

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

March 19, 2010

*Background notes for Monday, March 22nd
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

SENIOR CENTER FEASIBILITY STUDY

BH&A has begun working on the development of information for the study, and I've met with the consultant briefly to answer some questions about sites. The first part of the study report will be discussed with the PPBC on April 28th.

SPECIAL EVENT REQUESTS

A final decision needs to be made on the pending special event requests so that the final field permits can be sent out. (a) the Athletic Director has withdrawn the request for the MA State Track Coaches Association Track Meet for Freshmen and Sophomores, but may ask in future years; (b) Bay State Football Camp, Inc. doesn't have knew written information but someone will come to provide additional information; (c) Needham Soccer Club Pre-Season Clinic with updated written information; and (d) Rocket Lacrosse has broken their request into 2 separate requests and submitted two updated request forms.

FIELD SCHEDULING

This has been a difficult task this year. The majority of organizations submitted requests that conflicted with requests made by other organizations, and there have been multiple tense conversations between organizations. I've been approached by most of the organizations and asked to listen to their explanations on why their requests should take priority over the conflicted groups. Unfortunately, all of this will lead to me requesting to have additional rules created by the Commission and the Trustees of Memorial Park for future schedules, as it doesn't appear that resolutions will be found through cooperation between all the organizations. The major decisions I have made for this spring are: (a) fields built for older youth will not be permitted for younger youth; (b) agreements made in January and February will be honored and not changed at the last minute; and (c) long-established programs (5 or more years) have the right to give input on how to create space to allow new all-Needham groups to become established.

Little League, Fast Pitch Softball, and the Soccer Club have all sent me e-mails this week asking me to provide additional field space that could not be resolved with other organizations. Each organization has the luxury to view its own program on its own merits and without having to place it in the larger context of youth sports as a whole. I don't have the luxury, and have a finite amount of space to schedule. All groups – not just those listed above, and also including Needham High School - will have to work within the space that is given them, or find a way to collaborate with the other groups.

I'm not typically present when organizations discuss field scheduling issues, together, but I have to say I am disheartened by the tone used when one organization contacts me to complain about another organization, and the decisions that are being made by organizations without communication to the organization it most affects. It's sad for me to request additional rules from the Commission and Trustees, but I don't see any alternative from the permitting side of the issue. I clearly hope that all of these organizations will remember that they are all trying to do something positive for Needham's youth and that the benefits come from a community of caring adults, not individuals arguing over territory! It seems more appropriate for me to put my attention towards the restoration of fields, amenities to make the parks more useable, and finding opportunities for additional space.

ANNUAL DRAIN-DOWN OF ROSEMARY POOL AND LAKE

We are in the process of getting updated Order of Conditions from the Conservation Commission for the annual draining of Rosemary Lake and Pool, in order to prepare the pool for the summer season. The Conservation Commission opened the hearing on March 11th, and requested additional information for their March 25th meeting. I'm working with DPW and the Conservation Agent Patty Barry on the requested information. One report required the hiring of a biologist. I was fortunately able to hire a consultant that has worked on Walker Pond in the past and was able to start on the report on Thursday and will have information before next Thursday's meeting. Hopefully, the Conservation Commission will have enough information to close the hearing and issue an Order of Conditions so that draining of the lake can begin in late March/early April to keep us on schedule.

OPEN SPACE PLANNING

The meeting packets have lots of parcel maps, indicating some locations that might be appropriate for the Town to try to purchase if they became available. When approved, this listing will be discussed at a working group meeting with other Town representatives, and then moved onto a map.

FIELDS OF DREAMS

The contractors (RAD) will be back next week to do about a week of projects at DeFazio and Memorial. It is hoped that all punch list projects will be finished, and then we have officially completed the Sports Council's project. Other projects at the two parks would be undertaken by the Town, and the Sports Council will make the official gift of the project. It has been a wonderful partnership with productive results!

TENNIS BADGES

In 1997, the Commission set a policy to handle non-resident requests for tennis badges. It limited the requests to employees of Needham businesses, and created fees for the player and the business. It has never been an easy policy to handle, particularly for the front-line staff who bear the brunt of the complaints. I have a request from an employee of a Needham business, but before responding would like to the Commission to consider some changes to the policy. It is an important time to review this policy, as the Mills

courts will likely become a "beacon" to all that work in that end of town, and to people living in Newton, and we will lose the Newman courts for an extended period of time. My recommendations are to limit the number of badges to employees of Needham businesses (original policy limits it to 50, which seems appropriate). I would also recommend that only individual badges be sold, and that family badges not be an option. Proof of employment (or attendance in a Needham based school) would be required so that there is some connection to Needham, and I suggest a rate that is double the Needham individual rate.

MILLS TENNIS COURTS

DPW Engineering is consulting with the contractor on the final work to be done at Mills. I will hopefully have a schedule update on Monday, but it will also be pending weather conditions. Last fall, the contractor had hoped to patch the crack at Newman in early March so that the courts would be ready for use when Needham High started, but the school teams started practicing this week, and we can't shut down the Newman courts without having use of Mills. As soon as I know more, I'll provide an update. I'm also expecting to get a change order to review that would allow us to install a backboard at Mills for practices, but won't be able to make a decision until I see the cost estimate.