

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

December 5, 2014

*Background notes for Monday, December 8th
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Robyn Fink will join the Park and Recreation team on January 5th as the Assistant Director. Robyn has a degree in Therapeutic Recreation from the University of Georgia. She is a certified Park and Recreation Professional, and is certified with the Red Cross as an instructor for Lifeguard Training and Water Safety Instructor Training. She is also a certified high and low ropes course facilitator. Prior to starting her professional career, she has been a lifeguard, canoe instructor at a camp with a lakefront and a pool, and was also the unit leader at the camp, taking high school students on two-week adventures. She has worked with Girl Scouts of Southwest Georgia, assisting scouts with award achievements and organizing activities. Robyn began her professional career at the Leadership School at Camp Kieve in Maine, living with and supervising middle school students; teaching team building, communication and decision making through a variety of experiential outdoor activities. After 4 years, she left to teach at Jobs for Maine's Graduates, assisting at-risk high school students, finding ways to help them stay in school and create skills for job readiness, including how to apply for positions. She created a boat building apprenticeship while there. After 4 years, she returned to her hometown of Albany, Georgia as the Pool Supervisor and Coordinator of Therapeutic Recreation programs. In addition to her aquatics work, she organized Adult Special Olympics and other programs for children with special needs, and helped coordinate the area's Arena Football Program. With a change in leadership in Albany, Robyn chose, after 3 years to go to Tallahassee, FL Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs Department as the Aquatics Director, overseeing everything related to their pools for the past year. She missed having the opportunity to work in other aspects of recreation, and also missed New England, so was excited for the opportunity to return, use her aquatics experience, but work on developing programs within her other interests and the needs of Needham – particularly teens and children with challenges. Recreation Supervisor Brendan Croak, Administrative Specialist Kristen Wright and I look forward to having Robyn join our team in January!

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PROPOSALS

The CPC will review 10 proposals for funding at their December 10th meeting. They will determine, at this meeting, which proposals are eligible to receive CPA funding, and if eligible will appoint a liaison from the committee to each eligible project. Copies of the projects can be found at <http://www.needhamma.gov/index.aspx?nid=450>

NEEDHAM HEIGHTS ASSOCIATION

Chairman Cindy Chaston met with members of the Needham Heights Association on December 1st, presenting updates on the Commission and department, and answering questions.

RECYCLING AND TRANSFER STATION

The new Superintendent of the RTS begins working the week of December 8th, coming from a similar position in Plymouth. The RTS also has a newly created position of Assistant Superintendent and he began this week. Both are eager to work on trash issues at public locations, once they are settled into their positions this winter. Park and Recreation and DPW will host a town-wide clean-up on Saturday, April 11, 2015, but are also encouraging groups to sign up for clean-up days throughout the year.

STATE HOUSE

Angela Snell, the Director of Shrewsbury Parks and Recreation, has invited me to attend a meeting with her current state representative on December 8th at the State House. Rep. Matthew Beaton has been appointed by Governor-Elect Charlie Baker to serve as the next Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs. He asked Angela to bring in a small group of colleagues to discuss issues of importance to our communities.

A SPECIAL WEEKEND OF EVENTS

This upcoming weekend – December 6 and 7 – will exemplify the spirit of the Needham community. The Needham Business Association, Needham Merchants Association, The Community Center of Needham are jointly sponsoring two days of activities, with assistance from Parent Talk, the YMCA, the DPW, the Fire and Police Departments, and a long list of financial sponsors from the community. On Saturday, December 6th, there will be music and magic in the afternoon, along with lantern making. The shops and restaurants will be open and will be offering specials. The Needham Fire Department will escort Santa Claus to the Town Common and then the Blue Tree will be lit. On Sunday, December 7th, at 5 PM, the luminaries will be lit at homes around town.

The Blue Tree Lighting will continue on for many years, but the current tree will be replaced on Arbor Day this spring. For many years, this tree, plus branches from neighboring trees, was strung with blue lights, making it appear to be one very large tree. In recent years, the branches of the neighboring trees were lost in storms, so that it appeared to be a smaller tree. The new tree will be large, but not initially as large as the current tree.

CONGRATULATIONS

To Needham High School Girls Cross Country for becoming state champions; to Needham High Boys Soccer for becoming state champions; and to Needham High Football and Needham High Girls' Powderpuff teams for their victories in the annual games with Wellesley.
