

Summary of Barkhamsted Recreation Needs March 2011

In fall 2010, the Board of Finance requested that an informal study be performed to create a plan for recreational needs, essentially a “plan of development”. This plan was to include land, facilities, meeting space, or other needs for the various youth and adult recreation programs in town.

To accomplish that goal, a group was formed that included the First Selectman, the Town’s Recreation Director, representatives from the Board of Finance, the Board of Education and the Stanclift Cove commission, the school superintendent plus leaders from youth baseball, basketball and soccer, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, PTO and the Barkhamsted Seniors. This committee met in December 2010 and January 2011 to respond to the Board of Finance request.

The results of the brainstorming and resulting recommendations include:

The current inventory of town properties is limited and includes:

- Barkhamsted School
- Town Hall
- Senior Center
- Town Garage
- A small park on the Farmington River in Riverton Center
- Fire houses and local churches that are used by various groups, but which are not controlled by the town

Basically, it is very difficult for groups to find space suitable for their programs on a timely basis. In addition, the school gymnasium/multi-purpose room is inadequate for basketball once the age group goes above 3rd grade. Therefore, recreation basketball for older children has no place to play games or to practice within the town. The teams are allowed to use Regional 7 facilities for games, but the gyms at the high school have limited availability. Other groups, such as scouts or adult programs also have difficulty finding space for their meetings and activities due to the high demand for the school facilities.

Two projects are pending which could help alleviate the situation. The Town is proceeding towards renovation of the current Town Garage and construction of a large addition to the garage, which will house the town vehicles. The renovated garage is envisioned to have two meeting rooms for community groups, which would give them access to kitchen facilities. Final approval to borrow the money to build this facility will be the subject of a Town Meeting in March or April.

The Board of Education is in the early stages of planning an addition to the school, consisting of a large multi-purpose room, which, among other uses, would serve as a new gymnasium. This facility would have rest rooms, be lockable from the rest of the school and would have greater capacity to allow for school assemblies. The current gym is not reflective of the school’s enrollment and would be converted to classroom space to ease overcrowding in the school. The new multi-purpose room could be used for youth, adult or seniors functions, filling a need for all age groups, and could also function as a shelter, if needed. The facility’s current structure does not allow for a wheelchair-bound student to access the art and music rooms, but the new multi-purpose room would have an attached elevator to accommodate this need.

It is the consensus of the Committee that the Town should pursue these two projects as our top priorities. The recommendation is that the Garage expansion proceeds now, and that we pursue the school expansion, when feasible.

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A STEAP grant from the State of Connecticut was received by the Town in 2010, which will pay for a new playscape and improvements to the playground, including elimination of the drainage area on the west side of the property adjacent to the hill. Careful coordination with the potential expansion of the school is necessary, in order to prevent the playscape from interfering with the building project, should it go forward. The playground also allows for a small expansion of the youth soccer fields to allow for a field that is close to full size.

Other issues discussed by the committee included:

- MDC Greenwoods property – action to be taken by the First Selectman to contact the Greenwoods Commission and MDC management about the possibility of developing recreation fields on that property, which is adjacent to the east side of the Farmington River in Pleasant Valley.
- Stanclift Cove – priority is to work with the MDC or the Cove Commission to attempt to expand the area to allow a field for kids to play ball and to install canoe/kayak racks which would allow people to leave their boats.
- Seniors needs focus on housing and expansion of the parking lot and kitchen at the Senior Center to accommodate the number of folks who take advantage of the meals and other programs at the center. Their needs also include the acquisition of property for seniors housing.
- A resident of town is trying to form a committee to build a bridge on the Farmington River from West River Road to the island by the CCC bridge abutments. This is envisioned as a tribute to Walt Landgraf for his contributions to the town. This bridge would enable more access to the river, building recreational opportunities to fish, picnic or otherwise use the river.
- Fundraising needs were discussed, including approaching the Northwest Community Foundation or restarting sales of the Barkhamsted Heritage book that was published a number of years ago.
- Similarly, there is a need to find volunteers to work on these projects, some of which are likely to be time consuming.
- Lighted playing fields are desirable, but there are some concerns over zoning and neighbor issues, the associated cost, and whether there are grants available for this purpose.
- Strategies for acquiring property that could be used for playing fields. This includes soliciting donations of property or obtaining easements that would allow a piece of property to be used for recreation.

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Recreational Needs Summary

Create a plan of development focused on recreational needs:						
	Baseball	Scouts	Soccer	Basketball	Other Recreation	PTO/BOE
<i>Youth Recreation</i>						
land for 2 more fields (3-4 acres)	X		X			
possible multi-use for soccer and baseball	X		X			
lighted fields	X					
meeting space		X			X	
kitchen space		X			X	
arts and crafts		X			X	
improve small field by school	X		X			
expand fields into drainage area	X		X			
<i>School addition</i>						
full size gym with 6 baskets(4 adjustable/2 full size) and room for spectators				X	X	X
possible divided space for 2 small courts				X	X	X
adult recreation space					X	
multi-purpose room		X		X	X	X
storage	X	X	X	X	X	X
inside/outside snack bar			X	X	X	X
additional classrooms for art/music/special education						X
stage for performances		X			X	X
<i>Seniors</i>						
expansion of the parking lot and kitchen at the Senior Center					X	