

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

April 9, 2010

*Background notes for Monday, April 12th
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

THANK YOU, MR. DOLLASE

Where do I begin to thank Chris Dollase for his many years of service to the Park and Recreation Commission? Chris started his career with Park and Recreation on the summer staff as a program director and two years as a summer supervisor. He helped with the department's transition when the new position of Assistant Director of Park and Recreation was created (which coincidentally was me!) We lost Chris for several years to Washington DC and his career, but it was the Needham community and Park and Recreation's gain when he returned to Needham to raise his children and was elected to the Commission. Thank you, Chris, for all the meetings you attended, including your strong representation on the Field Study Committee. Thank you for asking lots of questions, allowing me to vent, and making sure that the Park and Recreation Commission and Department always strived to represent the whole community!

TRACK LIGHTS AT DeFAZIO

As discussed at the last meeting, the safety lights on the track at DeFazio have been off since the initial trial last spring. In the early fall, an electrical contractor adjusted the heads of the lights down, and changed the ballasts to allow for the use of lower wattage bulbs. The heads of the lights are not directed straight down, as they are located outside of the track and need to have some slant to them in order to provide safety lighting. Unless the Commission would like to consider a different time, the lights would come on around dusk and be turned off at 9 PM.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Commission is being asked to go into Executive Session at the end of the regular meeting under Exception Six of the Open Meeting Law, "to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property, if such discussions may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the governmental body and a person, firm or corporation." A roll call vote is required to go into and adjourn the Executive Session.

ANNUAL DRAIN-DOWN OF ROSEMARY POOL AND LAKE

The Conservation Commission has issued an Order of Conditions for draining Rosemary Lake to perform annual maintenance on the pool. Additional monitoring requirements are included, which will provide additional data to study. One downstream neighbor continues to make claims which aren't supported by the current set of data, and he may appeal the Conservation Commission's decision. The steps taken to handle an appeal vary depending on the way it is appealed. We are at the crunch time for doing the work

inside the pool, so that we can have it filled in enough time to do all the pre-season testing to receive our permit to open.

OPEN SPACE DISCUSSIONS

Brian Nadler, Phil Robey and I met with the Town Manager and Chairman of the Board of Selectmen on open space issues. There was general agreement to move forward the discussion on the transfer of jurisdiction of the Avery, Dwight and Perry parcels to the Commission from the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Nadler also made a request to formalize the discussion on the future of the Nike Site.

FIELDS CONDITIONS

Despite the record setting levels of rain in March, almost all fields were open for use by April 5th, just a few days after the hoped-for date of April 1st. Not unexpectedly, the back fields at Newman remained closed a few extra days, but were available for use by April 8th. The warm temperatures and breeze helped with the drying out. Regular pre-season work was delayed, but the DPW is getting to each field as quickly as possible, with the fields used by the High School having the highest priority. The contractor has completed his work on Warner Field at DeFazio so that is now officially opened. The DPW has repaired the sinkhole at McLeod Field and that is now open for practices. The contractor has moved over to Memorial Park and is working on punch list projects, mostly around the 90' diamond. Little League has hired a contractor to help with the pre-season preparation on some of the diamonds, and will offer that service as a gift to the Town. The Soccer Club is donating new nets for the goals, so they will also be gifted to the Town.

PARK RESTROOMS AND BUBBLERS

The first step for opening up the park restrooms at DeFazio, Cricket and Riverside is handled by the DPW and involves installing meters and turning the water on from the street. I then have to bring in a plumber to turn on all the units in the buildings. The contracted cleaning crew will then start at DeFazio and Cricket. Memorial Park is open, and we have been trying to leave them unlocked, as we do at DeFazio. Cricket is a major storage building for the department, so the restrooms are only used by Needham High School. The High School Athletics Department has brought in portable toilets at DeFazio and Claxton until the regular restrooms are available.

The Claxton restrooms have been a long-term project. The architect made errors on the specifications, and the contractor completed only the tasks put in by the architect. Public Facilities has taken over the completion, while Town Counsel works on the other issues. What we believe to be the final task was completed last week, and is now in line for inspection for us to receive an "occupancy permit." The cleaning crew will start at Claxton this week, in preparation for when the restrooms will open officially. As with DeFazio, we will try leaving the restrooms unlocked for park users, and will relook at that decision if we start to have vandalism. We don't have staff to lock and unlock bathrooms on a daily basis, so it's a challenge! The last set of restrooms to be renovated

will be the ones at Mills. The Claxton project needed to be completed first, so I will need to meet with Public Facilities Director Chip Laffey to get the direction on that project.

The DPW completed all of the foundation work for the new bubblers. We are waiting to see if the Town plumber can do the final installations, or if I need to hire an outside plumber. The other bubblers will be turned on in late April to early May.

ZBA HEARING

The ZBA asked the Commission to return to their May meeting to update them on the athletic field lights, and hopefully finish up with the permitting process. The hearing will be on May 20th, and the application for the hearing needs to be submitted by April 26th. I am not available to attend the 5/20 meeting, so I'll need to provide any detail information ahead of time.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS WARRANT MEETINGS

The League will have the Town Meeting warrant overview meeting on Monday, April 26 at 7:30 PM at Pollard. New Town Meeting members start at 7 PM. The Commission meeting is being moved to Pollard at 6:30 PM, so the Commission can then attend the meeting. Town Meeting members meet by precinct, with two precincts in each room. We'll need to have Park and Recreation representation in each room to answer questions on any warrant articles related to the Commission and department.

FIELD SCHEDULE

The spring/summer field schedule, as of this week, is listed on the Town's website at <http://www.needhamma.gov/index.aspx?nid=2367> We will try to update the information, periodically.

PLAYGROUNDS

It wasn't possible to do any pre-season work at the playground in February and March, so it will take some time to get around to all of them this spring. The school custodians are re-spreading the existing surfacing until DPW can get around and add where it is needed. I'm hiring a former summer employee to do the raking at the non-school playgrounds, to also assist with loosening up the surface. A private contractor will make some needed repairs, and I'm working on an RFP to have an on-call maintenance contractor – something we've been trying to do for many years – so that I don't need to do separate procurements each time something needs to be repaired.

Greene's Field playground should be coming down this month. The DPW basically lost the month of March to the storms, and all the related work. I'll be working with a small group to come up with some short-term solutions for young children, and then as more information is available on Greene's Field, we'll work on a long-term plan.

OFFICE STAFF

We received 38 applications for the Administrative Assistant position. That list has been narrowed down to 8 for interviews which will take place later in April. I'll be doing the

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first interviews with the Assistant Director and the Human Resources Director. We'll invite about 3 back for 2nd interviews, and then hopefully have someone in place sometime in May before the major summer program registration begins. It's not the best time to start in our office, but it has happened before, and we will make it work, again!

I have also started the official process of converting our Department Assistant 2 position into a Recreation Supervisor position. This will allow us to spread the programming work between two people, the "front-desk" tasks between two people, and I will be able to spend more time on long-range tasks rather than daily, detailed work. It will be exciting to have the work spread out in a more even pattern, and allow each of us to get into some creative projects that continue to linger on our desks!

April is the start of our "crazy" season in the office, and being short one member of our team puts additional pressure and tasks on the remaining three. Please note that what seems like a simple request will take us much longer to handle as we juggle to make it through!
