

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

**Minutes of Meeting
February 25, 2008**

PRESENT: Christopher R. Dollase, Chairman
Cynthia J. Chaston, Vice Chair
William R. Dermody, Member
Brian S. Nadler, Member
Philip V. Robey, Member
Patricia M. Carey, Director
Karen A. Peirce, Assistant Director

GUESTS: Bob Cohen, Resident

The meeting convened at 7:02PM in the Board of Selectmen's meeting room located in the Town Hall.

1. **Minutes of Meeting February 11, 2008:** Mrs. Chaston made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2008 meeting. Mr. Robey seconded the motion and the minutes from the February 11, 2008 meeting were approved.
2. **Financial Report:** Ms. Carey noted there have not been any changes but as it gets closer to June there may need to be a request to move funds from purchase of service to the expense line. Mr. Nadler asked if the Commission should balance the expenses by increasing the fees to cover the operational costs. Mr. Dollase indicated that all aspects of the pool operations are considered when setting fees. Ms. Carey also noted the Park and Recreation budget absorbed the cost of chlorine and DE from the DPW budget last year, needing to use more than a typical year and provided a substantial amount of scholarships to Needham families.
3. **Correspondence**
 - A. **Guest Editorial Submitted to Needham Times:** Ms. Carey shared a copy of "What Was and What Will Be", an article she submitted to the Needham Times regarding the history of Memorial Park and DeFazio Park. Highlighted in the article was the number of volunteers that have worked hard to maintain and improve both Town owned parks. It also summarized the work of the Field Study Committee to renovate and reconfigure both parks to better serve the community.
 - B. **Planning Board Decision: High Rock Parking:** Ms. Carey shared a Notice of Decision dated February 14, 2008 submitted by the Planning Board for a Major Project Site Plan Special Permit Amendment at the High Rock School. The requested Special Permit Amendment was granted.

4. Assistant Director's Report: Ms. Peirce reported that the February Vacation week programs were very successful serving 151 children. She and Ms. Carey continue to interview applicants for summer staff positions. Ms. Peirce met with Kristen Liteplo from the United States Tennis Association to see how USTA can help promote tennis in Needham. Currently Ms. Peirce is advertising for a summer youth tennis instructor to teach lessons and help with the Totally Tennis program. Tennis badges go on sale next week. The Ice Skating program begins February 16, 2008 with 125 children registered. She continues to work on details pertaining to the summer brochure.

5. Discussion Items:

A. Director's Report: The Commissioners discussed an email from Sam Bass Warner sent to his group, the Friends of Needham Woods and Water regarding the student project researching the Camp Property. Ms. Carey tried to meet with the Harvard Arboretum Advanced Design Class professor to discuss the project but the professor cancelled the meeting twice. The Commissioners expressed concern that members of the volunteer group may circulate the design plans to the public without any clarification from the Park and Recreation Commission that this was a student learning project, not a viable Town approved project. Mr. Dollase suggested a letter be sent to the Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen and Planning Board indicating this information is for informational purposes only and is not approved by the Park and Recreation Commission for implementation. The Community Preservation Committee will be presenting 5 projects at a public hearing on April 15, 2008. The projects include: \$1.5 million dollars for the Town Hall renovation design, \$25,000 from the Conservation Fund to be earmarked for open space, \$100,000 for the High Rock trail system to be created through the High Rock homes and connected to the Town Forest, \$5500 for unified kiosk signage and trail markers on all of the Town trails, and \$1 million dollars to purchase a parcel of the MacCracken property to provide access to the Camp Property. Mr. Dermody made a motion to endorse all of the 5 projects presented by the Community Preservation Committee. Mr. Robey seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

B. Budget Updates: Operating and Capital: Ms. Carey and Mr. Dermody attended the recent Finance Committee meeting to discuss operating and capital budgets. The Finance Committee asked questions regarding the Cricket building renovation. Ms. Carey indicated the renovation would include the creation of restrooms on the lower level so they can be accessed outside the building to be used by sports groups and families using the tot lot. Issues to be addressed are handicapped parking and handicapped access to the building, energy costs, and access to the parking area on Sunnyside Rd. during the bad weather. It is clear there would need to be significant site improvements to make the building more functional. The Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick recommended the project move forward with the support of the Board of Selectmen.

C. Field Study Update: Ms. Carey indicated 2 handouts will be sent to all Town Meeting members regarding the Memorial Park and DeFazio Park renovation and reconfiguration project. Mr. Dollase and Mr. Healy will present the information at the Special Town Meeting. Ms. Carey will attend the Board of Health meeting to answer questions regarding synthetic turf. Ms. Carey is waiting to hear from Northeastern University to see if the track will be available for the High School track team in the spring. Ms. Carey has not heard from the Athletic Director John Palmer to see if he has any other leads for a facility for the track team. Ms. Carey reported that the bid documents will be opened for the DeFazio Park track and grass field project on February 28, 2008.

D. Camp Property Update: Ms. Carey and Mrs. Chaston will walk the MacCracken property this week to identify an appropriate access point to the Camp Property.

E. Other Business: Mr. Dermody shared a letter from the High School baseball coach sent to local businesses asking for donations to defray the cost of using indoor batting cages for team practices. The fundraiser would allow businesses to purchase signs to be placed on the outfield fence at DeFazio Park. The Park and Recreation Commission has a policy prohibiting signs at fields and has communicated this to the baseball coach. Ms. Carey will follow up with the Athletic Director, High School Principal and School Superintendent. Ms. Carey shared a list of towns in Massachusetts that received the Urban Self Help grants.

6. Action Items:

A. Request: Needham Soccer Club Memorial Day Tournament: Ms. Carey reviewed the request from the Needham Soccer Club for the Memorial Day Soccer Tournament. Ms. Carey will ask the Soccer Club to remind the visiting teams that no dogs are allowed on the fields. Mr. Dollase indicated that the Soccer Club still owes \$600 for the past 3 Memorial Day tournaments. Ms. Carey will send them an invoice. Mr. Dollase suggested Needham Soccer Club Executive Director Mark Miskin be invited to a future meeting to discuss the tournament. After meeting with Mark Miskin the Commissioners will vote on approval of the tournament.

B. Field Scheduling Conflicts: Ms. Carey highlighted the difficulty scheduling the youth groups this spring due to the number of field hours requested by the High School Athletic Director. The Commissioners would like the Athletic Director to explain why more hours and fields are being requested on weekends this spring compared to the request for last spring. The Commissioners discussed the Park and Recreation field scheduling policy stating that Needham Public Schools receive the first priority and Needham youth organizations are second. Mr. Dermody suggested scheduling a review of the policy at the next meeting.

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Mr. Nadler made a motion to deny the high school permit request. Mr. Dermody seconded the motion. The Commissioners indicated by not approving the schedule they would be violating the field scheduling policy. They would prefer the request and the policy be studied further. Mr. Nadler stated the policy was intended to be fair and equitable to all user groups and it seems that the High School is taking advantage of the policy. There was one vote in favor of the motion and four votes opposed. The motion did not pass. Ms. Carey will contact the Athletic Director and she will work with the youth groups to clear up as many field request conflicts as possible.

7. **Adjournment:** Mr. Dermody made a motion to adjourn the meeting 9:05 PM. Mr. Nadler seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 9:05PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen A. Peirce, CPRP, CTRS
Assistant Director