

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

MINUTES OF MEETING

June 11, 2012

PRESENT: Michael J. Retzky, Chairman
Thomas M. Jacob, Vice Chairman
Cynthia J. Chaston, Member
David C. DiCicco, Member
Andrea L. Shorthose, Member
Patricia M. Carey, Director
Karen A. Peirce, Assistant Director

GUESTS: Bob Cohen, DeFazio Neighbor
Chris Cox, Heather Yountz, Sue Owen, Daniel Shapiro,
Rhonda Spector, Carole and John Stefanoni - Cricket Field
Neighbors
Heidi Black, School Committee Chairwoman
Dan Gutekanst, Needham Public Schools Superintendent

The meeting convened at 7:00PM in the Charles River Room located in the Public Services Administration Building.

1. **Minutes of Meeting:** None presented.
2. **Director's Report:** Submitted in writing prior to the meeting. Ms. Carey reported the Rocket Lacrosse non profit paperwork has been received.
3. **Assistant Director's Report:** Ms. Peirce stated the summer staff have been attending trainings and are working at the pool to get it ready for the June 18th opening.
4. **Action Items:**
 - A. **Hillside/Mitchell Feasibility Study:** Prior to the meeting, the neighbors chose two representatives to speak on their behalf. Mr. Retzky invited Chris Cox and Heather Yountz forward to speak on behalf of the Cricket Field neighbors. Mr. Cox spoke about the neighborhood concerns but also how the loss of Cricket Field would affect the entire Town of Needham. He provided copies of his notes, which can be found as Appendix A. Heather Yountz spoke to the value of the field as the core of the neighborhood and noted it is the location of memorials to four young women from Needham. The group is willing to brainstorm alternatives for other school sites and they would be willing to help raise funds for the Cricket building renovation. Their reason for being at the meeting tonight is

to raise awareness on the value of Cricket Field as a park. Sue Owen introduced herself as the Cricket neighborhood liaison to the Park and Recreation Commission. Mr. DiCicco thanked the neighbors and agreed that, in his opinion, building a school at Cricket Field does not make sense. Mrs. Chaston indicated the Park and Recreation Commission has discussed the topic since becoming aware of the option to use Cricket Field as a possible school location. She noted the Commission has held off on taking a vote hoping the School Committee would come up with an alternative that does not include Cricket Field. Ms. Shorthose stated Cricket is too valuable for its current uses to be given up as a school site. Mr. Jacob understands this is a very long process but he is not sure he is willing to be patient any longer. He would like to see the options at the current Hillside location vetted more thoroughly as well as the review of temporary space during construction. Mr. Retzky indicated that the Park and Recreation Commission has jurisdiction over Cricket Field and would like to see the Cricket option removed. He does not want the MSBA to read the report and consider Cricket Field to be a viable option.

Mr. Jacob made a motion,
Whereas, the Park & Recreation Commission has full and sole jurisdiction of Cricket Field, and
Whereas, Cricket is a vital asset of the Park and Recreation Commission and the Town of Needham and is heavily utilized by school and youth athletes and the Park and Recreation Department, and
Whereas, the field is located in a neighborhood that is short on green space and has historic significance to the neighborhood and town, and
Whereas, the current Hillside School site has not been thoroughly reviewed as to whether it can or cannot continue as a school site, and
Whereas, the building of a school at Cricket would result in substantial redistricting; would incur significant costs that would not be reimbursed by the State for the construction of replacement fields and field house and would result in the loss of two heavily utilized multipurpose fields, play ground and field house during the 4 years of construction, and
Whereas, three options have already been withdrawn by the School Committee, I move that we request the School Committee withdraw Cricket Field as an option for any school building development.

Mrs. Chaston seconded the motion. Mr. DiCicco asked if there would be a timeline for the School Committee to discuss the Commission's vote. Superintendent Dan Gutekanst noted the architect is issuing a final report on June 30th. A joint decision from PPBC and the School Committee is necessary, not just the School Committee. Mr. Jacob amended his motion to include asking the PPBC to withdraw Cricket Field as an option. Mr. DiCicco would ask that the option be withdrawn before the report was finalized, but Mr. Jacob reminded him that the Commission would not likely vote to relinquish jurisdiction of Cricket

Field. Cricket neighbor Dan Shapiro spoke in support of the motion, explaining how the activities at Cricket Field helped define the neighborhood. He asked that Cricket Field be removed as an option. Mr. Retzky called for a vote on the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Mr. Retzky thanked all of the guests for attending the meeting.

B. Special Event Request: Temple Aliyah: A request was received from Temple Aliyah to use the DeFazio Tot Lot for a family bar-b-q on September 9, 2012 from 4-6:30PM. Mr. Jacob made a motion to approve the special request. Mrs. Chaston seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

C. Special Event Request: Norfolk Lodge: A request was received from the Norfolk Lodge A.F & AM to host a bar-b-q at Claxton Field on August 11, 2012 (rain date August 12) from 12:00-7:00PM. Mr. Jacob made a motion to approve the special request. Mrs. Chaston seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

5. Discussion Items:

A. Walker Gordon Project: Ms. Carey stated the Walker Gordon bid only received one bid for the fencing portion. A bid for other portions of the project was not received as the person bringing it to Needham was in a car accident. The project will need to be rebid, except for the fence portion which will be awarded.

B. DeFazio Parking Lot: Ms. Carey reported new chip stone has been installed in the DeFazio parking lot. There was some discussion regarding the parking lot signage and driving conditions. No recommendations were made at this time.

C. Rosemary Pool: Ms. Carey reported the pumps began running on Friday and a water sample was taken to the lab today and another one will be taken tomorrow. She is waiting to hear when the deposition will be scheduled pertaining to the law suit. The state is considering another Permit Extension Act approval, which could extend permits by an additional two years. The current permit for Rosemary is set to expire in August 2014. Ms. Carey will be meeting with Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick and PPBC Director Steve Popper to draft a Rosemary Pool Feasibility study scope.

D. Community Preservation Update: Ms. Carey reported that both the House and the Senate have voted favorably on the change in wording for recreation projects, but they were not in agreement on the financial terms, so the proposed legislation is now under review by a joint committee to seek a compromise amendment. The CPC will begin discussing how to handle a volume of requests at their next meeting, in anticipation that the legislation changes will be approved.

The Commission will begin discussing projects and priorities, and will need to work with other boards on submittals. The Charles River Center will reapply this summer, in the hopes that their project to build a new group home will go before Special Town Meeting in the fall for approval.

E. Rail Trail Update: Ms. Carey reported that on June 8th a meeting was held with the Town department managers to review the concept of building a Rail Trail from Needham Junction, through Dover, and ending in Medfield, along rails formerly leased by Bay Colony Rail. Tad Staley, from the non-profit, and Danvers' Senior Town Planner Kate Day made presentations to the group. Ms. Day indicated Danvers was the first Town in Massachusetts to use the Iron Horse Company to remove the rails from the railroad track with great success. Currently the MBTA is discussing the lease that will be needed. Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick will go to the meeting in July to speak on behalf of the Town supporting a lease with Needham. Each Town will have their own lease with the MBTA. The MBTA requires a 5 year insurance program that costs about \$44,000. The state has a program to pay ½ of it which leaves the insurance program costing about \$22,000. Mr. Staley and Ms. Carey have been working with resident Gene Bolinger from Weston and Sampson to scope out a study of parking, trail access and bridge renovations. Representatives from the three towns will continue to meet this week.

F. Trails Projects: Ms. Peirce reported she is hoping to organize some trail projects this summer at Outdoor Living and with Project Van. The postponed Hikes for Tykes for Parent Talk has been rescheduled for June 16th at Ridge Hill.

6. **Topics for future Agendas:** Goals
 - Project wish List for CPC funds and other
 - Hillside Mitchell Feasibility Study
 - Review Summer Meeting Schedule
7. **Adjournment:** Mr. Jacob made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:04PM. Mrs. Chaston seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 9:04PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen A. Peirce, CPRP
Assistant Director

Save Cricket Field!

Presentation to:

Needham Parks and Recreation

June 11, 2012

Objectives



Share our Thanks and Common Concerns

A Brief Word on Other Town Concerns Regarding the Potential Loss of Cricket

A Neighborhood Perspective

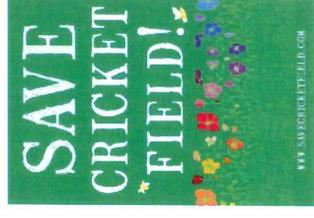
How we can Work Together

Next Steps

Open Discussion / Questions

Appendix: Contact Information

Did you know: Within one week of the community becoming aware of the Cricket proposal, we rallied over 100 people to show up at the School Committee Meeting in Support of Cricket Field – Imagine what we can do with time.



Common Concerns and a Word of Thanks



What we Inferred from your Letter to the School Committee

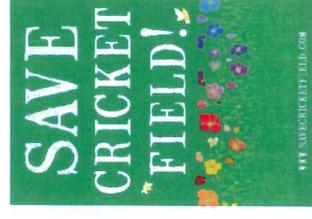
Like us, Parks and Recreation is Concerned about:

- Potential Permanent loss of Green space
 - Lack of other green space in Needham Heights
 - Limited playing fields in town already
- Permanent change to a neighborhood park
- Loss of the only P&R field house
- Space for High School practices and other teams
 - Potential to force more inconvenient practice schedules, less practice time, or at worse, complete loss of neighborhood teams
- Significant cost to set up facilities for a new park

Did you know: Between in-person and online signatures, over 130 people have signed a petition supporting the preservation of Cricket Field – and we still have tremendous awareness to build!

Thank you For:

- Eloquently and Professionally Sharing many of the concerns that the citizens of Needham have – with an official, public voice
- Providing us a forum to share with you tonight



Other Concerns for the Whole Town



Usability and Access of the Hillside Site as a Park / Playing Fields

- You asked for any plan to turn Hillside into a park to be done by a firm with the appropriate expertise and cost knowledge, but also keep in mind:
 - Water issues prevent building on part of the site – how often will that prevent practices and play time on Fields at that site?
 - The site is located at the top of a steep hill – will that prevent elderly neighbors from enjoying it?
 - The site is isolated and not a 'part of a community' like Cricket

Other Potential Cost Implications for the Town to Lose Cricket

- A 2005 study by Crompton in 'Managing Leisure' finds that homes abutting or across from parks have an increase in value by ~20%
 - Far more homes face Cricket than Hillside – how will that impact the tax revenue for the town over a decade?

Cricket Field does not appear to meet several criteria the School Committee laid out

- Cricket Field is in the Eliot Neighborhood, not the Hillside Neighborhood
 - Increases distance for most Hillside students – limiting walk-ability and increasing busing
- Architect study suggests only 63 students would be redistricted – but seems highly unlikely once town sees how sub-optimal that will be from a busing / walking perspective

Setting the precedent that there is no accountability for lack of future planning in the past

- School Committee has given up several properties over the years in Needham (Avery, Carter, Dwight, Highland Ave), and now is considering taking away one of our most valuable town assets

Giving away our history

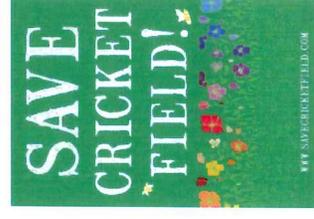
- e.g., Cricket Capital of Massachusetts, several Memorials

Potential Legal Concerns

- Title IX
- Ch. 45, sec. 7

We will now share a neighborhood perspective

Did you know: In our online poll (which has been shared broadly with the town of Needham via Facebook), 86.75% of respondents have indicated that Cricket Field should NOT be considered as a relocation site for Hillside School



How we can Work Together



Our Asks of Parks and Recreation

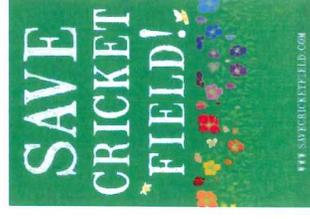
Ideal Outcome: Publicly announce that Parks and Recreation will not provide Cricket Field to the School Committee without a public override

If Ideal Outcome not Currently Feasible:

- Continue to apply pressure and make your voice heard
- Keep us in the loop on your stance and actions as the process proceeds
- Help us think of other alternatives for Hillside School – we all want the best for Needham’s children
- Let us know how else we can assist you

What we can Offer Parks and Recreation

- Private fundraising support for a new Field House at Cricket Field (many of us did not know you were seeking public finances)
- An active community voice to save Cricket Field
- Brainstorming and manpower to help the School Committee think of viable alternatives that do not include Cricket Field
- Public awareness / support for any other initiatives that Parks and Recreation is currently pursuing



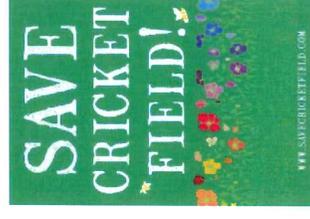
Did you know: Our website – www.savecricketfield.com – has had 1153 hits in the last 10 days

Next Steps



1. Determine how we can partner together
2. We will be sending a letter to the School Committee asking for the immediate dismissal of Cricket Field as an option for Hillside School
3. We are also pursuing the following:
 - Holding an organization meeting of all 'Save Cricket Field' supporters to organize around functional areas and workstreams
 - Raising an even greater level of awareness across town
 - Working to find alternatives for the School Committee

Questions? Discussion Topics?





Appendix: Contact Information

'Save Cricket Field' Coordinator and Primary Parks and Recreation Contact

- Sue Owen – cricketfieldowen@gmail.com

Tonight's Speakers

- Chris Cox – chriscox@gmail.com
- Heather Yountz – hyountz@gmail.com

