

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT

In 2010 the Arlington Recreation Department continued to offer a variety of safe, quality programs and facilities for the residents of the Town of Arlington.

The Veterans' Memorial Skating Rink at the Arlington Sports Center was renamed the Ed Burns Arena at the Veterans' Memorial Sport Complex and received major capital improvements including: a new rink bed extended to 197', boards, 6' seamless glass, increased size of players benches, modified penalty box area and timer's booth, installed a low emissivity ceiling, installed subfloor heating system to allow for making ice in the warm weather, updated handicapped ramp and viewing area, improved the existing dehumidification system, updated electrical controls for the refrigeration system and installed a new state of the art water heating system. In 2010 the Veterans' Memorial Rink had 1,859 hours of ice rentals and our public skating attendance numbers were 3,979 adults and 7,846 youth/seniors, excluding seasonal skate passes.

<b>Veteran's Memorial Rink</b>	<b>FY 2010 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2009 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2008 Actual</b>
Ice Rental Hours	1,859	2,086	1,913
Rec & Public Skate Hrs	500	552	496
Public Skate #'s-Adult	3,979	3824	3,597
Public Skate Passes #'s-Adult	58	55	46
Public Skate #'s-Child/Sen	7,846	8597	8,356
Public Skate Passes #'s-Child/Sen	98	92	85
Skate Rentals	2,762	2597	2,713
Skate Sharpening	982	962	932
Skate Sharpening Passes	20	11	NA
Stick and Puck	557	452	280

The Department has been committed to providing quality programs, special events, and improvements to its many facilities. New programs offered in 2010 include: youth lacrosse program for girls grades K-4, Barrie Bruce Youth and Adult Golf Classes, Zumba for Adults, Stroller Fit Classes, One Day Art Classes for Youth, Sharlie Joseph of New England Revolution Soccer Clinic and Thundercats After School Sport program at three elementary schools. Overall the participation numbers in recreational programs have increased significantly from 4,043 participants in 2009 to 4,872 participants in 2010.

With a very hot summer the Reservoir Beach continued to be a popular summer cooling spot. A total of 1,469 season passes were sold, an increase from the 1,129 season passes sold the previous year.

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 North Union Spray Pool continues to be a free service offered by the Department.



*Cooling off at the North Union Spray Pool.*

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. Gibbs Gym was allocated capital

funds to repair and replace the gymnasium floor. The project began during the summer and was completed in October. The Department oversees the rental of the facility, which currently includes various youth activities and organizations, adult basketball, and soccer. Gibbs Gym hosted 63 birthday parties in 2010 which is a decrease from the 110 hosted in 2009. The decrease can be directly contributed to increased recreation programs held at the Gibbs Gym and the gym floor renovation which resulted in the gym being closed for over two months.



*Tot Soccer*

Arlington Recreation collaborates with various Town organizations and recreation centers in Arlington to offer Town-wide special events. Such events include the Town Day Road Race, Daddy Daughter Dance, Egg Hunt, Halloween Window Painting, and Olde Tyme Summer Field Day. 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. Arlington Recreation proudly held their Third Annual Golf Tournament at Hillview Country Club. The tournament was in honor of basketball program volunteer Darla Hart. Limited outdoor recreational facilities and playing fields continue to be an important issue facing Arlington Recreation. The Department continues to work with both high schools and the Town's many youth sport associations crafting policies and procedures to assist in the scheduling and maintenance of Town playing fields. The Department also works with many of the park abutters, neighbors, and friends' organizations on perpetual park concerns and maintenance items.

The Department was very pleased to welcome Maria Day to the staff as the Department's office assistant.

## **Parks and Recreation Commission**

Arlington Recreation continues to manage the capital improvement projects for the Park and Recreation Commission. In 2010 the Thorndike Field Parking Lot was completed as well as the Summer Street Playground Renovation. The Veterans' Memorial Ice Rink/Ed Burns Arena received over one million dollars worth of necessary capital improvements. The Department also assisted the Planning Department in the renovation of the Gibbs Gymnasium Floor. The management of the recreational capital projects continues to be a major responsibility of the Director of Recreation.

With the passing of Article 36 by Town Meeting in the spring of 2010, the Recreation Director assisted in the implementation plan of designated off leash dog hours at parks specified by the Park and Recreation Commission. The Recreation Director is also assisting in the acceptance of a major financial gift to construct and operate a fenced off leash dog recreational area in Town.

## **2011 Objectives**

Arlington Recreation will continue to offer residents quality recreational programming. It is the goal of the Department to increase and improve program offerings every season. The Department will 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 and program and facility management.



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# RECREATION

## PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION

In 2010 the Park and Recreation Commission worked closely with Arlington's Recreation Director, Joseph Connelly, 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 ever increasing and varied demand for use of Arlington's playing fields and limited open spaces. The commission continued its efforts to upgrade parks, playing fields, playgrounds, and open spaces as outlined in its Multi-Year Capital Improvement Plan, developed and evaluated policies to address increased user requirements and resident needs, related to recreation facilities 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 improvements to the recreation and open space properties under the jurisdiction of the Park and Recreation Commission involves establishing the need and its priority; applying for and receiving approval for funding; obtaining input from the general public and other interested parties; coordinating with user and "Friends" groups; reviewing the development of plans and specifications by qualified consultants, and selecting contractors through the public bid process and monitoring construction of the projects. The length of time for each project varies, depending on the availability of funds and complexity of the project. Here are summaries of these projects.

### **Arlington Sports Center/Veterans' Memorial Rink Improvement Project**

This year a major overhaul of the Town's sole ice skating facility was completed with minimal disruption to facility usage. A great deal of credit for the success of the renovation goes to the rink management and staff. Replacement and expansion of the complete rink bed and board system, installation of a low-e ceiling for energy efficiency, and dehumidification improvements were among the enhancements made to the aging facility. Plans and specifications were completed by Terry McLaughlin, within the context of the Sports Center Master Plan produced by Sasaki Associates, and Preferred Mechanical was the contractor. On December 28<sup>th</sup> a dedication ceremony was held to celebrate the naming of the Ed Burns Arena at the Veterans' Memorial Skating Rink.

### **Thorndike Field Parking & Access Improvements**

In 2010 the Commission saw the completion of upgrades and safety improvements to the Thorndike Field Parking Area. The area, adjacent to the Minute-man Bikeway, sees heavy use by cyclists, pedestrians commuting to the Alewife T-station and field users. The commission worked with the Transportation Advisory

Committee (TAC) to identify off-site overflow parking alternatives and signage to help control access. With Warner Larson of Boston providing design services and construction completed by Jnj Sacca of Arlington, the project focused on improving pedestrian and vehicular safety, traffic flow, drainage, and landscaping improvements in an environmentally sensitive location.

Summer Street Playground and multi-generational area

Warner Larson of Boston was retained to create the design for renovations to the Summer Street Playground and basketball court and to develop a multi-generational recreation area. The project was designed to work within the context of the Master Plan prepared by Sasaki Associates for the Sports Center area, and incorporated recommendations from the Arlington Police Department to help improve safety and reduce vandalism. Between Buck and Hill's Hill fields, a highlight of the renovation is a large completely handicapped accessible children's play structure with zero-entry ramp. Behind Summer Street Field, a tree-shaded multi-generational area provides bocce courts, game tables, a circular walking path with fitness stations, and young child play elements. Construction was completed by Jnj Sacca of Arlington.

### **Wellington Tennis Courts**

Design work began in 2010 for the renovation of the Wellington Park Tennis Courts. With the demand for tennis courts in Town increasing, this much needed improvement will restore the five courts at the park on Grove Street for individual and high school play. As a public recreation space adjacent to Mill Brook, this is expected to be one in a series of renovation projects to improve access and usage of the properties along the brook corridor. Leonard Design is providing the design services for the court renovations.

### **Thorndike Off-Leash Recreation Area (OLRA)**

With a feasibility study completed by Leonard Design highlighting several potential options, Thorndike Field was selected as the location for Arlington's first dedicated fenced off-leash recreation area for dogs and their owners. Funding for the project will mainly come from a generous gift by the Stanton Foundation, which has agreed to donate 90% of the total project cost to the Town. The design process is slated to begin in early 2011 followed by construction.

### **Maintenance Priorities**

As the success of the playing field maintenance program continues, focus this year has been on other significant maintenance issues. In parks like Spy Pond, McClennen and Menotomy Rocks, concerns exist about continuing pathway erosion. The commission would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Friends of Spy Pond



# RECREATION

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Park for their research of potential solutions, which has led to a demonstration installation at Spy Pond Park of test materials. Arlington's skateboard park at McClenen and the hillside slides at Robbins Farm are also rallying the efforts of their Friends' groups to find solutions to problems that exist with these well-used recreation sites.

## Policies

In 2010 the Commission reviewed its playing field policy with respect to the increased use of lights and amplification equipment. The policy was enhanced to control the use of these amenities to minimize disruption to neighborhoods and to require compliance with independent monitoring and the provision of penalties. In its first year of implementation, 100% compliance by field users was achieved.

To help ensure equity and the protection of Town properties, the Commission also developed and implemented a policy for the placement and use of storage sheds on Town fields. It also continued to monitor league expansions and use of Town facilities, including working with the Arlington/Belmont Rowing Club program to insure its compliance with the town's motorboat bylaw in its use of Spy Pond.

At the spring 2010 Town Meeting a bylaw amendment was passed to allow responsible dog owners to have dogs off-leash at properties under the jurisdiction of the Park and Recreation Commission during limited morning hours, provided they follow a set of established rules. The commission held several public meetings, including one facilitated by retired judge Rudolph Kass, to define exclusions and implementation guidelines. A brochure of rules and signs for parks were developed and widely distributed. On a monthly basis, the commission reviews all concerns and comments and is optimistic about the recently implemented change.

## Other Projects and Activities

In addition to the many organized and pick-up sports activities, Arlington's parks and open spaces continue to provide the community with venues for a wide variety of recreational opportunities. Organized star gazing, movie nights, picnics, school fairs and field days, a fishing derby, Shakespeare performances, an arts festival, concerts, a tennis tournament, and "Spooky Walk" are some of the special event requests reviewed and approved by the commission this year.

2010 was also the pilot year for the Robbins Farm Community/Educational Garden Project. This communal garden saw all participants work a single large plot at Robbins Farm Park and share the harvest, unlike the Magnolia Park Community Gardens where individuals work their own small plots. The garden also provided an opportunity for gardening education for children and adults. The Recreation Department administered the

program, which was open to all residents, and after a successful first year, the commission has approved an expanded pilot for 2011.

Another successful pilot program that the commission approved and continued to monitor is the seasonal installation of portable restrooms at many of its parks and fields. This year, working with the Disability Commission to obtain CDBG funds, the commission reiterated its commitment to insuring that all of the portable restrooms, which are funded by donations from local sports organizations and Friends groups, are handicapped accessible units.

Also in 2010 the Commission participated in several committees and discussions related to recreation and open space concerns. Through its participation in the Mill Brook Linear Park Study Group, which was formed to study the feasibility of developing a Mill Brook Linear Park, the commission continues to look for opportunities to enhance and improve recreational access along the brook. The Fenced Off-Leash Recreation Area (OLR) Task Force was formed to evaluate and recommend options to the commission for the creation of a fenced area in Arlington that could be designated for off-leash dog recreational activity and continues its work as the Thorndike OLRA capital project begins. Finally, the commission was approached by the School Department to consider a land swap arrangement that would allow the rebuild of the Thompson Elementary School on the North Union Park land and participated in the discussions, which ended in a decision to pursue other options for the school renovation.

The Park and Recreation Commission would like to acknowledge and thank the countless community members of all ages who actively participate in the many youth sports organizations, Friends groups and other committees dedicated to recreational pursuits and open space enjoyment. Without these passionate volunteers the quality of Arlington's parks and recreation opportunities would be greatly diminished.

Additional information on the work and projects of the Park and Recreation Commission can be found at [www.arlingtonma.gov/parkrec](http://www.arlingtonma.gov/parkrec).