

# RECREATION

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT

In 2007, the Arlington Recreation Department continued to offer a multitude of safe, quality programs and facilities for the residents of the Town of Arlington.

The Veterans Memorial Skating Rink at the Arlington Sports Center made many important improvements including: replacement of the chiller system, painting the entire facility Town of Arlington school colors, adding a rink entrance door to locker room two, new flooring in both bathrooms, flat screen television in the lobby, new tables and benches in the lobby, and repairing the outdoor ventilation units in the rink. Due to the extended ordering period of the new chiller, the ice rink opened two and a half weeks later than usual. The chiller replacement cost was \$125,000 and was part of the rink's capital improvement program.

Arlington Recreation Department has been committed to improving the quality of existing programs. Arlington Recreation restructured its Club Rec and Kids Corner programs to allow for greater adult supervision and program organization. Arlington Recreation expanded into alternative areas of recreation including fencing, karate, dance, cooking, music, and badminton. The Arlington Recreation Department started its second year overseeing the full administration of the Arlington Youth Travel Basketball Program. Overall the participation numbers in the programs has been maintained with approximately 4,700 participants.

The Arlington Reservoir continued to be a popular summer cooling spot for residents with a total of 1,580 passes being sold; an increase from 1,475 passes sold the previous year. This was the second year that season passes were sold at the reservoir. The Arlington Reservoir was named Boston.com's Top Ten Massachusetts Swimming Areas. The North Union Spray Pool located adjacent to the Thompson Elementary School was also enjoyed by residents on a daily basis throughout the summer. The push button timers were replaced assisting in the conservation of water used at the facility. The North Union Spray Pool 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 indoor birthday party and gym rental options for the Arlington community. The Recreation Department's Gibbs Gym hosted ninety-eight birthday parties in 2007, which was up almost 35% from last year.

Arlington Recreation collaborates with other town organizations and recreation centers in Arlington to offer town-wide special events. Such events include the Town Day Road Race, Memorial Road Race, the Winter Carnival, Spring Craft Fair, and Summer Carnival. This year we continued to offer the successful Special Needs Skate Program with the Arlington Catholic High School Boys' & Girls' Hockey team and their coaching

staff. The Arlington Sports Center also hosted its first Coming Together Dance for students in grades 5-7 and a Professional Wrestling Match featuring two nationally known wrestlers. The Arlington Sport Center was also pleased to host the 2007 Bishop School Annual Bear Fair.

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 policies 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 2007 include Bishop Field, Wellington Park Adventure Course and Menotomy Rocks Park. Arlington Recreation provided guidance and support to the Bishop School Playground community build process and various improvements and repairs to the North Union Playground. New capital projects initiated in 2007 include Buzzell Field, Pheasant Avenue Playground and Field, and the Thorndike Field Parking Lot. The management of the recreational capital projects continues to be a major responsibility of the Director of Recreation.

In the Fall of 2007 Arlington Recreation changed its brochure distribution method from school disbursement and Arlington Advocate inserts to a direct mail target demographic mailing. The intent is to more widely market recreation programs and draw participants from Arlington and surrounding communities.

Looking ahead to 2008, 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.

Arlington Recreation was pleased to announce the hiring of Program Supervisor Dan McGrath who comes to Arlington from a similar position with the Town of Reading.

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## PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION

In 2007, the Park and Recreation Commission worked closely with Arlington's Recreation Director and various town organizations and volunteers. The focus of the commission was to improve the town's public recreation facilities and develop policies that address the increased and varied demand for use of Arlington's playing fields and open spaces. The commission continued improving parks, playing fields, playgrounds, and open spaces as outlined in its Multi-Year Capital Improvement Plan, developed new policies to address increased user requirements for open space in town and participated in a variety of committees working to address open space and recreation issues.

### 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 user groups and open space advocates; development of plans and specifications by qualified consultants; selection of contractors through the public bid process and construction of the projects. The length of time for each project varies, depending on the availability of funds and complexity of the project.

The following is a summary of projects that are currently in design, under construction or have been completed this year.



### Bishop Field and Playground

The renovation of the playing fields and playground adjacent to the Bishop School was completed in 2007 through the combined efforts of the Park and Recreation Commission and the Bishop Playground Improvement Committee (BPIC), led by Mr. Chuck Carney and Ms. Justine Bloche. The playing fields project was funded by the town and included the reconstruction of the in-field, re-grading, irrigation and new turf on all field areas, replacement of the backstop fence fabric, drainage improvements and new players' benches. Improvements



were designed by Leonard Design Associates of Arlington, MA, and the contractor was D & D Enterprises. The work was completed in early fall 2007. The renovation of the playground, also completed in fall 2007, was accomplished through the planning and fundraising efforts of BPIC and the contributions of many, including the Department of Public Works (DPW). A successful "Community Build" constructed an innovative new play space for students and other Arlington children. The Commission expresses thanks to the BPIC group for running a well-organized event, for their outstanding fundraising and planning efforts and to all contributors.



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## Menotomy Rocks Park

Menotomy Rocks Park underwent a renovation that was completed in the fall of 2007. Upgrades included 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 back field; pond aeration; repairs to the Jason Street entrance and stone wall; and drainage improvements to prevent erosion throughout the park. The renovations were designed by Leonard Design Associates of Arlington, MA with the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park (FoMRP) and Conservation Commission actively involved in the planning and review of the project. The contractor was Emanouil Brothers, Inc. with the DPW and students from the high school's "The Workplace" program providing assistance with several tasks. FoMRP has committed funding and labor to install additional plantings during spring 2008. The Commission expresses thanks to FoMRP for the continuing financial support and stewardship activities of the group.

The project is anticipated to be put out for public bid in early 2008 with construction anticipated for spring/summer of 2008.

## Buzzell Field Renovation

The renovation of Buzzell Field began in the summer of 2007. New grading for the entire field to improve drainage, reconstruction of the two softball/baseball diamonds, installation of an underground irrigation system, accessible walkways to connect the park with the surrounding community, and replacement of the sand surface in the playground with wood-fiber surfacing has been designed. During construction, household trash was uncovered at this former town landfill, which delayed the project until testing and the best method for containment could be determined. The project is expected to be completed in spring of 2008 with the fields resting through the fall. Larson Associates is the landscape architect. The site contractor is Heimlich Landscaping & Construction.

## Pheasant Avenue / Stratton School

Working with the Friends of Greeley Park at Stratton (FoGPaS), the Park and Recreation Commission is finalizing the design for an updated park and playground. Proposed improvements include re-grading and irrigation of the field to eliminate erosion plus renovation of the playground to enhance safety, accessibility and add play experiences for the children at the school and in the community. The project is funded as a town capital project and with CDBG funds. Leonard Design Associates of Arlington is providing design services.

## Wellington Park Challenge Course

Through a collaborative effort between Arlington Public Schools and the Park and Recreation Commission, an outdoor challenge course was constructed at Wellington Park on Grove Street. The course consists of several high elements, including a climbing wall, rappel surface, catwalk, two-line bridge and "flying squirrel." The course will be used under trained supervision only for physical education classes and Recreation programs. It was designed and constructed by Northeast Adventure, LLC and paid for through a Carol White Physical Education Program Grant that the Arlington Public Schools received. The course will be ready for use in spring of 2008, after state licensing has been finalized.



## Future Projects 2008

### *Thorndike Field Parking*

In 2007, the Arlington Park and Recreation Commission solicited proposals to prepare a design for upgrades and improvements to the Thorndike Field Parking Area. Larson Associates of Arlington was selected to provide design services. The project is focused on safety, traffic flow, drainage and landscaping improvements in the Thorndike Field area, which is in an environmentally sensitive location. Estimated costs for completing the improvements are identified in the Park and Recreation Commission Multi-Year Capital Improvement Plan for FY 2008 and FY 2009.

### *Summer Street Playground & Parking*

In 2007, a Feasibility Study was completed to determine options for increasing parking at the Arlington Sports Center / Veterans Memorial Rink. Leonard Design Associates was hired to define these options. Design work for the renovation of the Summer Street Playground, which includes replacement of outdated play equipment and renovation of the basketball court area, will be evaluated in conjunction with the possible parking options and other potential enhancements under consideration for the Veterans' Memorial Rink.



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## Committees / Sub-committees

The Commission also performs its work through participation in a number of committees and sub-committees, including:

- *Field User Committee* – proper maintenance of the town’s playing fields continues to be a major challenge facing the Park and Recreation Commission and the Department of Public Works. Working with user groups, signage for the playing fields with hours, rules and contact information was designed and installed at all playing fields under the jurisdiction of the commission.
- *Sports Center Improvement Committee* - many rink improvements, including the installation of a new chiller, were implemented through the outstanding efforts of the Rink facilities staff. The Sports Center Improvement Committee works to support these efforts.
- *PRC Capital / CDBG Planning* – the Park and Recreation Commission continues to evaluate and maintain a Multi-Year Capital Plan for upgrades and improvements to the recreation and open space areas under the jurisdiction of the commission. A number of future projects are expensive and complicated, including upgrades to the town’s tennis courts and Reservoir Beach. In addition to capital and CDBG funds, alternative sources of funding are also being explored.
- *Open Space Committee* – in 2007, the town’s Open Space and Recreation Plan for 2007-2012 was updated with the participation, input and approval of the Park and Recreation Commission. The inventory of Arlington’s open spaces was documented, along with the open space needs and priorities of the community. The commission actively supports the plan to preserve, protect and enhance Arlington’s limited open spaces.
- *Friends of Parks Group* – representatives from each of Arlington’s “friends” groups, land stewards groups, and other volunteer organizations meet regularly to discuss common concerns about park maintenance, develop guidelines for sharing work among volunteers, Town employees, and contracted landscaping services and share information and ideas for advocacy and fundraising to supplement town budgets for parks and other public open spaces.

## Policies and Other Projects

In 2007, to ensure park protection and reduce disruption to other public uses the Park and Recreation

Commission drafted and approved Film Production and Wedding & Photography policies. The commission is also defining a policy for Bench Dedications and a town-wide Bench Installation Plan for donated benches. Through an extensive public process, a working group is developing a “Green Dog Pilot Program Proposal” to allow for limited off-leash dog activity in designated parks and open spaces. The Commission also continues to work with “The Workplace” of Arlington High School on community service projects, such as removal of graffiti from the rink and replacement of benches at North Union Playground, that help to enhance our recreation facilities.

The Commission membership underwent changes in 2007 with the retirement of Chairman, Joseph Carabello, the departure of Thomas Caccavaro and the addition of new members Jim Robillard and Jennifer Rothenberg. The Commission thanks Mr. Carabello and Mr. Caccavaro for their service and welcomes Mr. Robillard and Ms. Rothenberg.

