

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

January 25, 2008

*Background notes for Monday, January 28th
Park and Recreation Commission Agenda*

CLAXTON PLAYGROUND

The Exchange Club has sent in an official letter of donation for the Claxton playground improvements. After the Commission accepts the gift, I will forward the request to the Board of Selectmen noting that all equipment and the installation are of the appropriate quality to accept. I will also request that representatives of the Exchange Club have an opportunity to formally present the gift to the Selectmen at one of their meetings.

FIELD STUDY UPDATE

The Board of Selectmen has voted to hold a Special Town Meeting on Monday, March 3, 2008 and one of the articles will be to fund the new track and natural grass field within the track to be built at DeFazio. The bid documents are being finalized and will be available to bidders within a week. The bid opening is scheduled for February 28th, with the hopes that a review of the bids can be finalized by March 3rd so that it can be announced at Town Meeting. The public bid process is under the jurisdiction of the DPW Engineering Division with my assistance.

The bid documents for the private work to be done at Memorial Park and DeFazio Park are being finalized and a decision on a contractor will likely be made in March. It is very possible that the private contractor and the public contractor will be different, so both sets of bid documents have been written to clarify how these two companies would work side-by-side at DeFazio.

The Conservation Commission has held two sessions for the public hearing on the aspects of the DeFazio design that border wetland areas. The hearing has been continued until February 14th, but no additional requests for information were made. It is likely that the hearing will close on February 14th and the Conservation Commission will discuss the Order of Conditions that will be placed on the project. The drainage plans move the same amount of water that currently goes through DeFazio, but is able to slow down the water's movement to avoid flooding the wetland areas. The plan also removes water from the surface, currently a major problem at DeFazio.

I am still waiting for all groups to submit their field requests, including Needham High School, but as of this time, it appears that the groups have been able to work out possible conflicts. Some are still researching alternate locations for field space that is not available during construction. The only official notice that I have received is that the

Needham Track Club has been given a permit to use the track this summer at Wellesley High School.

CULTURAL COUNCIL GRANT

Assistant Director Karen Peirce received notice this week that the department is the recipient of a \$600 grant for Summer Arts in the Parks from the Cultural Council. The Council has been supportive of this program for many years, and we appreciate their continued generosity.

TOWN HALL UPDATE

The Selectmen voted to narrow the renovation options to Alternative # 1. This option restores the walls, floor, ceiling, windows and stage area of the original auditorium, and then places "temporary" office space within the room. This option will now be forwarded to the Community Preservation Committee for their review of the funding request. Alternative # 1, under the current schematics, requires moving two departments out of Town Hall into an alternate permanent location, and Park and Recreation is one of the recommended departments. One possibility is to move our department to a new administration building at DPW. As we work with all divisions of the DPW, as well as the maintenance and construction divisions of Public Facilities, and the Conservation department, this option works well for Park and Recreation.

BUDGET REVIEW

The Town Manager is completing her recommended budget for General Government departments next week. The Finance Committee will begin their formal review of her recommendations, utilizing information they have gathered from meetings with the departments. There were not many questions on the Park and Recreation proposed operating budget at the recent review.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

The CPC will be holding discussions with the proponents of two proposals at their January 30th meeting. They will initially discuss the possible purchase of a portion of Hearthstone Farm owned by the McCracken family. They will then discuss the renovation of Town Hall.

SUMMER STAFF

Work on the summer programs and pool has begun in the office. The Assistant Director and I are in the process of hiring the Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors, the first step taken in order to determine other staff openings. The Assistant Director has held meetings with some staff members to discuss changes that will be needed in the 2008 season. A meeting was recently held with the schools to figure out requests for summer sites, so most location decisions are just about finalized.

SCHOOL PROJECTS

The High Rock project bid came in at less than the estimate. The Planning Board will hold a hearing on the parking requirements, having been requested to reduce the number

of required spots. The Conservation Commission asked for a reduction to give additional protection to nearby wetlands. Since the original number of spaces was based on incorrect information that stated it was needed for when the athletic fields are in use, I have provided information that the reduction in spaces will still leave more than adequate for use of the athletic fields. I will attend the hearing on February 12th.

HIGH ROCK HOMES

As staff to the CPC, Administrative Specialist Nikki Witham and I attended the groundbreaking ceremony for High Rock Homes last week. The Community Preservation Fund provided the "seed money" to get the project designed, and enabled the project to be fully funded through multiple sources. The concept for this project was first discussed almost 15 years ago, and there were multiple legal steps that needed to be taken for it to become a reality. Representatives of the Governor, Senator Brown, and Representative Harkins are congratulating the Needham Housing Authority and Needham Opportunities Inc for their initiative, and are using this project as an example that should be followed in other communities.

TERCENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Assistant Director Karen Peirce has agreed to be the Chair of the subcommittee that will oversee Wellness programs and activities for Needham's Tercentennial. As 2011 approaches, it will become a major project for Karen, but she's prepared to take it on and will do a great job promoting health and wellness in Needham.