

Recreation

(Broken out as a Separate Chapter from 2004 Open Space and Recreation Chapter and Updated in 2012)

Recreation

Introduction

The Recreation Chapter of the Master Plan serves as a guidance document for town level planning of recreation programs and facilities. The Recreation Department, Recreation Commission and other town boards and commissions must use this chapter to plan wisely to met the recreational needs of all citizens of Plaistow

This chapter will identify:

- Existing recreation conditions and facilities,
- Future recreation needs,
- The gaps between existing conditions and future needs, and
- Recommendations: strategic needs, future programming and funding sources.

Recreation is very important to quality of life, and in terms of community development, increasing recreational opportunities is often identified as a way to develop a stronger sense of community through participation in shared activities. Many health experts agree that offering recreational opportunities to the citizens of a community increases the sense of well being and general health of all citizens, youngsters to seniors included.

According to a report entitled "*NH Outdoors, 2003-2007*" *NH's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*, Rockingham County has one of the largest populations of any NH county and therefore the largest need for recreational areas of all kinds. But Plaistow does not conform to this trend as evidenced by the lack of recreation areas. Because of this, recreational opportunities are a significant concern in Plaistow and due to the continued dwindling amount of open space, it is important that additional land be deployed/acquired for recreational purposes. SCORP recognizes that citizens participate in a broad range of activities and that a broad range of space be considered for those needs.

If Plaistow is going to continue to work to provide adequate recreational opportunities for all citizens, justifying and obtaining additional land space is imperative to this growth. The blending of open space needs for passive recreation, space and equipment for active recreation, and issues of maintaining both will be a constant challenge. The Recreation Commission and Recreation Department must remain vigilant in that pursuit.

The following distinction is made between Active and Passive Recreation:

Active Recreation: Consists of leisure activities that “require equipment or take place at prescribed places, sites or fields”. NSRE, the National Survey of Recreation and Environment, includes over 80 activities in its survey of US citizens that are considered “active recreation”. These activities can be land, water, snow, ice or facility based. Some examples from the survey: camping, hunting, hiking, walking, mountain climbing, boating, swimming, fishing, skiing, sledding, tennis, golf, soccer, fitness trails and baseball. Also considered as active recreation are playgrounds, league sports and team sports.

Passive Recreation: Consists of those activities that are relatively less active or less energetic, but require open space for nature and observation purposes. NSRE sites examples such as: bird watching, picnicking, sightseeing, and nature watching. Also considered as passive recreation are those programs which are more cultural in nature: music concerts, arts and crafts events, senior programming, speakers, community trips and community events.

Goals and objectives that were identified by the Plaistow Recreation Commission are:

Goal: Provide suitable recreation opportunities, both passive and active, to service the town’s existing and projected populations.

Objective 1: Meet the town’s current and projected recreational needs by ensuring that there is an appropriate amount of land, space, equipment and facilities for both active and passive recreation.

Objective 2: Provide low cost/no cost opportunities for families to recreate in Plaistow.

Objective 3: Ensure that a broad range of activities are available for citizens of every age.

Goal: Encourage the long-term use, maintenance, and improvement of existing recreational facilities.

Objective 1: Ensure that there are available recreation resources for all age groups.

Objective 2: Provide for the maintenance and enhancement of existing recreation facilities.

Existing Recreation Conditions and Facilities

Personnel:

- **Recreation Director-** Plaistow employs a full time Recreation Director, who manages the town’s Recreation Department. In addition, the town employs a summer director and staff of counselors to coordinate a summer recreation (6 week) program.
- **Recreation Commission-** A 7 member volunteer Recreation Commission, by RSA, works with the Recreation Director to plan and implement programming. Recreation commission members meet regularly to ensure that programs are promoted and staffed. The Recreation commission members volunteer many hours helping the Recreation director by suggesting new programming ideas, coaching, and representing the public’s interests.
- **Friends of Recreation-** The Recreation Commission and Recreation Department are also fortunate to have a subcommittee called “Friends of Recreation”. The Friends of Recreation have sponsored fund raisers to support recreation programs. They have volunteered their time to landscape Smith Field and PARC, manage the concession stand at PARC, offer programs during Old Home Day, manage the concessions during summer concerts and annually offer a free family “Fall Festival” event on the Town Hall Green.
- **Volunteer Coaches-** The Recreation department is fortunate to have numerous volunteer coaches (parents, grandparents, etc) who ensure that the Recreational philosophy of the department is maintained and that youngsters learn the importance of team play.

Programming: The Recreation Department offers numerous programs, both passive and active, including: spring baseball and softball, summer recreation program, senior programs, field trips, community trips, farmers market, workshops, summer concert series and other community-holiday events. While it is difficult to pinpoint accurate counts of participants in all programs, the Town has experienced consistent growth in programs that are family-oriented and offer low cost/no cost activities for families. As an estimate of current participant numbers, approximately 400 to 600 participate in our youth programming, with seniors and other adults bringing the total estimate to well over 1000 citizens annually. The department has continued to experience an annual demand increase on the town's recreation programs.

Recreation Facilities: The Recreation Department manages two recreation facilities: a 2.16-acre field on Ingalls Terrace (Smith Field), constructed in 1974 and a 21 acre facility on Old County Road (PARC), constructed in 2005. Historically, the Timberlane School District had allowed the Plaistow Recreation Department limited use of some school district athletic fields and facilities. But by early 2009, the use of these school facilities by the Town became problematic due to the growth in both number of school teams and increased level of Town program participation. Of course, school programming on school facilities is the school district's priority. The construction of PARC has somewhat reduced the need to use Timberlane fields but the need for town owned athletic fields and gymnasium space continues. While the gyms at TRMS and TRHS and POLLARD schools are used for baseball/softball tryouts, youth basketball programs and summer recreation use (during inclement weather), the school programming takes priority and these facilities are available on a limited basis.



Other Facilities: Since the spaces for recreation are limited, the Town has used other town owned and private (non profit) venues:

- Town Hall Green- for community based passive and active recreation programs such as summer concerts, Easter egg hunt, Christmas Caroling, Halloween pumpkin lighting.



- Town Hall Great Hall- for community based passive and active programs such as yoga class, senior programs, and Christmas and craft events.



- Vic Geary Senior Center- for community based programs for seniors, craft making and community breakfasts.



- The Plaistow Public Library- for community based programs such as recycling events, craft events, etc.



- The Fish and Game Club- for community events such as Senior Service Fair, Craft Fairs and community dances and suppers.
- Plaistow Town Forest and trails- offer numerous walking/hiking/jogging /nature viewing activities for all citizens (both passive and active).
- Venues outside of the community are considered as well- movie theaters, community trips to live theater (Boston, Epping, Beverly, etc), bowling alleys, craft events, fairs, and the like are considered all part of our current facility choices to offer programming for Plaistow citizens.

Other Land: There are a number of town-owned parcels, some of them quite near PARC, which would be suitable for some recreational activities, such as trails, etc. These properties have never been reviewed nor designated for Recreational use by the Town.

Funding:

- Operating Budget- The Operating Budget contains the funds necessary to maintain the existing facilities and to support the existing programming.
- Warrant Articles- Large capital expenditures are usually funded via Warrant Articles, rather than in the Town’s Operating Budget, as they are usually are of a one-time nature. For example, PARC was constructed by a Warrant article.
- Fund-raising by Friends of Recreation- Friends of Recreation have sponsored numerous fund raisers. Some examples include funding to build playscapes at both Smith field and PARC, manage the concession stand at PARC, and during summer concerts.



Table (R-1) on the following page summarizes the current facilities available for Recreation programming:



Table R-1: Recreational Facilities in the Town of Plaistow

Facility	Owner	Size (approximate)	Includes
Pollard Elementary School	Timberlane Regional School District (TRSD)	1 Ball Field = 116,480 sq.ft. Gymnasium= 4250 sq ft.	1 Ball Field 1 Gymnasium Playground equipment
Timberlane Regional Middle School	(TRSD)	All fields =845.000 sq ft. 4.250 sq ft.	1 Baseball Field 1 Softball Field 1 Soccer/Multi-Purpose Field 1 Field Hockey Field 1 Cross Country Running Course 1 Outdoor Basketball Court/gymnasium 1 Indoor Basketball Court
Timberlane Regional High School	(TRSD)	All fields= 825,00 sq ft.) PAC Center= 14.400 sq ft. Tennis courts=21.200 sq ft.	2 Softball Fields 1 Baseball Field 4 Multi-Purpose Fields (Soccer, Lacrosse, Field Hockey, Junior Football and Baseball) 1 Indoor Basketball Court/gymnasium 1 Field for Both Soccer and Football (With Lights with Stadium Seating) PAC Center (Theater with seating for 900) 4 Tennis courts 1 Track (Around the Soccer/Football Field)
Recreation Field located on Ingalls Terrace (Smith field)	Town of Plaistow	2.16 acres	1 minor league baseball field 1 outdoor basketball court Skateboard Park 1 picnic area with shaded enclosure Playscape equipment and swings 2-Story Maintenance Shed Well ,bubbler/no toilet facility
Recreation Field Located at 51 Old County Road (PARC)	Town of Plaistow	21 acres	2 Baseball Fields 1 Softball Field 2 Multi-Purpose Fields 1 Playground Area with Swings and playscape 2 Basketball Hoops 1 Sandbox 1 Concession and Maintenance Shed Running Water and Bathroom Facilities
Town Forest with Walking Trails	Town of Plaistow	?	Includes Numerous Trails Maintained by Boy Scouts and Conservation Commission
Pollard Park (Around Town Hall)	Town of Plaistow	?	Gazebo Open Space (Grassed Area) for Various Recreation Events Band Concerts
Plaistow Town Hall, Great Hall	Town of Plaistow		Open hall and stage area Kitchen space
Plaistow Public Library	Town of Plaistow		Meeting rooms for events Kitchen space
Fish and Game club Vic Geary Center, Senior center American Legion Hall	Fish and Game Club American Legion American Legion		Open hall Kitchen space

Source: Town of Plaistow, NH, Recreation Commission and Department

Plaistow's Recreation Needs

In order to meet the recreation goals and objectives identified in this chapter, Plaistow needs more recreation facilities and more land space dedicated to recreation. This was true in the 2004 Master Plan when our town was compared to the state's 2000 standards. The town **did not meet a single requirement for recreation in the year 2004 and is still not meeting these minimum standards in 2012.** Plaistow continues to be woefully lacking in recreation space and facilities.

This lack of adequate land and facilities has been a concern to Town officials and residents for well over a decade. Here are some examples where the need has been identified and documented-

Community Growth: The Planning Board recognized the impact that population growth would have on the existing shortage of recreational facilities and established, per RSA 674:21 V, a zoning ordinance and recreational impact fee in 1999. This allows the Town to assess a recreational impact fee for new residential development as a means to compensate the town for its share of the recreation's capital costs constructed or to be constructed in anticipation of growth. All funds collected are transferred for deposit in a recreation impact fee account and are used solely for the purposes described in the zoning ordinance.

Beede Site Reuse: The Board of Selectmen identified a Community Center and additional playing fields as the highest priority Town needs during the development of the Beede Site Re-use Plan in 2002. When polled by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as to how the Beede Site could best be used by the Town, the Beede Site Re-Use Committee recommended, and the Board of Selectmen unanimously agreed, that a Community Center and additional athletic fields were the top Town priority. This was voted into the official record and was used by the EPA to determine the level of cleanup required for that site.

Plaistow First Committee: The Plaistow First Committee, appointed by the Board of Selectmen to study existing town-owned property and to make recommendations for future acquisitions, identified additional Recreation facilities as the highest priority need for the Town. The committee's Phase 1 Recommendations in their report to the Board of Selectmen includes many recommendations regarding the need for additional space to improve recreation opportunities for all Plaistow citizens. In addition to some specific actions that the Board of Selectmen should take, they urged that the Recreation Commission's Strategic Needs Plan (see below) be used as the driving force to deploy/acquire facilities/land dedicated to recreational activities.

Strategic Needs Plan: The most accurate indication of the demand for the facilities/land space is the needs expressed by Plaistow residents and observed by town officials. The Recreation strategic needs list addressed needs such as passive and active recreation requirements, and low-cost/no cost programming for families. While no formal, costly surveys or studies were completed, the Recreation Commission and Department have informally gathered data from the community. The Recreation Commission used their knowledge of the broad needs of families to support their strategic planning document of 2012:

Recreation Strategic Needs - Adopted April 11, 2012:

- Trails to include running, walking, biking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, picnic areas and shelter, rock climbing, sledding hills, bouldering, fitness trails, and letterboxing trails
- Additional playing field or diamonds to include T-Ball, Softball, Babe Ruth Baseball, Senior Leagues, etc...
- Community Garden Space

- Additional Courts for Volleyball, Bocce ball, Horseshoes and Badminton
- Dog Park
- Pool Areas, wading pool and swimming pool, water elements
- Ice Rink
- Community Center, with gymnasium
- Adult Fitness Park
- Additional Playground
- Additional Basketball Court
- Wall Ball Area
- Batting Cages
- Driving Range
- Chip and Putt Golf
- Climbing Wall
- Floor Hockey Rink
- Frisbee Golf Course
- Fenced in Whiffle Ball Court

Strategic Needs Plan Considerations:

- It should be noted that Plaistow's needs for recreational facilities will be different from state-wide norms due to the specific demographic and physical characteristics of the Town. For example, Plaistow is one of 2 towns in the state of NH with NO natural body of water to use for beaches, boating areas or water supply. Therefore it is necessary then to offer MORE land based recreational activities than other towns that have water as a resource.
- A key consideration for expansion of the PARC facility is that large concentrated areas allow for the ability to host large events, such as summer recreation programming, league baseball tournaments, and summer concerts/fireworks. Also, games can occur simultaneously in one area for a variety of age groups (i.e. parents would not have to drive between locations when more than one child is involved in a sport), and this allows the more efficient use of maintenance staff.
- While using the privately owned facilities of Vic Geary, Fish and Game and American Legion for recreation has been possible, limited availability of these venues reinforces the crucial need for a community center. A community center owned and operated by the Recreation Department on town owned land. A community center where Plaistow's population would have a gathering place for meetings, after school youth activities, town-sponsored senior activities during the day, summer events, craft events, weekend events and any other activities that would best be done indoors. The

The Recreation Department and Recreation Commission would like to extend our search to accommodate this crucial need as our community grows.

Gaps that exist between Needs and existing conditions

It cannot be emphasized enough, that the gaps between existing condition and needs (both current and future) are plentiful. The Recreation Commission was well aware of these gaps as they prepared their Recreation Strategic Needs List.

Gaps:

- Community center with gymnasium
- Field space
- Open space
- Water resources

The challenge is in the planning for the future, finding sources for land and the money to support such recommendations. The challenge is meet the goals and objectives of this chapter by the best possible method.

Recommendations

- The Recreation Commission and Recreation Director develop a proposed implementation plan for the items identified in the Recreation Strategic Needs Plan, including a “time-phasing” of the items and estimated costs.
- The Board of Selectmen develop an action plan to consider the Recreation-related recommendation received from the Plaistow First Committee, including estimated completion dates and estimated costs.
- The Recreation Commission work with the Conversation Commission to determine how the Town Forest could be utilized to support recreation-related programs, such as:
 - Make use of existing trails in the Town Forest.
 - Create and maintain trails that could use the existing P.A.R.C. facility as a trail head.
 - Trail creation should provide opportunities for fitness as well as historic, cultural, and environmental awareness.
- The Recreation Director work with the Highway Safety Committee to explore the best way to connect recreation facilities; including sidewalks and/or bike paths.
- The Recreation Commission work with the Historical Society to identify historic sites (e.g. Kelley Town) that could be incorporated into any proposed trail system.
- The Conservation Commission work with representatives from the abutting Towns of Atkinson, Hampstead and Kingston to expand on the Town Forest trail system developed by the Plaistow Boy Scouts.
- The Recreation Director consider the advantages of providing both neighborhood-based recreational activities as well are activities more appropriate for a large central facility such as PARC.
- The Board of Selectmen continue to work toward the best, ultimate use of the Beede Site property, considering the Record of Decision and what is in the better interest of the Town.
- The Recreation Director and Town Manager work to pursue any federal or state grants that can be used to offset the costs of recreational facilities/land space.
- The CIP Committee consider the use of Recreational Impact Fees when preparing the CIP as a means of offsetting recreation capital expenditures.
- The Planning Board pursue all appropriate Impact Fees collected by the Town per RSA 674:21 V for new residential development as a means to compensate the town for its share of the recreation’s capital costs constructed or to be constructed in anticipation of growth.
- The Recreation Director aggressively pursue donations and fund raising from a wide variety of sources: local business and individuals. An example might include, donation accepted for advertising businesses “on the fence” at PARC.
- The Board of Selectmen establish a Recreation Capital Reserve account in order to level the yearly tax impact of large recreation capital expenditures..

Summary

It is essential that all town boards and commissions consider these recommendations as guidance documents for planning for the best interests of the present and future citizens of Plaistow. Recreation is extremely important to quality of life, and in terms of community development, increasing recreational opportunities is identified as a way to develop a stronger sense of community through participation in shared activities. Plaistow must continue to work to provide adequate recreational opportunities for all citizens and must remain vigilant in that pursuit.

