

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

February 6, 2009

*Background notes for Monday, February 9th
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

ELECTION

In staying with past practice, I will send full Commission meeting packets to the official candidates for the Park and Recreation Commission. At this time, there are two official candidates, in addition to the incumbent Brian Nadler, for the two seats. Both Sam Bass Warner and Tom Jacob have submitted their signed papers. There is a fourth potential candidate, but he has not returned his papers, as of today. If any of the candidates need additional material for the campaigns, just let me know.

CAMP PROPERTY

Girl Scout Gold Award candidate Adel Damon has submitted her project proposal to the Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts Council to work on trails at the Camp Property. She has met with Conservation Agent Kristen Phelps, Assistant Director Karen Peirce and me on the details of her project, and will take on some of the tasks identified in the Trails Master Plan, plus remove some invasive species from the meadow area. She hopes to do much of the work in late April and early May.

NEWMAN KINDERGARTEN PLAYGROUND UPDATE

The parent committee completed a survey with the staff members who oversee children in the Kindergarten playground at Newman, including the Kindergarten teachers and aides, KASE teachers, NEDP staff, physical education staff, and school nurse. The PTC will provide some funds to add some components that work on developing social skills (sharing, taking turns, cooperative play). I am in the process of getting some concepts and prices for the new equipment. The work to study the playground equipment for the Grades 1-5 unit will be a more substantial process and has extra layers of complexity due to the impending work that is needed at the school.

CPC AWARD NOMINATION

The CPC has submitted a nomination for the Robert Kuehn Community Preservation Award. The High Rock Homes project was submitted for the contribution it has made to the community, and the long-term goals that it met. Award winners will be notified in late March, and \$3,500 will be provided to two projects to be deposited into their CPA funds.

CPA LEGISLATION

Senator Creem has re-filed legislation that seeks to make revisions to the current language of the Community Preservation Act. Most importantly to Needham, it seeks a

change in the wording related to recreation uses. Under the current wording, communities are encouraged to purchase new land and create new recreation facilities. In more established towns like Needham, there is not a substantial amount of new space to purchase, and the goals of sustainability are not met if existing facilities are ignored. The Town Manager is reviewing the legislation and will work with Town boards to determine the next appropriate steps for Needham in relation to the legislation. As of today, Senator Brown has signed on as a co-sponsor of the legislation.

DOWNTOWN STUDY

The Planning Board is preparing eight zoning articles for the May Town Meeting, most of which will pertain to recommendations from the Downtown study. Three new districts will be recommended that will provide economic development opportunities, including the possibility of housing.

COMMONWEALTH CAPITAL SCORE

The Town of Needham is one a handful of communities to apply every available year for a Commonwealth Capital Score since the program's inception in FY 06. The purpose of the program is to encourage communities to make better land use choices and to work towards being consistent with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles. In addition, the score is part of the judging criteria for many state grants. I coordinated the last application, and will be working with Economic Development Coordinator Joyce Moss on the Town's fourth application.

OUR NEW OFFICE

The awarding bid came in lower than the estimated bid. Contracts are being signed this week for the construction of the new Public Services Administration Building (PSAB) at 500 Dedham Avenue. The heating system at PSAB will be a geothermal model which adheres to the Town Manager's goals for sustainability. The DPW did preliminary site work in the past two months, and it is expected the contractor will start immobilizing next week, with the majority of the work completed by late November. If the Town Hall renovation project is approved, then all Town Hall offices will move to PSAB most likely in late December 2009, and Park and Recreation and Planning will remain in the new building as our permanent offices. The Park and Recreation staff has begun the clean-up of our office materials, and is putting in place the plan for the end of the summer. We'll need to utilize space at the Cricket Building and Rosemary Pool during the temporary Town Hall staging, and will then gain permanent long-term storage on the 2nd floor of the DPW building. We are starting the process now, as we won't have time to spend on it over the summer when most other offices will start their work.

The construction will obviously interfere with some personal recreation activities for residents, as the fencing will extend towards the Reservoir. It will be difficult to walk the perimeter of the Reservoir, and some of the preferred areas for fishing will be marked off. I'll work with Public Facilities-Construction on educational material that would also be likely shared with the Town Clerk's Office for when they sell fishing licenses. For our department, we are hopeful that the Fishing Derby and one-day Geocaching workshop

will still work out. There are also plans for repeating last May's nature scavenger hunt, but that may need to move to a new location. The Model Yachting Club uses the Reservoir in the spring, moving to Rosemary Lake after it refills. They will likely need to find a new location this spring.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS

The Town Manager has been providing training support to all department managers on the concept of performance measurements for several years, and requires that they be included in the annual budget requests. The training will continue over the next few months, helping each department come up with measureable goals and objectives. "The goal is where we want to be. The objectives are the steps needed to get there." In combination with this, she will be asking the various boards who set their own goals and objectives to work on a set timeline, so that she can incorporate those goals into ones that she sets for department managers, and also make sure those priorities are reflected in the Board of Selectmen's goal setting plans created at the beginning of each fiscal year.

SCHOOL VACATION PROGRAMS

Assistant Director Karen Peirce was able to add some new program options for the February School vacation week and continue previous favorites. Registration for all seven of the programs is very strong. The department is offering a nature based *Wings and Things*, beach crafts and games at *Indoor Tropical Getaway*, fitness activities at *Ahead of the Game All Stars*, a *Lego* workshop, *youth cross country ski lessons*, a *basketball clinic* and non-competitive sports games at *Thundercat Sports Jam*. As of today, more than a week away from vacation week, three of those programs have reached their maximum enrollment numbers and will have wait lists. The other four programs are very close to being full, and will likely have their final spots taken during the next week. Karen, herself, is helping to staff some of these programs. The programs aren't held during college breaks, and many of our high school staff members from the summer are busy with sports or special trips.

NEEDHAM SPORTS COUNCIL

Chairman Cindy Chaston, Vice Chairman Brian Nadler and I met with representatives of the Needham Sports Council and Memorial Park Trustee Dave DiCicco to discuss the future of the Council, as the end of the construction phase will come to a close by summer. The non-profit will stay in existence, and will try to support some fundraising for future projects, but will spend more time working with all youth sports organizations on issues important to youth, and to advocacy projects. It will be exciting to continue this successful private-public partnership!

MEMORIAL PARK TRUSTEES PUBLIC MEETING ON ATHLETIC FIELD LIGHTS

As indicated in the Joint Policy for Use of Athletic Field Lights, the Memorial Park Trustees will hold a public meeting on the use of athletic field lights in Fall 2008. This meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 25 at 6:30 PM. The location has not been determined, yet.