

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

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**September 20, 2013**

*Background notes for Monday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>  
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

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**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION APPOINTMENT**

At a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Park and Recreation Commission, Matt Toolan was appointed to the Park and Recreation Commission, serving through the election in April 2014. Welcome to the Commission, Mr. Toolan!

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**OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER MEETING DATES**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in October is Columbus Day and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in November is Veterans' Day, so the Park and Recreation Commission will need to adjust their meeting date. Please bring your calendars!

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**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE – APPOINTMENT**

Mr. Retzky's three year term representing the Commission on the Community Preservation Committee is up. He is eligible to be re-appointed, so the confirmation vote is on the agenda.

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**FACILITY MASTER PLAN - APPOINTMENT**

The Board of Selectmen is creating a Facility Working Group to assist the Board of Selectmen and the Permanent Public Building Committee on the development of an updated Facility Master Plan. This will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> rendition of the Town-wide plan. The first was completed in 1998-1999 by Kaestle-Boos, and the second in 2006 by DiNisco. The Selectmen have asked that a member of the Park and Recreation Commission be appointed to serve on the advisory working group. It is likely that meetings will be held in the early morning time, but evenings might be an option. I will be attending meetings as one of the primary staff members on the project.

Some history to this process...in the early 1990's, a committee was formed to discuss building needs of some departments that might be served in a "community center." Many boards and residents appreciated the idea, but continually asked "where does this fit in with all the other buildings needs?" The chairman of that committee and I started visiting other towns with community centers, and found one that had done a town-wide review and master plan. It took us a year to convince boards that it was better to plan together than separately by board and department, which was the process then. At the beginning of the process, we heard "it will never happen" but by the end of the year, we got reluctant support to try this new process. Phase One reviewed all facilities and outlined deficiencies. Phase Two, through a major public process and a number of summit meetings, attempted to come up with recommendations for improvements and priorities...otherwise known as a master plan. As with most master plans, the initial emphasis is on the early priorities, and then the order needs to change as conditions change. The first two projects to move out of the initial master plan were the

renovation/addition of Broadmeadow followed by the rebuilding of Eliot. The Library project began the process of renovation/addition shortly after that. The High School moved up in the order due to a change in state financing. Other side studies were done, including the possibility of a community center/senior center at Rosemary. It was time to review all the issues and set a new priority, which was the 2006 study. Meanwhile, Needham adopted Community Preservation which brought in a funding resource for Town Hall, so that project moved forward, including the creation of the Public Services Administration Building (PSAB). Decisions were made on the Senior Center which is weeks away from opening at a new site with a new name – Center at the Heights. The High Rock option moved forward to help with overcrowding issues at Pollard, and due to air quality issues, Newman moved up on the list and received additional renovations.

Though we don't have a true community center, many of the components have been incorporated into other building renovations. The gyms at Broadmeadow and Eliot are full-sized, making them available for a greater variety of activities outside of the school day. Accessible meeting spaces are now available at the Library, PSAB and Town Hall – including Powers Hall for events. The new senior center will have more programming space, and the Library has multi-media opportunities.

Still to come? For the schools, it is Hillside and Mitchell, as well as the School Administration Building at Emery Grover. For the Town, the Police/Fire building, with enhanced emergency management ability, as well as some additional facility needs for DPW. For Park and Recreation, Rosemary Pool (outdoor and/or indoor swimming facilities), the Cricket building, and dedicated programming space...with the "community center" concept still under discussion as all of these ideas are discussed in unison.

Needham's model of collaborative planning has now been taken on by other communities, and we've made great achievements – with many more to be made!

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## **FOOD TRUCKS**

At the Selectmen's recent public hearing on a policy related to food trucks, several residents spoke in favor of allowing food trucks to set up at parks, so the Selectmen will be looking for additional input from the Commission.

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