

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

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**March 6, 2009**

*Background notes for Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup>  
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

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**JOINT MEETING**

The members of the Board of Selectmen and School Committee have been invited to join the Commission at the March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting to hear the presentations from the Needham Sports Council as they request names for some of the new fields at DeFazio. At the conclusion of that session, the Town Manager will remain for her annual discussion with the Commission. This is an opportunity for the Commission and Town Manager to share new ideas, concepts, and questions with each other.

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**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Commission will be asked to go into Executive Session under Exception Six of the Open Meeting Law, "to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property, if such discussions may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the governmental body and a person, firm or corporation." In order to go into Executive Session, a motion must be made and seconded to move into Executive Session with the above wording. A roll call vote is then taken and recorded. The Chairman must then state whether the meeting will reconvene in open meeting after the executive session is completed.

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**TRUST FUNDS**

The Park and Recreation Commission has access to five different trust funds. Listed below are the balances as of June 30, 2008. They do not reflect interest, nor do they show capital gains or losses on the invested funds since 6/30/08.

Park and Recreation Trust Fund	\$14,754
Greene's Field Trust Fund	\$ 5,242
Carleton Pavilion Trust Fund	\$27,529
Skate Park Trust Fund	\$ 2,240
Rebecca H. Perry Trust Fund	\$27,952

Each of these have different criteria for spending. As an example, the Rebecca H. Perry Trust Fund has \$15,000 that is non-expendable, and the criteria for spending it is not clearly defined. The Park and Recreation Trust Fund paid for the replacement park signs, but is also the recipient of the most frequent donations, as it is noted as an option on the program registration form.

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## **ENERGY**

The Public Facilities – Operations Department is working with the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) to perform energy audits of all Town buildings, including Park and Recreation's park buildings. The hope is that the Town might be eligible for some grants to replace outdated lighting and equipment and reduce our energy costs. We've submitted our information to the department, and I also recommended that Rosemary Pool might be a good location for sampling some new products or ideas. One example might be the possibility of utilizing the wind in that area to generate electricity for the building. Public Facilities is also working on a plan to reduce costs over the summer related to air conditioning, by only scheduling use of specific areas of the relevant buildings.

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## **NEWMAN KINDERGARTEN PLAYGROUND UPDATE**

The parent committee has put together a master plan for the Kindergarten playground at Newman. This spring, they will order a new sandbox and some other small pieces of play equipment, plus add some storage for toys. In a future year, they hope to add a little play house. On Wednesday morning, the playground committee co-chairs presented their plan to the PTC board and were awarded \$8,500 for the first year of the plan.

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## **VIRGINIA GRAEME BAKER ACT**

I've received an official estimate for replacing the drain cover at Rosemary Pool. The cost will be about \$2,500 and the work would be done while the pool is drained in April. I've put some additional articles about this federal ruling in the meeting packet. As noted, the implementation has been difficult for many though the intent is honorable.

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## **DOGS AT PARKS**

Selectmen John Bulian and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick met with Chairman Cindy Chaston, Vice Chairman Brian Nadler and me earlier this week regarding dogs in parks. As can be seen in Wellesley, the issues between dog owners and non-dog owners can create quite a divide in a community. Our discussions centered around how to work within the Town's current by-law regarding dogs, protect all those who use parks, and provide opportunities for dog owners. There are health and safety concerns related to dogs in playground areas and on athletic fields. The urine is highly acidic and destroys the root system in the natural turf, especially when the same area is utilized over and over. The feces can transfer types of bacteria that are harmful to humans, and can remain on the grass surface even when dog owners pick up after their dogs. The Town Manager and I will put some ideas into writing for the Commission and the Trustees of Memorial Park to review.

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## **CANADA GEESE**

Questions about Canada Geese have been coming up, again. There are some who are concerned that the geese will eat the sod that is on the new natural turf fields at Memorial Park and DeFazio Park, plus some fear that it is a health hazard. Updated information is

available on the Park and Recreation website and has been included in the meeting packet. All current information states that no link has been shown that Canada Geese transfer bacteria or disease to humans. They also do not eat down to the roots of grass fields, but nibble on the top. They are an extreme nuisance! Canada Geese are protected wildlife under federal guidelines. There is not one single cure to rid an area of geese, but a comprehensive strategy must be in place which is difficult. Some will claim that all the Town needs to do is spray something down on the field, but that is just one option to be put into the strategy. On its own, it is expensive, and requires the field and surrounding area to be sprayed after every rain and every mowing.

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### **NRPA BENCHMARKING SURVEY**

The National Recreation and Park Association is conducting its first-ever benchmarking survey, and Needham Park and Recreation has been asked to submit information. We'll receive the aggregate report, and may opt to pay for an individualized report. I won't have the opportunity in the next week to work on the survey but will have it done by the end of March. It will be interesting to compare some of the information with the benchmarking survey that was completed by Needham residents last year for all Town services.

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### **ORGANIC FIELD MAINTENANCE PLAN**

At the last Commission meeting, a discussion was held on the request of the DPW Parks and Forestry Superintendent for additional funds for an organic maintenance plan for the new natural turf fields. Under the currently known available budget funds, the Finance Committee has not recommended this additional funding, but if more money is available for appropriation, they would reconsider their vote.

In order to do an appropriate plan for maintaining an athletic field, the Parks and Forestry Superintendent Lance Remsen has to have more information than is currently available to him. One example – he needs to have a soil sample tested, to prescribe what needs to be done. The contractor RAD will provide soil test information on the sodded fields, but the seeded fields haven't been finalized yet so he doesn't have anything definite to work from, yet. Mr. Remsen also doesn't have direct experience with RAD's fields and may find them easier to maintain than fields built by other companies.

If money was no object, Mr. Remsen would move all natural turf fields to an organic program. This program takes 3-5 years to establish itself, but in essence, it allows his staff to control the creation of the root system, and eventually be able to decrease any product additives. He's in his third year at Cricket with this type of program, and is pleased with the results he has been getting. With the synthetic program, he is not able to control the growth of the root system – he can only fertilize to help it grow.

The cost in the short term is higher for organic than synthetic, but in the long term the costs are similar. With synthetic, the tendency is to use about the same amount of product each year, but with organic, you alter it more often to work with the conditions and decrease it over time. Organic is also the way the industry is moving. Hopefully, as

more maintenance managers move to this style of maintenance, some of the costs will come down with the increased demand.

It won't hurt to start of the first year with synthetic fertilizer and give Mr. Remsen time to learn more about the fields. He would have a much better plan after this year to argue for organic using actual statistical information rather than guesstimates.

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#### **MILLS FIELD TENNIS COURTS**

The DPW Engineering Division has started compiling the specifications and bid information for rebuilding the Mills Field tennis courts. With the High School courts back on line, we won't have such a problem with timing for this project and can just move ahead as soon as everything is ready.