

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

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**November 4, 2010**

*Background notes for Monday, November 8<sup>th</sup>  
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

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**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

Reminder! Monday night's meeting will be held in the Newman Cafeteria at 6:30 PM, prior to Special Town Meeting.

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**PROJECTS WITH DPW**

The Asa Small project is basically completed now, with just a few final punch list items. The Parks and Forestry Superintendent and I have been putting together a list of fence replacement projects that can be bid the winter. One of those projects is the replacement of the outfield fence and backstop at Mills. We are also getting estimates on some fence replacement at Memorial Park, and I still have funding to replace the Cricket fence along Hillside Avenue. The schedule will be set to provide the least disruption to the programs. As an example, if Mills can't be scheduled in March, it will likely wait until the summer, so that we don't lose use of the diamond during the busiest season. It won't take as long as Asa Small as the dugouts are in place. The contractor for the batting cage at Claxton still needs to get the building permit before doing the installation. All the excavation work is completed. The goal was to have that in place prior to the spring NHS Girls Softball season. As the DPW starts reducing their athletic field maintenance work this month, they will attempt to get to delayed projects, including the installation of the bike racks. The racks will go to DeFazio, Memorial, Rosemary Pool, the Heights Common, the High School, High Rock, Newman, and Mitchell. The purchase of the Charles River Street parcel will happen in early December, and the lease on the property expires on November 30<sup>th</sup>. The DPW is working on their plan for demolition of the buildings, removal of trees and grading of property to match up with the current field.

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**REVENUE AND EXPENSE REPORT**

The office staff is working on putting together the revenue and expense report from the summer programs and pool. As in the past, it will indicate information over a 5 year spread. I noted in the draft minutes from the last meeting that the Commission was putting together their own information, but you will likely the official records by the end of November.

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**SPECIAL EVENT REQUESTS**

As part of the discussion on the updated rules and regulations, I am requesting that a time line be included for when special event requests can be made. The # 1 issue is that requests are made too late for a full review by the Commission. The # 2 issue is that groups schedule special events within their practice/game permit. The new issue, which

is # 3, is groups requesting time about a year in advance of the event. Some of these events are non-athletic in nature, but shut down a major park for part or all of a day, preventing use of the athletic fields.

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### **GREENE'S FIELD**

There will likely be discussions about Greene's Field at Special Town Meeting, as a group of residents is seeking to refer the article related to design back for further study so that Greene's Field could be the chosen site. As I often hear it is a "little used" park, I wanted to remind the Commission of its actual use. The park is permitted every weekday afternoon in the spring and fall for programs offered by the YMCA. In the spring, Little League uses the diamond after the YMCA is done. On the weekends, the time is shared between Little League and the YMCA. During the summer, the YMCA typically offers some programs during the weekday, and Little League or Summer Baseball use the diamond. The park also has numerous non-permitted uses. The Needham Children's Center, the Baptist Nursery School and Tobin After-School Care are all located within close walking distance and frequently use the park for outdoor activities. St. Joseph's School will also use it periodically for outdoor activities, including an annual Civil War re-enactment. The playground structure brought regular visitors to the park. The playground is temporarily removed for the park but a new one will return. Greene's Field does not have irrigation, and the heavy use continues to compact the soil which is periodically loosened, but it remains difficult to over-seed and provide a safer grass surface for children. The basketball court is used on a first-come-first served basis, and children from the neighborhood regularly use the court. The park has not been used on a regular basis by older residents, despite the effort from the original playground committee to install bocce and horseshoe areas, along with picnic areas.

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### **BASKETBALL COURTS**

I noted on the draft minutes that a question on basketball courts had been raised. As noted during the discussion on capital projects, the Mills courts would be resurfaced when the Mills parking project is done. The Greene's Field courts will be part of the master plan for renovating the park and playground. That discussion will start after decisions are made at Special Town Meeting. Perry Park cannot have an asphalt overlay. The cement slab is the foundation of the old school and sits on top of a basement. A structural engineer has indicated that the weight of an overlay would collapse the foundation. The basketball courts located at schools would be updated when parking lot work at their locations is done. In the past, the Commission has discussed the possibility of a basketball court at DeFazio, but the remaining areas for a court are within the possible school site. If the paving of the DeFazio parking lot moved forward, a court could be added at that time.

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### **THANKSGIVING DAY FOOTBALL GAME**

Since many of the Town staff involved with the Thanksgiving Day Football game are new to Needham and haven't worked when the game was in Needham, the Athletic Director hosted a meeting this week to discuss all the issues. A major issue two years ago was related to the selling of tickets. Some people missed the first quarter of the game

while waiting in line. The two high schools will promote early ticket sales, at a reduced rate. I have offered Park and Recreation as a ticket sale site, and should hear next week if it is needed. The Police will step up patrols in the area, as there has been some vandalism at Memorial, most recently to the gazebo. The bleachers purchased by the Booster Club are on site, and the contract has been signed for the permanent bleachers being purchased by the Town. The installation wasn't done in time for this weekend's Needham 300 event, but it is hoped they will be installed prior to the Thanksgiving Day game.

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### **TRACK LIGHTS**

While I was at the conference last week, a Coulton Park neighbor contacted the office noting that she felt the track lights had been moved. The track lights are currently on from 7-9 PM, and have been on since early September. They are on 7 nights a week and no changes have been made. It's likely that the leaves are starting to thin out, so it was more obvious to the neighbor that they were on. Next week, I'll work with DPW to adjust the time due to the move back to standard time.

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### **COULTON PARK SKATING RINK**

The neighbors of Coulton Park are once again requesting permission to install a temporary ice rink in the park this winter. The neighbors have used the approved area in past years, and cleaned up all debris preventing any damage to the park. They handle all maintenance.

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### **WINTERIZATION**

It's that time of year when park bathrooms are shut down for the season. Claxton does not need to be shut down, as the building is heated, but at the end of the Junior Football season, they will be locked until the spring. Riverside and the Pool are all winterized. Cricket was supposed to remain open one more week, but there was miscommunication at the DPW, so the meter was pulled last weekend, and then the High School uses the facilities. The DPW has reinstalled the meter and water, and the plumbing contractor will properly winterize the units before the weekend. The Carleton Pavilion at DeFazio will remain open over the weekend. With below freezing temperatures at night, we are at a point where the final shut-down has to be scheduled. Though the sports groups would like the schedule to match their own schedules, nature doesn't work on their schedules. Last year, we had already had the first snowfall in October! All of the bubblers have been shut down and winterized. Most of the tennis nets will be removed for the winter, but we'll try to leave a few nets up for those nice winter days when people can be out on the courts. We try to leave out the oldest nets so that they get replaced in the spring.

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### **COMMUNITY CENTER CONCEPT**

The citizen group promoting a community center has started a survey with other towns. They updated a survey from the Town's prior Community Center Study Committee that was in files I have shared with them, and I gave them a list of about 20 New England communities that were willing to provide information.

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**POLLARD PROJECT**

At Special Town Meeting, the PPBC is proposing the addition of a new one-way access road from Dedham Avenue to the back of Pollard, and the addition of a new parking area. For anyone familiar with the daily parking issues at Pollard, the additional spaces have been a long-time need. The neighbors located at the back of the site have had to deal with cars parked along the roads, making it difficult to get in and out, and clearly making it harder for emergency vehicles. The additional parking will not only improve the school-day parking issues, but make it easier for those using the fields and the double gyms.

**NEWMAN PROJECT**

In the plans for rebuilding the tennis courts, the PPBC has asked if lights should be installed. They have a concept using 35 foot light poles, but it's my understanding that the poles would need to be higher for appropriate lighting. I'll have additional information for the Commission's discussion.