

RECREATION DIVISION

RECREATION DEPARTMENT

In 2006, the Arlington Recreation Department went through many changes, while continuing to offer a multitude of safe, quality programs and facilities for the residents of the Town of Arlington. With the retirement of Human Services Department Head Patsy Kraemer, the Recreation Division became its own department. The Recreation Department welcomed back former Superintendent of Recreation Joseph Connelly to take the Director position. Other changes included the resignation of Superintendent Jon Jalbert, Program Supervisors Donna Sullivan and Bill Gore and Facility Supervisor Dan Brothers. Mark Linskey was hired as the Skilled Maintenance Craftsman and Dave Cunningham was promoted to Facility Supervisor.

The Veterans Memorial Skating Rink at the Arlington Sports Center received several improvements, including the following: All locker rooms, coaches and officials room, showers, bathrooms and lobby painted, new poly-kick plates installed at the bottom of the board system, zamboni doors replaced, rink floor repainted, spectator heaters repaired, purchased two new goal frames, and a back-up drain was installed in the zamboni room. During the non-skating season batting cages were installed for spring sport use. A capital improvement study was also completed to present the Town with a detailed capital plan for the facility.

Arlington Recreation Department has been committed to improving the quality of existing programs in order to increase participation numbers. Arlington Recreation is also looking at expanding into alternative areas of recreation including fencing, karate, dance, and badminton. The Arlington Recreation Department has formally taken over the full administration of the Arlington Youth Travel Basketball Program. Overall the partic-

ipation numbers in the programs have slightly declined over the last year with a total this year of 3,853 participants.

The staff at Arlington Recreation work professionally with residents to meet their changing recreational needs. New programs in 2006 included: a women's hockey league, pick-up soccer, dodgeball, rock climbing, young adult tennis, MLS soccer, girls softball, girls volleyball, parent tot tennis, fencing, core conditioning program, and badminton. Many traditional programs were also modified to meet the increasing demand and changing needs of program participants.

The Arlington Reservoir continued to be a popular summer cooling spot for residents with a total of 1,481 passes being sold, an increase from 1,220 passes sold the previous year. This was the first year that season passes were sold at the reservoir. The beach did experience some minor interruptions in service due to a failing motor that needed to be replaced. The North Union Spray Pool located adjacent to the Thompson Elementary School was also enjoyed by residents on a daily basis throughout the summer. This continues to be a free service offered by the Arlington Recreation Department.

The Gibbs Gymnasium continued to house a majority of the recreation indoor programs as well as provide residents with indoor birthday party and gym rental options. The Recreation Department's Gibbs Gym housed seventy-three birthday parties in 2006 for residents.

Arlington Recreation collaborates with other town organizations and recreation centers in Arlington to offer town-wide special events. Such events include Town Day, Memorial Day Road Race, the Winter Carnival, Spring Craft Fair, and Summer Carnival. This year we continued to offer the successful Special Needs



First Arlington Recreation Women's Hockey League – Picture courtesy of Heather Maietta

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Skate Program with the Arlington Catholic HS Boys' & Girls' Hockey teams, Minuteman Tech High School Hockey teams, and their respective coaching staff.

Limited outdoor recreational facilities and playing fields continue to be an important issue facing Arlington Recreation.

Arlington Recreation continues to work with both high schools and the many youth sport associations to adopt policy and procedures to assist in the scheduling and maintenance of our playing fields. Arlington Recreation also continues to manage the capital improvement projects for the Park and Recreation Commission. Capital projects completed in 2006 include Waldo Playground, Locke Playground, North Union Playground and Spy Pond Park. New capital projects initiated in 2006 include Bishop Field, Buzzell Field, and Menotomy Rocks Park. The management of the park capital projects continues to be a major responsibility of the Director of Recreation.

Looking ahead to 2007, the Arlington Recreation Department will continue to offer residents quality recreational programming. It is the goal of Arlington Recreation to increase and/or improve upon program offerings every season. Arlington Recreation will also continue to work with users of the Arlington Sports Center and Town outdoor playing fields to address the increasing needs of the community. Our financial goal is to continue to become increasingly self-supporting through appropriate fee structuring, improved program quality, and increased program budget management.

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

In 2006, the Park and Recreation Commission worked closely with the Recreation Director and various Town organizations to improve recreation facilities and develop policies that address the increased demand for Arlington's field and open space use. The commission continued the task of improving the Town's parks, playgrounds, and open spaces as outlined in the 10 Year Capital Improvement Plan. The commission also developed new policies to address the increased demand and use of open space in the town.

In July of 2006, Mr. Joseph Connelly was appointed Recreation Director by the Town Manager. Mr. Connelly has 12 years experience as a municipal recreation administrator. He served as Recreation Administrator in Reading for 5 years then 1-1/2 years as Recreation Superintendent here in Arlington. In 2001 Mr. Connelly served as Recreation Director in Winchester where he was employed before returning to Arlington. The position has been upgraded to a department head level position reporting directly to the Town Manager.

Field Permit Policy

The Park and Recreation Commission continued to implement the Field Permit Policy to assist with the growing demands in scheduling and permitting of the Town of Arlington Fields and Outdoor Spaces. The policy was amended and approved by the Park and Recreation Commission. The Park and Recreation Commission formed a sub committee called "Field Use Committee". This committee meets several times a year to work together with the Recreation Director and his staff to discuss usage, maintenance, and permitting of playing fields. During the upcoming year this sub-committee will continue to encourage enforcement of the Town's bylaws for use of recreational facilities.

The sub-committee also met on numerous occasions regarding field and open space signage. A new sign policy was adopted and it is hoped to have the signs in place by the spring of 2007.

Arlington Sports Center

With the finalization of a lease agreement for the Arlington Sports Center between the Town and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, The Arlington Sports Center Improvement sub-committee will meet several times a year to discuss improvements to the Sports Center. Two additional members from the general public as well as members from the Sports Center user groups and the Park and Recreation Commission will comprise this sub-committee.

Maintenance

Maintaining the Town's parks and playgrounds continues to be one of the major tasks facing the Park and Recreation Commission and the Department of Public Works. The number of organizations and teams that use the Town open space facilities continues to grow and has resulted in the deterioration of fields. The DPW has contracted with an outside specialist in field maintenance to provide scheduled seeding, aeration, fertilizer, and weed control. It is the hope of the Park and Recreation Commission that all combined efforts will improve maintenance and conditions for the future of playing fields.

During the 2006 Annual Town Meeting the Field User Fee Study Committee recommended a fee increase specifically for maintenance of the Town's fields. That recommendation has been implemented in FY 2007.

Capital Improvements

The process of identifying and implementing capital improvements to open space areas under the jurisdiction of the Park and Recreation Commission involves establishing a priority of need, application for and approval of funding, coordination with open space advocates and user groups, development of plans and

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specifications by qualified consultants, selection of contractors through the public bid process and construction of the projects. The time of this process varies depending on the availability of funds and complexity of the project. The following is a summary of the sites that are currently in design, construction or have been completed.

Spy Pond Park

The Park and Recreation Commission opened the reconstructed park in the spring of 2006. Carol R. Johnson and Associates, landscape architects and Heimlich Construction Company began and completed improvements to Spy Pond Park. The improvements included restoration of the shoreline and drainage improvements to prevent erosion, new paths, selective pedestrian access to the waters edge, emergency boat access to the pond from Pond Lane, new landscaping, and site furniture. Because of the projects' proximity to Spy Pond, permits were required from the Town, state, and federal government. The Friends of Spy Pond were involved in the planning process and were participants during the construction process. In the fall of 2006 additional improvements were made to the park by adding a underground irrigation system.

Waldo Park

In May of 2006, the Park and Recreation Commission held a Dedication Ceremony marking the official opening of the renovated Waldo Park and Playground in East Arlington. The project was funded by Community Development Block grant allocations in 2003, 2004 and 2005 totaling \$220,000. The renovations were designed by Larson Associates, Landscape Architects of Arlington, MA. The contractor was Emanouil Brothers, Inc. The Friends of Waldo Park were actively involved in the planning process and participated in the Community Build of the playground in September 2005. The Commission expresses thanks to the Friends group for running a well-organized event and for their fundraising efforts.

Locke Playground

The Park and Recreation Commission open the renovated Locke playground in the spring of 2006. The project was funded by Town allocations in 2003 and 2005 totaling \$245,000 and included replacement and relocation of the play equipment, reconstruction of the entrance to the playground to make it handicap accessible, repairs to the fencing, seating, and landscaping. One of the park benches was dedicated to Debbie Hayes, former Recreation Superintendent and advocate for the park improvements. Larson Associates were the landscape architects and Emanouil Brothers was the general contractor.

North Union Playground

North Union Playground was renovated in the fall of 2006. The Park and Recreation Commission worked with the Friends of North Union Playground and Leonard Design Associates to develop a plan for the installation of new and relocated play equipment plus the installation of new rubberized safety fall area surfacing in the playground area.

Future Projects 2007

Buzzell Field Renovation

The renovation of Buzzell Field was delayed so that the sports teams could utilize Buzzell Field during the renovation of Peirce Field at Arlington High School. The renovations include the re-grading of the entire field for improved drainage, the reconstruction of the two softball/baseball diamonds, the installation of an underground irrigation system, the reconstruction of the basketball court, the replacement of the sand surface in the playground with Fibar mulch, re-alignment of the Summer Street entrance, and new fencing. The \$290,000 project was funded by the Town in 2003 and 2006 and will go out for public bid in January 2007. Larson Associates is the landscape architect.

Menotomy Rocks Park

The Park and Recreation Commission engaged Leonard Design Associates to prepare a design and cost estimate for the renovation of Menotomy Rocks Park. The upgrades include the reconstruction of the path system leading into the park and around Hills Pond, improved access to the edge of the pond, re-grading and irrigation for the south field, aeration of the pond, repairs to the Jason Street entry and stone wall, and drainage improvements. The Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park have been actively involved with the planning and design process. The Conservation Commission also reviewed the project for conformance with wetland regulations and issued an Order of Conditions for construction. It is anticipated that the project will be advertised for bid in February with construction completed in the fall 2007. The DPW will participate in the construction of the project.

Bishop Field

In 2006, the Park and Recreation Commission worked with Leonard Design Associates and representatives of the Bishop School community to plan and design the renovations to Bishop Field. The \$190,000 project was funded by the Town in 2005 and 2006 and includes the reconstruction of the infield, re-grading, irrigation and new turf on the field areas, replacement of the backstop fence fabric, drainage improvements, and new players' benches. Bids were received in January 2007. The low bid contractor was Mountain View Landscape. Construction will begin in the spring with

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completion scheduled for fall 2007.

Stratton School

With the delay in design and reconstruction of the Stratton School, the Park and Recreation Commission engaged Leonard Design Associates to prepare a Feasibility Study for the renovation of Stratton Field and Greeley Playground. Proposed improvements include re-grading and irrigation of the field plus renovation of the playground to meet current code requirements and eliminate erosion. The project is included in the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan and a request for funding will be made in FY 2008.

Summer Street Playground

In 2006, a Feasibility Study was prepared for the renovation of the Summer Street Playground. The Feasibility Study was prepared by Leonard Design Associates and included recommendations to replace the non-code compliant, and outdated, play equipment and renovation of the basketball court area. The Feasibility Study identified the estimated costs that are included in the Park and Recreation Commission 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan for FY 2009.

10-Year Capital Plan

The Park and Recreation Commission have developed a 10-Year Capital Plan for upgrades and improvements to the recreation and open space areas that is under the jurisdiction of the Commission. The program is more than fifty percent complete, however a number of the remaining projects are expensive and complicated. Menotomy Rocks Park, Buzzell Field, Bishop Field and others will require significant funds to address the problems and potential of these sites. To avoid phasing of the work over many years, the commission will be seeking an increased level of funding that is greater than the amounts that have been traditionally approved by Town Meeting. Alternative sources of funding will be also be explored.