

# Fiscal Year 2017 Narrative

## Department: **Parks & Recreation**

### 1. What do you want the Selectmen, Finance Committee and public know about what you've done in Fiscal Year 2015 and Fiscal Year 2016 (to date)?

- Programs -
  - MPRD continues to experience solid participation across its entire program spectrum. Most significantly, we continue to see a consistent increase in participation in our Summer Playground Program for the past three years. We attribute a lot of this success to our enthusiastic, creative, and dedicated staff.
- Parks & Facilities -
  - Skate Park Construction - After three years, the multi-phased Unity Park Improvement Project will come to a close early this winter, with the completion of the skate park. The Unity Skate Park will be fully constructed of concrete, and should be a major recreational attraction in the town for years. The facility will accommodate both beginner and pro-level skateboarders and BMX riders, and will solidify Unity Park as one of the premier outdoor recreational destinations in the area. The Skate Park Project would not have been possible without critical funding from the Park Acquisition & Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant through the Massachusetts Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs, the Tony Hawk Foundation, donations obtained by the Skate Park Committee, and the Town of Montague.
  - Sway Fun Glider (Accessible Swing Project) - This project was a perfect example of the positive impact that caring citizens can make in our community. Motivated by a local boy who suffers from a rare genetic disorder, a small group of local citizens came together and raised approximately \$20,000 to purchase and install a glider that is accessible for **all** populations, including those who are wheelchair bound. In May of 2015, with the help from members of the Turners Falls Fire Department and local citizens, the Sway Fun Glider was installed and has become the crown jewel of the Unity Park Playground.
  - Paul Winske Access Award; Stavros Center for Independent Living - Influenced greatly by our new Sway Fun Glider, Unity Park was recognized in October of 2015 for its accessibility for persons with disabilities.
  - Lake Pleasant Parks (Norma's Park & Rutter's Park) - The Parks & Recreation Department is currently working with the Franklin County Housing & Redevelopment Authority (FCHRA) in developing a master plan for both parks. The master plan process will be funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and we will be hosting a number of public hearings through the spring of 2016 to help us identify needs for both facilities.
- Playful City USA Honoree for Second Year - This is a designation that the entire town can take pride in, not just the Parks & Recreation Department. Funded through the Humana Foundation, "Playful City USA" Communities provide innovative work to strengthen their communities through play, and by developing kid and family-friendly environments. There are a number of agencies, businesses, and citizens who help mold the town of Montague into this distinction.

During their June meetings, the Parks & Recreation Commission approves a Strategic Plan for the upcoming fiscal year. The department is currently implementing its FY16 Strategic Plan, with the FY17 plan to be voted upon this coming June. Typically any items that are not met in a given fiscal year are moved to the next. That being said, items that we anticipate for FY17 are noted. The following is our **Strategic Plan (per division) for FY16** where completion is slated for June 30, 2016. Completed items have a checkmark;

**I. ADMINISTRATIVE –**

- Revise Departmental Master Plan
- √ Be awarded and maintain "Playful City USA" designation through 2016

**II. \*PROGRAMS -**

- Continue to develop partnerships with local schools, non-profits, local businesses and other town departments to diversify and strengthen current programs and develop new programs
- Research and apply to grants that enhance current programs and services
- Continue to improve training for program volunteers

**III. \*SPECIAL EVENTS –**

- Develop new special events which will broaden financial resources to support our Sponsor-A-Child Scholarship Program

**IV. PARKS & FACILITIES -**

**Unity Park –**

- √ Begin & Complete construction of the Unity Skate Park
- √ Replenish wood fiber surfacing on playground (scheduled maintenance)

**Highland Park –**

- Pursue the development of a master plan for the park.

**Montague Center Park –**

- Pursue the development of a master plan for the park.

**Norma's Park & Rutter's Park, Lake Pleasant -**

- √ Dependent upon CDBG funding, begin the Master Plan process to address facility improvements.

*\*MPRD perceives that the development of programs and special events is an on-going and dynamic process, where we not only continually seek new program opportunities, but also seek new methods and systems for current programs to run most efficiently.*

**Departmental Financial Study:** The Parks & Recreation Department performs an internal study on an annual basis to evaluate its current practices relative to their financial resources and how they are utilized. It helps us identify where/how we are funded, and how we allocate those funds at the administrative, programmatic, and resource level. Its ultimate goal is to allow us to maximize opportunities, and work as a developmental tool for our departmental budget and Strategic Plan.

**2. Please explain any significant changes in your budget for Fiscal Year 2017, including any staff changes (if that impacts your budget).**

There are no significant changes to our FY17 budget, other than a request to increase *P/T Wages Temp* to address the continuing rise in minimum wage. Minimum wage will go from \$9 to \$10 per hour, resulting in an expense of approximately \$3,102. Having our Revolving Account take the full impact of this cost would force us to raise program fees to discomforting levels. Having both the Operating & Revolving Budgets share the burden (\$1,551 each), would make the increase in fees much more palatable to our customers. A similar request was made for our FY16 budget, and we anticipate this trend will continue for the foreseeable future.

**3. Is there anything specific or new that you plan to accomplish in Fiscal Year 2017 with the level-services budget you've requested?**

Other than the goals and objectives noted above, there are no specific or new plans that are in development that would affect our Operating Budget.

**4. Is there anything you'd like to ADD to your level-services budget for Fiscal Year 2017? If so, describe what it is, what it would cost, and the benefit to the town.**

We have no additional budgetary requests for FY17.

**5. What are your plans for improvements and projects for the next five years?**

- **Improvements to Norma's & Rutter's Parks in Lake Pleasant** - As stated previously, the Parks & Recreation Department is currently working with the FCHRA in developing a master plan for both parks. The master plan process will be funded by CDBG, and we will be hosting a number of public hearings through the spring of 2016 to help us identify needs for both facilities. The focus will primarily be on playground improvements, but other areas of the parks will be looked at as well to ensure that we meet the needs of other populations and age groups. Our ultimate goal is that this master plan process will result in block grant funding for a construction phase in the next couple of years. Neither park has seen any significant improvement in the last couple of decades making any consideration long overdue.

- **Unity Park Fieldhouse -**

- Convert Garage Area into Programming Space - As the multi-phase Unity Park Improvement Project comes to a triumphant close with the construction of a new Skate Park, we turn our attention to improvements for the Fieldhouse. One of the more ambitious goals we have in store is to convert the garage area into programming space. This area will not only provide support for some of our current services, it will also allow us to develop new programs and revenue streams for the department. We estimate that we will be able to develop approximately 1,000 square feet of space, but do not feel a substantial capital campaign is needed at this time. We *hope* to financially support these improvements through our Revolving Fund. We anticipate the replacement of the garage doors, painting, and other minor improvements being needed to realize these goals.

- Sustainability - This past fall, the Director of Parks & Recreation met with the Montague Energy Committee (MEC) in hopes of identifying areas where the Fieldhouse could become more sustainable and energy efficient. As a result of the meeting with MEC, the Parks & Recreation

Department feels it can easily address some minor items like stemming air leaks, and installing LED lighting which shouldn't be of any significant cost. Installing insulated doors and purchasing Energy Star rated equipment will be at a much higher cost, so obtaining these items over a period of a couple of years may be more viable. We will also be contacting MassSave to inquire about an energy audit and any other municipal programs and services that may be available.

- Exterior Improvements - To say that the Fieldhouse needs a facelift is somewhat of an understatement. The department is currently coordinating with DPW and the House of Corrections to paint the two remaining, unpainted sides of the building by the summer of 2016. Installing vinyl siding on the northern side of the building may be an option at some point down the road.

- **Montague Center Park Improvements** - Minimal improvements have been made to Montague Center Park in the last fifteen years, but MPRD hopes to develop a master plan for this facility in the next couple of years to help define any shortcomings. Accessibility seems to be the biggest issue with Montague Center Park. Accessing the playground area is somewhat of a challenge, and there is also no formal parking area, making it difficult to maximize its usage by the general public. This past spring the Mohawk Ramblers, as well as a few residents of the village, helped dismantle the large playground structure at the old Montague Center School. Therefore, any future plans for Montague Center Park's playground area will include the re-installation of this structure. Due to the higher income level of the village fewer grant opportunities exist, which would necessitate the financial burden of any improvement project to be placed on the town.

- **Highland Park Improvements** - Similar to Montague Center Park, Highland Park in Millers Falls has not realized its potential. Highland has seen a considerable amount of improvements over the past ten to fifteen years; primarily in the playground area. Moving forward, the one area in particular that needs the most attention is the park's shed. It is not only used for storage, but also for restroom use during programs. Aside from the shed, we should also look at addressing accessibility issues and making some improvements to the ballfield. Highland Park improvements would qualify for a greater number of grants than Montague Center, so the department will be looking at those funding options as we move forward.