

FY 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

Park and Recreation Commission

Michael J. Retzky, Chairman
Cynthia J. Chaston, Vice Chairman
David C. DiCicco, Member
Thomas M. Jacob, 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 typically meets on the second and fourth Mondays of each month.

FY'13 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 \$30,000 for Needham individuals and families in need of assistance, to enable all to have access to recreation and leisure activities, an increase from prior years;
- Commission generated more than \$250,000 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 \$220,000 in revenue for the cost of running those programs, and fee-based services, including Field Maintenance and Athletic Field lights fees;
- Harold J. Street, III provided \$22,000 in his will to be spent by the Park and Recreation Commission, which will be dedicated to small projects along trails or at parks;
- 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 discussed Field Maintenance Fees with sports organizations who regularly use fields, and it was determined to raise the original fee of \$5/participant/season to \$10/participant/season as of 1/1/14;
- 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 \$40,000 was collected. In addition, fees charged for organizations holding clinics on athletic fields generated more than \$20,000;
- Parent Talk donated financial support for the summer of 2013 Children's Theatre program;
- Needham Cultural Council, Louise Condon Realty, Needham Exchange Club, Dedham Institute for Savings Bank, Middlesex Savings Bank, North Hill, Tom Nutile Band, Needham Business Association, and many Needham residents donated funds in support of the 2013 summer Arts in the Parks concert series;
- 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;
- Director served as staff liaison to the Community Preservation Committee;

- 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. The updates were approved in July 2012, and the first project approved under this new legislation was at the November 2012 Special Town Meeting which authorized \$445,000 for the renovation of Greene's Field, including a new playground;
- The Greene's Field fundraising group raised more than \$180,000 for the purchase of the new playground at Greene's Field, and the design was finalized during the spring of 2013, with installation anticipated in fall of 2013;
- Projects funded from Community Preservation Funds in May 2013 include the update of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan; the design of the renovation of the Newman athletic fields and the adjacent Eastman Conservation Area; the design of some park improvements at Mills Field; and design of an all-accessible trail around the Reservoir.

Community Benefits

- Rosemary Pool celebrated its 40th birthday in July 2012;
- Weston & Sampson was hired to undertake a feasibility study of Rosemary Pool and the site. They began the study prior to the annual maintenance work and will continue through the full season, developing a variety of options for possible future uses and aquatics;
- Construction began 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;
- 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. A study of the recreation path was completed by Fay, Spofford and Thorndike and preparations were made to request that the Board of Selectmen enter into a long-term lease agreement with the MBTA;
- Designs were finalized for the new Greene's Field Playground, and a major fundraising campaign was held, raising more than \$180,000 for the purchase of new playground equipment;
- Designs were developed and finalized for the renovation of Greene's Field. CPC funds were approved for the work at the park, including the installation and the surfacing for the playground area. Greene's Field will continue to have a passive park on the Great Plain

Avenue end of the park, active recreation in the center with a 60' diamond, a small multi-purpose field, and a basketball court. The final section will be a fenced in playground area;

- Director worked with Town Manager to create a new part-time position for a playground maintenance specialist, and approval was granted by the Personnel Board. Funding is now being established;
- DPW created new on-street parking area at Avery Field during reconstruction of Webster Street;
- Youth Services' Project Van provided a summer carnival day at Cricketeer Adventure program, did a trails clean-up project on the Rosemary Lake trails, and painted a wood structure at the DeFazio tot-lot;
- Held Field Scheduling Summits, with sport league officials for eleventh 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;
- 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 received funds at Town Meeting for an update of the 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;
- 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 2,131 pounds of trash picked up;

- 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 Ryan Collaruso and Holden Barth's Eagle projects to each clear half of the Charles River Trail at Ridge Hill; Temple Beth Shalom's Tikum Olam Day to clear the Swamp Trail and Chestnut Trail at Ridge Hill; Eagle Scout Matt Bejian's project to plant 23 Emerald Arborvitae at the High School tennis courts, and add two spectator benches; Eagle Scout Ted Morin's project to rebuild the turnboards in Rosemary Pool; the Berkshire Bank employees did a pre-season clean-up at Rosemary Pool; the High School Environmental Club assisted with the annual spring clean-up day. These volunteer projects typically also received donated materials or materials are purchased through fundraising efforts, saving the Town thousands of dollars on labor and costs;
- Continued implementation of projects listed in completed Trails Master Plan;
- Assisted MA Division of Conservation and Recreation with design plans to improve recreation path from Highland Avenue to 4th Avenue, parallel to the Charles River.

Personal Benefits

- Department is part of national campaign to get "Kids into Nature." More than 40,000 annual hours have been tracked at Park and Recreation sponsored programs;
- Fitness was a key component for many programs, in addition to nature. New programs created include Down on the Farm (with the Community Farm organization), Hikes for Tikes, Owl Prowl, and the ballet program underwent a re-design to become Dance and Movement;
- 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. The Assistant Director serves as the Advisor to the High School Fishing Club;
- 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.