

FY 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

Park and Recreation Commission

Thomas M. Jacob, Chairman
Michael J. Retzky, Vice Chairman
Cynthia J. Chaston, Member
Brian S. Nadler, Member
Andrea L. Shorthose, Member

Patricia M. Carey, Director
Karen A. Peirce, Assistant Director
Nicole DiCicco, Recreation Supervisor
Cassandra Halloran, 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 meets on the second and fourth Mondays of each month.

FY'12 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.

Economic Benefits

- Commission waived Summer Program and Rosemary Pool fees of almost \$25,000 for Needham individuals and families in need of assistance, to enable all to have access to recreation and leisure activities. The amount of requests for programs declined from the prior year, but have not returned to the level prior to the economic downturn;
- Commission generated almost \$300,000 in revenue that was deposited into the Town's General Fund, with an increase of more than \$5,000 over the prior year;
- 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 reviewed new policy regarding permitting of athletic fields. Input was received for sports programs before new policy was established;
- Provided staff assistance to the Community Preservation Committee;
- Parent Talk donated financial support for the summer of 2012 Children's Theatre program;
- Needham Cultural Council, Needham Exchange Club, Dedham Institute for Savings Bank, Louise Condon Realty, Middlesex Savings Bank, Needham Bank, Tom Nutile Band, Needham Business Association, and many Needham residents donated funds in support of the 2012 summer Arts in the Parks concert series;
- 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 \$45,000 was collected, an increase from prior years;
- Department offered programs through the use of a revolving fund fees, generating more than \$220,000 in revenue for the cost of running those programs, and fee-based services, including Field Maintenance and Athletic Field lights fees;
- Town Meeting created the Athletic Facility Improvement Fund, with an initial balance of more than \$280,000, to prepare for future capital improvements on athletic fields;
- 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. It appears there is support for these changes to be approved and implemented in Summer 2012.

Community Benefits

- DPW oversaw project to re-grade the DeFazio parking lot and add stone chips, as a short-term solution to parking lot issues, while resources are still sought for a permanent solution;
- Worked with Permanent Public Building Committee on study to develop options for renovation or replacement of building at Cricket Field;
- Designs were developed for the rehabilitation of Walker-Gordon Field and incorporating the adjacent two parcels of land recently purchased to expand the field and create a garden and seating area near the pond;
- Perimeter fences were replaced at the Mills Field baseball diamond;
- Worked with Bay Colony Rail Trail group, and representatives from Dover, Medfield and Newton to study the possibility of unused rail right-of-way being used for recreation path. The primary focus has been on the 2 mile section that begins at Needham Junction and extends to the Charles River and the border with the Town of Dover;
- Worked with Town Manager's committee on development of social media policy and guidelines for use by departments;
- Selectmen appointed a working group to study and recommend a new playground at Greene's Field;
- Worked with Newman parents on the creation of new playgrounds for Kindergarten and Grades 1-5. The plan is to install the playgrounds in Summer 2012, ready for the school's reopening in September;
- Department continued to work with School Department on safe playgrounds;
- Worked with DPW on re-design of Webster Street at Avery Park, to create segregated parking area for park users;
- Assistant Director participated on Eat Well/Be Fit, Needham Committee, including offering a walk for children during the week of walk events called Needham Springs Into Action Week;
- Held Field Scheduling Summits, with sport league officials for tenth 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 warm winter temperatures prevented outdoor pond skating activities;
- Worked with resident sponsored committee studying the concept of a community center;
- Assistant Director served as Chair of the Wellness Subcommittee for Needham's Tercentennial in 2011;
- Commissioner Brian Nadler retired from the Park and Recreation Commission. Dave DiCicco was elected to the Park and Recreation Commission in April 2012.

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;
- 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;
- Trails Steward Program established. Sixteen Trails Stewards regularly walk designated sections of trails at eight locations, assisting with light maintenance and reporting issues to Trails Coordinator;
- Assistant Director coordinated Town-wide clean up projects with Needham 300 Committee;
- Assistant Director worked with a variety of organizations and individuals on park clean-up projects, including assisting several Eagle Scout (Boys Scouts) and Gold Medal Award recipients (Girl Scouts) with completion of their projects. Projects included Scott Groux's Perry Park project to install new benches and remove an old walkway; Ryan Colarusso's project to clear part of the Charles River Trail at Ridge Hill and installation of signs; Matthew Bejian's project to plant 24 Emerald Arborvitae trees at the tennis courts at Needham High and install park benches; Msgr Haddad clean-up at Reservoir and DeFazio; Temple Aliyah Day of Service clean-up at Town Forest; Temple Beth Shalom Tikkun Olam Day of Service on trails at Ridge Hill;
- Continued implementation of projects listed in completed Trails Master Plan;
- Assisted Conservation Commission on developing plans for restoration of bridge on Swamp Trail;

- Assisted MA Division of Conservation and Recreation with concepts to improve recreation path from Highland Avenue to 4th Avenue, parallel to the Charles River.

Personal Benefits

- Department assisted with the final Needham 300 activities with the cricket match at Cricket Field and the final gala at Greene's Field and Town Hall in November 2011;
- Director participated in 10th anniversary event at Memorial Park honoring the memories of those lost on 9/11 and their families;
- Fitness was a key component for many programs, and efforts were made to offer additional tennis classes due to a high number of requests. Tennis-related programs for younger children were increased, providing activities that help teach eye-hand coordination with a racquet;
- The Commission participated in discussions with the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager on possibilities for dog park;
- Assisted with the Town Hall departments' move back to Town Hall, and the departments' moving permanently into the Public Services Administration Building from 470 Dedham Avenue;
- 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;
- Provided assistance to the annual New Years Needham events. The Recreation Supervisor served as the administrator for the activities;
- Recreation Supervisor and summer program staff created a welcome video for families participating in summer programs;
- 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; training of staff; and Complete Streets. Summer program directors participated in Metrowest regional training program that the Recreation Supervisor helped coordinate.