

Park and Recreation Commission Meeting

August 11, 2025, at 7:00pm

Present: Christopher Gerstel (Chair) via Zoom, Michelle Geddes (Vice-Chair), Cynthia Chaston (Member), Dina Hannigan (Member), James Rosenbaum (Member), Stacey Mulroy (Director), Hannah Corrigan (Assistant Director), Grace Steeves (Administrative Assistant) via Zoom

Guests: Hank Haff, Meryl Nistler, Katie King, Tina Stanislaski, Matt LaRue, Alisa Skatrud, Tim Puopolo, Dave Herer, Kyle McGee, Bob Baker, Michael O'Brien

Call to Order

Mr. Gerstel called the meeting to order at 7:02pm, August 11, 2025

Open Forum Public Comment

Kyle McGee, a Needham resident, brought forward questions regarding Needham disc golf. Mr. McGee, a disc golf advocate, inquired about next steps in the process of creating a town disc golf course, and what needs to be done to get it to the next stage. Mr. Gerstel thanked Mr. McGee for his questions and expressed the commission's shared support for a disc golf course in Needham. Ms. Mulroy was able to provide an insight into the capital process of this project, explaining how the commission has a five-year plan that they bring forward to the town each year. Last year the commission submitted a future form for disc golf that announced to town meeting, as well as the Finance Committee (FinCom), that the commission is interested in pursuing this project in the next few years. Ms. Mulroy explained that the next steps would include a discussion by the commission on which year out of the next five the disc golf course takes priority under, and submitting that in October to then be presented to FinCom, town management, the Select Board, etc. Depending on which project takes priority, it goes to town meeting to be voted on by the Town Manager. Mr. McGee thanked Ms. Mulroy for her explanation and offered support in the process. Bob Baker, a Needham resident, also expressed his desire to see the disc golf course come to fruition, and provided support to ensure it is moving forward. Mr. Gerstel again thanked Mr. McGee and Mr. Baker for their attendance and comments regarding disc golf and encouraged both to attend the next meeting so that they could have a larger and more in-depth conversation on the project.

Meeting Guests

Representatives from the Needham Building Design and Construction Department, as well as HMFH Architects presented information discussed in the Pollard Middle School Permanent Public Building Committee (PPBC) meeting that took place on August 4th, 2025, and some updates that have been made since then. Through this presentation, representatives of the project aimed to provide an overview of the plans and progress of the project thus far, as well as answer any questions the commission had. Director of the Building Design and Construction Department, Hank Haff, began the presentation explaining the need to refurbish Pollard Middle

School, and how the town of Needham began a School Master Plan to do so in 2019. Mr. Haff explained that at this point in the project, studies are being completed as required by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) process, for a new building at an alternative site. At this moment, the only alternate site that the town has offered is DeFazio Park. Meryl Nistler of the Building Design and Construction Department also shared that through these studies, using land at DeFazio has become much more of a possibility as discussions with the design teams looked at moving out of the jurisdictional boundaries of Pollard school, and into jurisdictional boundaries of the Park and Recreation Commission. Throughout this presentation, representatives discussed the goals of the Pollard School project, timelines, study sites, and costs. The Park and Recreation Commission inquired about several possible concerns that may arise with using DeFazio Park as the site for a new school, including the overlap of study sites with fields and sports schedules, the influx of parking both on site and in residential neighborhoods, disruptions to the community, potential impacts on abutters, and the effect on emergency access procedures.

Concluding the end of the Pollard School Project presentation, Tim Puopolo, the Conservation Specialist with the Town of Needham Conservation Department, spoke to the Commission regarding Needham trails. Since starting his position with the town in July, Mr. Puopolo has committed to building out a Trails Master Plan, including timelines and recommendations. One of the projects that is a part of the master plan is reestablishing the Trails Advisory Committee with stakeholders of the land on which the town trails are located, Park and Recreation being one of them. The goals of this committee are to increase visibility, accessibility, overall visitor use, and public access throughout the town trails. Dave Herer, the chair of the Needham Conservation Commission, was able to help secure Community Preservation Committee (CPC) funds to help set phase one of this project into motion. Phase one will include installing trail signage, trail map modifications, signposts and sign installation, kiosk refurbishment, interpretive signs, and trail improvements. Also, they hope to have a member of the Park and Recreation Commission join the trail committee. Ms. Geddes expressed the Commission's shared support for this project and informed the committee that they would get back to them by the end of the week with a key point person from Park and Recreation.

Director's Report

Ms. Mulroy provided updates to the commission on numbers from July, as well as the summer thus far. In terms of passes, Ms. Mulroy shared that for the month of July, there were fourteen court badges purchased for an additional \$671.00 in revenue. There were also twenty-two family passes, one individual pass, and four senior passes purchased for the pool, resulting in a total July pass revenue of \$10,068.75. Pool programming saw fifty registrants for session one of swim lessons, forty-two registrants for session two, and fifty-seven registrants for session three. The Needham Sharks Swim Team had a total of 124 participants.

Ms. Mulroy shared that the best numbers will be seen after the pool closes. Ms. Chasten asked what date the pool will be closing. Ms. Mulroy explained that the earliest the pool will close is Sunday, August 24th. She is looking to see if they could keep the pool open for a couple of nights during the first week of school, however, they must first see how many pool staff are able to work during that week. Ms. Hannigan inquired whether the department throws an end of season party for the staff to celebrate the hard work that they put into making sure the summer season ran smoothly. Ms. Mulroy confirmed that the department does throw an end of season party for the pool staff and that it will be held on August 12, 2025, from 6:00pm – 8:00pm.

Discussion Items

- A) Commission Policies and Goals – The Commission will review at a future meeting.

Action Items

A) Special Event Approvals -

1. Broadmeadow Outdoor Family Movie Night – This event is put on by the Broadmeadow Parent Teacher Council (PTC). The Commission gave the Park and Recreation department permission to approve PTC events, but the department includes the events in the meeting packets to make the Commission aware they are occurring.
2. Back to School Picnic – Temple Beth Shalom withdrew their request.
3. NYFH Preseason Coaches Meeting – Ms. Chaston made the motion to approve the NYFH Preseason Coaches Meeting to be held by Needham Youth Field Hockey on Sunday, August 24, 2025, from 1:30pm – 4:15pm in the Rosemary Recreation Complex Multipurpose Room. Ms. Geddes seconded the motion, and it passed as follows: Chris Gerstel – yes, Cindy Chaston – yes, James Rosenbaum – yes, Michelle Geddes – yes, Dina Hannigan – abstain.
4. Popsicle Party - This event is put on by the Broadmeadow PTC. The Commission gave the Park and Recreation department permission to approve PTC events, but the department includes the events in the meeting packets to make the Commission aware they are occurring.

B) Policy Approvals – None

C) Fee Approvals – None

D) Meeting Minute Approvals – None

Chairs Update and Issues Not Reasonably Anticipated by Chair within 48 Hours

Ms. Hannigan inquired what the next steps in the Pollard Middle School project will be. Ms. Mulroy was able to provide an answer to this question stating that there will be two public meetings on the topic in the near future. One meeting will be on August 21st, 2025, and the other will be a PPBC meeting on August 25th, 2025. Ms. Chaston stated that the commission should continue to discuss the Pollard Middle School project at their next meeting and take a position on the topic if they feel it is necessary. Commission members agreed, and Mr. Gerstel pointed out that the next Commission meeting is scheduled for August 25th, 2025, the same night as the PPBC meeting. Ms. Mulroy stated that the Commission meeting is at 7:00pm while the PPBC meeting is at 7:30pm. She suggested moving the meeting forward to 6:00pm, so that members could attend the PPBC meeting after. Commission members agreed to have members present at both meetings.

Topics for Future Meetings

- Pollard Middle School Project
- Policies
- Goals

Next Meetings

August 25th, 2025

September 8th, 2025

Adjournment

Dina Hannigan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:55pm. Ms. Chaston seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote of 5-0 as follows: Chris Gerstel – yes, Cindy Chaston – yes, James Rosenbaum – yes, Dinna Hannigan – yes, and Michelle Geddes – yes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Steeves

Administrative Assistant