

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

April 8, 2011

*Background notes for Monday, April 11th
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

COMMISSIONER ROBEY

It seems that I am writing this note each April now, as I express my thanks to a retiring member of the Park and Recreation Commission, and this is an emotional one for me to write! Phil Robey was appointed as a member of the Park and Recreation Commission in October 1992, to complete the term of Eric Fleming who had resigned due to his work schedule. Phil ran for election in April 1993 and easily won each subsequent election for 3 year terms! As Phil retires at the end of the meeting on April 11th, he will officially become the longest serving member of the Park and Recreation Commission since its original inception in the 1930's.

How do I condense 18 ½ years of service into a few sentences? If Phil was writing this, he would give credit to others, but his leadership encouraged others to stand up and make changes! Phil doesn't take on a task without making a commitment to follow-through with it, and he gives full effort to the task. No matter how busy Phil has been with his family, work or other volunteer projects, he has always had time for Park and Recreation and for me! I was always given full permission to express my opinions and feelings with him, and always knew that he "had my back!" If we didn't agree, we found a way to make it work. Phil would rarely be described as a "politician," but he actually is a very successful politician who has learned to listen to concerns and work on finding win-win solutions, or make the difficult decisions that are best for Needham. When Phil started on the Commission, Park and Recreation was frequently called "non-essential" in financial terms, but as Phil leaves, there is a much greater understanding of the importance of recreation and parks to the Needham community. Phil should be proud of very visible projects – the Carleton Pavilion, Fields of Dreams, new playgrounds, Community Preservation – but also the invisible accomplishments – educating people on the values of recreation and parks, including economic, personal, environmental, and community values, and making sure that Park and Recreation has a "seat at the table" for important Town-wide decisions. His colleagues on the Commission recognized his abilities, voting him to Chair the Commission 12 times! Phil is a Needham historian, with a story about any location in Town you can name. He has also been the Commission's historian, and I am sure he will receive many calls from future Commissions looking for his input. The answers will be in one of his many 3-ring binders!!

I thank Phil for challenging me to be a better professional each day, but I also thank him for his friendship, and challenging me to be a better person each day!

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION LEGISLATION

Senate Bill 1841/House Bill 765 – *An Act to Sustain Community Preservation* – will be discussed at a public hearing held by the Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Business on Wednesday, April 13th. The major piece of the legislation of importance to Needham, and the correction of wording related to the use of CPA funds for recreation and park projects. Currently, a parcel of land has to be purchased with CPA funds in order to have use of the funds for recreation purposes. The Commission will discuss signing a letter to be submitted as testimony at the hearing. Special thanks are extended to Memorial Park Trustee Dave DiCicco who is contacting legislators to get their support, and Dave is hoping to speak at the upcoming hearing.

SPRING FIELD UPDATE

The April 1st date for possible opening of the fields wasn't able to happen, as the fields were under a covering of snow on that day! The synthetic turf fields were useable during the afternoon of April 2nd and the natural grass fields started to open on April 5th. The DPW is working around the wet areas to handle maintenance tasks.

DPW Parks and Forestry is working on some revisions to the maintenance plans, building on some of the advancements made in recent years. The Superintendent Edward Olsen has been able to find a resource for organic fertilizer that will now be used on 75% of the parks, including all the school sites. He is also purchasing a used piece of equipment that will enable his staff to get more diamond infield work done each week, reducing the amount of weeds through this manual method. More fields will be aerated, breaking up the compaction that brings more oxygen into the soil and allows for a better growth of natural grass.

NEEDHAM GOLF CLUB

The creation of the new club house has progressed far enough that it will not delay the opening of the season at the Needham Golf Club. Resident use will begin on Sunday, April 24th and our Senior Golf League and Adult Golf Lesson programs will begin the first week in May. The starting point for the course will be the 4th tee, and there will be a temporary pro shop located at that tee. There will be a small quantity of golf carts available until the new pro shop opens.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

Tuesday, April 12	Election Day
Saturday, April 23	Needham 300 Town-wide Clean-up Day
Monday, April 25	League of Women Voters Warrant Meeting
Saturday, April 30	Spring Trail Day at Ridge Hill (co-sponsor Park & Recreation)
Monday, May 2	First Day of Town Meeting

DOGS IN PARKS

DeFazio Park will have new Welcome signs to replace the ones on the fence. It reflects the updated General By-Law. There will also be new signs made to signify that dogs are not permitted at DeFazio (or Memorial Park), whether leashed or unleashed. Both sets of signs are being ordered by the DPW and will be put up as soon as they are delivered. I am working on a press release with the Animal Control Officer regarding the Town's updated General By-Law. Currently, the most complaints made to our office are about dogs off leash at Perry Park.

VISITORS FROM PAKISTAN

There are two government officials from Pakistan who will be visiting Needham for 2 weeks and then Wellesley for 2 weeks. The two women are part of a program funded by the State Department to create collaborations between government officials in our two countries. The Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) is sponsoring this part of the program, and there is a separate program happening at the same time is for reporters from Pakistan. The women are in Amherst right now with the other program attendees. They are going through a training program and then will come to Boston for a weekend of "tourism" and on April 11th will have a visit at the State House and receptions with the City of Boston and the MMA. I am organizing Friday, April 15th, collaborating on a tour with DPW and Conservation. Our office will also be one of their visits on Tuesday, April 12th, as they get a chance to see how different departments interact with residents. The host communities are Needham/Wellesley, Amesbury/Newburyport, Boston/the Commonwealth, Dedham/Westwood, New Bedford/Somerville, Natick/Westborough, Pittsfield/Lenox, and Springfield/Hadley.

APRIL 25th AND MAY 9th MEETINGS

The Commission's next scheduled meeting in Monday, April 25th, which is the same night as the League of Women Voters' Warrant Meeting. The first meeting in May is scheduled to be Monday, May 9th, which conflicts with Town Meeting. I've placed the discussion on the agenda, so that an alternate times and/or dates can be chosen.

WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

Best wishes to the residents willing to step forward and campaign as write-in candidates for the open seat on the Park and Recreation Commission. I will be in contact with the person elected to serve once the results are confirmed by the Town Clerk's Office.