

TOWN OF MONTAGUE, MASSACHUSETTS

**PARKS & RECREATION
DEPARTMENT**

MASTER PLAN
2016



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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

The Montague Parks & Recreation Department and Parks & Recreation Commission are proud to offer you this valuable community resource that defines the current state of the department. A Master Plan is, essentially, a current inventory of the department's services, facilities and resources. It is based upon site and program analysis and evaluations, and is a graphic representation of how those elements relate to one another and how they can accommodate the recreation needs of the community.

1. Administration - This plan helps define "service gaps" and works as a compass to navigate us through developing the Strategic Plan
2. Programs - Evaluates current offerings with the possibility of modification and/or the creation of new programs.
3. Special Events - Evaluates current offerings with the possibility of modification and/or the creation of new special events to benefit the Sponsor-A-Child Scholarship Program.
4. Parks & Facilities - Assists in defining areas that need upgrading/renovating, or developing new facilities and amenities

Through the information gathered in a Master Plan, a *Strategic Plan* is developed. A Strategic Plan is often called an "Action Plan" and typically determines the direction the department will take in one, three, five, ten, or even twenty-years. While a Master Plan is completed every five years, a Strategic Plan is reviewed and revised every year to evaluate how effective the department has been in accomplishing their goals. Additionally; while a Master Plan defines issues regarding programs, services and facilities, a Strategic Plan establishes a strategy by which those items are to be addressed. The Master and Strategic Plans are essentially looked at as being parts of a map; a Master Plan is "where you are", while the Strategic Plan is "where you need to go".

One should also note that some findings and statistics gathered from the Montague Open Space and Recreation Plan are also cited in this text, and we acknowledge and appreciate the time and effort the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee invested in that process. We would also like to recognize the efforts of the Town Clerk's Office and the Highway Department for providing us much needed information used in this Master Plan.

And finally, we would like to thank the residents of the Town of Montague. The success of the Parks & Recreation Department would not be possible without the community support it receives from all of you.

Sincerely,

Parks & Recreation Staff

Jonathan J. Dobosz, CPRP, CPO

Director of Parks & Recreation

Jennifer L. Peterson, Clerk/Bookkeeper

Parks & Recreation Commission

Dennis Grader, Chairman

Barbara Kuklewicz, Vice Chairperson

Albert Cummings, Secretary

General Information

Montague Parks & Recreation Department
56 First Street
Unity Park Fieldhouse
Turners Falls, MA 01376

Office Hours:
Mondays – Fridays
8:30am – 4:30pm

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e-mail: recdir@montague-ma.gov

Clerk/Bookkeeper – Jennifer L. Peterson

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Mission Statement

The Montague Parks and Recreation Department is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life and the sense of community to the residents of the Town of Montague through the delivery of safe, healthy, diverse, accessible, quality, year-round leisure-time experiences, in addition to, maintaining and preserving its parks and resources.

Vision Statement -

We will enrich the lives of our constituents and contribute to the cultural and economic fabric of our community through the combined efforts of programs, special events, parks and facilities, and administration;

*.....**PROGRAMS** – we will offer creative, accessible, and well-structured programs where community members will be able to experience physical, mental, and social benefits*

*.....**SPECIAL EVENTS** – we will help build a sense of community with events that attract and encourage social bonding amongst citizens of various backgrounds. These events will also provide a positive revenue source for our scholarship program.*

*.....**PARKS & FACILITIES** – we will provide clean, accessible, and safe parks and facilities which will be a source of pride for community members*

*.....**ADMINISTRATION** – we will display a high level of customer service, where administration will strive for continued efficiency in various organizational duties, in addition to properly training all staff and volunteers in departmental standards and practices*

CURRENT ELECTED OFFICIALS & APPOINTED STAFF
(As of November 2016)

Federal Government

Elizabeth Warren, D-MA - Senate
Edward Markey, D-MA – Senate
James McGovern, D-MA 2nd Dis. - House of Representatives

State Government

Senator, Stanley Rosenberg D-MA, Amherst
Representative, Steven Kulik, D-MA, Worthington

Montague Selectboard

Christopher Boutwell
Richard Kuklewicz
Michael Nelson
(Chairperson position changes annually)

Town Administrator
Steven Ellis

Parks & Recreation Commission
(with Re-election year)

Dennis L. Grader, Chairman (2017)
Barbara Kuklewicz, Vice Chairperson (2018)
Albert Cummings, Secretary (2019)

Parks & Recreation Department

Jonathan J. Dobosz, *CPRP, CPO
Director of Parks & Recreation
*(*Certified Parks & Recreation Professional, Certified Pool Operator)*

Jennifer L. Peterson
Clerk/Bookkeeper

A BRIEF HISTORY OF RECREATION in the TOWN OF MONTAGUE

The Town of Montague has enjoyed a long and diverse history of recreation. The significance of recreation in Montague, like most places, can be traced back through the centuries when activities like hunting and fishing were not only looked at as a method of survival. As the centuries passed and European colonization expanded, Montague (known as Hunting Hills) was a very popular fishing and hunting spot for settlers from the Hatfield, Northampton and Amherst area. Without question fishing and hunting have endured, recreationally, throughout the centuries. In the 19th century, as agricultural and industrial opportunities expanded the population of Montague grew considerably. Swimming was very popular due to places like Lake Pleasant, Green Pond and the Connecticut River. In those days, churches and other houses of worship were the primary source of “organized recreation” as they entertained picnics, fairs, dances and other forms of events open to the general public.

As we all know, a characteristic that has made our community unique is the five villages that make up the Town of Montague. Each village has its own distinct personality and this fact is certainly demonstrated as how the people in each village have spent their leisure-time over the years. In Montague’s largest village, Turners Falls, recreational opportunities were most readily available in the downtown area where the population was most dense. Unity Park, which was also the hub of town activity throughout the early part of the 20th century, provided opportunities including; the Toboggan Run, the very popular Bandshell that housed community concerts, a Wading Pool, numerous semi-pro baseball and football teams, Turners Falls High School Football games, tennis leagues and tournaments, and adult softball (Fraternal League). The Toboggan Run, in particular, included a rather large tower that extended over the Unity Park Hill for those who were brave enough to sled down in the winter. The Wading Pool was also very popular where in the summer of 1935, over 10,000 children used the facility. Unity Park was also used for numerous community-wide activities including skating, horseshoe tournaments, the Community Christmas Party, and Community Field Day. Unity Park, still one of the most popular parks in the area, has been used by the Montague Men’s Softball League, Co-Ed Softball League, youth baseball and softball programs, the Summer Playground Program, as well as many other programs and special events.

Other popular recreational sites in Turners Falls during the early to mid-1900’s included the Connecticut River for fishing and boating, and Hibernian Hall (Avenue A; now Powertown Apartments) which housed an indoor basketball court. There was even a *Community Service Industrial Basketball League* which played at Hibernian Hall that included teams from Russell Cutlery, Keith Paper, Esleek Paper, McLaine Silk, and Montague City Rod Shop – to name a few. Basketball at Hibernian Hall was so popular, that at one time there were thirty-six teams that played on that revered court. The Turners Falls Inn was also a popular spot as it had bowling alleys in their basement. The *Girls Recreation League* was one of the more popular users of that facility. The Town also showed great ingenuity (and guts) where the Fire Department used to flood L Street to allow skating and “coasting” (sliding down the L Street hill). Members of the Fire Department obviously took appropriate precautions by closing off the intersections to motor traffic.

Montague Center also proved to be a village of considerable activity. The main hall, or Gymnasium, in the Town Hall became a very popular site for various recreational outlets. Aside from being used for basketball (as it still is), residents utilized the room for plays, performances, dances and village meetings. Montague Grange No. 141 also proved to be a valuable community center by entertaining plays, performances, dances, and Grange meetings. The Montague Grange is still a thriving community resource to this day. Montague Center Park, located at the corner of Station Road and School Street, entertained community baseball and softball games. In the middle of the century a play area was constructed in the eastern portion of the park. From the 1970’s to the early 1990’s the Montague Men’s Softball League utilized the ballfield for some of their regular season and tournament games. Currently, Montague Center Park is the home to the department’s youth baseball program (Montague Independent Baseball - MIB), Summer Playground Program, the Winter Carnival, bonfires and other special events. In 2002, MPRD purchased new playground units for this play area. It should also be noted that for decades the First Congregational Church has held “Montague Old Home Days” in the village proper, attracting numerous people from around the area. This weekend festival is usually scheduled in late August every year.

Throughout most of its history, Millers Falls was primarily a mill town. Bordered by the Millers River, a tributary of the Connecticut River, this village became a considerable industrial community thanks to waterpower from the Millers River and substantial railroad traffic. Highland Park, located on Lyman Avenue just above the village proper, is the primary recreational facility in the village. Over the years the park and ballfield has entertained baseball teams, the Montague Men's Softball League, the Co-Ed Softball League, as well as being one of the sites for our Summer Playground Program. There is also a playground with numerous play-units that has proven to be a very popular site for many families living in the village. In 2002, MPRD purchased new playground units for this play area. In recent years, the Millers Falls Village Community Connection has held a block party during the later part of the summer.

The village of Lake Pleasant was once a popular resort community. In the late 1800's the village prospered with its attractive lake and gingerbread style cottages. Many who came brought the energy of The Spiritualist Movement, which further popularized Lake Pleasant. The village also became a major local hub for outdoor swimming. Lake Pleasant and Green Pond, current water town supplies, were extremely popular for water recreation. Outdoor swimming continues to rate among the highest priorities for Montague residents, and these sites have always been looked at when discussing public swimming facilities. Currently, there are no plans to bring swimming back to these sites. There are also two playgrounds currently located in Lake Pleasant; Norma's Park on Lake Pleasant Road, and Rutter's Park located on Montague Street. These facilities, as well as the ballfield adjacent to Norma's Park (currently owned by Northeast Utilities) have offered recreational opportunities in one of the most aesthetically pleasing areas in town.

Montague City, the second village to be developed, was planned to have become a major city due to the benefits it would reap from railroad traffic and waterpower. Though this plan never quite materialized, Montague City has become a strong residential community that has seen considerable growth in the service industry in the past few years. Early in the 1900's, a playground with ballfields was developed next to the Montague City Rod Shop, across from the Farren Care Center. Since the late 1980's, this area was no longer used by the town in this capacity and has since grown over with considerable vegetation. At this time, the Parks & Recreation Department does not manage a facility in Montague City. However, we are currently looking at the feasibility of developing a park for the near future.

Lastly, the recreational history of Montague would not be complete without noting the Montague Plains. "The Plains", a rare benefit to any community, is a very unique geological area. Consisting of considerable forestland that borders the villages of Turners Falls, Millers Falls, Lake Pleasant, and Montague Center, The Plains is the largest inland Pitch Pine-Scrub Oak community in Southern New England. Throughout the years, the Montague Plains has been used extensively for legal and even illegal recreational activities. The Montague Planning & Conservation Department is currently spearheading efforts to broaden and improve legal recreation use like hiking, hunting, nature interpretation, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, mountain biking, etc. that are compatible with protection of rare species and other ecological resources.

LAWS, ARTICLES & EVENTS of SIGNIFICANCE

The following is a list of the most significant laws, articles and events that resulted in the current formulation of the Montague Parks & Recreation Department, Parks and Recreation Commission, their programs, parks and resources. *This information was gathered through assistance from the Montague Town Clerk's Office, and is indicated here as they were written.*

Annotated Laws of Massachusetts – (1912)

S.15 of Chpt. 45

Obligation to Provide Playgrounds –

“Every town having a population of more than five thousand which accepts this section, and every city and town having such population which has accepted corresponding provisions of earlier laws, shall provide and maintain at least one public playground conveniently located and of suitable size and equipment, for the recreation and physical education of the minors of such city or town, and at least one other playground for every additional twenty thousand of its population.”

Montague Special Town Meeting - June 30, 1921;

Article 2

Public Park and Playground Committee

“Voted that the moderator appoint a committee to investigate and report at the next annual meeting or a special meeting if called before the annual meeting – on the matter of procuring land for the use as a public park and playground.”

Committee Appointed

Norman P. Farrell, Fred J. Frennl, Joseph S. Keating, Rev. James W. Casey, Chester A Davis, Wallace B. Warston, Mr. Frank W. Hauce, Mrs. Stuart Winch, Mr. George W. Starbuck.

Annual Town Election - March 6, 1922;

(Vote known as “The Playground Act”)

Shall section fifteen of chapter forty-five of the general laws requiring certain towns to provide public playgrounds be accepted by this town?

	<u>Precincts -</u>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	
Yes	688	79	45	812
No	145	11	19	175
Blanks	565	81	44	690
Annual Business Meeting				

March 13, 1922 - Article 52;

Selectmen Appointed Playground Committee

“Voted that the town authorize and direct its board of selectmen to be a committee until otherwise order or voted, to carry out all matters in relation to the provisions of Chapter 45. Section 15. Of the General Laws, the “Playground Act” so called. Also to accept of a deed or deeds of any land given for said purpose. As in their judgment it is for the best interest of the town.”

Park Property is Transferred

Deeds were passed between the Montague Company and the First Unitarian Society by which the latter acquires from the former a tract of land at the lower end of Second Street containing a little over six acres, and which is in the future to be known as “Unity Park”.

Annual Business Meeting - March 12, 1923;

Article 56

Establishment of a Playground Commission

“Voted that the town have and establish a Playground Commission, as provided in Chapter 45, Section 15 of the General Laws, consisting of three voters of the town, said commission to be elected by ballot, beginning at the next annual meeting of the town,; One member for a term of three years from the date of his or her election, One member for a term of two years from the date of his or her election, One member for a term of one year from the date of his or her election, and one member each year thereafter for a term of three years from the date of his or her election, said commission to serve without compensation, who shall be sworn to the faithful performance of their duties, and vacancies may be filled as provided in such cases for school committee in towns unless otherwise provided by law.”

Article 57

“Voted to pass this article (Election of Playground Commission)”.

Article 58

Appropriation for Playground

“Voted 135 in the affirmative and 42 in the negative, that the town raise by taxation and appropriate the sum of \$10,000.00 for the purpose of grading, equipping and supervising the playground, the money to be expended under the direction of the School Committee.”

Article 59

Playground Equipment for Millers Falls

“Voted that the town raise by taxation and appropriate the sum of \$300.00 for the purpose of purchasing playground equipment to be placed on play-ground at the Highland Park, so called in the village of Millers Falls, said sum to be expended under the direction of the School Committee.”

Annual Business Meeting - March 7, 1959;

“Voted on motion of Mr. Sidney Cohen that the vote taken on Article 26 of the March 8th 1958 Annual Town Meeting as printed in the Annual town Report to be corrected to read as follows:

Article 26. voted to pass over this article

Art. 2. Voted to accept the reports of the following committees.

1. Committee To Investigate The Recreation Program.

I. Organizational Terminology

A. Title of governing board should be changed from the Playground Commission to the Montague Recreation Commission.

B. Reclassify present permanent employees as custodians.

II. Create the position of DIRECTOR OF RECREATION

A. This position would be created with the idea of eliminating one of the custodial positions.

B. Duties

1. Plan and supervise maintenance

2. Adjust custodian’s hours to suite the needs of the season.

3. Utilize present facilities to better advantage

a. Hibernian Hall (\$1350 per year rent for four months use)

b. Building at Unity Park

4. PLAN, SUPERVISE AND PROMOTE a year-round program set up under the general policies of the Recreation Commission

5. Add activities for retired people

- III. *Maintenance: Equipment and tools inventory should be brought up to a point where the staff will be able to provide general care on its own.*
- IV. *Road running through Unity Park*
 - A. *Immediate steps should be taken by the Recreation Commission, in cooperation with the Selectmen and the Police Department, to control the traffic problem and ensure the safety of the children.*
 - B. *A permanent solution should be sought in conjunction with the planning board of the town – for example the relocating of the road.*
- V. *Capital Improvements*
 - A. *Wading Pool at Unity Park*
 - B. *Grounds at Unity Park*
 - C. *Water bubbler and toilets at Montague Center*
 - D. *Develop Picnic Area at Unity Park further*
 - E. *Long range plan of landscaping at all parks*
 - F. *Seek title to land at Millers Falls that is used for ballfield but is not legally the town land*

Approved by:

*J. Kosewicz
D. Russell
W. Borthwick
D. Bray
Mrs. R. Grimard
C. Gloski*

Voted on motion made by Mr. Raymond M. Trudel that the committee be commended for its labor in making this report.”

March 12, 1960 - Article 22;

Playground Commission changed to Park & Recreation Commission

Voted: That the name of the “Playground Commission” be changed to that of “Park and Recreation Commission.”

Voted Unanimous.

Directors of Parks & Recreation

Jonathan A. Butler (“Director of Community Services”); hired 1922 – 1959 (?)

John Skrzypek (1959 - 1979)

Dominic Longo (1979?)

Cynthia (Cynnie) Erho (1979? – 1996)

Janice Hogan (1996 – 2001)

Jonathan Dobosz (2001 – Present)

2014

Playful Cities USA Community

Since 2014, Montague has been recognized as a town that has "taken bold steps that make it easy for all kids to get the balanced and active play they need to thrive." The department applies for this distinction on an annual basis on behalf of the town. Grant funding opportunities are available for those recognized as being "Playful City USA Communities".

Unity Park

Design of Facility Award

Massachusetts Recreation & Parks Association

During the 2014 Massachusetts Recreation & Park Association Annual Conference, Unity Park was awarded best Design of Facility.

2015

Unity Park

Paul Winske Access Award

Stavros Center for Independent Living

Unity Park was awarded as being a facility that improved access for people with disabilities.

MEMBERSHIPS

The Parks & Recreation Department is a member of the following organizations/agencies;

- Pioneer Valley Parks & Recreation Assoc.
- Massachusetts Recreation & Parks Assoc.
- National Recreation & Parks Assoc.
- New England Parks Assoc.
- National Alliance of Youth Sports
- Playful Cities USA Community

Other ADMINISTRATIVE

Departmental Policies & Procedures & Other Administrative Documents

Policies and procedures manuals help provide direction for the department. All policies, procedures and administrative documents are dynamic in nature, and are subject to modification when the administration/Parks & Recreation Commission deems necessary. These documents may be viewed by the general public at the Parks & Recreation Office. The following are said manuals with the year in which they were initially approved by the Commission, and their scheduled revision (if applicable).

Name	Date of Publication or Last Revised
• Master Plan -	2016 - Every five years
• Strategic Plan -	Annual
• Marketing Plan -	2008
• Parks & Facility Rules & Regulations –	2004
• Park Naming Policy –	2003

Administrative Policies, continued;

- **Aquatics Program Policy & Procedures –** 2002
 - **Lifeguard Manual** 2002
- **Youth Sports Policies & Procedures –**
 - **Coaches Manual -** 2006
 - **Parents/Participants Manual -** 2006
- **Volunteer Policies & Procedures -** 2006
- **Summer Playground Program Policies & Procedures –** Annual
 - **Summer Playground Program Staff Manual**