed the need for more programming space for the department, as well as the Pool Study and the next steps that will be taken on the review of the study. Mrs. Chaston stated the Commission's support for the budget of the DPW Parks and Forestry Division. The Town Manager has recommended full funding of the Park and Recreation budget request, as well as additional funds for playground maintenance. The Finance Committee is still in the review process and will develop their own recommendations for the budget, taking the Town Manager's recommendations under advisement.

5. Action Items: None presented.

6. Topics for Future Agendas: Mrs. Chaston and Mr. Jacob will not be at the next meeting in February, but the Commission will still meet and will have the dog park group on the agenda for a discussion.

7. Adjournment: Mr. Jacob made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 PM. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Chaston and the meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia M. Carey, CPRP
Director