

Rye Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment Committee  
Report to Rye Board of Selectmen  
November 7, 2016

Dear Selectmen:

The Rye Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment Committee (RRFNAC), a Selectmen appointed committee, has been meeting since February, 29, 2016 to discuss and review the Space Needs requirements for the Rye Recreation Department.

The Selectmen's Charge to the Committee is included as **Attachment A**. Basically the committee was charged with:

- To define the Recreation Department facilities and space needs, including future needs.
- Insure the Public is provided opportunities for input and is informed...

Based on the charge given the committee, we are pleased to provide this report to the Rye Board of Selectmen.

Since February 2016 the committee has accomplished the following tasks:

- Met 6 times as a committee (Meeting minutes are included in **Attachment B**). All meeting were posted.
- Worked with town consultant, Christopher Williams Architects on the evaluation and inventory of existing space being used by the Recreation Department (**Attachment C**).
- Christopher Williams Architect gave a PowerPoint presentation to the committee (**Attachment C**).
- Committee member Garritt Toohey conducted a summary of existing space being used by Recreation Department for programming (**Attachment D**).
- Committee member Beverly Levesque prepared a questionnaire for parents of Rye Recreation After School Program participants. (The summary of responses is included in **Attachment E**).

## **PROGRAMMING**

The Rye Recreation Department provides a wide range of programming to the community, servicing residents from ages 4 to 95. The Recreation Department does a remarkable job of providing many recreational options for participants of all ages with limited facilities that are under the control of the Recreation Department. In 2015, the Recreation Department had 1,780 participants and programs were held in 12 different facilities.

Programming that can be offered to the community is restricted or limited by the facilities available to accommodate the programming. Over the years some programming has been discontinued because participants have expressed their displeasure with the facilities being utilized, and as a result has chosen not to participate.

During the meetings of the committee, it was brought to our attention that there is no recreation programming offered for the teens of Rye. With the lack of available space it is unlikely this situation will change.

Another issue the Recreation Department faces, is that some of the more popular programming, the Over 55 Programs and the After School Program, are held at facilities where the Recreation Department is a “tenant at will”. There are no long term agreements in place to secure the space so the Recreation Department staff can be assured of proper space to offer the programming from quarter to quarter, and year to year.

The Over 55 Program is becoming increasingly popular, has over 150 participants and is growing. The Over 55 Lunch and Fitness Programs are all held at the Rye Congregational Church. The After School Program, a much needed program for Rye’s working families, averages 45 children per day. This program is held at the Rye Elementary School.

## **STORAGE**

Storage for Recreation Department equipment is severely lacking, and is currently located in various locations throughout town. This creates inefficiencies in having Recreation Department staff travel to remote sites to get the proper equipment. Also because some of the spaces are unheated, or susceptible to mold (old Police Station) and mice, equipment becomes damaged and is being replaced prematurely. This inadequate storage situation is resulting in unnecessary labor costs and replacement costs. The Recreation Department requires secure, climate controlled storage.

## **ADA COMPLIANCE**

Per the review by Christopher Williams Architects of the existing facilities used by the Recreation Department, some of the facilities do not meet ADA codes. Facilities that do not meet code include the Recreation House, the Recreation Office modular, and the After School Program space at the Elementary School. This could potentially become a major problem to the town in the future.

## **PUBLIC RESTROOMS**

When the restrooms at the recreation area were constructed, they were meant to be temporary. Also the restrooms were designed so they could be accessed by either inside or outside the building. This creates a safety issue for people using the restrooms and a security

issue for the building. The restrooms are heavily used year round and should be replaced with a more secure commercial type design.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the work summarized above, and attached documents, it is clear the Recreation Department does not have the proper space to meet the needs of the Rye community now and in the future. The Rye community is very active and there is a good cross section of participants from all ages that participate in year round programming. This requires not only proper program space but also proper storage space.

Where possible, the use of town owned school building space and school fields is encouraged to eliminate the duplication of facilities. But even with the use of school property there is not enough space available to properly support the recreation needs of the community.

We understand the Recreation Department cannot offer every program requested, and spent two meetings reviewing and discussing the programs being offered by the department so we had a better understanding of the space needs. However, what has become clear is that the Recreation Department is having a difficult time supporting the basic programs being offered because of the number of residents that enjoy the recreation programming and the lack of proper space and storage to support the requests of the residents.

We recognize the importance the Selectmen place on the town tax rate so we have come up with a list of recommendations that can be budgeted and phased over a number of years.

### **Short Term Recommendations**

1. Immediately address storage situation for recreation department program equipment and general equipment that supports the upkeep and maintenance of the recreation fields. Storage should be climate controlled and located at the Recreation area. Confirm the storage area identified in the Williams report is accurate and develop budgets for a climate controlled storage structure that can be constructed while a master plan is being developed.
2. The Selectmen in association with the Recreation Commission support funding an update to the Recreation Area land use master plan, including limits of recreation area land, resource areas, potential parking expansion areas, future storage building and other potential future building(s). The Master Plan should address the needs of the recreation department and town for the next 15 years.
3. The Selectmen negotiate a multiyear agreement with the School District for the use of the elementary school for the After School Program and the basketball program. This will provide some stability to the recreation department knowing the space is available for the near term.

4. The Selectmen negotiate a multiyear agreement with Rye Congregational Church for the use of that facility for the Over 55 Program. While we recognize it may be difficult for the church to commit, it may be beneficial to their financial plans knowing the town is interested in renting space for the near term.

### **Long Term Recommendations**

1. As outlined in the Williams report recommendations the current recreation house and recreation modular are inadequate for programming and staff working conditions. The Williams report concludes approximately 10,174 sf is needed to support the Recreation Department programming, staff space and storage (Program Space 4,835 sf; Administrative Space 1,185; and Support Space, 4,154 sf). Note the Recreation Department current space used at the Recreation Area is approximately 2,500 sf.

The Williams report recommends the two outdated and temporary buildings at the Recreation area be replaced with a Community Center. The Williams report suggests that the community center not include space for the After School Program or Basketball programs and that these two programs should remain at the Elementary School.

We recommend the Selectmen in association with the Recreation Commission consider funding an architectural study to determine the costs to construct a Community Center at the Recreation Area, including additional parking to support the new building.

2. The public restroom situation needs to be addressed, by either including them in a new community center design or by constructing a new restroom facility.

We appreciate the Selectmen's attention to the above matters.

Very Truly Yours,

Rye Recreation Facilities Needs Committee

Gregg Mikolaities, Chairman

### **Enclosures**

Attachment A: Selectmen charge to the committee

Attachment B: Committee Meeting Minutes

Attachment C: Christopher Williams Report and PowerPoint presentation

Attachment D: Garritt Toohey Space summary

Attachment E: Beverly Levesque Afterschool summary

