

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

June 20, 2014

*Background notes for Monday, June 23rd
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

NEWMAN/EASTMAN CONSERVATION PROJECT

Weston & Sampson will attend the Commission's meeting to get input from organizations with interest in improvements to the athletic fields at Newman and the trails and educational sites in the adjacent Eastman Conservation area. This part of the meeting will start at 7:30 PM, which will be held in the Charles River Room. Information has gone to the contacts for the sports groups, school staff, and other Town departments. Once more information is drafted for the designs, a larger public meeting can be held.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Assistant Director Karen Peirce will be leaving the department on July 11th. This short set of paragraphs can only begin to touch the surface of Karen's accomplishments with Needham Park and Recreation. The position was created in 1986, and Karen is just the 4th person to serve in that role. Karen started in September 2001 and has put her "stamp" on the department. For most of those years, Karen was the primary programmer for the department, enhancing the traditional programs and offering new programs. Under Karen's supervision, the Nashoba Ski and Snowboard program has prospered, and new offerings in recent years for Skateboard enthusiasts have been welcomed. In the past decade, there has been a national effort to bring children and families back outdoors to participate in activities that involve nature. The Fishing Derby is an annual successful program that includes an educational component with students at Pollard. Karen recently became the supervisor to Needham High's Fishing Club. During her tenure, the Needham Community Farm was created, and Karen has developed several programs run through the department to encourage children and families to garden. I believe if you go by the class garden in our community gardens on Tillotson, you'll see the products from this spring tot class!

In 2010, we were able to re-organize the department to create the Recreation Supervisor position, with Nicole DiCicco taking on supervision of youth programs. Karen continued with the programs at the pool, the successful tennis programs, older youth/adult and senior citizen programs – but possibly most important to the Town, took on the role of Trails Coordinator for Park and Recreation, the Conservation Commission and other Town departments with trails. Karen represented the Town on the Rail Trail volunteer group. She created the trails steward program, utilizing information and advice from other communities to create the format, the training manual and process. All trails have now been marked under Karen's supervision, and she has a list of places that need additional markers to make it easier to follow. She has coordinated the volunteer projects on trails and at parks, including Eagle Scout, Girl Scout Gold and Silver awards, scout projects, religious organization and civic group projects, and community service projects.

She has begun annual park and trail clean-ups in the spring and fall. The efforts put forward by all the volunteers, including the trail stewards, has made our trail system – and our parks – cleaner and easier to use. During the FST study for the rail trail, the consultants commented on the quality of the trail system in the Town Forest, which is high praise coming from people who visit trail systems on a regular basis.

In 2001, the Town Manager appointed Karen to be her representative on the Needham Commission on Disabilities. She has been an active participant on the board, but also handled the tasks related to budgeting, with assistance from our office on procurement. Karen spent the early years helping to guide the Commission to become more interactive with other Town boards and departments, helping to insure that the NCOD was brought into projects early to help avoid issues, rather than at the end when there might be multiple issues. Karen also worked with NCOD to create a pamphlet, and helped to oversee the parking violation program.

As a Needham resident, Karen has been involved with Needham organizations with her family. The Needham 300 chairs invited her to be on the committee to represent wellness related programs during the celebration of Needham's 300th birthday. The work of the committee will be remembered by many for years to come – a true success thanks to efforts put in by Karen and other committee members.

As Karen moves onto the next adventures in her life, she can be proud of her accomplishments – and maybe now find some time for recreation herself! Working for our department takes a lot of personal recreation time away from all of us – so we are excited that Karen can now do many of the things that she encouraged others to do all these years. Many, many thanks Karen!

POOL PRESEASON

The long cold winter put us behind with the start of the pre-season, but thanks to yeoman work by the DPW and then the Rosemary Pool staff – with lots of help from the office staff – we received our permit on June 19th and will open on schedule on Friday, June 20th. Pool Supervisor Jacob Cotton and Assistant Pool Supervisor Eric Buckley have done a great job with training, with assistance from Assistant Pool Supervisor Julia Chisholm as she finishes up her school-year position. Karen has met with them every day, and guided the training process, participating in the many sessions we hold to prepare everyone for day one.

PROGRAM PRE-SEASON

With weeks of preparation behind them, including multiple training sessions, Recreation Supervisor Nicole DiCicco and Summer Recreation Supervisor Joe Vespa are ready for the Friday, June 20th Open House at Cricket Field for families to come and sample typical summer activities from each program – and then the staff is ready for day one on Monday, June 23rd. Each program has met at the table outside my office to plan their calendars, and it is fun to listen to the enthusiasm for what is to come – including many new ideas and new twists on old favorites.

OFFICE PRE-SEASON

Administrative Specialist Kristen Wright joined our staff in February, so she's experiencing her first summer pre-season with the department...and has survived! It is a massive task to handle the collection of \$200,000+ of revenue, all connected to registrations of individuals that often have follow-up work related to the registrations, and handling all the paperwork related to hiring more than 50 seasonal employees. Add in the phone calls and regular visits to the window, and it is an amazing amount of work done in a short period of time. Kristen was able to keep up with it thanks in part to daily assistance from Mini-Evergreen Director Eddie Pantridge.
