

## Recreation and Open Space

Windham is a great town to live in, due in large part to the recreational opportunities it provides its residents; which are fundamental to Windham's sense of community. Whether you choose to walk the numerous town trails, cheer for a child participating in a sport at one of the many Windham fields, or go swimming at the Town Beach, people meet and stay connected to each other through these recreational activities. For this reason, recreation must continue to play an integral role in planning for Windham's future.

Since 2005, Windham population has grown substantially. Historically, rapid population growth has been known to strain any town's sense of community. The Recreation Department's goal is to maintain that sense of community by continuously evolving programs and facilities that encourage positive, ongoing interaction between all residents and their families.

The Town of Windham is committed to providing for the recreational needs of its residents and, to that end, has both volunteer and paid staff to focus on providing recreation programs. Our full-time Recreation Coordinator position, established in 2005, is responsible for planning, organizing, and administering comprehensive recreation services for the community. The Coordinator is also responsible for overseeing the maintenance and management of existing facilities, for planning and development of new facilities to meet new demands, and coordinating the scheduling of all fields amongst the various leagues and programs. The current Recreation Master Plan was approved by the Planning Board in 2012, and it is the intent of the Recreation Department to update it every five (5) years.

Key issues that should be considered over the next ten (10) years include:

**Field expansion is necessary to keep up with growing demand.** Due to continuing population growth, particularly in the under 21 age group, new recreation fields will have to be seriously considered. Organized teams (including school teams) continue to compete for field time and the resulting, constant use makes proper maintenance difficult to achieve. In addition, insufficient parking to accommodate users poses a safety hazard both for them and the surrounding area, and there are little or no options to expand parking at the current fields.

Recreation will continue to advocate for the development of the Spruce Pond Field complex, as it is currently the most feasible solution. The Spruce Pond Field option will provide the town with an additional 20% of field space that can be utilized by multiple sports programs with expandable parking options. We will also continue to look at other opportunities for field expansion/addition as they present themselves.

**Management of, enhancement of, and improving access to, the Town's trails and conservation lands is important.** There is a continuing need to connect parks and trails to neighborhoods in order to provide easier access for users. There is a growing active

senior population in the State of NH, and in Windham with an influx of 55+ housing. According to the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2013-2018, seniors are becoming more interested in wellness, safe and easy access to recreation opportunities, and have an increased interest in social activities. As described in the SCORP, connectivity through trails and green spaces is a low cost solution to address the need for access to active recreation opportunities, and we have seen evidence of this in Windham based on the number of active seniors who currently walk at our parks and trails.

**Address emerging demands for new facilities and programs requested by the community.** The Recreation Department via resident committee representation, town surveys, and other resident engagements, has received requests to address specialized facilities needs and programs. These requests are documented in the department's detailed Recreation Master Plan. The Recreation Department will continue to serve the community by providing an updated Recreation Master Plan every 5 years that will specify detailed facility and program needs.

**Complete the Griffin Park Passive Recreation Project.** In 2016, the voters approved funding to complete the first phase of the new passive recreation area at Griffin Park. This phase will include benches and tables for seating, shade trees, plantings and walls for aesthetics, and a gazebo. Once this area has been completed, the Recreation Department will begin fundraising efforts to complete phase 2, which will include pavement game areas, as well as additional seating, trees, plantings and walls.

**Evaluate opportunities related to I-93 land reclamation.** The I-93 corridor project has made available segments of land that were once paved highway, affording the Town a unique opportunity to gain conservation and/or recreation space. The Recreation Department will work with the Conservation Commission to determine the best uses of these area to benefit town residents.

**Develop recreation opportunities related to Windham's Market Square Overlay District.** With the implementation of this new District, there will undoubtedly be a need to develop related recreation activities and facilities (e.g. play areas, ice rinks, area events). The Recreation Department will work with the various town committees to develop related programs to enhance the usage of this area.

**Continue to evaluate and advocate for specialized facilities requests.** The Recreation Department via resident committee representation, town surveys, and other resident engagements, has received several requests to address specialized facility needs. As documented in the detailed Recreation Master Plan, new facilities requests include: integration of more elderly and disabled resident recreational areas, outdoor skating rink, swimming pool, and a community amphitheater. The Department will continue work

with residents and town officials to strategize and implement financially viable facilities solutions and advocate for town voter support.

**Continue to Update Programs and Policies.** The Recreation Department will continue to promote and offer year round active and passive recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities; expand or adjusting programs to meet the emerging needs of the residents as demands and interests change.

Our main program goals are:

- Maintain the strong relationship we currently have with the School District and Youth Sports Leagues.
- Continue to offer passive and active recreation opportunities.
- Continue to offer activities for all ages.
- Continue to maintain and upkeep existing facilities.
- Continue to implement strict procedures regarding preservation of the fields.
- Explore the development of fields and satellite/neighborhood parks.
- Explore lands to purchase/acquire for the development of new fields.