

Hartford Parks and Recreation Commission

AGENDA

Date:
May 14, 2020

Time:
5:30 PM

Location:
Online

- Call to Order
- Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (March 2020)
- Citizens Comments
- Commission Member Comments
- Director's Report
- Old Business
 - Review Department Goals & Objectives
- New Business
 - Review Liaison Roles
 - Discuss Community Center Interest
 - Discuss Changes in Department and Programming during Pandemic
- Agenda Items for Next Rec Commission Meeting
- Adjournment

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**Parks & Recreation Department
Significant Activity Report
April 6, 2020**

Respectfully Submitted By: Scott Hausler, Director

Program Highlights

- The Department implemented its Mobile Offsite Operations for Emergency Operations. The plan is designed to provide a framework to address the response to consequences of any disaster or emergency that would affect the population and/or property within Hartford, and to provide more specific response information in emergency public health situations such as COVID-19. The Mobile Off-Site Operations Plan is designed to work within the guidelines of the Town of Hartford Emergency Operations Plan.
- Hartford Parks & Recreation has taken steps to prepare for situations that would impact programs and services through the Parks & Recreation Department. Our priority will be the health and safety of our program participants, employees and volunteers throughout the Town of Hartford. During emergency situations such as COVID-19, that threaten public health safety, Hartford Parks & Recreation will consult guidance from local Public Health Officer and State of Vermont agencies to assure our facilities, programs and users are safe for occupancy and usage if they are to remain open.
- The Administrative Assistant, Karen McNall was moved off site and is working following our Mobile Off-Site Operations. Karen has worked directly with the Town Manager and the Public Health Officer on the COVID-19 Newsletter that is updated Monday's and Friday's. On behalf of the Department, we commend her on all the efforts to support the Town Team as we work through this situation.
- The Department continues to utilize the COVID-19 resources available to us through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Vermont Recreation and Park Association (VRPA) as we continue follow guidance from the Town on Parks & Recreation programing and use of our facility. The Director is involved in on-line resources provided by NRPA and agencies across the country as we all continue to deal with decisions that are impacting all Parks and Recreation Departments. In addition, the Director is involved in a weekly Zoom Meeting with Directors of Parks and Recreation Agencies within the State, discussing impacts on each other's department, providing support to each other and working together to become unified in our communities needs and messaging to the general public.
- Jay McDonough, Superintendent of Programs continues to work on planning for the summer Camp Ventures Program. Despite the current situation, we continue to plan for a full summer of activities. This includes reviewing summer staff applications and preparing for the seasonal hires. All positions will be contingent upon decisions made by the Governor of Vermont related to public activities and programs.
- The Superintendent of Recreation Programs has completed interviews for the Leadership Positions for Camp Ventures.

- We are preparing for alternative programming for the camp if it is necessary. It is important to understand that the Camp Ventures is a fee-based program where revenues offset the cost of operational expenses.
- Department continues to monitor Governor Scott's Executive Orders related to April 15th Social Distancing Guidelines for our spring sport programs.
- We have held off on purchasing of equipment and supplies and programming expenses such as baseball, spring soccer and our summer camp. This will be assessed weekly by the Department and Finance Director.
- The Spring Season of the Hartford Youth Lacrosse is cancelled due to COVID-19. This impacted just under 90 youth participants in the spring program. The Youth Lacrosse Program may run a summer season, but it is uncertain at this time.
- The Department may be looking at on-line registrations without payment. This eliminates processing of refunds on programs later in the spring and summer. If programming resumes, we will request the program fee prior to the start of the program.
- The Department continues to communicate with all the volunteers for the spring and summer programming. All are understanding of the situation and hopeful programs will be able to resume.

Parks/Facilities

- The Department received notice from the Department of Corrections (DOC) regarding work crew programs. The current program is suspended until further noticed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Director provided the Town Manager with financial impacts due to the loss of DOC crews. The Director and the Superintendent of Parks & Facilities will be working on a plan on how we can manage without DOC and what that might look like.
- All park locations are open for the public to access except for Quechee Falls, Watson Park and Clifford. Quechee Falls and the Watson Dog Park fall within social distancing areas that are small and confined park areas. For this reason, these parks areas will remain closed. Snow is still piled in front of the gate at Clifford. Once the ice melts, we will be able to open the park location.
- Due to social distancing with the COVID-19 we have locked up picnic tables and transportable goals due to encouraged social gatherings at Maxfield.
- Kilowatt South gate was opened. The boat ramp will remain barricaded until Great River Hydro installs the buoys. Even then, we will have to work with the Health Officer to determine if opening the boat launch is possible based on social gathering restrictions and the Stay Home-Stay Safe order.
- Fenced in playing courts and playgrounds remain closed at Maxfield, Clifford, Ratcliff, Commons, Watson and Lyman.
- The staff with Parks & Recreation continue to provide safety checks of all park areas daily and are identifying projects that will need to be addressed when full essential staffing can resume.

- One of our employees continues to be off on COVID-19 Sick/Childcare reducing our staff capacity of 2 in the park's division. Between essential duties, staff will be completing several free on-line trainings through GroundskeeperU and Playground Safety through several playground and recreation supply vendors. In the recreation division, we have one employee that is working reduced hours and use of COVID-19 Sick/Childcare.
- The Superintendent of Parks & Facilities continues to update parks operational plans related to COVID-19. This includes a plan to address return to work under restrictions and assuring staff have the proper personal protective equipment.
- The Superintendent of Parks & Facilities continues to study for the pesticide applicators licensed. In addition, the Playground Safety Course has moved to an on-line course. This course will give the Superintendent the National Playground Safety Course Certification.
- The Department continues to review the proposals for the Turf Care and Maintenance Program. We hope to award the program the second week of April.
- The Department will need sanitizer, gloves and disinfectant wipes for daily cleaning and usage of equipment. Items are not in stock or available through our vendor.
- Department finalizing the purchase of the replacement mower for the park operations. This item was in the current budget and came in under budget.

Parks & Recreation Department
Significant Activity Report
April 20, 2020
Respectfully Submitted By: Scott Hausler, Director

Program Highlights

- Over the past couple weeks the phone traffic along with program planning continues to keep the remote office busy. Most calls are in reference to summer activities as families continue to plan for their summer. Karen continues to support the efforts of the Town Health Officer with promotional materials and postings regarding Covid-19 in the community. Additionally, the department will begin to experience with virtual programming with a Card Making Class with Karen. Additionally, we have been posting informational programs such as the STEM program on Turfgrass for Kids sponsored by the New England Sports Turf Managers Association.
- The Chamber of Commerce informed us the Balloon Festival is changing its event date to September of this year. This causes a direct conflict with the Glory Days Festival. This might be the end of Glory Days as we know it today. The Department will need to decide on the Glory Days Festival and the resources needed to continue this community event. The Balloon Festival is a huge opportunity for the Department to generate on average \$7,000 to \$10,000 in scholarship funding each year through parking cars at the festival. The parking program is supported by the Brian Hanson Scholarship Fund and many members of the community and provides financial support to families in need of recreation program support. Glory Days has struggled with community planning support and it very well could have run its course in the community.
- The Department participated in a letter to Governor Phil Scott through the Agency of Human Services and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development who best represent the membership of the Vermont Recreation and Park Association (VRPA). VRPA is made up of 350 park and recreation professionals in the State of Vermont. The letter focused on seasonal employment concerns for programs, camps and park maintenance along with the need for guidance related to special programs and gatherings including events such as the Independence Day Celebrations in Hartford and the entire state.
- We will begin promoting the upcoming summer concert series. The Department is hopeful physical distancing measure in place later in June will allow for events like our summer concert series. We have discussed physical distancing options for our concerts that generally attract 50 to 100 spectators each week. Concerts are free to the general public.
- Staff continue to work on the Ventures Summer Camp Program as we start planning for a camp that may be located at several sites allowing for smaller groups. Additionally, being able to implement social and physical distancing methods in the program. All staff positions have been offered and will be contingent upon decisions made by the Governor of Vermont related to public activities and programs. We are preparing for alternative programming for the camp if it is necessary. It is important to understand that the Camp Ventures is a fee-based program where revenues offset the cost of operational expenses.

- Our priority continues to be the health and safety of our program participants, employees and volunteers throughout the Town of Hartford. Hartford Parks & Recreation continues to consult guidance from local Public Health Officer and State of Vermont agencies to assure our facilities, programs and users are safe for occupancy and usage if they are to remain open.
- The Department continues to be involved in a weekly Zoom Meeting with Directors of Parks and Recreation Agencies within the State, discussing impacts on each other's department, providing support to each other and working together to become unified in our communities needs and messaging to the general public.
- The Upper Valley Recreation Association made up of recreation programs and departments across the Upper Valley will be holding a meeting on April 21st to discuss spring and summer sports and programs.
- We received word that the Post 84 Legion Baseball Season has cancelled for the year. We still await the Vermont Principles Association decision on Spring Sports for High School Athletics. This will drive what we do for spring programming and planning for what summer programming might look like.
- The Department continues to communicate with all the volunteers for the spring and summer programming. All are understanding of the situation and hopeful programs will be able to resume.
- A spring photo contest was started using on-line social media outlets. The community is encouraged to submit a special spring photo. We have received 6 photos so far. Photos can be sent to recreation@hartford-vt.org

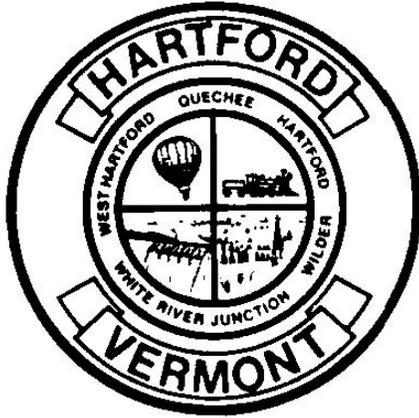
Parks/Facilities

- All park locations continue to be open for the public to access except for Quechee Falls and Watson Park. Quechee Falls and the Watson Dog Park fall within social distancing areas that are small and confined park areas. For this reason, these park areas will remain closed until physical and social distancing guidelines change. Tennis courts enclosed and gated fields are closed to play but continue to be a struggle monitoring as we are doing what we can to promote physical distancing and disallowing group games and activities.
- A new social and physical distancing sign was installed on A-frames at Maxfield and Kilowatt. We are also installing signs at the Recreation Reserve at Hurricane Hill.
- Staff continue to service downtown trash receptacles and service all the dog waste stations in town parks.
- All the community parks and resources will be published in our new Parks and Facility Guide being designed by Karen McNall. The guide will describe the facility, its amenities and provide information on the type of programs and activities take place at the facility. Additional information will assist residents with information on how to reserve spaces for activities and events.
- The Superintendent of Parks & Facilities completed an orientation April 20th with individual staff members as work in the parks will commence this week. A schedule to address local park

areas with cleanup and annual services were reviewed. Direct contact exposure was addressed, and staff reviewed protocols for protecting themselves and maintaining a clean and safe work environment.

- Full maintenance operations are planned to begin the week of April 20th. This will require cleanup of all areas prior to mowing. We anticipate mowing selected sites immediately with a labor crew of two staff. Seasonal staff will need to come on board in one week or we will begin to fall behind of opening of parks such as Quechee Falls Park, maintenance cemeteries and being able to keep up with maintenance of Maxfield.
- The Turf Treatment Program was awarded following a bid process. Turf treatments will begin next week on playing surfaces which will require posting for a 24-hour cycle. Completing the turf treatment controls the broadleaf weeds along with crab grass. The grub control treatment and a round of fertilizer will be applied at the same time.
- Without the Department of Corrections (DOC) this spring, we are planning to incorporate mowing of the town owned cemeteries with an anticipated return of DOC the beginning of the summer. If they are unable to return, it is highly likely the locations will need to be contracted out for mowing. The Director provided the Town Manager with an anticipated cost to have them serviced at an estimated \$12,000 annually. This only covers mowing of the non-active town owned locations.
- Parks & Recreation Staff continue to provide safety checks of all park areas daily and are identifying projects that will need to be addressed when full essential staffing can resume.
- The Superintendent of Parks & Facilities continues to study for the pesticide applicators licensed. In addition, the Playground Safety Course has moved to an on-line course. This course will give the Superintendent the National Playground Safety Course Certification.
- We anticipate the roadway and parking lot at Maxfield will be regraded and new gravel added to address the road imperfections and elevate the area near the granite curbing.

**HARTFORD, VT
PARKS AND RECREATION
DEPARTMENT**



Strategic Plan

2020 - 2025

“Our mission is to serve the recreational needs of the community by offering lifelong learning through recreational and educational programming utilizing existing parks and facilities.”

Adopted by the Hartford Parks and Recreation Commission May 13, 2004
Updated and approved at Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, December 2006
Updated and approved at Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, December 2011
Reviewed objectives at Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting December 2012, 2014
Updated by Parks and Recreation and Staff December 2015
Updated by Parks and Recreation and Staff April 12, 2018
Updated by Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, March 14, 2019

Hartford Parks and Recreation Department

Strategic Plan

Introduction

The Hartford Parks and Recreation strategic plan is an effort by the Parks and Recreation Commission and Department staff to prepare for the long-range future of the department from 2018 through 2023.

This strategic plan is an attempt to follow the adopted vision and mission statements of the department and to establish a path of direction for the department. This strategic plan will give the necessary direction to the staff in developing programs, short and long term capital projects, addressing social community needs and managing our natural resources.

Several of the goals and objectives mirror revised 2018 Town Master Plan (Parks and Recreation sections) and the department administrative yearly goals and objectives. This strategic plan was developed utilizing the strategic plan model outlined in the book “Management of Parks and Recreation Agencies,” NRPA Publication 1999.

The components of the strategic plan consist of:

- The Vision Statement
- The Mission Statement
- Environmental Scan (SWOT analysis)
- Goals
- Objectives (action plan)
- Time Line of Action Plan

Vision and Mission Statements

Vision:

Something for Everyone – where the citizens of Hartford and surrounding communities recognize the vital necessity of recreation through diverse programs that reach all, regardless of age, gender, race and economic backgrounds. A department that cooperates with all community groups to bring a variety of recreation opportunities to the citizens of Hartford. The parks and facilities are maintained at the highest quality and improved on a regular basis to meet the future needs of the community.

Mission:

Our mission is to serve the recreational needs of the community by offering life long learning through educational programming utilizing existing parks and facilities.

Environmental Scan (SWOT analysis)

The Environmental Scan is a “look” at the department and the Town of Hartford community through the process of a SWOT analysis. The analysis encompassed the reviewing of the Department’s and Community Trends, Issues, Opportunities, Strengths and Weaknesses/Threats.

Trends:

- Individual awareness of health and wellness.
- Increase in community conservation / environmental activities.
- Youths specializing in one specific sport year round.
- Increased demand (higher expectations) on facility / park amenities and types of activities provided at facilities / parks to citizens.
- **Loss of outdoor pool venue for community.**
- Growing population and growing diversity of population make-up.
- Increase in the lack of outdoor experiences and increase in obesity.
- Increase in activity focused on community collaboration/cooperation – partnerships.
- Needs/demands of older adults (55 years and over) increasing.
- Increase in social networking services and use of the internet.

Issues:

- Quality of Life (maintaining)
- Obesity – people are overweight - creating health concerns.
- Five village town (transportation challenges **and lack of one location for all activities**)
- Lack of consolidated Park Division storage.
- **Maintaining current facilities before building new.**

Opportunities:

- Strong presence of community / civic activities (STORM, Youth Sports Clubs, active Chamber of Commerce, environmental groups and Lions/Rotary/Kiwanis clubs, Hartford Community Coalition)
- Utilization of Maxfield property
- Continued Master Plan development of Kilowatt Park
- Diversity of the demographic makeup of the five villages and potential connecting trail system
- Replacement of the Sherman Manning Pool through a community driven process.

Strengths:

- Professional staff
- Quality programs
- Park system
- Volunteers (individual and groups)

Weaknesses/Threats:

- Overall park athletic field and facility maintenance awareness to keep the properties in excellent condition (example: WABA / Pool / Maxfield)
- Tax base and constraints on Town budget to fund Park and Recreation delivery of services.
- General economic development of region and local area.
- Not prepared for the influx of an older population and increase in the general population.

Recreation

A. Organizational

Goal 1: Continue collaboration and adapt to the community's cultural and demographic make-up.

Strategy 1: Maintain a variety of recreational opportunities for all residents.

Actions:

- a. Continue to collaborate with special interest groups to provide recreation programs and special events; Polar Express, Covered Bridges Half Marathon, Balloon fest and Special Events.
- b. Continue to explore the possibility of constructing a river trail from Downtown White River Junction to Ratcliffe Park, which is part of the Latham Works Community Group.
- c. Continue relationships with the Lebanon/Mascoma Trail Network to connect with White River Junction.

Goal 2: Secure a plan that will guarantee funding to maintain our existing recreational programs, resources and facilities.

Strategy 1: Develop financial giving opportunities and establish secure funding resources.

Actions:

- a. Establish a capital reserve fund to secure funds in the operating budget to go toward existing capital maintenance and repair of existing facilities.
- b. Develop a give a gift catalog that shows images and descriptions of park and recreation related items that the Department can use through a donation.
- c. Establish a revolving fund for recreation programs.
- d. Identify cost-saving maintenance practices and landscaping options for parks and public spaces.

Goal 3: Implement or participate in a community-wide needs assessment, maintaining a 4 to 5 year cycle.

Strategy 1: Initiate participation in community needs surveys or develop internally to collect data on a 4 to 5 year cycle.

Actions:

- a. Continue to demonstrate through evaluation of community need through needs assessment and program evaluations for desired new programs and facility offerings.

Goal 4: Create a sub-committee consisting of a variety of vested interests to establish a community center.

Strategy: Meet with community partners and stakeholders to identify a vested need for a community indoor recreation facility.

Action:

- a. Create a steering committee to focus on the feasibility of developing a community center for the Town of Hartford. Look at developing in collaboration with the Bugbee Senior Center.

B. Programs

Goal 1: Have services and facilities meet the community's cultural and demographic make-up.

Strategy 1: Maintain a variety of recreational opportunities for residents of all ages, cultural diversity, and abilities to advocate and promote a healthier community population.

Actions:

- a. Plan and implement town-wide indoor and outdoor active-living programs for families and adults.
- b. Maintain community wide events by enhancing its program through collaborations with other organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Merchant Associations.
- c. Continue participation in the Hartford Community Coalition.

Strategy 2: Facilitate intergenerational social awareness and diversity.

Action:

Hartford Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan

- a. Create and implement two intergenerational art/music programs per year (cooking, quilting, knitting and card making).

Strategy 3: Meet the programming logistics of working parents through a more on-line presence.

Actions:

- a. Continue to engage in social media outlets to promote further programs and offerings.

Strategy 4: Build on existing coalitions within the community and identify new opportunities.

Actions:

- a. Continue to collaborate with special interest groups to provide recreation programs and special events: Polar Express, Covered Bridges Half Marathon, Balloon Fest and other special events.
- b. Continue to explore the possibility of constructing a river trail from Downtown White River Junction to Ratcliffe Park with the Latham Works Community Group.
- c. Continue relationships with the Lebanon/Mascoma Trail Network to connect with White River Junction.

Strategy 5: Continue to promote programs that create one-town awareness versus a one-village image.

Actions:

- a. Program activities that create visitation to each village (Valley Quest, Tree Walk tour and fun run/walk events)
- b. Maintain the Parks & Recreation motto of five villages, three rivers, one town.

Goal 2: Secure a plan that will guarantee funding to maintain existing recreational programs, resources and facilities.

Strategy 1: Develop financial giving opportunities and establish secure funding resources.

Actions:

- a. Establish a capital reserve fund to secure funds in our operating budget to go toward existing capital maintenance and repair of existing facilities.
- b. Develop a give a gift catalog that shows images and descriptions of park and recreation related items that the Department can use through a donation.
- c. Establish a revolving fund for recreation programs.
- d. Identify cost-saving maintenance practices and landscaping options for parks and public spaces.

Goal 3: Provide and maintain desired and high-quality programs and services.

Strategy 1: Create short-term and long-term measurable assessments of Parks and Recreation services and facilities.

Actions:

- a. Use evaluations at the end of every recreational program to identify what worked, didn't work and desired new programs.
- b. Maintain the Survey Monkey online program and apply the data to evaluation summaries.
- c. Implement or participate in a community wide needs assessment and program evaluations, every 4 to 5 years.

Goal 4: Evaluate the need for a community indoor recreational facility.

Strategy 1: Engage community partners and stakeholders in the process.

Action:

- b. Create a steering committee to focus on the feasibility of developing a community center for the Town of Hartford.
- c. Consider collaboration with the Bugbee Senior Center.

Goal 5: Integrate Town and School Services and Facilities

Strategy 1: Have department youth & adult athletics become an integral part of developing an entire town/school sport programs and facilities.

Actions:

- a. Maintain relationship with Hartford High School Athletics using their system to aid in the development of the youth sport and recreation programs.
- b. Maintain representation on the Hartford Field Facility Use Committee.

Goal 6: Maintain the rural character of our community landscape.

Strategy 1: Facilitate community appreciation of preserving opens spaces and forested areas as recreational resources.

Action:

- a. Schedule community conservation/environmental educational programs over the course of a year working in partnership with the Hartford Conservation Commission.

Time Line

The time line is a matrix showing anticipated schedule when objectives / actions will be implemented and/or the start of an objective. The time line activities will vary due to the budget constraints, staff ability to accomplish tasks, political climate and community/economic development. (see attached matrix)

Hartford Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan

Action	Based on a calendar year				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Organizational					
1a. Collaborate on special events	x	x	x	x	x
2a. Plan to maintain existing facilities (WABA / Pool / Maxfield)	x	x	x	x	x
2b. Continue Lathem Works Trail Project	x	x	x	x	x
2c. Community Center Feasibility Study			x		
3a. Needs Assessment			x	x	
4a. Give a Gift Catalog		x			
Programs					
1a. Enhance adult program offerings		x			
2a. Enhance Glory Days Festival	x	x	x	x	x
2b. Continue program partnership with HCC	x	x	x	x	x
3a. Maintain Survey Monkey	x	x	x	x	x
4a. Develop Youth / Adult Programming for all people	x	x	x	x	x
4b. Continue Field Use Committee	x	x	x	x	x
5a. Enhance programming, including turf program at waba	x	x			
Social					
1a. Two intergeneration programs	x	x	x	x	x
2a. Visibility in each village	x	x			
2b. New logo and branding of the Department	x	x			
3a. Conservation and environmental education	x	x			
4a. On-line presence within the community		x	x	x	x
		x			
Townwide Community Survey			x		
Prepare for 15 CAPRA review	x	x			