

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

February 24, 2012

*Background notes for Monday, February 27th
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

SAD NEWS

The Town of Needham and Park and Recreation lost a special friend a few weeks ago, with the sudden death of Jane Howard. She has been a long time supporter of the department and Commission, from the 1970's until her death. She worked with then-Director Dick Foot on the "Needham Naturally" bumper sticker campaign, initiated projects with the Women's Club including our former Delightful Doorways holiday decoration contest, assisted with teaching leadership to our summer staff, supported the budget as a member of the Finance Committee, and coordinated projects with the Exchange Club. Jane's support was never automatic. She asked lots of questions to understand our goals, and in most cases, she understood and provided her support. As a member of the Community Preservation Committee, she worked with our staff and members of the Commission. This is only a small sampling of what Jane did for Needham. As her son said at her funeral "My guess is that the first time you met Mom, you were both working on a project to benefit others." So true! Thank you, Jane!

FEBRUARY VACATION PROGRAMS

We had a successful week of programs during the school vacation week. From basketball, to crafts, to cross country skiing, and to be-bop dancing, lots of children had fun this week – except for a few who ended up being sick this week! It's usually a fun vacation week when the ponds have ice, but the warm temperatures melted the ice at Farley Pond, the only one to reach 6 inches this winter. We did have people playing tennis, though – unusual for this time of year. We leave two nets up at Mills for the occasional warm day, and the other nets will go back up in a few weeks. Below freezing temperatures, which we still have at night, are damaging to the nets, so we won't put the others up right away.

BUILDING INSPECTOR

Needham's Building Inspector Dan Walsh has accepted a position in the Town of Lincoln and will be leaving next week. His state association recently named him Building Official of the Year.

RAIL TRAIL

Tad Staley, from Needham's rail trail group, and I will meet with the Board of Selectmen on Tuesday night to give them a presentation on the possible trail from Needham Junction on Chestnut Street to the Dover line, and our work with Dover and Medfield on possible sections in their communities.

CHARLES RIVER TRAIL

The MA Division of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is working on a trail improvement project. They have a natural path that extends along the Charles River between Highland Avenue and Kendrick Street. There is also a paved path that starts from 4th Avenue at Charles River Landing to Highland Avenue that would be improved and would meet ADA requirements. The DCR has funds from the Charles River Landing project in escrow with the Town for this project. The Town Manager, Town Counsel and I met on site with them last week to review the possible plan.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

The annual public hearing for this year's CPA project proposals will be on Wednesday, March 14th at 7:30 PM at Town Hall in the Highland Room. There are three historic preservation projects and one affordable housing project. The proposed changes to the legislation have not come out of House Ways and Means, yet. On February 29th, I will join some others from the region in Wellesley to discuss how CPA works in Needham.

CAMP PROPERTY

A few weeks ago, the Police arrested a Needham resident who had spray painted the building at the camp property. The Police are working on restitution with the District Attorney's Office. The estimate for me to hire a company to do the work, under procurement rules, is \$1,500.

GREENE'S FIELD PLAYGROUND

The committee has seen three presentations from vendors for possible layouts and will meet in early March to try and choose one vendor to continue to work with and refine the design. John Bulian and I hope to present to the Selectmen on March 12th. I will share the concepts with the Commission at the meeting.

NEWMAN SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

I've been working with the Assistant Principal and the building architects on the site requirements for a new Grade 1-5 playground at Newman, as well as space to relocate the Kindergarten playground adjacent to the larger structure. The building contractor will remove the current structure in June. The parent committee has started working without meeting with me, but one member has stayed in touch with me and will set up a meeting.

ELECTION

It appears that there will be three official candidates for the Park and Recreation Commission this spring. Tom Jacob is running for re-election and Dave DiCicco and Matt Toolan have returned their papers. A fourth possible candidate did not return his papers by the deadline. I'll send full meeting packets to the new candidates for the March meetings and will provide any other needed information as requested.
