



NEEDHAM PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

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Guest Editorial – April 4, 2016

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After swimming in Rosemary Lake since the 1930's, it closed in 1969 due to issues with visibility and water quality. The Park and Recreation Commission and the Rosemary Reclamation Committee, including Charles "Red" Rizzo and Gary Petrini, deliberated on the healthiest and most cost effective solutions to return public swimming to Rosemary Lake. With partial federal funding, a "temporary" pool structure was built within the lake and Rosemary Pool opened in July of 1972. As solutions for the lake remained challenging, the decision was made to continue to use Rosemary Pool for longer than anticipated, and here we are preparing for the 45th season at Rosemary Pool, and the final spring drawdown of the lake and pool for pre-season maintenance, with the permit to drain expiring in September.

The topic of "what's next" has rarely left the Park and Recreation Commission agenda over the decades, and with Town Meeting support, improvements and maintenance have been on-going, but it is a tired facility and it is time for its new life. In the 2012 National Citizen Survey conducted in Needham, 66% of respondents were supportive of a substantial investment in re-constructing the pool. In 2013, the Park and Recreation Commission with the PPBC began work on a feasibility study to determine options for the future that included twelve month use. With a tremendous amount of public input, ideas studied ranged from returning to lake swimming, doing minimal repairs, rebuilding an outdoor pool, adding a cover to convert to an indoor pool, and adding a separate indoor pool. The Park and Recreation Commission studied all the options, and chose to rebuild the outdoor pool, improve and expand the parking area, improve access to the pool, add outdoor recreation opportunities to the lake and surrounding property, and renovate the building to include year-round recreation programming space.

In August 2015, BH+A was hired to help review concepts and design the new recreation complex. The Park and Recreation Commission, with guidance from PPBC as well as from the Rosemary Pool Design Advisory Committee and public input, has reviewed numerous options to maintain favorite features and add new. The design has two pools – a recreation pool, with zero depth entrance, play features, slides, and long lanes for water walking and fitness laps; and a fitness/competitive pool with 8 regulation lanes, a diving board and increased deck seating. A splash pad/spray park with availability before and after the pool season would be added next to the pool. The lower level of the new building would be pool related functions with a bathhouse, access to pool, meeting ADA and plumbing codes. The second floor features a 2,200 square foot year-round programming space and department offices for both Park and Recreation and Health. The parking lots would be rebuilt to provide more than 100 parking spaces, and the entrance road will be rebuilt to decrease the slope. Easier access to the lake will be provided.

So, what's next? The Community Preservation Committee is recommending the funding of the second phase of design funds to Town Meeting in May, for \$550,000. The project would then move into the permitting stage, with a variety of permits required from state and local authorities. Construction funds would be requested at the May 2017 Town Meeting. Rosemary Pool will be open in Summer 2016 and most of Summer 2017. Construction would begin in late Summer 2017 for the Rosemary Recreation Complex and the removal of sediment in the lake. The Park and Recreation Commission is proud of the plans to re-create the Rosemary Recreation Complex, within the center of Town, and as part of a "community center campus" with Center at the Heights, Library, High School and Memorial Park. A new generation of Needham residents, from the very young to our valued senior residents, will learn to swim, recreate, participate in fitness activities, and come together as a community. The Needham Park and Recreation Commission is proud to continue the more than 80 year tradition of public swimming at Rosemary Lake, and to create many new opportunities for year-round recreation at this beautiful site for the next 50 years.