



NARA PARK MASTER PLAN 2016-2026





Published by the Acton Natural Resources Department

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Town of Acton Recreation Department

NARA Master Plan, 2016-2026

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Winter Carnival, 2016

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Acton Recreation Department Mission Statement:
Building a sense of community through quality recreation.



Executive Summary

Overview of Master Plan 2016-2026

The time has come to memorialize the evolution of Acton's jewel, NARA Park. Beginning with the hand drawn conceptual plans in the 1980s, through years of politics and permitting, to construction in the late 1990s, NARA Park has been open to the public since 1999, providing us with 17 years of park management experience and enough time creating and learning to undertake the task of developing a Master Plan, a road map for the future.

The NARA experience can be completely passive for those on an early morning walk, listening to migratory warblers, or frantic and full of excitement on Saturday mornings during the soccer season. NARA is silent during a star gazing party, but filled with thunderous roars during a Led Zeppelin tribute band performance on stage. Our task is to plan for these extremes and everything that lies between.

We manage a delicate and highly vulnerable nine-acre, groundwater-fed swimming pond, and in doing so, must attempt to control the many avenues by which non-point source pollution enters the aquifer. With each passing season, NARA grows as a regional destination. Our July 4th celebration plays host to thousands of visitors each year. NARA Park will soon become a major hub along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail with more than a 1,000 visitors a day.

In order to give this Master Plan a solid foundation, the Recreation Department conducted an online comprehensive park-use survey advertised extensively through both print and social media. The survey was open to residents and non-residents, with emphasis given to the views of Acton residents. Questions ranging from, "What needs to be improved?" to "Where would you like to see NARA in ten years?" were asked. Greater than 400 responses to the survey were received and these became the building blocks for the Master Plan to follow. For the past year, the Recreation and Natural Resources staff have met periodically at the park to examine all aspects of the property, from parking lots to shade trees. The valuable input from staff, having experienced the park so closely, was essential in molding the "goals" and "prioritized tasks" that comprise the long-term strategic plan.

We take great pride in managing and making NARA Park a destination to be proud of. All the behind-the-scenes meetings and logistics becomes worthwhile on nights when a band is playing on stage and the audience is dancing and singing along. The purpose of this Master Plan is to thoughtfully review current activities and plan for the next ten years by incorporating the wishes of the Acton citizenry, while drawing on the experience of our dedicated, talented and knowledgeable staff.

Tom Tidman
Director of Natural Resources



The World Famous Glen Miller Orchestra, Ampitheater, June 2015



Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this document is to take a look back and to make a plan going forward. This will provide decision makers and Acton residents with a clear, concise path for the evolution of NARA Park for the next ten-year period. To celebrate the first 20 years, we have provided many historical photographs and a detailed history of the genius and ingenuity found in the Acton staff and citizenry. The planning, construction, and program offerings at NARA Park have taken many years of incredible dedication.

To launch NARA into the next decade, we combined the input of the public and Town staff to establish the broad goals and objectives to support a Ten-Year Action Plan.





Paddle Boating, July 2015



Letters of Support

James Eldridge
Senator

William Mullin
Former Selectman

Bruce Stamski
Former Recreation Commissioner

Allen Warner
Former Recreation Commissioner



Amphitheater and Bathhouse, Thompson and Rose Architects

Volunteer of the Year Award



Barbara Willson, a long-time Acton resident, receives Acton Recreation's **2014 Volunteer of the Year Award** and a **Senate Citation** presented by Senator James Eldridge, at **Acton's Independence Day Celebration** held on July 3, 2015.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

SENATOR JAMES B. ELDIDGE

Middlesex and Worcester District

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TEL. (978) 460-8564

March 30, 2016

Tom Tidman
Director of Natural Resources & Conservation
Town of Acton
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Director Tidman,

As an Acton resident I have witnessed the amazing evolution of NARA Park from a dream to a regional destination. NARA has come a long way since it was built in the late 1990's and it has become a community treasure. A lot of the success of NARA is due to the dedication and expertise of the staff of the Recreation and Natural Resources Department.

I understand that as NARA Park continues to grow as a destination that there are greater demands on it that need to be addressed. I agree with the need to develop a long range master plan to carefully evaluate NARA's presence in Acton and its appeal as a regional destination. I know you and your team have worked hard to compile a master plan for NARA and I am confident that we can achieve a balance of use and protection.

The planning, construction, and program offerings at NARA Park have taken many years of incredible dedication by many individuals. The document you are putting together is a wise investment in our future and will provide decision makers and residents with a clear path forward for the evolution of NARA Park for the next 10 years.

Sincerely,

Jamie Eldridge
State Senator
Middlesex & Worcester District

William C. Mullin
9 Wilson Lane, Acton, MA 01720
wmullin@wcu.com

Received: December, 2015

Mr. Tom Tidman
Natural Resources Director
Town of Acton
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Tom:

I write to you with an uplifted heart! I am excited to write to endorse and encourage you on your work and the work of your team on the NARA Park Master Plan.

As you may recall, about 25 years ago, I began working, along with many others, on the concept of a recreational area in North Acton. At that time, the land was an unused sand and gravel pit. How far we have come to now have a beautiful successful park, where a scarred landscape existed back at that time. Congratulations to you and our whole Town for working so hard, for so many years, to create and sustain a vision of land reclamation, in furtherance of the simple idea that being outside and getting exercise is one of the greatest gifts of our human world.

It is my understanding that you are near to finalizing the new NARA Master Plan document. Thank you for sharing the draft document with me. I found the document to be very thorough, community-based and future oriented and, as such, I would like to share with you my formal endorsement of the NARA Master Plan.

As you may recall, at the time of funding for the construction of NARA Park, we created a very strong value proposition. The "Big Dig" was in full throttle back at that time and there was a regional thirst for gravel. Entrepreneurially, we issued an RFP to contractors to do all of the site work in exchange for the gravel. As I recall, in essence, the contractor ended up actually cutting the Town a modest check to do all that site work. This plan was and is a demonstration of creative thinking and respect for our taxpaying public. While my memory is a bit faded on this subject, my recollection is that for about \$2mm in taxpayer dollars, we now have an asset that is easily worth more than \$10mm. In addition to the obvious community benefits over the many years, NARA Park has been a tremendous financial investment for our Town. I am also particularly proud of and grateful to your team for continuing our goal that the operational costs of NARA would be covered through revenue garnered from the park. Brilliantly done!

The Future

The NARA Park Master Plan outlines several forward-looking goals and objectives, as listed below.

Goals and Objectives

1. Develop long-term park management strategy
2. Meet taxpayers' expectations through improved customer service
3. Preserve, protect, enhance park's natural environment
4. Construct and maintain facilities to meet user needs
5. Expand and enhance arts and culture

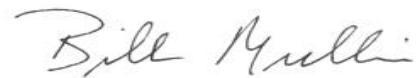
I believe that the goals and objectives align perfectly with the vision laid out back in the nascent days of the 1990's. We always believed that, like our world itself, NARA would be an evolving locus of nature and recreation. But, as with all human endeavor, we can never stand still. We must always look to the future, to the horizon and over the next mountain; I believe that the NARA Master Plan meets this objective.

Summary

Please know that I remain committed to the future success of NARA Park and am willing to help out in any way I am able to do so, in furtherance of your good work. Thank you again for taking the time to share the draft of the NARA Park Master Plan, which I fully endorse.

Rarely is it that we make a plan and that plan works out to meet our vision! NARA Park is a jewel of Acton, a natural delight and a safe recreational haven for all. We could ask for no more than that this jewel is sustained, maintained and polished for all of the generations to come.

Sincerely,



William C. Mullin

Reference: White Paper, A Policy Document Regarding Recreation in Acton, 1997 (Appendix Item)

July 11, 2016

NARA Master Planning Committee
Town Hall
Acton, MA

Dear Committee Members:

In 1999, as Chair of the Recreation Committee during the planning and implementation phases of NARA, I was asked to say a few words at the park's opening ceremony. I remember looking out over the fields and pond from the amphitheater and remarking how NARA would always be "a work in progress".

A few weeks ago on a warm spring Sunday afternoon, I had the opportunity to visit the park for the first time in over 5 years. I was astounded by how many people were enjoying the park. The picnic pavilion was full of happy faces and others were strolling around the pond or having pick-up sport games. It was a delight to see the Miracle Field. I also noted how well maintained the park was.

I have briefly reviewed the Master Plan and found the document to be thorough and informative, while also having a creative message about the future of NARA. The Master Plan will make sure that the existing park features will be maintained and that NARA will always be "a work in progress". Congratulations on a document well done.

Sincerely,

Bruce M. Stamski

March 1, 2016

Dear Acton Recreation Department,

Twenty years ago visionaries in this town recognized that Acton had an opportunity to turn a 40-acre abandoned gravel pit chocked with scrub trees and underbrush into The Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area, a tremendous resource for Acton citizens of all ages.

As with so many community projects and investments, timing was everything. The Town of Acton was able to leverage \$1.6 million dollars and much of the gravel remaining in the 40-acres into an estimated \$10 million dollar community resource. Since then, the Acton Natural Resources Department and the Acton Recreation Department have instituted programs, activities, and events that have more than fulfilled the hopes for NARA.

The NARA Master Plan describes all the ways that NARA has become truly our Town Park and provides us with the visitor statistics supporting that title. The offerings provided at NARA attract all citizens of the town. There are Programs that reflect the many cultures, faiths, artistic and athletic abilities, and needs for leisure activities.

I fully support the request of The Acton Recreation Department for funds to take the 2015 Survey Results and distill them into a plan for the future of NARA. What resources are needed in the forms of personnel, equipment, additional land, or structures in order for NARA to meet the continued needs of the citizens of Acton are a worthy investment.

I know that the Natural Resources Department and Recreation Department will continue to leverage any funding we provide into greater results than we could hope for.

Allen Warner
Member, Recreation Commission 1988 - 1999





History of NARA Park



Acton Minutemen at Acton's 275th Anniversary Celebration, July 2010



**FUTURE
BALLFIELD**

FUTURE POND



NARA Park, 2016



I-C: THE HISTORY OF NARA PARK

Recreational opportunities in Acton and the creation of NARA are strongly aligned. From pre-1970s, residents of the town consistently voiced the desire to have a town swimming facility. Prior to the construction of the High School swimming pool in 1974, youth swimming lessons were given at Walden Pond and the Recreation Commission then in place arranged for buses to transport the children to and from Walden. But the desire for a local pond remained. NARA was the long awaited fulfillment of this need. NARA's contribution to the recreational activities of the town were to be far greater than just swimming.

In the mid-70s, the Town of Acton purchased 40 acres of a former gravel pit in the northern part of town to be used as a back-up or second landfill. By the 1980s, however, the State and Federal environmental laws were making the development of landfills increasingly difficult, and the landfill use for this property was never fulfilled. In 1987, the Town Engineering Department had the idea to repurpose the land in North Acton as a park and swimming hole to meet the growing desire in the town to have a swimming facility. The Recreation Commission presented this idea to the Board of Selectman, who, in 1987, urged

the Town Manager, Don Johnson, to pursue the idea. This was the first time the public became aware of the vision for a Town recreation facility.

A major contributor for this visionary idea was Acton resident Bruce Stamski, at the time, principal of Stamski & McNary Inc., a local engineering company. He was on the committee to re-activate the Recreation Commission and, once reactivated, served as Chairman of the Commission. Bruce started work on the design of a park and in 1987, the town approved the appropriation of \$15,000 for a feasibility study.

In 1988, the Town hired Pine & Swallow Associates Inc. (P&S), an environmental engineering firm, to do the environmental and hydrogeological study with the major question being, can the area support a pond? The report, "Environmental Investigation, Proposed North Acton Recreation Area and Pond" was completed June 1989. The report is printed in its entirety in the appendix. P&S concluded that the area of the former gravel removal operations would be suitable to excavate for a pond. Bedrock elevation in the area where the future pond would be excavated was such that an average of ten feet of gravel could be removed. Dewatering would be necessary to excavate the nine-acre pond.

In the years from 1989 to 1991, the Recreation Commission worked on designing the site for maximum use. Bruce's firm, Stamski and McNary, created the conceptual drawing for the park that included an amphitheater and the layout of the pond. The design and engineering work was performed pro-bono by Bruce Stamski.

The process of applying for and receiving permits from EPA, DEP, the local Conservation Commission and Army Corps of Engineers was accomplished over the period of 1991 to 1993. Interestingly, the EPA would have preferred an in-ground pool rather than the construction of a pond. A public hearing of the Board of Appeals was held on September 9, 1991 to address a petition filed by Don Johnson, Town Manager, requesting a variance to allow the excavation of a recreation pond and related site grading at the site. The 40-plus acre site was in a Zone 3 Groundwater Protection District, and the variance was for the minimum distance to groundwater and the maximum allowed reduction within 10 feet of groundwater. In addition to Board of Appeals members, present at the hearing were Gary Rhodes, Building Commissioner; Bruce Stamski, Chairman of the Recreation Commission; Recreation

Commissioners; David Abbt from Town of Acton Engineering; Don Johnson, Town Manager; Norman Lake, Chairman of the Board of Selectman; Nancy Tavernier, Selectman; Ledyard Smith, COO of Rex Lumber; John Forrester of Rex Lumber; and several interested abutters. Town officials expressed strong support for the project, but there was some concern voiced by abutters and Rex Lumber. Citing the Pine and Swallow report, concerns were addressed and the request for the variance was granted. (Full text of Minutes are found in the appendix.)

Rex Lumber, owner of the adjacent property, had major concerns about the project. They hired a consultant who raised issues about safety and traffic. However, as a quid pro quo, it was agreed that a fence would be put up along the common border between Town property and Rex property at the Town's expense.

In the years from 1993 to 1995, little was done to move the project forward due to limited available funding from the Town. In 1995, the Town Manager named Tom Tidman, Natural Resources Director and Project Manager for NARA development. Thus, the NARA committee was created as an outcome of discussions for the upcoming

Acton 2000 celebration. In 1995 Town Meeting approved a request by the NARA Committee for \$50,000 to conduct additional studies and assemble a comprehensive package for consideration at the 1996 Town Meeting. Bidding was opened in February of 1996 and the following April the town voted to appropriate \$1.6 million for excavation of the pond site and construction of a bath house/ snack bar, amphitheater and associated parking lots and infrastructure.



Ampitheater roof before and after being lifted by crane onto columns



The contract for the excavation of the pond, site work and amphitheater terracing was awarded to C.R.C. Co. Inc. of Quincy, MA. They subcontracted to Bartolini Bros. of Fayville, MA for site grading and pond excavation. The true cost of excavation was offset by the sale of NARA gravel to the Big Dig, which was in full swing in 1998-1999, saving the town several million dollars.

Dexter Loring, a local contractor, now deceased, had dug the test holes for the site in 1988. He had the foresight to see the potential of offsetting some of the cost by selling the gravel from the excavation. The operation for the Big Dig was underway and there was an opportunity to sell the gravel to them. Over 180 thousand cubic yards of gravel were dug and hauled to the Big Dig site in Boston, offsetting excavation costs.

Once the nine-acre pond was excavated, at least another 14,000 cubic yards of loam was needed for landscaping and the development of the seven-acre ball field. The organic base for NARA loam came from the dredging of Ice House Pond in 1995. Material had been dried, mixed with sand and made ready for the NARA project three years later, an example of the foresight of the drivers of this project.

In 1996, following the start of construction of NARA, Bill Mullin presented a white paper to the Board of Selectman that made the very strong case for addressing the recreational needs of the Town. Acton, at that time, ranked poorly among area towns in providing adequate recreational opportunities. As a result of the white paper recommendations, the Recreation Department was reactivated in 1997 and an effort to find more recreational open space became a major priority. NARA was to provide the long awaited swimming facility. But even more, there were ball fields, a playground and an amphitheater, as well as a paved walking trail around the perimeter of the park. (See Bea Perkins History of the Recreation Commission in the Appendix.)

In March of 1999, NARA was given a \$7,500 portion of the Bell Atlantic NYNEX Mobile donation of \$26,000. This was used for the purchase of 12 benches to be placed along the walking trail at the park. The Recreation Commission, as part of its request for these funds, cited its concern for universal accessibility regardless of age or physical limitations, an ongoing priority. This continues to be an underlying principle in all of the enhancements and improvements at NARA since its opening.

The NARA Grand Opening event was held on September 18, 1999. It was an all-day event starting at noon and ending at 9:00 PM. There were bands performing throughout the day, food vendors offering snacks and cooking demonstrations throughout the park. There was a puppet theater, mural painting, boat races, martial arts demonstrations, and women's soccer. The day ended with a great fireworks display.

The following summer, NARA Beach opened to residents and non-residents. Beach memberships sold to residents numbered 650, while 40 additional memberships were purchased by non-residents. The July 4th Celebration was held at NARA with great success. Acton Day was

held in September and the following February, the first Winterfest was held. By 2014, NARA Beach was serving 814 members in addition to issuing 4,700 daily passes. Full Day Summer Camp programs serving ages 4 to 15 were being offered with 683 paid participants. Offerings included a Counselor-in-Training program for 14- and 15- year-olds.

NARA has become an integral part of Acton's recreational experience. Since opening in 1999, NARA has continued to offer all residents the opportunity to enjoy a broad range of recreational offerings: Summer Camp for children, adult softball, winter sledding and year-round walking, as well as an extensive schedule of cultural events and celebrations.

The following is a timeline of NARA's growth and maturation as reflected through the Recreation Department's Annual Reports. It illustrates both the success of the NARA story and the potential to continue to develop this park into a major regional recreational resource. NARA's history is ongoing.



Granite post installation in preparation for future boardwalk, Summer 1999

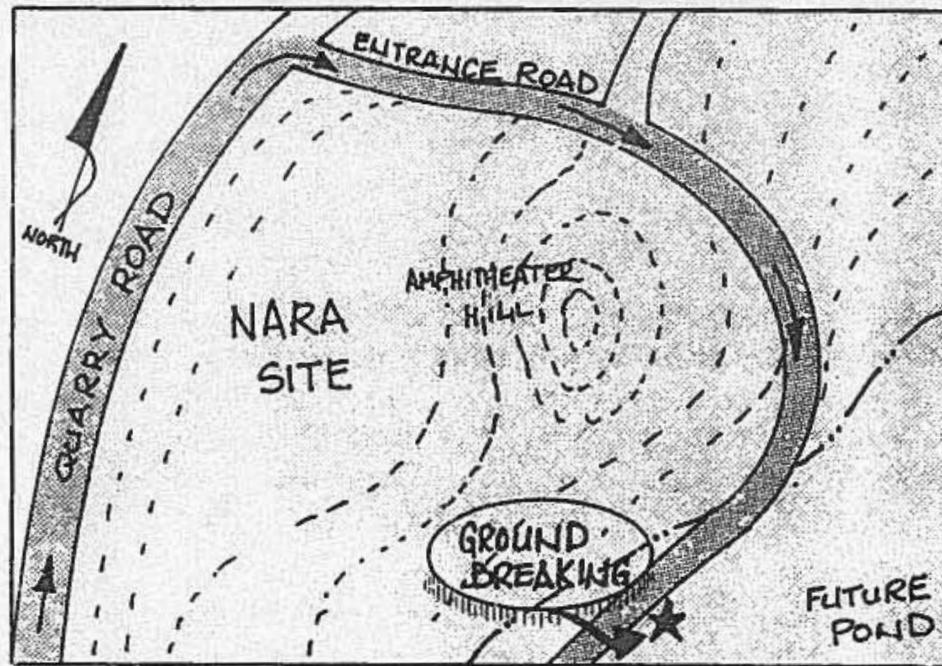
You are cordially invited to attend the

North Acton Recreation Area

"Ground Breaking Ceremony"

When : Tuesday September 17th @ 8:00 am

Where: Quarry Road entrance (see map below).





Chronological History



THE ACTON CITIZEN

Committed to our community.

VOL. 3 No. 26

ACTON, MASSACHUSETTS, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1996

SEVENTY CENTS

RRRRRRRRACB-BY 50RTW8-001
STANSKI & MCNARY, INC.
80 HARRIS ST
ACTON MA 01720-4104



The ground breakers. Selectman Bill Mullin, Mary Michelman, NARA chair Allen Warner, Conservation Officer Tom Tidman, Town Manager Don Johnson, Selectmen Nancy Tavernier, Wayne Friedrichs, Doré Hunter and Herman Kabakoff. (photo by Bob Wilse)

NARA ground breaking

The pouring rain failed to dampen the spirits of the ground breakers for the North Acton Recreation Area on Tuesday. The joy of having the recreation project finally get started after years of delay far outweighed any inclement weather.

"I consider this a contract across generations," commented selectman Bill Mullin. It was Mullin who as chair of the selectmen last year was the point man for the NARA project. "The land was acquired by a past generation, we will be the ones to build the recreation facility and the younger generation will be able to enjoy it." Mullin added that he thinks it will take about ten years for the site to reach its full potential.

"I think this ground breaking is a new beginning for Acton," Mullin said. "We will see the character of the Town change dramatically, the build out will be complete and we will focus on the infrastructure and facilities."

Mullin credited Bruce Samski as the force behind NARA. All during the late 80s, Mullin said, "Bruce kept this project alive. He always believed that it could be accomplished and he spent countless hours making it happen." Mullin also cited the work of the NARA committee chaired by Allen Warner who worked on getting the project through Town Meeting and are now working on the design of the site.

The contractor has a year to dig out the pond and landscape the area in preparation for the ball field, walking paths, amphitheater and beach.

— Ann Chang

AML gets \$2.1M State grant

ANN CHANG

The long wait is over. The Board of Library Commissioners has granted the Acton Memorial Library \$2,003,299 for the planned expansion of the library.

Acton was in competition with 93 other libraries throughout the State with projects totaling \$91.5m, all trying to get a piece of the remaining \$23,522,484 in construction grant money.

"This shows we have a good design," commented Library Director Wanda Null.

Null was so excited by the good news, she made a general announcement in the Library on Thursday afternoon when the call came through.

In part, Null said, credit for the project's success must go to the architects Tappé and Associates. Null added that the designer selection board was aware of Tappé's prior success in getting State grants for their building designs.

Town Meeting voted to fund the entire

continued on pg 4

Voter turnout hits an all time low

ANN CHANG

Only 7.1 percent of the registered Acton voters voted in the State primary on Tuesday. The small turnout was attributed to the rain and the fact that there were no contests in the major offices.

There were 544 Democratic ballots cast and 255 Republican. In Acton, Congressman Marty Meehan was the top vote getter with 471. District-wide, Meehan trounced his Democratic opponent, Patrick Raymond. This election assures Meehan another congressional term since he does not have a Republican opponent for the November 5 Presidential election.

Overall, Senator John Kerry was the second largest vote getter in Acton with 467. In the Democratic primary, there were 72 blanks cast, four votes for Gov. Weld and one for Ray Pfau. On the Republican side Weld pulled in 228 votes, one less than Dean Cavarretta the candidate for Representative of 14th Middlesex district. Weld of course will face Kerry in November. Cavarretta will face incumbent representative Pam Resor. Resor received 460 votes.

State Senator Robert Durand (456) will face off against William Monnie (197). Durand has defeated Monnie on two previous occasions.

Cynthia Green ran unopposed for the Governor's Council. She did manage to beat out the blanks getting 370 votes and only 172 blanks.

County offices

The adage that the core cities dominate the county elections proved to be true. Those candidates coming from the cities swamped those aspirants living in the western suburbs. The only exception to this rule was the re-election of incumbent Tom Larkin (19,708) as county commissioner.

There will be a recount in the commissioners race between Melissa Hurley (19,182) and Edward Sullivan (19,235). Joe Mullin, selectman from Weston and brother of our selectman, Bill, was only able to garner 10,824 votes county wide although in polling 260 votes in Acton proved to be the largest vote getter. Mullin, according to his brother, also

continued on pg 6

November says "Education is

A CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF NARA'S CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION

EXCERPTED FROM ACTON RECREATION DEPARTMENT'S ANNUAL TOWN REPORTS 1970 TO 2014

1970: Recreation Commission recommends hiring a part-time recreation director, a position that was to transition to full-time in the future.

1971: Swimming lessons were being given at Walden Pond and the search was begun for a suitable "dug" pond site. An indoor pool was being planned as part of the new wing for the High School. The Town expected 65% reimbursement from the State and the facility was expected to open in 1973. The Recreation Commission moved to have the Recreation Department operate year-round.

1972: A Recreation Master Plan was published. It was pointed out that for the last 10 years swimming and skating, i.e. water sports, consistently ranked as the most important activity desired in polls conducted by many civic groups. Acton had no water resources available for recreational use! A multi-use facility was needed. The focus was on the convergence of a site that would support conservation interests, open space, and recreational needs.

1973: William Lynch was Chairperson of the Recreation Commission. The Director, Thomas M. Haggerty (originally hired part-time), was moved to a full-time position in April. The High School pool opening had been delayed. There was a new focus on Great Hill and Taylor Road as potential sites for a swimming pond.

1974: The new High School pool facility opened in March. This generated a spike in citizen participation in recreational programs. Nominal fees were charged for memberships and daily usage, in order to cover the operating costs of running the facility. Approximately 7,200 Acton residents participated in Commission sponsored programs. Town Meeting also appropriated \$87,250, 50% of which was expected to be reimbursed by the State, for the first phase of development of the 185 acre Great Hill Conservation Area. Work was planned to commence in 1975 and would greatly

enhance both passive and active recreational opportunities for the citizens of Acton.

1975: Participation in recreational functions and the use of resources almost doubled, from 7,200 in 1974 to 13,000 in 1975, mostly attributed to the economic downturn. The downturn had resulted in less vacation trips and more use of local resources. There was also a shift in focus to designing new subdivisions with recreational open space included, thereby extending the recreational resources for many citizens. The quest for potential swimming sites continued.

A new ball field was added at Conant School with 2 more planned. Spring Hill Conservation Land was opened for cross country skiing. With the High School Pool opened, a Swim Team was started. The Commission was adhering to the original plan to keep recreation programs self-funded.

1976: Powder Mill Pond was being considered for a swimming pond.

1977: A community garden was opened off Robbins Street. A new Recreation Master Plan 1978-1982 was completed. Powder Mill Pond was deemed not safe for a swimming pond.

1978: The economic climate was such that town officials worried that the citizens would stage a tax revolt. Under a full-time Recreation Director, 35 programs were offered through the Recreation Commission; of those, 25 were self-supporting. The High School Pool was becoming popular for lessons and after-school use by the general public. The Commission was now looking at Great Hill Pond as a potential swimming site.

1979: Town Meeting approved the creation and operation of a Program Revolving Fund for the Recreation Department. Great Hill Pond was still being considered a potential site for swimming.



NARA Park Beach, Summer 2010

1980: The Recreation Commission's objective was to provide quality leisure time programs to Acton residents. A shift was occurring from just offering programs to expanding and maintaining facilities. Thirty to 40 programs and special events were offered throughout the year. In addition, major efforts were put forth to find additional fields for youth soccer and softball leagues. School Street land was acquired for soccer fields and Conant School's fields were upgraded. The Revolving Account was helpful in managing operational expenses, allowing the Commission to offer five additional programs while reducing tax payer cost \$2,300 from the prior year.

1981: A major focus was on managing programs within a limited budget. Some programs were scaled back and some fees were increased from 15 to 20 percent, but no programs or staff positions were eliminated. The need for baseball and soccer fields had intensified. The School Street fields, acquired the prior year, were graded and seeded, with the Highway and Engineering Departments' help.

1982: Field improvements continued, and the participation for programs increased to about 3,000 residents. Hiking and cross-country ski trails were improved and new ones planned, through cooperation with the Conservation Commission and the newly established "Building and Grounds Department."

1983: Recreation Commission was planning to request funds for NARA at the 1984 Town Meeting. The costs of building the park were to be offset by the sale of gravel to the Big Dig. Recreation was now operating under a revolving fund enabling high-quality programs to be offered at nominal cost.

1984: Activities offered by the Recreation Department were self-supporting, requiring minimal financial resources from the Town budget. The Town Pool, now fully operational, was very popular with the citizenry. School Street fields were being added under a proposed lease with the State Department of Corrections, which was sent to the Board of Selectman for approval.

1985: The Recreation Commission had been established in 1957 with Town Meeting approval. In 1958, the Commission recommended that all subdivisions set aside recreational open space areas. In 1959, Walden Pond was used for recreational water use for the Town. In 1970, a part-time Director was hired. In 1973, Thomas Haggerty was hired as the full-time Director and remained in this position until 1985, when the Recreation Commission was reorganized. The office moved to Merriam School and the decision was made to merge Community Education and the Recreation Department.

1986: No Recreation Department report.

1987: Recreation Commission was reactivated and tasked with having a feasibility study undertaken for the NARA site.

1988: The newly-reformed Recreation Commission submitted a questionnaire to the town for recreational needs and preferences. The need for a swimming area was clearly the most popular item.

1989: Community Education continued handling all programs, including Recreation Programs. The Recreation Commission received Pine and Swallow's hydro-geological report: NARA was a good site! They now began looking for options to develop the site for minimum cost.



Left: Weekday at the Beach • Center: NARA Campers • Right: Relay for Life event

1990: The following is excerpted from the Acton's Annual Town Report of 1990, submitted by the Recreation Commission (page 31): "The Recreation Commission spent the year of 1990 studying ways to accomplish the task of developing a recreation park on land owned by the Town in North Acton. A hydrogeological study done by Pine and Swallow had concluded that there was a real possibility that a swimming area could be dug there. The challenge (was) to find ways to accomplish this with little or no cost to the Town of Acton. The idea was conceived that there might be enough gravel at the site to finance the project. Dexter Loring donated his time, equipment and men to a day at the site one Saturday and test holes were dug to determine gravel quality. Good results were obtained and the people gathered there were pleased with what they saw. Unfortunately, the present economy is not favorable for receiving a good price for the gravel. The Recreation Commission has been working with the Town Engineering Department to draw up plans for the area; e.g., a soccer field, ball field, tennis court, basketball court, bath house, parking lots, road configuration, jogging trails, handicapped accessibility to these activities, buffer areas, etc. The Commission made a presentation at the Selectmen's meeting and was enthusiastically received. The Planning Council asked us to share with them our plans and suggested future impacts to the area for us to consider. As we worked with the different Boards and Town Departments, plans for the area began to take shape. As the economy becomes stronger, there is a real possibility of using the gravel to finance the building of the recreation park."

1991: The Recreation Commission was focused on developing NARA. It was determined that the sale of gravel (dependent on the health of the economy) could significantly offset the cost of development of the park. Bids were entertained for the sale of gravel. There was the additional task of obtaining permits: Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Town Engineering Department drew up plans for the placement of the various structures and facilities including pond, parking, bathhouse, roads, tennis courts, ball field, soccer field, jogging paths, and ADA compliant accessibility to all these activities.

1992: The Recreation Commission continued to work on permitting, working closely with the Engineering Department. Tom Tidman,

Conservation Agent, and Bruce Stamski, Recreation Chairperson, were recognized by Engineering as providing invaluable assistance.

1993: No Recreation Report

1994: No Recreation Report

1995: No Recreation Report. The following is from the Natural Resources Department's Report: The Natural Resources Department was created, with Tom Tidman appointed Director. The Department was to handle Conservation, Cemetery and NARA development. The design funding for NARA was approved by Town Meeting and a cost estimate was developed.

1996: Community Education was still administering recreational resources: camps, basketball league, scheduling Town and School fields, etc. Programs were self-sustaining. NARA construction was underway. Engineering staked property lines, limits of clearing, and edge of the 10-acre swimming area. Town Meeting approved \$1.6 M in funding for NARA construction.

1997: Bill Mullin's white paper on the state of recreation in Acton galvanized the community when it was presented. It was a call to action for volunteers to join the Commission and to oversee greater recreational opportunities for the town. As a result, the Recreation Committee was revitalized and expanded to nine members. They were to oversee all municipally organized and scheduled events, including the new NARA facility, targeted for opening in 1999. Tom Tidman, Natural Resources Director, was appointed liaison to the Recreation Commission. (Bill was a member of the Board of Selectman at the time).

Excavation and landscaping of NARA Pond was well underway. Thompson & Rose was hired as architects for the bath house, picnic pavilion and amphitheater. Construction was slated for the fall of 1998.

1998: The Recreation Department was re-established and a Recreation Director and Recreation Secretary were hired. Programs and events operated by the department were designed to be self-funded, through a Recreation Revolving Account.

1999: NARA Grand Opening was held September 18, 1999 (in spite of a threatened hurricane). The opening was a great success, though the bathhouse was still under construction. In addition, the Recreation Department published their first program guide. Nine classes, 11 trips, and four special events were offered. Planning was underway for the first Winterfest, for February 2000.

2000: February Winterfest was a success, and NARA Beach opened on Memorial Day. Summer programs were offered for nine weeks through the summer, with 317 kids (ages one thru eight) signed up. The Summer Concert Series ran for six Thursdays. Overall, recreational programs had 324 participants signed up for the Fall/Winter and 489 for the Spring/Summer programs. Town-wide, there were 3,500 children involved in youth sports.

2001: NARA beach memberships numbered 650 Acton residents and 40 non-residents. Boat, kayak and pedal boat rentals were available. The Thursday concerts continued free and open to the public. July 4th Celebration was a success as was "Acton Day" held Sept. 14, and Winterfest in February. In the beach area, ADA accessibility was improved and a sidewalk installed behind the beach. An ADA accessible path to the swimming area and the purchase of a water wheelchair for the area were being planned for 2002. Plans were underway for teen programs and toddler programs to be added in 2002. Natural Resources continued to focus on improving fields and parks throughout the town using the cemetery crew. A new Open Space and Recreation Plan was in development. It was determined that more shade structures and sidewalks were needed at the park. Trees were planted along the outer beach edges.

2002: The Community Preservation Act (CPA) was implemented, with a 1.5% surcharge applied to property tax bills. This offered the Recreation Department, with the many needed improvements to NARA and opportunities for additional funding. Recreation's top priorities were Special Events, Field Maintenance and new programs. Improvements at NARA included an inter-generational garden, completion of the beach sidewalk, an ADA accessible pathway on the beach, and a water wheelchair. A patio deck was added to the bathhouse. Gardens were added and fields were improved. The free concerts attracted anywhere from 50 to 500 attendees. Youth programs were selling out for six of the nine weeks being offered, and there was now an offering

to four and five-year-old's for half-day programs. Acton Day, held Sept. 21, was a huge success. And, as a proof of concept, the events and programs continued to be self-funding. The expanded program offerings continued to show good participation. Maintenance help came from Highway, Municipal Properties and Cemetery crews.

2003: Due to budget restraints, the July 4th celebration was in need of funding, with the possibility of having to cancel. Four local car dealerships stepped up and provided the funding that saved the day. There was a 50% increase in program participation from the prior year. Swimming lessons were popular and Acton Day, celebrated on Sept. 20 of this year and totally self-funded, made the Guinness Book of Records for the largest human flag! Approximately 1,300 residents participated.

2004: The following is a Recreation Department overview submitted by Nancy McShea:

- Recreation Department was re-established in 1998 with the development of NARA.
- In NARA's first year, nine classes were offered with about 150 participants.
- By 2004, 84 classes were being offered with 150 children participating per week.
- In addition, 350 beach memberships were issued, nine summer concerts were held.
- Events included July 4th Celebration, Acton Day, Winterfest, Halloween Party and an Egg Hunt.
- Field improvements had been made at NARA, Veterans, Elm St., Jones, and Hart/MacPherson.
- The T.J. O'Grady Memorial Skate Park came on-line, 10 new acres of fields were added at the Morrison Farm Community Gardens on Concord Road, and a feasibility study of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail was underway.

The Department was continuing to expand resources and to seek grants and other funding sources.

2005: Nancy McShea resigned in April and Allison Trout was hired as Recreation Director. Maura Haberman was hired as a full-time assistant to replace Jenna White (who left the department in January) to handle the expanding Event programs. There was a continual effort to find sponsors for special programs, and the potential for CPA funding was explored. At NARA, the pond walkway was resurfaced and sand was added to the beach area.

2006: Recreation Director Allison Trout resigned and Cathy Fochtman was hired as her replacement. Program offerings had by now been increased to 159. The department was responsible for managing 18 playing fields and 12 recreational areas. A CPA grant for \$69K was awarded for construction of twin baseball fields on the additional 10 acres on the School Street fields. Youth Programs served about 825 participants. At NARA, Natural Resources added plantings and set up two storage sheds on site.

2007: A new dog leash policy was enacted at NARA. Program offerings increased to 171. A Special Needs Soccer program was launched and was well received, prompting the desire to increase sports programs for special needs participants. Beach memberships were 309. On target, the beach opened May 26 and ended the season on Sept. 3. Summer events were generously supported by local merchants. An anonymous donation was received that allowed the installation of new lighting for the amphitheater. Grant funding was sought for the purchase and installation of shade structures for the beach area. Natural

Resources continued the effort to install landscape plantings and improve the overall appearance of the park. Recreation Department staffing changed to accommodate the expansive activities and venues that now fell under the department's umbrella. There were two full-time employees, Cathy Fochtman, Director and Maura Haberman, Events and Program Coordinator. Cheryl Getsick was hired in late 2007, as a part-time secretary.

2008: Continuing to expand opportunities to the people of Acton, Recreation offered 120 classes and 20 bus trips. There were also 34 special events offered free to the public. Funding was provided through the generous support of local area businesses. Youth classes were in high demand. And NARA had its first theater production, "Beauty and the Beast," performed by the Acton Teen Repertory Theater, a Recreation program. Beach membership rose to 347 with many daily passes issued. There were numerous improvements implemented at NARA. A new fence was installed along the beach front that improved security and control of beach access. The bath house and snack bar had electrical upgrades; new equipment was purchased for the snack bar; a storeroom was added to the Amphitheater that would be used to house equipment, provide a changing area and be used as a snack booth; the Amphitheater was stained and painted; new maintenance equipment was purchased, landscaping improvements were made around the amphitheater; two new chairs were purchased for the lifeguards and new folding chairs were purchased for events.



First Skate Night Party at NARA's new rink, January 2015

2009: The Department was managing 18 playing fields, two community garden sites, and 12 recreation areas. There were 175 program offerings and many events for all ages. All segments of the population were offered some opportunity to participate and benefit from the recreational resources of the town. Programs and events continued to be self-funded, drawing on the revolving fund for the secretary's salary and donations from local businesses and sports organizations. NARA was now considered the "crown jewel" of the department. The Acton Town Fair moved to NARA. In a continuing effort to promote culturally diverse programs, the first cultural special event, "Sri Lanka Day," was held at NARA, offering a great educational and cultural enrichment opportunity for all attendees. It was coordinated with members of the Sri Lankan Association of New England. "Monsterbash," the annual Halloween event, was again celebrated by costumed young folks dancing to live music. Improvements included staining the Amphitheater changing room and attached snack bar. CPA funding was secured for the construction of a Picnic Pavilion, with the intent that the park could then be marketed to a broader audience such as corporations looking for picnic sites. And NARA was host to its first wedding!

2010: NARA events had, by now, become "traditional." Each year starts off with the Winter Carnival, even in bitter cold winters, such as 2010! Good summer weather supported larger celebrations and events. NARA was a center point for Acton's 275th Anniversary events. The Lions Club Town Fair was again held at NARA, as was the American Cancer Society Relay for Life, Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce Appreciation Night, and many other successful and well attended events. In addition, company outings and weddings were becoming more popular. Encouraging cultural enrichment was a continuing effort. This year, the Acton Chinese Language School put on a Chinese Cultural Day, with attendance of almost 3000 people, as well as a Sri Lankan Day of cultural festivities. The free concert series continued to be popular, as was Acton Day in September and Monsterbash in October. Enhancements to NARA in 2010 were the addition of two new volleyball courts. Beach passes sold numbered more than 970, in spite of water level fluctuations due to flooding in the spring and drought in the summer.



August, 2006: Jonas Brothers (Nick, Joe, Kevin) performed at NARA Park in August 2006. Pictured here with Maura Haberman, Event & Program Coordinator and Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Director after their KISS 108 Summer of Fun Concert Series at the NARA Amphitheater.



2011: Passing the 10th year anniversary since opening in 2000, NARA has become a well-established recreational resource for the town, offering picnicking, hiking, swimming and sports facilities as well as cultural and community events throughout the year. The beach served over 600 members and sold over 4,500 daily passes. NARA summer camp is a full-day camp for ages four to 15. The adult softball league is the most popular sport option in Acton. Cultural events include "Chinese Cultural Day," "Sri Lankan Day" and, introduced in 2011, "Essence of India." Two dozen events were offered through the generous support of local business sponsors. The first "Bluegrass Festival" was held June 11 followed by a fireworks display. And NARA made Fox News as a "Zip Trip" destination. Improvements to NARA included major additions to the playground.

2012: Through a Board of Selectman vote, NARA was officially renamed Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area, Honoring Medal of Honor recipient Nathaniel Allen, a Civil War veteran and resident of Acton, buried at Woodlawn Cemetery. Proudly, a new ADA compliant ball field was completed and opened on September 15, 2012. Named the Joseph Lalli Miracle Field, this was the fulfillment of a quest, begun in 2009 with the formation of the Miracle League of Boston, the first league franchise in Massachusetts, by Lauren and Andy Richardt. The mission of the national Miracle League organization is to provide support for providing a fully handicapped accessible baseball field in every city throughout the U.S. After operating a successful program in Boxborough for several years, the Richardts were looking for a permanent home. They had secured funding but finding an ideal spot was elusive. Finally, a creative approach was suggested by Tom Tidman, Director of Natural Resources, to utilize a small piece of Town property adjacent to NARA that could be linked to the newly expanded upper parking lot. The idea took hold, supported by Selectman Chairperson Mike Gowing, and became a reality.

2013: The Town of Acton received the Design of Facility Award from the Massachusetts Recreation and Parks Association for the design and construction of the Miracle Field. Preparations were being made for the new, three-winged picnic pavilion to

be constructed the following year. Bathrooms were renovated; a new storage shed behind the amphitheater was installed to provide protection for electrical equipment and power panels; and, through a generous donation from an anonymous donor, new stage equipment was purchased. Demand for the use of the fields and picnic space for large functions, such as weddings and family functions, was growing. Beach membership numbered 689 and over 4,500 daily passes were sold. A Ga-ga Pit was installed to add to the recreational opportunities for the full day camp. And a grant from the "Healthy Communities" initiative was used to fund an information kiosk promoting "Active Acton."

2014: The new picnic pavilion, designed by Kang Associates and constructed by Stallion Builders, Inc., was completed. Funded through Community Preservation Act funds, the Recreation Department and a private donation, it was officially opened on July 5th. A rain garden with landscaping to channel water around the picnic pavilion was being constructed as part of an Eagle Scout project, and restrooms are to be installed nearby in the future. NARA Beach served 814 members in addition to issuing 4,700 daily passes. Full Day Summer Camp programs serving ages four to 15 offered 683 paid participant session weeks. Offerings included a Counselor-in-Training program for 14- and 15-year-olds.



Grand Opening



NARA PARK

NORTH ACTON RECREATION AREA

25 Ledge Rock Way, Acton

Grand Opening · September 18, 1999 · 12:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Rain Date · September 25, 1999

ENTERTAINMENT

MAIN STAGE

12:00 Ribbon cutting ceremony with opening remarks from the Board of Selectmen and a performance from the Acton-Boxborough High School band.
1:00 Wildcat Dreams - World Music
2:30 Swing Legacy - Swing Band
4:00 Project Lucifer - Age-upt North Acton
5:00 Bouquet Swans - Cajun/Country
7:00 United States Air Force Band of Liberty (will play at the Concord/Cadet stage. School performance 10:00 if present is postponed due to inclement weather)

OFF STAGE

1:00 Samba Sire - Latin Percussion
2:00 Party All Night - Rap/R&B
3:00 (Kapow) - Rock in Radio
4:00 Immunity - Indie Rock

Supported by the
Acton-Boxborough School Committee
and
New England Foundation for the Arts

ALL DAY EVENTS

Food vendor from local establishments. Various cooking demonstrations located throughout the park.
MUD walls on site.

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...
COME OUT AND PLAY!

8:00 Fireworks

For more information
call the Acton Information Department at 283-9811.

RECREATION EVENTS

1:00-3:00 2nd Annual Canoe/Craft Boat Show
2:00-4:00 On-going events:
• Novelty Events
• Inflatable Jumping
• Snow Wrestling
• Horse Racing
• Team Challenge
• Bungee Challenge
• Diesel Locomotive -
• various outdoor activity stations
• Kite flying demonstration
• Traditional Cultural Arts demonstration
- and more
• Fly Fishing Demonstration
• Water Safety Demonstration
• Model Boat/Craft Demonstration
• Swing Dance Lessons
• Fish and Wildlife Exhibit
• Boston Renaissance Faire Marching Band

Appearance by local folk artists

Open to
Acton-Boxborough Community Association

See Appendix: Grand Opening Memo to Board of Selectmen, September 1999

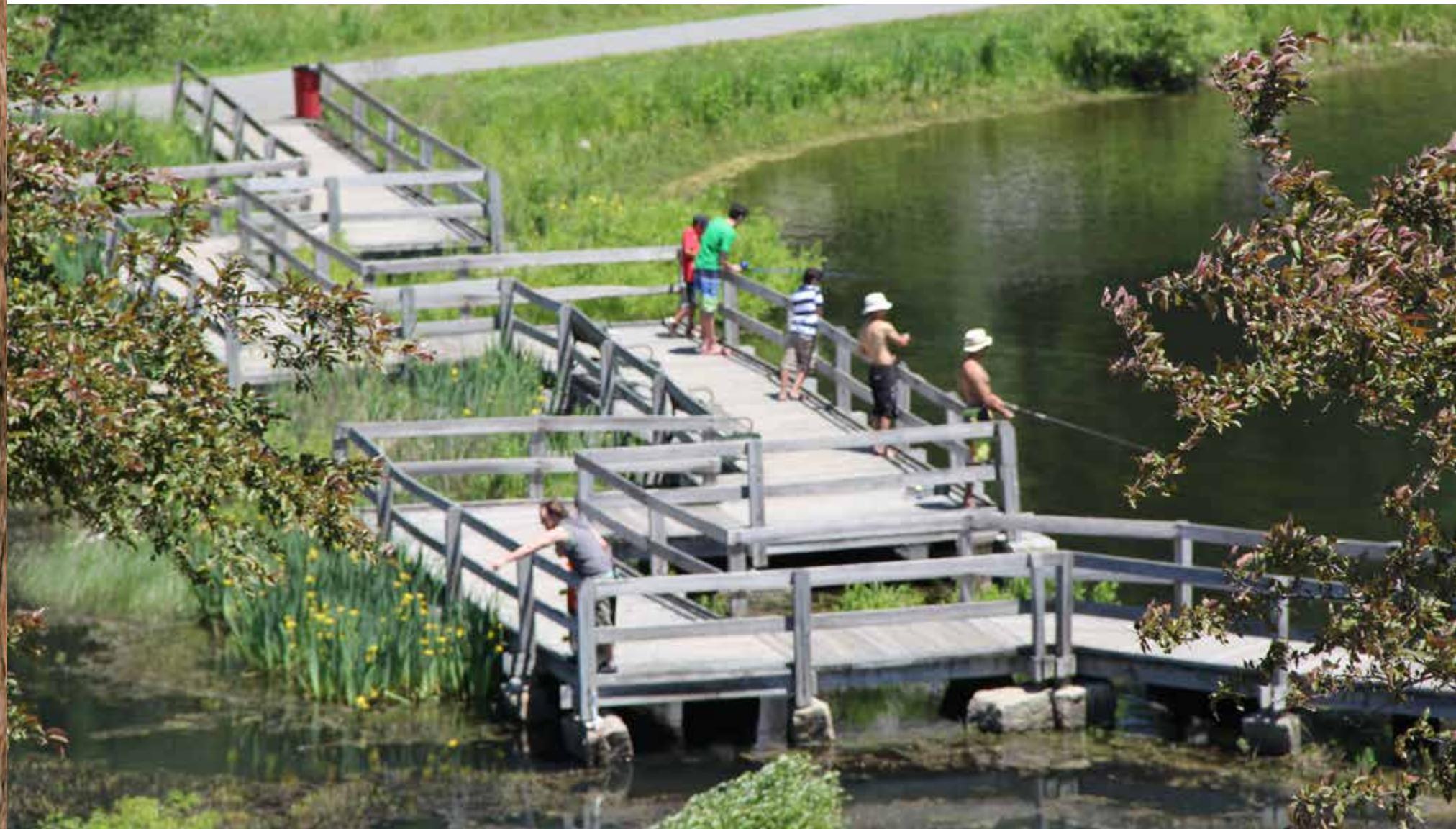
1999



Before: Bridge, 1999



Then and Now Photos



After: Bridge, 2015

NARA Amphitheater Construction

This photo was taken after the hillside was hydroseeded. Bedrock rises within 4' of the top of the Amphitheater Hill.



Before: Amphitheater, 1999



After: Amphitheater, 2015



Before: NARA Pond, 1998



After: NARA Pond, 2015



Before: NARA Pond, 1998



After: NARA Pond, 2015



Before: Bathhouse, 1998



After: Bathhouse, 2015



Before: NARA Pond, 1998



After: NARA Pond, 2015



Before: NARA Pond, 2000



After: NARA Pond, 2015



Before: Wetland Replication Area, circa 1999



After: Wetland Replication Area, 2015



Before: Wetland Replication Area, circa 1999



After: Wetland Replication Area, 2015



Before: View from Picnic Pavilion site, 2013



After: View from Picnic Pavilion, Independence Day Celebration Family Fun Time, July 3, 2015



KANG ASSOCIATES



Drawing of Picnic Pavilion, Kang Associates, Inc.



Completed in 2014 • Photo: September, 2016



Picnic Pavilion at night, 2014



Picnic Pavilion at night, 2014



Before: Playing Field, 1998



After: Playing Field, 2016



Acton-Boxborough Youth Soccer, upper sports fields, 2016



Acton Adult Softball, 2016 (Photos: Elliot Gilfix)



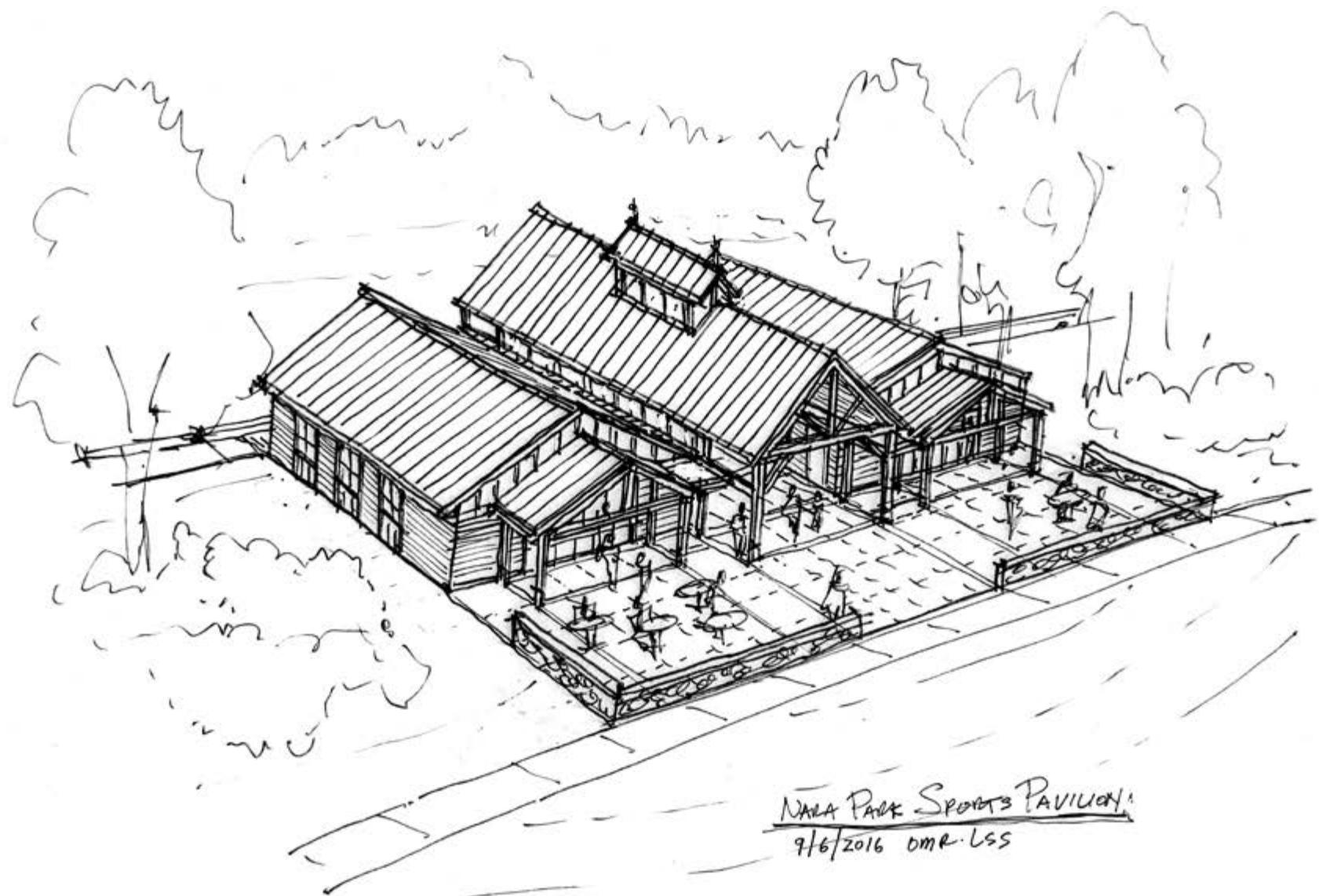
Before: Miracle Field, 2012



After: Miracle Field, 2012



Before: Donated Modular Buildings for Sports Pavilion, April 2016



NARA OPERATIONS:

- Multi-use sports fields
- Picnic rentals
- Facilities/building oversight
- Concerts & special events
- NARA Summer Camp
- NARA Beach & Pond
- Recreation programs
- Perimeter walking trail
- Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (2017)



Top: Posted calendar of events at NARA, field rental • Bottom: NARA Campers, NARA Beach



NARA Park Operations



July 4th concession at Amphitheater snack bar, 2010

HOW NARA OPERATES • NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE RECREATION REVOLVING FUND

The Natural Resources Department is comprised of three divisions: Conservation, Cemetery and Recreation. The Natural Resources Department and the Recreation Department provide the staff that enables NARA to be operated and maintained.

The Natural Resources Department's budget funds the personnel that maintain and manage NARA: Natural Resources Director, 4 full-time Grounds Crew and the Recreation staff which is comprised of the Recreation Director, Event & Program Coordinator, Recreation Coordinator and Recreation Secretary. Natural Resources also maintains the equipment and supplies needed to do landscape and building maintenance of the park. The Natural Resources Department's budget is appropriated from the Town's General Fund.

To fund the operations of NARA Park, the Town of Acton adopted a recreation and park self-supporting revolving fund, commonly referred to as a Recreation Revolving Account, or 53D Revolving Account. It is defined under Massachusetts General Laws under Chapter 44, Section 53D. This fund is authorized by the Town Manager. The fund may not be used for the purpose of paying full-time wages of recreation and park employees. Revenue that comes into the account must cover the expenses that are paid out of the account – the operations it supports are thus self-funded. The unreserved fund balance each year may not exceed \$10,000 at the close of each fiscal year and any excess is rolled into the Town's General Fund.

The Recreation Revolving Account or Fund is administered by the Recreation Director and is utilized to pay wages for all seasonal employees hired by the Recreation Department to operate NARA Camp and Beach, in addition to a seasonal Park Groundskeeper and Park Ranger, a total of 40-50 summer employees. Natural Resources seasonal grounds crew workers (4 summer employees) are also paid via the Recreation Revolving Fund. Wages comprise a large portion of the expenses. In addition, the Recreation Department covers the cost of utilities (water, electric) and maintenance and repairs that are needed for NARA facilities (quarterly fire inspections, septic pumping, plumbing and electric, irrigation systems). Unlike other Town departments, the Recreation Department has been handling the functions that the Municipal Properties Department covers for all other Town properties and the Town Departments that inhabit them. The Recreation Department is responsible for purchasing supplies for operating its facilities (bathroom, snackbar, trash, hardware, cleaning, food, etc.). Recreation is responsible for other recreation fields and facilities outside of NARA Park and pays for maintenance and repairs at the playgrounds (Goward, Gardner, Jones, Veterans, Robbins Mill, Elm Street) and fields and other facilities (Camp Acton, T.J. O'Grady Skate Park, Concord Rd., Elm Street, Great Hill, Hart and MacPherson at Conant School, Jones, School St., Veterans, and Community Gardens at North Acton, Morrison Farm and Hebert Farm). Recreation supplies dog waste bags at the Acton Arboretum, Great Hill and NARA.

As a self-supporting department, the Recreation Department must earn its operating budget revenue from fees and donations. It does not receive tax dollars from the Town's General Fund to support its operating budget.

REVENUE SOURCES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING

Donations

Business donations to support events (\$50-\$6,000 per donation)
Event Donations by Attendees (\$1-\$20 per donation)
Gifts to Support Projects (varies)

Fees

Recreation Programs

- *Camp Fees* - Weekly Tuition, Pre and Post Care, Field Trips
- *Beach Fees* - Seasonal Beach Memberships, Daily Beach Passes, Swimming Lessons, Snackbar Food Sales, Boating
- *Other Program Fees* - Classes, Bus Trips, Vendor, Event and Ticket Fees, Community Gardens

Facility & Field Rentals

- NARA Facility Rentals for Patio Tent, Bathhouse Pavilion, Picnic Pavilion, Amphitheater
- NARA Field Rentals for Playing Field, Softball, Miracle Field, Volleyball

For capital expenditures (defined as purchases that are not paid out of the operating budget and generally exceed \$25,000), the Recreation Department participates in the Town's Municipal Budget development process. In October, projects are presented to the Town Manager, combined with all Town Department capital requests and ranked by all Town department heads. The Town Manager refers projects that meet priority objectives and fit within the budget parameters for funding consideration in December to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee for approval. This is either through General Fund appropriation, or as applications for Community Preservation Act grants to the Community Preservation Committee. Capital projects are vetted and by February, those that are approved by the Town boards are included in the warrant for Town Meeting in April to seek final approval.

Given Recreation's financial obligations and the regulations for operating a 53D Revolving Fund, capital expenditures are not affordable through Recreation's Revolving Fund. Recreation has found it generally has \$10,000 - \$15,000 each year to invest in high priority purchases. In some years, it has been advantageous to invest in purchases that can serve as leverage for larger projects to follow, such as contracting for design funding, and applying for construction funds through grant sources such as the Community Preservation Act. This method helped support the building of NARA's Picnic Pavilion.

In the future, Recreation looks to create new revenue streams that are candidates for alternate funding vehicles that permit the retention of fund balance for capital investment.



A quiet spring day at the pond, 2015



Geology & Hydrology of NARA Park



GEOLOGY AND HYDROLOGY OF NARA PARK

Prepared by: Peter Shanahan, November 12, 2015

The Nathaniel Allan Recreation Area (NARA) lies atop sands and gravels deposited by glaciers during the Pleistocene Ice Age approximately 15 to 20 thousand years ago. Pine & Swallow (1989) describe the shallow geologic deposits as glacial outwash. In other words, sand and gravels left by the streams that flowed from the melting glacier at the end of the Ice Age about 11,000 years ago. To the southwest of the park, across Quarry Road, lies a hill created by a knob of bedrock. The park lies at the margin where the glacial outwash laps onto this neighboring hill. The area may be a kame terrace—deposits laid down by a meltwater stream that ran between the hill and the melting glacier in neighboring valley. Kame terraces are usually good sources of sand and gravel, which is why the NARA land was once a gravel pit.

The hill opposite NARA across Quarry Road is quartz-biotite gneiss of the Nashoba geologic formation according to Pine & Swallow (1989). Gneiss is similar to granite and was once quarried in the area, hence the name Quarry Road. Since this land is uphill of the park, rain falling on the hill runs onto NARA park. In addition, the underlying bedrock has cracks and fissures, from which groundwater flows for at least part of the year. One particular location of groundwater discharge is the abandoned one-acre quarry of the North Acton Granite Company, in which there is typically standing water. When the water level in the quarry is high (typically late March, April, and May), a small stream crosses from the quarry under Quarry Road and onto NARA Park, where it runs along the southeast side of the amphitheater and into the NARA swimming pond.

The flow of water onto and from NARA is largely controlled by the topography of the land surface. Higher land lies to the west on the Acton Town Forest and privately-owned land along Quarry Road. This area, which is largely forested, amounts to about 70 acres according to Pine & Swallow (1989). The park itself amounts to about 40 acres. These 120 acres drain to the NARA swimming

pond and from there to wetlands and small drainage channels east of the park. Those eventually flow through a culvert under Main Street and the former railroad line to Block Brook, a tributary of Nashoba Brook.

Most of the surface water flowing onto NARA Park comes via the small stream that originates at the abandoned North Acton Granite Company Quarry. The flow in this intermittent stream is treated in an artificial wetland before it flows into the NARA pond. The artificial wetland was designed in 1999 as a graduate research project by Anouk Savineau, a Master of Engineering student at MIT (Savineau, 1999). The artificial wetland is designed as a cascade of treatment cells including an initial sedimentation basin to remove sediment, two emergent marsh cells, and a final micropool as a polishing step. Plants and microbiological organisms in the emergent marsh cells remove phosphorus and nitrogen from the stormwater and additional sedimentation and nutrient uptake occurs in the micropool. Large rough quarry stones were used to construct the cascade and a pedestrian bridge across the wetland. The artificial wetland also provides wildlife habitat and an attractive space within the park.

Although some surface water flows onto NARA, it is limited in quantity and flows steadily only a short while in the spring. Most of the water in the NARA pond, and particularly during the summer months when the pond is actively used, comes from groundwater. The pond was created by excavating into the sand and gravel deposits beneath the park. Sand and gravel can hold a considerable amount of groundwater and groundwater flows through sand and gravel easily. In fact, groundwater in glacial outwash deposits throughout the town supply all of Acton's water supply. The importance of groundwater to NARA pond was recognized from the earliest stages of planning the park and was the main subject of a pre-construction environmental characterization study by the consulting firm Pine & Swallow.

Pine & Swallow (1989) installed groundwater monitoring wells and exploratory soil borings throughout the NARA Park parcel prior to the park's creation in order to understand the geology and groundwater hydrology of the site. They found that there were 20 to 40 feet of sand and gravel at the southern end of the park, where the pond was planned, and that groundwater generally flowed from northwest to southeast across the park. The plan was thus made to dig into the sand and gravel to below the elevation of the water table and in that way create a swimming pond by intercepting the groundwater. Thus, although there is a surface inlet and overflow outlet from the NARA pond, it is primarily a groundwater pond. Most of the flow into the pond is groundwater seeping through the sand and gravel on the west side of the pond, and most of the flow out of the pond goes back to being groundwater as it seeps into the sand and gravel on the east side of the pond. An advantage to this system is that the pond is supplied with clean water: sand and gravel is a good filter for removing bacteria and other small particles from water.

Over time, the original design has proven to stand up well. NARA Park has become a treasured recreational resource to the town of Acton and users from other communities. The clean groundwater in the NARA pond has provided summer recreation and refreshment to thousands of users, few of whom know they are actually swimming in a groundwater aquifer!

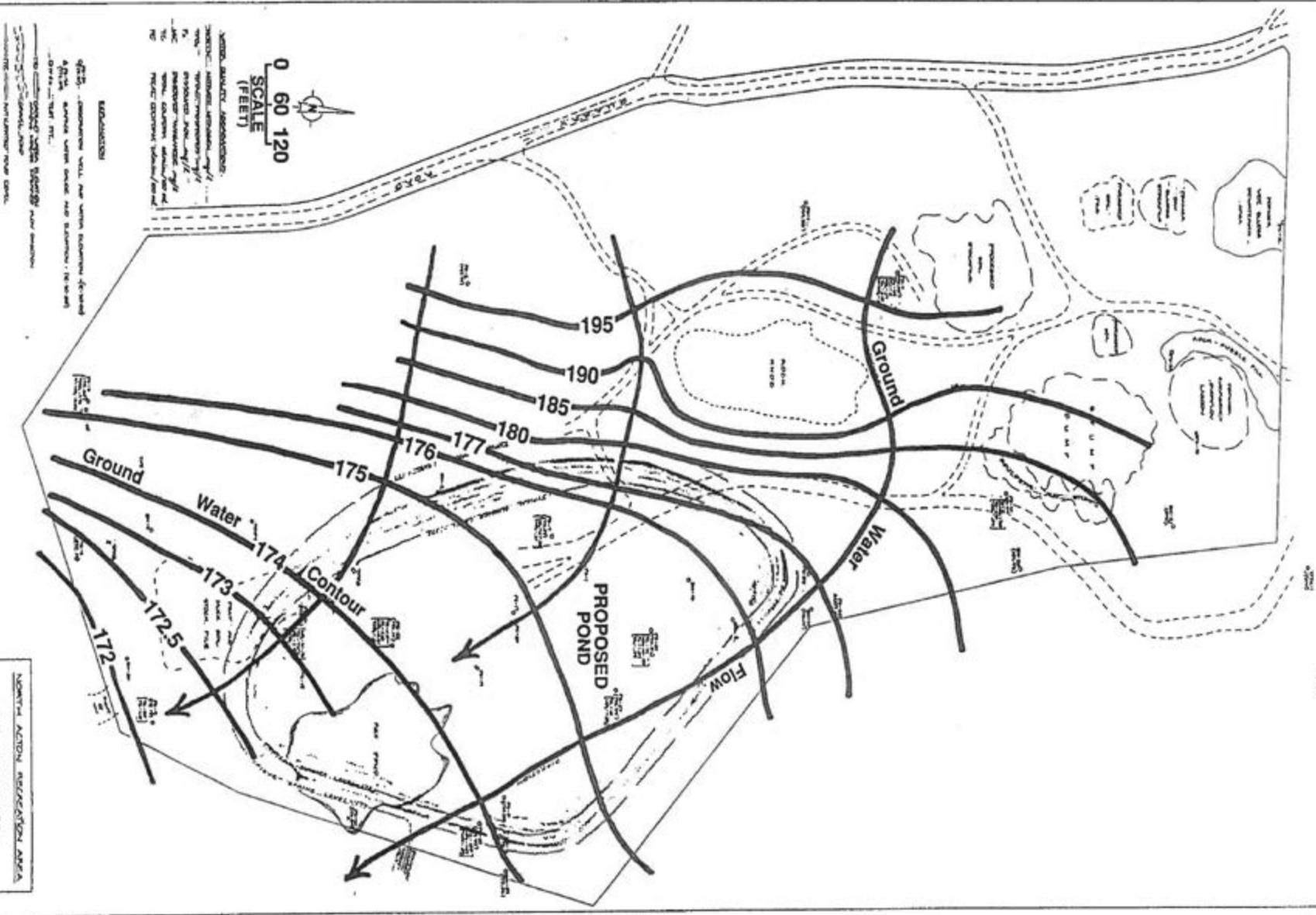
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Savineau, A., 1999. Design of a Treatment Wetland for the North Acton Recreational Area, Acton, MA. Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. Master of Engineering: 73. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Appendix: Pine & Swallow, 1989. Environmental Investigation, Proposed North Acton Recreation Area and Pond. Pine & Swallow Associates, Inc., Groton, Massachusetts. June 8, 1989.





TREATMENT WETLANDS AND BIO-RETENTION AREAS

A healthy, natural aquatic environment, as well as a swimmable pond is of the highest priority. One of the ways we enhance and safeguard water quality is to treat stormwater runoff prior to it entering NARA pond. The development of treatment wetlands and bio-retention areas around the park are a cost-effective, semi-natural way to filter out suspended solids and affect the biological uptake of nutrients. We are fortunate that the source of the groundwater entering NARA Park originates upgradient in the Town Forest and migrates to the pond through gravel overburden. Treating stormwater runoff and the non-point source pollutants it vectors, requires constant monitoring and management, with bio-retention areas and constructed wetlands playing an important role (**see Goal 3-#2, p. 197**).

As pointed out earlier in the report, the large central wetlands complex built in 2001 was designed specifically to maximize surface area while allowing untreated stormwater runoff an opportunity to travel through densely-vegetated, shallow wetlands. A secondary opportunity to filter stormwater contaminants is afforded by the native shrub and tree species planted in the constructed wetlands. These plantings have the added benefit of providing significant wildlife habitat.

In 2015, a bio-retention complex was constructed in association with the development of the Picnic Pavilion. Surface runoff from lawn areas around the Picnic Pavilion, along with roof runoff from the pavilion, are treated and recharged in the rain gardens. NARA Groundskeeper Bruce Carley, Eagle Scout Davis Schottler, and Boy Scout Troop 1 were instrumental in planting the rain gardens.

As plans evolve to redevelop the existing storage tent area adjacent to the volleyball courts with a new rentable picnic area, a new constructed wetlands area will also be added. This constructed wetlands area will be designed in 2016 and installed during the fall of 2017. The primary value of this wetlands will be intercepting stormwater running through the swale that flows adjacent to NARA's interior road, as well as treating water flowing down from the steep Ledge Rock Way hillside, collecting along the west side of the volleyball court (**see Goal 3-#2, p. 197**).



Rain Garden at the Picnic Pavilion



Painted Turtle in the pond



Park Ecology



Left: Great Blue Heron • Upper Right: Osprey • Lower Right: Barn Swallow on nest in bathhouse (photos by Rick Cowen)

THE ECOLOGY OF NARA POND

Geology

The nine-acre pond at NARA Park is man-made and has a maximum depth of 12 feet. The park and the excavation for the pond were shaped by giant earth moving machines such as bulldozers and excavators. The pond is fed by groundwater, traveling through the Town Forest in a southeasterly direction. Gravel was excavated down to the underlying granite bedrock; and water filled the basin left behind.

Water levels in the pond represent the local water table - most surface water features in New England are expressions of the local ground water and, indeed, roughly half of the flow in Acton's streams is groundwater discharge. That's why they continue to flow, even when it doesn't rain - that's called "base flow." Wetlands, ponds, and waterways are generally found where the local topography drops below the local water table. Prior to NARA pond being excavated, the hydrogeologists involved determined the level of the local groundwater, and then made recommendation as to how deep the pond should be dug to insure it intercepted the water table.

Acton is underlain by the Nashoba Formation, an assemblage of old metamorphic rocks which were reshaped and covered during the continental ice ages. Original sandstones or similar sedimentary rocks were altered by heat and pressure over geologic time into metamorphic rock. Most of the formation in Acton is biotite gneiss, which contains small plate-like crystals of the mineral biotite, a black form of mica. The Nashoba Formation is punctuated in places by younger volcanic rocks, known as the Acton granite. Granite deposits were formed when molten magma intruded from the subsurface into the Nashoba Formation. The intrusions, which are relatively small features, were mined in the past in several small quarries in Acton. One such historical quarry is on private land adjacent to NARA Park, off Quarry Road. The rock is still used by the stone sculptor in residence.

Plant and Animal Ecology

NARA pond is a self-contained, groundwater-fed ecosystem. It does not have streams, brooks or tributaries flowing into it. During springtime high water periods, the pond drains through an overflow pipe, traveling east and eventually flowing into Nashoba Brook, part of the "SuAsCo" (Sudbury, Assabet, Concord River) watershed.

NARA pond's water level changes seasonally depending on how much precipitation there has been. In 2010, the water level rose high enough to float the wooden boardwalk off of its granite pilings. In the past 15 years, the water level has dropped low enough to expose large boulders at the northeast side of the pond. On a yearly basis the pond fluctuates 3'-4' from high in the spring to low in the fall.

The plant community in and around the pond creates habitat for many animals that rely on the pond to live, breed and find food. The plant stems and leaves create microhabitats between the grains of sand and mud and the undersides of rocks and stones. Burrowing larvae, mussels, snails and worms live in the mud. These creatures feed on the decaying plant matter that falls from the surface. The marginal plants grow on the edge of the pond and are shelter and food for other animals. These are irises, cattails, marsh marigolds and rushes. The leaves and flowers of water lilies float on the surface and have their roots in the mud on the bottom of the pond. Many animals can hide under their cover. Other submerged plants like milfoil and other weeds are rooted in the mud, but they grow underwater. They provide shelter, food and sites for egg-laying. They also produce oxygen that dissolves in the water. Algae, photosynthetic creatures, grow in fresh water and are neither plant nor animal. Some are single-celled, other species are multicellular. Insect larvae and tadpoles eat the algae. Many different food chains in the pond are all dependent on plants as well as the decomposers, such as fungi and bacteria that convert rotting leaves and plants back into nutrients for the animals.

There are essential microscopic organisms in healthy ponds such as the one at NARA Park. Phytoplankton are microscopic organisms that inhabit the upper sunlit layer of bodies of fresh water. They perform photosynthesis, create oxygen and sustain the aquatic food web. Copepods are crustaceans that are part of the zooplankton, which eat the phytoplankton, and are a keystone species in a pond such as NARA's. They are a major food source for fish, insect larvae and many other animal species and are the basic elements of life in freshwater. Plant eaters are essential because they take in the plant nutrients, digest them and turn that matter into energy. Plant-eating snails and mussels live on the river bottom and are filter feeders. They strain plant food from the water. Animals such as ducks and geese eat these herbivores and benefit from the plant energy stored in their prey. Shore birds, such as great blue heron, green heron, spotted sandpiper, mallard, mute swan, several species of gull, kingfishers, and egrets have been seen feeding in the shallow waters at the edge of the pond.

Some animals begin life as an egg or egg mass in the pond, but leave the pond when they become an adult, through metamorphosis. The dragonfly egg hatches into a nymph and molts up to 15 times during 2 years of growth to adulthood! It's a fierce predator crawling along the bottom eating other insects or small fish. It climbs up the stem of a plant and molts into a dragonfly, usually at night. They are superb fliers and hunters, with huge compound eyes, speeding over the water and consuming insects. Dragonflies are an indicator species. Their presence and multitude tells us about the overall health of a local pond.



Amphibians such as the green frog, hatch from egg masses and begin life as tadpoles in NARA pond. They eat the larvae of many insects such as mosquitoes and caddis flies. Tadpoles are an important part of freshwater food chains. Insects such as water beetles often eat them. Many tadpoles are filter feeders that eat plankton; while others scrape algae from rocks. Snakes, such as the Northern Water Snake and several species of turtle live and breed in the pond. They hibernate in the mucky bottom during winter.

There are several species of fish in the NARA pond such as largemouth bass, blue gills and catfish. Freshwater fish have sensory organs that help them find their way in poor visibility, such as a vibration-detecting system via a lateral line along their bodies. Fish have a good sense of smell. Most use gills to extract oxygen from water. Maintaining a healthy diverse fish population in NARA Pond is important. Implementing a "catch and release" program represents our best chance for not having the pond fished out (see Goal 3-#5, p. 197).

Many turtles call NARA pond their home. Most typical is the eastern painted turtle, but snapping turtles have also been observed on the shore and in the water. These species of turtles lay their eggs on land, eat both plant and animal food, and are fast swimmers. They brumate (hibernate) in the muddy bottom of the pond during winter. During winter months, the painted and snapping turtles stop breathing through their lungs; their hearts beat once every few minutes. Additionally, painted turtles have a respiratory device near their tail called a cloaca that allows for the transfer of oxygen and carbon dioxide between the animal and the surrounding water. When the water warms in springtime, they swim to the surface and resume respiration through their lungs.

The food cycle depends on prey and predators. Without predators, prey would reproduce in massive numbers, taking over the water body. Every animal that lives in the pond's ecosystem will at some point become prey of another species.



NARA Pond: high water and low water comparison



NARA Pond, Summer 2015

Water Quality

Although the NARA pond water does not flow like river water, it does move. In fact, the entire volume of water is replenished approximately four times annually by the migration of groundwater. Wind pushes the water, forming waves which mix and move the water. Seasonal changes also move the water. In the autumn, the cool surface water sinks. Top layers trade places with bottom layers and that action is called turnover. It allows deeper water that gets less light to move to the surface, and for surface water that is highly oxygenated to move below and bring oxygen to organisms at deeper, darker depths.

Pollution occurs when a contaminant has been released into the freshwater and alters the natural environment. Typically, bacterial contamination originates from conditions on or near the shore. Bacterial levels will vary at different locations in a body of water, and are usually lower further away from shore. Large flocks of birds such as gulls and geese that take up residence at a pond can raise the level of bacteria in the water, for example. The best way to determine if a body of water is safe and the risk of water borne illness is low, is to sample the water and check for *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) bacteria. *E. coli* is commonly found in the intestines of humans and other mammals. Most strains of *E. coli* are not dangerous, but they can indicate the presence of other disease-causing bacteria. Since bacteria are living organisms, levels can change over time. A single sample will give a snapshot of water quality at the time the sample was collected. After significant rain events, bacteria from animal waste deposited along the shoreline can flow into the pond. Because many mammals live in

the wooded and riverine habitats surrounding NARA Park, at night some may visit the NARA pond to drink, such as foxes, coyotes, raccoon and deer.

Maintenance and Permitted Activities

The Town of Acton Natural Resources Department performs annual tasks in order to offer the public swimmable and accessible conditions in the pond and on the beach. High quality silt free beach sand is brought in to replenish beach areas where sand has eroded (usually bi-annually) in order to keep the beach clean and enjoyable (**See Goal 3-#3, p. 197**). Dogs are not permitted on the beach. The prohibition of pets is to reduce any additional biological animal waste that would increase the nutrient load to the water, as well as to protect patrons from any nuisance action dogs often commit while romping on the beach. A delineated swimming area is roped off using heavy concrete weights anchored to the bottom of the pond. This restricts the area that lifeguards are responsible for supervising while on duty. Beach passes are sold to patrons for the summer season from Memorial Day to the end of August. Fishing is permitted around the perimeter of the pond and from the wooden boardwalk with a valid Massachusetts fishing license, as is required by all anglers over the age of 15. Ethical angling brochures are on display at the bathhouse. People who practice "catch and release" are urged to pinch or remove the barbs on their hooks (**See Goal 3-#5, p. 197**). Paddle boats are available to rent and launch from the universally accessible dock on the beach. A wheelchair mat is placed on the sand from the sidewalk and a beach wheelchair is available for patrons to use free of charge.



Non-Point Source Pollution

In addition to joggers and fitness walkers, many visitors to NARA bring dogs to walk the park's one-mile perimeter trail. There is a dog leash policy at NARA. However, patrons do not all adhere to that mandate, though signage is posted. Some people allow their dogs to swim and play fetch in the pond. Despite rules, there is still dog fecal matter along the trail in proximity to the pond's shoreline that pet owners are failing to pick up. This is despite the fact that dog waste bags and trash barrels are provided at no charge by the Natural Resources Department.

After heavy rain events, nutrients from the animal waste can wash into the pond and elevate the nutrient load. Occasionally during the summer camp and beach membership season, the pond has to be closed when the Health Department's water quality test comes back too high for allowable E. Coli levels. This happens rarely (approximately once per season); but it causes great public concern and can give a sense that pond water is dirty and not "sterile." It is a popular misconception that if one area on a lake or pond has elevated bacteria levels, then the whole lake or pond is unsafe.

The Acton Health Department conducts weekly water quality testing while the pond is open for memberships during the normal beach operating season. The water samples are sent to an independent lab for testing. Testing procedures by the Acton Health Department are conducted in compliance with the Minimum Standards for Bathing Beaches, Massachusetts State Law 105CMR445. Imminent plans to install an aerator in the pond will assist by keeping oxygen levels in the pond high enough to prevent algae blooms or eutrophication. Storm water from the parking lots near the amphitheater (north of the pond) flows through a series of treatment wetlands, before entering the pond. The 2015 water testing spreadsheets as well as water quality report forms from 2010-2016 are included in the document. (See Goal 2 #1, p. 195)

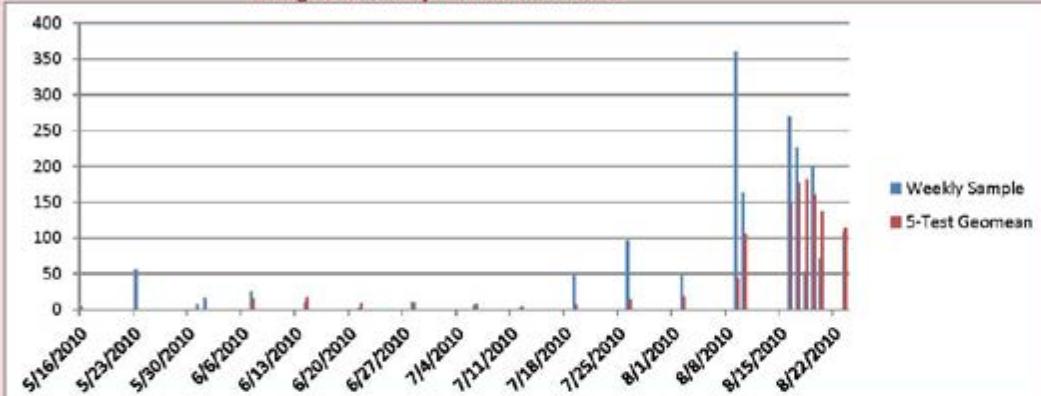
NARA pond is a living ecosystem, in balance with the innumerable components of nature. As opposed to a swimming pool, people

cannot add chlorine or chemicals to kill the natural elements residing in the pond. Rather, a balance is maintained between plants and animals allowing people to share in the pleasure of the pond as a scenic natural resource and recreational amenity.

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (<http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/whatis.cfm>), "Unlike pollution from industrial and sewage treatment plants, nonpoint source (NPS) pollution comes from many diffuse sources. NPS pollution is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters and ground waters."



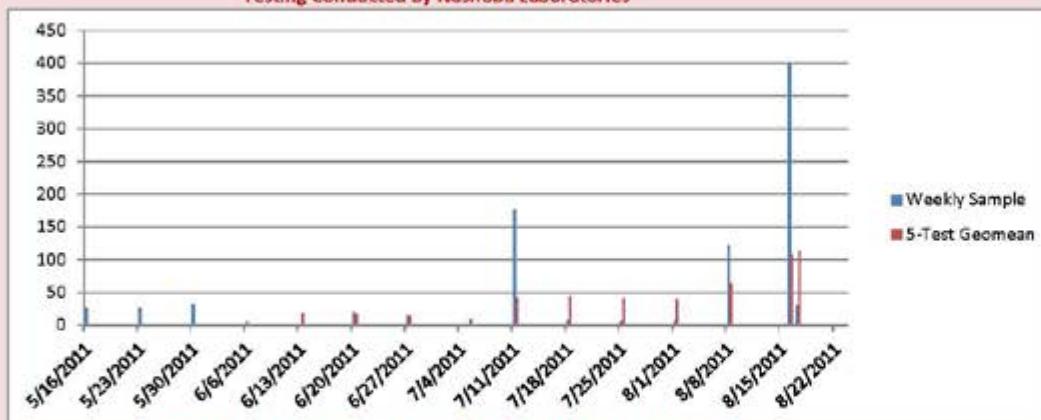
Acton Board of Health
 NARA Pond Weekly Bacteria Testing Results, Summer 2010
 Testing Conducted by Nashoba Laboratories



Weekly E. Coli Sample may not exceed 235 ppm (parts per million)
 5-Sample Geomean may not exceed 126 ppm

Date	Weekly Sample	5-Test Geomean
5/16/2010	4	
5/23/2010	56	
5/31/2010	7	
6/1/2010	16	
6/7/2010	26	14.55
6/14/2010	10	17.48
6/21/2010	2	8.98
6/28/2010	10	9.64
7/6/2010	6	7.92
7/12/2010	2	4.74
7/19/2010	48	6.49
7/26/2010	96	14.08
8/2/2010	48	19.27
8/9/2010	360	43.69
8/10/2010	164	105.48
8/16/2010	270	149.01
8/17/2010	226	176.84
8/18/2010	54	181.05
8/19/2010	200	160.97
8/20/2010	72	136.54
8/23/2010	108	113.67

Acton Board of Health
 NARA Pond Weekly Bacteria Testing Results, Summer 2011
 Testing Conducted by Nashoba Laboratories

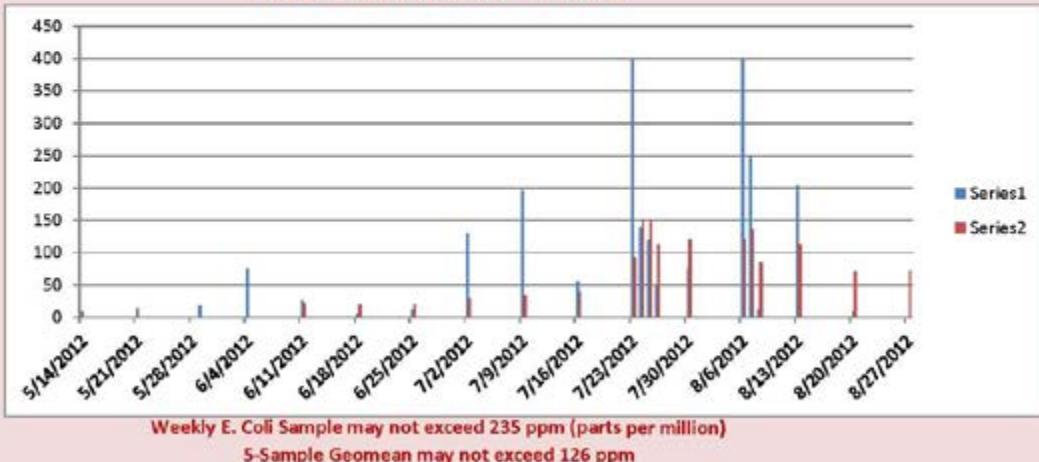


Weekly E. Coli Sample may not exceed 235 ppm (parts per million)
 5-Sample Geomean may not exceed 126 ppm

Date	Weekly Sample	5-Test Geomean
5/16/2011	27	
5/23/2011	26	
5/30/2011	32	
6/6/2011	6	
6/13/2011	1	18.4
6/20/2011	20	17
6/27/2011	16	15
7/5/2011	1	8.8
7/11/2011	176	42.8
7/18/2011	8	44.2
7/25/2011	6	41.4
8/1/2011	6	39.4
8/8/2011	122	63.6
8/16/2011	400	108.4
8/17/2011	30	112.8
8/23/2011	0	

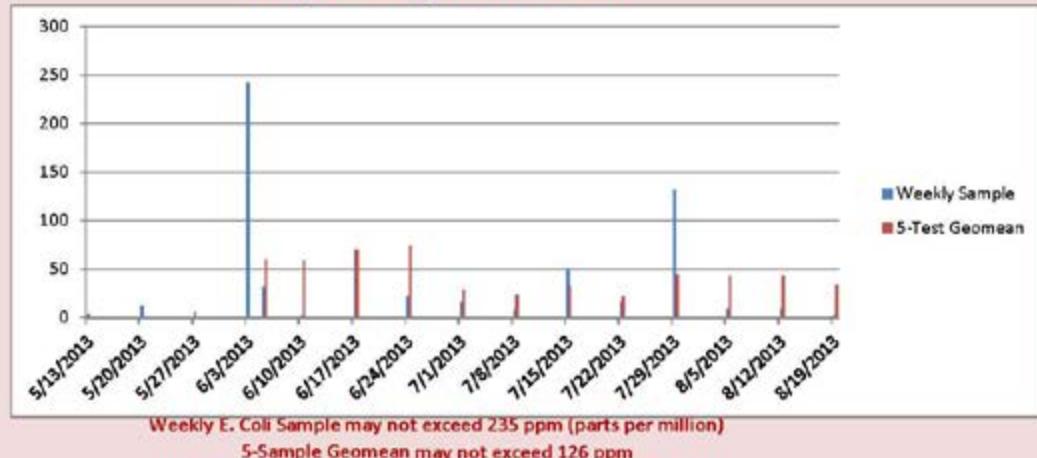
Board of Health Water Closure

Acton Board of Health
 NARA Pond Weekly Bacteria Testing Results, Summer 2012
 Testing Conducted by Nashoba Laboratories



Date	Weekly Sample	5-Test Geomean
5/14/2012	9	
5/21/2012	14	
5/29/2012	18	
6/4/2012	76	
6/11/2012	26	21.39
6/18/2012	6	19.73
6/25/2012	12	19.13
7/2/2012	130	28.41
7/9/2012	196	34.33
7/16/2012	56	40.03
7/23/2012	400	92.71
7/24/2012	140	151.54
7/25/2012	120	149.13
7/26/2012	50	113.48
7/30/2012	76	120.62
8/6/2012	400	120.62
8/7/2012	248	135.24
8/8/2012	12	85.33
8/13/2012	204	113.04
8/20/2012	8	72.06
8/27/2012		72.7

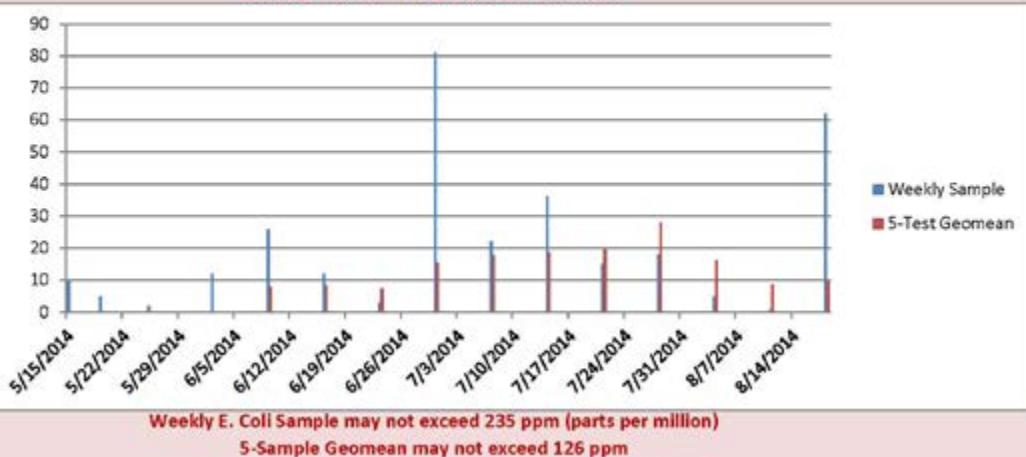
Acton Board of Health
 NARA Pond Weekly Bacteria Testing Results, Summer 2013
 Testing Conducted by Nashoba Laboratories



Date	Weekly Sample	5-Test Geomean
5/13/2013	4	
5/20/2013	12	
5/27/2013	6	
6/3/2013	242	
6/5/2013	32	59.2
6/10/2013	2	58.8
6/17/2013	70	70.4
6/24/2013	22	73.6
7/1/2013	16	28.4
7/8/2013	8	23.6
7/15/2013	50	33.2
7/22/2013	16	22.4
7/29/2013	132	44.4
8/5/2013	10	43.2
8/12/2013	10	43.6
8/19/2013	2	34

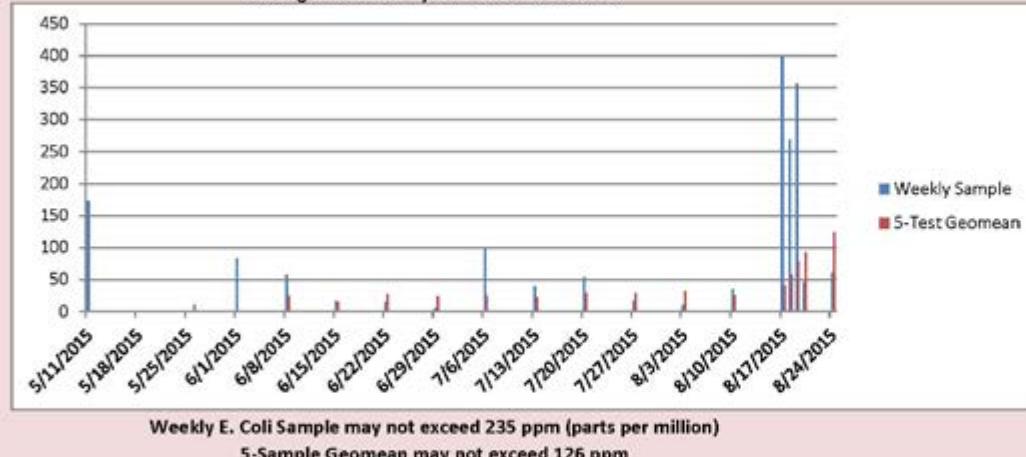
Board of Health Water Closure

Acton Board of Health
 NARA Pond Weekly Bacteria Testing Results, Summer 2014
 Testing Conducted by Nashoba Laboratories



Date	Weekly Sample	5-Test Geomean
5/15/2014	10	
5/19/2014	5	
5/25/2014	2	
6/2/2014	12	
6/9/2014	26	7.92
6/16/2014	12	8.22
6/23/2014	3	7.42
6/30/2014	81	15.55
7/7/2014	22	17.56
7/14/2014	36	18.74
7/21/2014	15	19.59
7/28/2014	18	28.04
8/4/2014	5	16.06
8/11/2014	1	8.66
8/18/2014	62	9.65

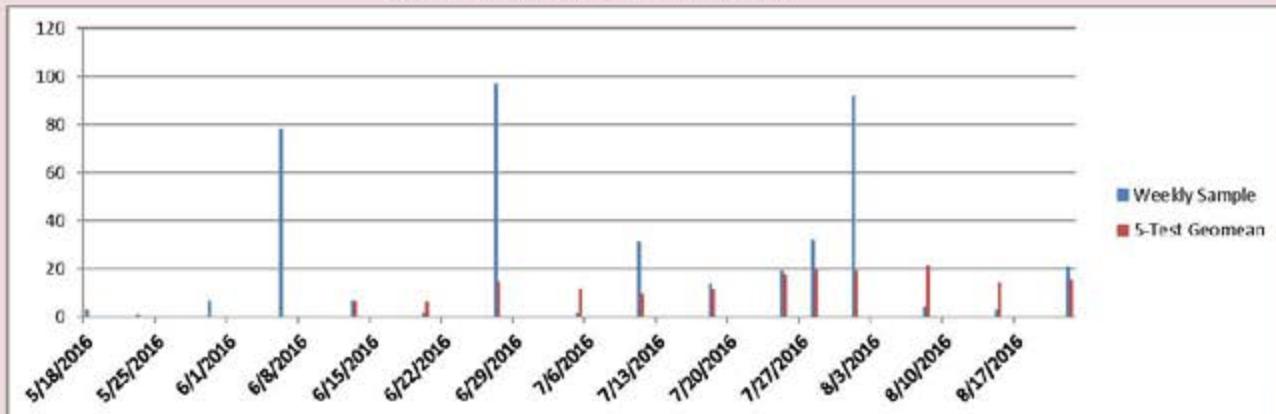
Acton Board of Health
 NARA Pond Weekly Bacteria Testing Results, Summer 2015
 Testing Conducted by Nashoba Laboratories



Date	Weekly Sample	5-Test Geomean
5/11/2015	173	
5/18/2015	1	
5/26/2015	11	
6/1/2015	83	
6/8/2015	58	24.68
6/15/2015	17	15.52
6/22/2015	15	26.67
6/29/2015	6	23.63
7/6/2015	98	24.43
7/13/2015	39	22.56
7/20/2015	53	28.32
7/27/2015	17	29.04
8/3/2015	10	32.17
8/10/2015	35	26.18
8/17/2015	400	41.7
8/18/2015	268	57.67
8/19/2015	356	78.11
8/20/2015	46	92.2
8/24/2015	61	124.63

Board of Health Water Closure

Acton Board of Health
 NARA Pond Weekly Bacteria Testing Results, Summer 2016
 Testing Conducted by Nashoba Laboratories



Weekly E. Coli Sample may not exceed 235 ppm (parts per million)

5-Sample Geomean may not exceed 126 ppm

Date	Weekly Sample	5-Test Geomean
5/18/2016	3	
5/23/2016	1	
5/30/2016	7	
6/6/2016	78	
6/13/2016	7	6.48
6/20/2016	2	5.98
6/27/2016	97	14.93
7/5/2016	2	11.62
7/11/2016	31	9.66
7/18/2016	14	11.1
7/25/2016	19	17.41
7/28/2016	32	19.27
8/1/2016	92	19.1
8/8/2016	4	21.44
8/15/2016	3	14.53
8/22/2016	21	15.54



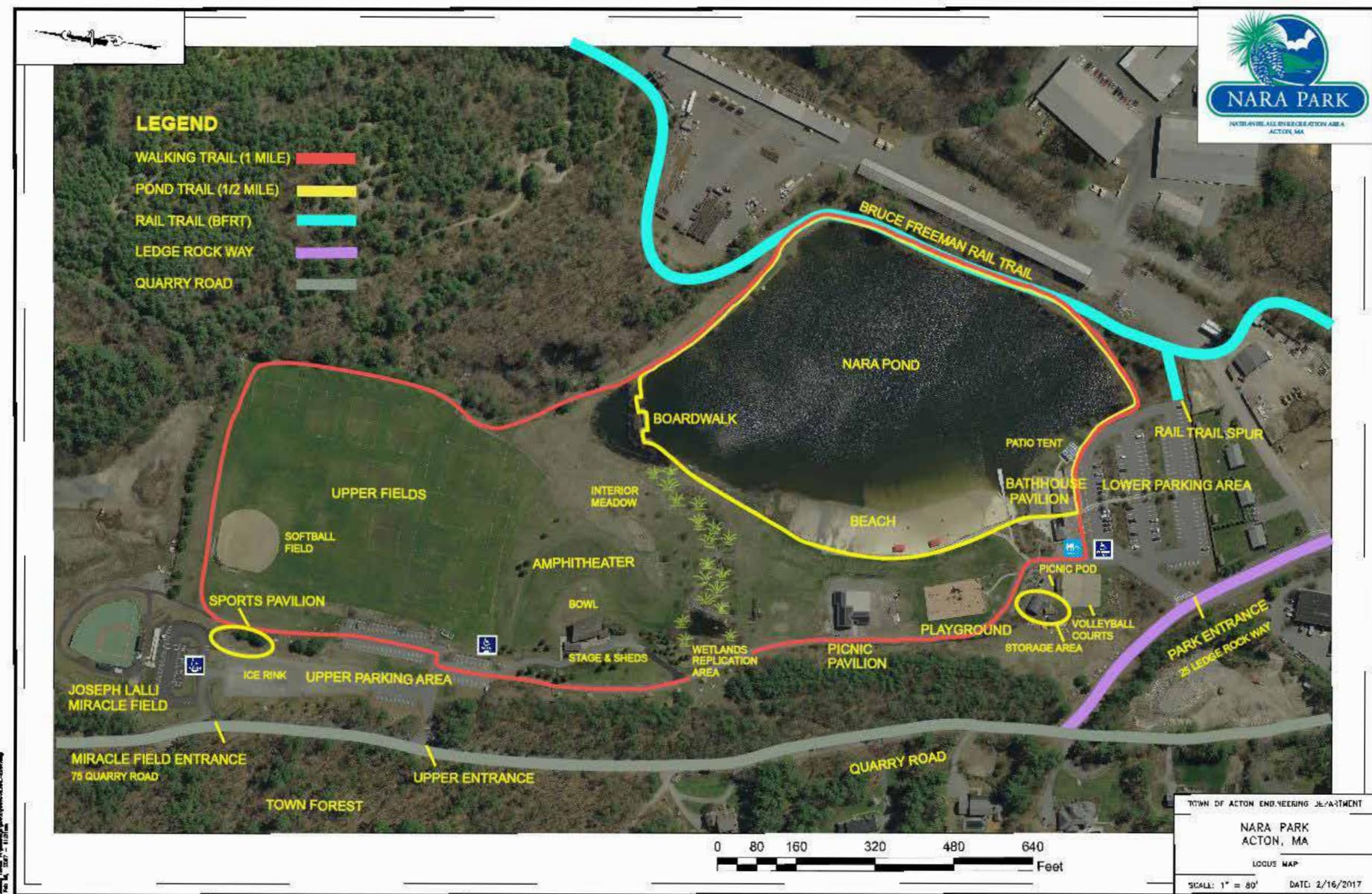
View from Patio Tent area of final phase of Picnic Pavilion construction, Spring 2014



92 Left: NARA Beach & Picnic Pavilion • Top Right: Patio Tent (rental area) • Bottom Right: Perennial Gardens at the Bathhouse

II. PLAN SUMMARY







Planning Process

The large construction phase of development of NARA Park is coming to completion. Expanding NARA into abutting properties aside, the focus and next phase at NARA Park now turns to protecting natural and cultural resources and Acton's investment in the park. Of primary concern is protecting and enhancing water quality. As NARA Park continues to flourish as a regional destination to recreate, inherent to its popularity comes overuse and unfortunately abuse. Our goal is to strike a healthy balance by both protecting the natural environment while embracing cultural diversity. We take the responsibility of being Acton's stewards of the NARA Park investment very seriously.

II-A	NARA Map	94
II-B	Planning Process	95
II-C	Inventory and Needs of NARA Facilities and Use Areas	97-175
II-D	Recreation Survey	178-183, 209-233
II-E	Future Expansion	185-187

Town staff describe each park asset and discuss needs to address.

The Recreation Department solicited public input from 414 respondents to this survey conducted from June-September, 2015. The input from the public shaped the list of Goals and Objectives detailed in Section III.

NARA Facilities



Bathhouse Pavilion



Picnic Pavilion



Ice Rink - upper gravel lot



Miracle Field



Multi-Use Sports Fields / Softball Diamond



Playground



Amphitheater



Patio Tent



Volleyball Court with Pod



Inventory of NARA Facilities and Use Areas



Bathhouse Pavilion.....	99
Picnic Pavilion.....	105
Amphitheater.....	111
Upper Fields.....	127
Playground.....	133
Walking Trail.....	135
Beach.....	139
Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.....	145
Landscaping.....	151
Gaga Pit.....	158
Volleyball Courts.....	159
Beach Parking & Park Entrance.....	161
Storage Area.....	165
Ice Rink.....	167
Joseph Lalli Miracle Field.....	169
Sports Pavilion.....	173



Bathhouse Pavilion

The NARA Bathhouse, like the Amphitheater, was designed by Thompson & Rose Architects and opened in 2000. It is the gateway into the park, the facility that visitors first encounter from the beach parking lot. As you approach the low-slung cedar clad building, the office and concession wing is on the right and the bathroom and changing room wing is on the left, separated by an open air corridor that beckons the visitor through the building and onto the bathhouse patio. From the patio, views of the pond, playground, picnic pavilion and amphitheater are visible and a central sidewalk leads to the beach.

From the rear, the office and concession areas are sheltered by a roofed pavilion that is popular for gatherings and currently serves as the home of NARA Camp. It is furnished with Trex picnic tables of various shapes and sizes. A staff bathroom is accessed through an outside door on the front of the concession side of the building. There are custom-made portable weather panels made

to fit the bathhouse pavilion by Doyle Sailmakers that protect the pavilion users from the elements. These panels are easy for staff to access when needed for camp or special outings. The panels are stored indoors during the winter months.

Next to the office and concession wing, a sidewalk connects to another paved patio with a 20' x 30' tent, the Patio Tent, with four picnic tables. Out in the sun on the bathhouse patio, additional round cast concrete tables, some with umbrellas, are distributed on the open concrete and wood decked patio area. Outdoor shower spigots line the outside wall of the changing room facing the beach. The patio border is softened by planted shrubs and perennial plants, providing enclosure from the beach beyond.



Bathhouse Pavilion with custom-made weather panels



Top: NARA Bathhouse and Patio • Bottom: Monsterbash 2015 at the Bathhouse

Bathhouse Pavilion (continued)

The storage room is located at the end of the bathroom wing and houses bathroom and camp supplies.

Beyond the patio, a sidewalk to the beach crosses over a swale running parallel to the patio and terminating at the pond shore, dividing the bathhouse area from the lower lawn adjacent to the playground. The swale carries water that runs off from Quarry Rd. along the park interior road where it turns toward the pond by the bathhouse.

Office

The office serves as the operating center for NARA Beach and Camp, and headquarters for Recreation staff during park events. It has a first-aid station and defibrillator, office desk, computer, printer and landline phone service. It stores supplies for camp, the bathrooms and concession. Employee payroll logbooks, schedules, mailboxes, walkie-talkies and a safe are utilized by the staff. An adjacent hallway is lined with shelves that store both camp and beach supplies. Current constraints include limited work space for the park supervisors and crowding of the office space while camp and the beach are in session. Recycling containers will be distributed around the perimeter of the bathhouse facility prior to the opening of summer camp in 2017 (**see Goal 3-#4, p. 197**).

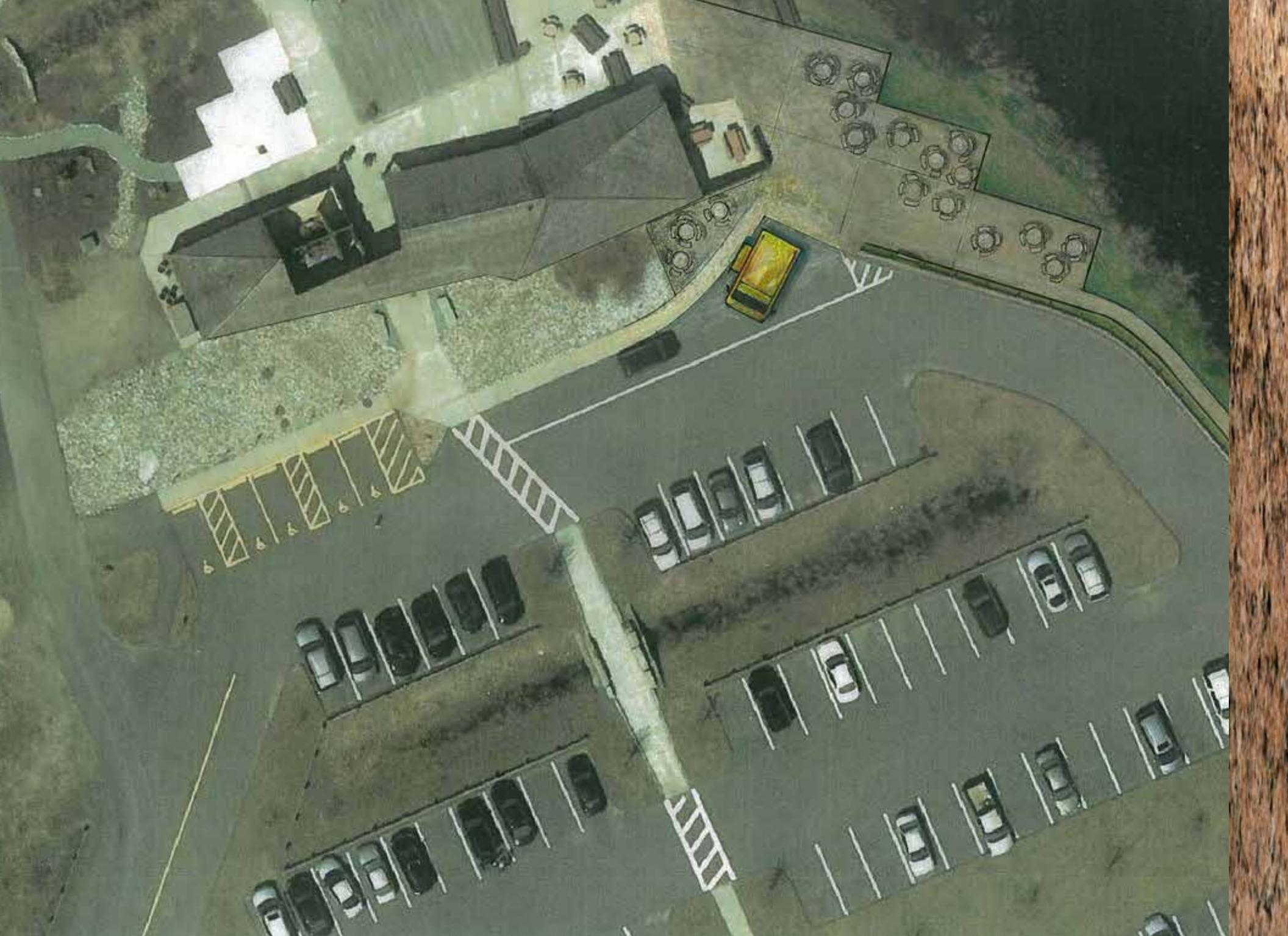
Changing Rooms

Both the men's and women's restrooms have a changing room, an antechamber to the restroom which is a walled room lacking a roof. It has a single long bench along the interior wall. Requests have been made to create privacy for changing - such as by hanging curtains or building stalls.

Restroom

There are currently two public restrooms at the park. Both the men and women's restrooms consist of a single toilet stall, a handicap accessible toilet stall, two sinks with mirrors, and a hand dryer. The restrooms underwent a large renovation in 2012 which included sealing the concrete floors, replacement of stainless steel stalls, new toilets, new on-demand hot water heaters for the bathroom sinks and painting the interior and staining the exterior of the building. There is a staff restroom located on the backside of the office building that has a toilet and sink.

The restrooms are the only permanent ones at the park and have a limited septic capacity. The restrooms are scheduled to be open during normal beach operations during the summer, and are closed when the beach is not open. When facilities are rented by large groups, they are required to rent a portable toilet for their use. During large events like July 4th at NARA Park, the bathrooms are augmented with additional portable toilets. The septic system is regularly pumped and ongoing maintenance has been costly due to the high demand and usage. The Recreation Department has been funding the costly upkeep of operating and maintaining the restrooms including septic pumping, winterizing, repairs, cleaning, supplies, and utility bills. Due to the lack of adequate restrooms to meet the patron's needs, portable toilets have been placed at the upper and lower park also funded by Acton Recreation. The lack of permanent bathrooms is one of the most common complaints we receive. Planning is underway to install a year-round permanent handicap accessible restroom located at the north end of the Park, the new NARA Sports Pavilion (**see Goal 4-#1, p. 197**), along with a permanent bathroom pavilion at the picnic pavilion (**see Goal 4-#6, p. 199**).



Schematic of "Cafe NARA" - future expanded concession area at Bathhouse

Bathhouse Pavilion (continued)

Snack Bar

The office serves as the operating center for NARA Beach and the snack bar consists of a commercial divided stainless steel sink, separate handwashing sink, a counter with storage shelves below and electrical outlets. It is furnished with upright refrigerators for beverages and cold items, an ice cream novelty freezer, a deep chest freezer, ice maker, microwave, pizza warmer, and a cash register. Upgrades were performed in 2012: an exhaust fan was installed to expel hot air to help reduce air temperature in the high ceiling room; the electrical service panel was expanded to add more circuits; more electrical outlets were installed.

This concession area was designed to handle primarily pre-packaged food items, such as snacks, chips, ice cream novelties, etc. with a limited amount of prepared foods including hot dogs, pizza and sandwiches. Space for more equipment is not available. Expansion of this space into the adjoining staff bathroom has been discussed to

acquire more square footage to reconfigure the space to accommodate more equipment and provide more service space toward the front of the building. An expansion in menu offerings is desired, such as offering hard ice cream, soft ice cream or yogurt, as opposed to packaged frozen treats. Other infrastructure changes will include additional lighting, an expanded patio, a sidewalk extension to link the bathhouse to the pond trail, and parking space for a food truck. With the opening of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in 2017, "Café NARA", an expanded concession at the bathhouse, could be an additional revenue source with the anticipated increase of NARA patrons. (See Goals 4-#4, p. 199) See Conceptual Drawing on page 102. The Chelmsford Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee has informed Acton that an average of 1,000 Rail Trail users per day are annually measured by both the Town of Chelmsford and the Center Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) of the Metropolitan Planning Organization.



Snack Bar and Bathhouse Pavilion seating area



A quiet early morning at the Pavilion through a fun-filled afternoon into a relaxing evening

Picnic Pavilion

A permanent picnic pavilion building located between the bathhouse and amphitheater was envisioned for NARA at the conceptual stage of the park's original design, but was cut from the final design due to budget limitations. After 2000, the Recreation Department instead erected two sturdy Eureka twin-tube canopy tents measuring 20' x 30' and 20' x 40', which served park patrons as two picnic rental areas for many years. By 2007, Recreation envisioned a design for a permanent picnic structure based upon a three-gable roof pavilion building installed in the state of Washington and designed by Heartland Timberframes. The objective was to create a single building that could be subdivided into multiple rental zones.

Recreation applied for Community Preservation Act funding in November 2007 for the installation of a similar structure, based on the premise that a company building modular pavilion structures could bid on this design and erect it. After the award of the CPA grant for \$250,000 in 2008, the Picnic Pavilion Modular Project went out to bid for construction, but despite interest from a number of companies, received no bids primarily due to the bid requirement that the company be certified by Department of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). In November 2008, a legal decision known as "Seideman vs. City of Newton" resulted in the Town putting the project on hold to avoid the risk of a similar lawsuit. City of Newton citizens contested the use of CPA funds for renovating existing recreation facilities on a Newton property that was not originally bought with CPA funds.

In 2010, while awaiting legislative changes to CPA bylaw restrictions, the Recreation Department invested \$15,000 from Recreation revolving account funds to hire an Architect to design a Picnic Pavilion from scratch. Kang Associates of Sudbury, MA was selected and worked with Picnic Pavilion committee members Tom Tidman (Natural Resources), Cathy Fochtman (Recreation), Maura Haberman (Recreation) and Dean Charter (Municipal Properties)

to create conceptual and engineered design plans. Upon the revision of CPA bylaws pertaining to Recreation projects, the Recreation Department could again access the 2008 CPA grant monies and applied in November 2012 for additional CPA funding to build the Kang Associates designed building, which required additional funding. The CPA awarded \$100,000 in 2012 for the project. Recreation contributed the remainder from Recreation revolving funds to put the design out to public bid for construction in May 2013. Stallion Builders of Nashua, NH was awarded the project. Construction began in October 2013, and included a post-and-beam framework designed by Bensonwood, a stamped and colorized concrete patio by New England Hardscapes under the roof, and an Ipe wood dance floor. It was substantially completed by Memorial Day 2014 and opened to the public. Additional features were later completed, including electrical outlets and step, pendant, and cove lighting tied to a battery backup system (UPS) to provide emergency lighting in the case of an electrical power failure. In addition, electrical hookups for projection and audiovisual equipment were added to the beams surrounding the dance floor. (Goal 4-#13, p. 199) A design for AV and sound equipment will be completed. (**See Goal 4-#21, p. 199**). Having custom made weather panels similar to those made for the bathhouse pavilion, would allow more ample use of the picnic pavilion during less than favorable weather conditions. (**See Goal 4-#36, p. 201**)

Recycling containers will be installed in the spring of 2017. (**See Goal 3-#4, p. 197**)



October 2013



December 2013



March 2014



December 2013



March 2014



Concrete Staining and Stamping



Dance Floor Installation



Patio Pour



Alison Gallagher painting a metal conduit



Picnic Pavilion in Fall 2014

Picnic Pavilion (continued)

The landscaping surrounding the picnic pavilion includes an irrigation system installed in 2013. Additional shade tree and shrub plantings are planned for the pavilion landscape. A rain garden diverts water runoff from the building's foundation and channels it into planted beds along the sidewalk entrance to the building. A large charcoal grill, a water spigot and a handicap accessible water fountain are amenities provided.

The pavilion is rented to the public for functions including family parties, reunions, weddings and corporate events. The building can be rented as one large rental area or can be subdivided into two smaller rental areas for functions. A collection of six large

planter boxes on caster wheels were built by the Natural Resources Crew Chief to house attractive plantings in whiskey barrels that are portable and can be wheeled into position to visually separate the two rental areas when needed.

Based on our experience renting to large groups, a permanent bathroom facility is needed in close proximity to the Picnic Pavilion to accommodate guests with mobility issues. (**See Goal 4-#6, p. 199**) To provide vehicle access for guests with mobility issues, three pervious pavement parking spaces are planned for the area south of the rain garden. (**See Goal 4-#17, p. 199**)



Conceptual Picnic Pavilion Bathroom



Recording Artist Sam Adams, June 19, 2010

Amphitheater

The NARA Amphitheater was built in 1999 and was designed by Thompson & Rose, Architects. The Amphitheater was completed in time for the Grand Opening Celebration held on September 18, 1999.

The amphitheater is made of massive semicircular berm with an elevated promenade and concrete stage covered by an oversized roof. The "Bowl" is the seating area. The venue is all lawn seating accommodating up to 3,000 people based on a footprint of 10 sq. ft. per person.

The Amphitheater is the hub of many concerts, special events, theater productions, movie nights and cultural events for the Town of Acton and private citizens/corporations. NARA events can range as high as 12,000 in attendance for the Town's annual Independence Day Celebration, to smaller, more intimate occasions such as a marionette show or string quartet. It is also rented for private functions like weddings and fundraising organizations such as the Miracle League of Massachusetts.

Over the past 10 years, the amphitheater has increased in value and demand. A private citizen donated funding in 2008, which served as the seed money to purchase professional sound and lighting equipment that helped pave the way to improving this sector of the park. A multi-purpose building was constructed in 2011 behind the stage to serve as a dressing room, storage area, and a small snack bar. The multi-purpose building, aka "Green Room," is heavily used throughout the year and provides a great amenity to both park guests and performers. The green room serves as an instrumental location for our event needs. A storage shed was built in 2013, behind the amphitheater opposite the green room building to enclose the exposed electrical panel and house the growing demand for storage of stage equipment during the off-season.

Many events are funded through donations by local businesses and private citizens. Donations are sought throughout the year to support a variety of free concerts and special events that take place at the Amphitheater, all of which are open to the community.

In a special NARA Master Plan Survey conducted throughout the summer in 2015, with a total response of 414, the following feedback was received:

- Of the 414 survey respondents, 91.3% were Acton residents.
- The Amphitheater was the second largest use of NARA apart from the walking trail.
- The Amphitheater's maintenance ranked above average.
- The majority of responders ranked additional restrooms as their second most needed priority (shade trees #1) within the next two to five years at the Park.
- Of the 414 respondents, 77.5% have attended concerts or special events.
- There were 392 who responded their top genre preference to attend a concert was classic rock followed by classical music, bluegrass/folk, and jazz. Remaining genres after jazz followed in this order: big band, country, contemporary, reggae, rap/hip-hop/turntable with heavy metal as least likely to attend.
- One question asked, "If there were theater at NARA, what would they most opt to see?" Shakespeare and drama were tied for the top choice, followed by comedy and musical, also tied. Of 414 respondents, 70.2% have attended the Independence Day Celebration at NARA Park.

There are many elements that comprise the Amphitheater performing space. Specifics are as follows:

STAGE EQUIPMENT

- An E-Z Stage Portable Stage System was purchased in 2013 for \$26,000. Funding for the initial purchase was made possible by a donation from a private citizen. The stage is almost complete, but is still in need of two 8' x 4' sections and a handicap ramp (See Goal 1-#10, p. 193). In 2015, the Recreation Department purchased a stage skirt to cover the exposed EZ Stage framework.
- Four steel-framed side stage custom display panels were created and installed in 2009. These frames support custom-made banners and help to direct sound into the amphitheater. The side panels are made of weather resistant material and two frames are positioned on each side of the stage. The banner panels last approximately four years. New side panels were purchased in 2014. The Recreation Department would like to have a study conducted to design a system to control sound exiting the bowl area. (See Goal 5-#6, p. 203)
- A large shade curtain is hung at the back of the stage. The shade curtain is in need of replacement now due to heavy use and deterioration from the elements.
- As theater continues to be a draw to NARA, having a stage curtain designed, created and installed would be an asset to add to the amphitheater. (See Goal 5-#10, p. 203)

SOUND AND LIGHTING EQUIPMENT

- There are three portable truss lighting frames for stage lighting.
- In 2007, a \$28,000 donation from a private citizen allowed Recreation to obtain its initial sound and lighting equipment

for the stage, opening the venue to more well-known performers and for theater opportunities.

- Original lighting purchased is now out-of-date and expensive to operate. LED stage lighting has become the new standard and the cost of those fixtures has dropped significantly since their introduction. Recreation purchased a few LED fixtures over the past five years, helping to offset the operational cost and enhance the venue. The older par can stage lights are due for replacement. (See Goal 4-#23, p. 199)
- As part of the donation purchase in 2007, both the sound and light boards are getting close to needing replacement. Some of the functions are not working on both pieces of equipment and the cost of repairing exceeds the cost of replacement.
- Chain falls that are used to hoist light and sound equipment were also purchased in 2007. They are now weathered and nearing replacement.
- In 2014, Recreation purchased surplus light equipment from Danny's Place now being used at the new picnic pavilion as well as the amphitheater.
- For larger concerts and theater productions, sound and lighting companies are hired to operate and augment sound and lighting needs.

PARKING

- The parking area for the amphitheater is located at the north end of the park. There are 70 paved parking spaces and a gravel lot which can accommodate up to 70 parked cars. There are currently two handicap spots (van accessible) located at the paved section.
- Recreation has utilized the upper fields for parking which has been successful (conditions permitting). However, parking remains an issue for events where more than 300 guests

are expected. For example, for July 4th the Town must seek permission to use Nagog Park parking lots for overflow parking. When using these lots, bus shuttles must be hired for \$3,000 to transport guests back and forth to the Park/Nagog Park. In addition, lighting the Town Forest Trail requires many strands of construction lights, portable generators and staff time, and numerous police personnel to direct traffic. Twelve additional light towers are rented, some borrowed from nearby towns to assist in the parking areas for the July 4th celebration. Additional parking areas are a critical need and all options for additional parking areas should be considered, including opportunities to purchase abutting land. (See Goal 1-#1, p. 193, Goal 4-#15, p. 199, Goal 4-#28, p. 201)

- Parking is a major complaint from guests who have attended large events. The survey statistics show that this is a major problem that needs to be addressed. It prevents many people from attending NARA events. (See Survey Public Comments, RE: Acton's July 4th Celebration, P. 222, See Goals 6.A, 6C, p. 204.)

AMPHITHEATER LIGHTING

- The Amphitheater has four halogen fixtures. Two face off to the outside grass area of the Amphitheater and two illuminate the stage. There are three 100 watt fixtures--two on the multipurpose room and one on the storage shed. These lights are the only permanent lights for the Amphitheater and are only used during events.
- Throughout the summer and selected events, borrowed use (pending availability) of Highway Department light towers is needed as well as rented light towers to illuminate parking areas. Light towers have been rented for large events like July 4th.
- There is a need for permanent parking lot lighting along with street lights on Quarry Road. (See Goal 1-#15, p. 193)

RESTROOMS

- Restrooms with water service are located 1/3 mile away from the amphitheater, at the bathhouse pavilion during regular beach operational hours (Memorial Day-Late August).
- Amphitheater guests must use portable toilets. These portable toilets are funded from the Recreation Department operating budget. The disadvantages of not having restrooms and only portable toilets in use at the Amphitheater vicinity include:
 - Difficulty for guests with special needs or young children
 - No night lighting
 - Lack of cleanliness
 - Safety to and from
 - Rental difficulty
 - Costly
 - Not aesthetically pleasing
 - Odor
 - Overuse from field users or outside events
- Permanent restrooms are needed to make this a user and guest friendly venue.
- According to our survey, lack of restrooms is one of the major problems NARA faces.

LANDSCAPING

- The Amphitheater has beautiful mature shrubs and pine trees. The Amphitheater bowl in early summer is lush and then throughout the summer loses its color and becomes hay-like. (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)
- There is an irrigation system in the lower part of the bowl; it requires repair. (See Goal 4-#39, p. 201)
- A seasonal groundskeeper maintains the gardens in this area and the Natural Resources crew maintains the area mowing and general maintenance.

SECURITY

- The Park is not open after dusk with the exception of special night events (typically held at the Amphitheater or Picnic Pavilion). When Amphitheater events are held, police are notified and if needed, police detail(s) are assigned to the event. Town staff is present during these events from the onset until the conclusion. In addition, a part-time seasonal Park Ranger was hired in 2015 and is present at larger events. (See Goal 1-#3, p. 193)
- Safety enhancements are being reviewed: video cameras, gate access to interior road, and improved night lighting. (See Goal 1-#11, p. 193) Gates to restrict motorized traffic on the interior road between the lower and upper parking lot were installed in 2016.

EQUIPMENT

The Recreation Department has purchased an array of costly equipment that is heavily used for events which needs to be replaced frequently. (See Goal 4-#35, p. 201) This equipment includes:

- 10' x 10' EZ Up Tents (6), will need replacing in 2017
- 6' and 9' Folding Tables (10), will need replacing in 2017- 2018
- Party Grill-Gas (1), will need replacing in 2016, 2021
- Folding Chairs (250), will need replacing in 2017

ACCESSIBILITY

- The Amphitheater is a hub for a variety of activities and Recreation strives to meet the needs for all ages and abilities.
- Tom Tidman, Cathy Fochtman and Maura Haberman met on-site with Building Commissioner, Frank Ramsbottom, on September 29, 2015 to review ADA Accessibility.

- Currently, there is a concrete sidewalk in front of the concession area that leads into the bowl (audience viewing area) of the Amphitheater. There is a need to widen the patio in front of the snack bar (See Goal 4-#9, p. 199) and extend the level access area to meet ADA compliance. The accessibility pathway needs to be extended so that all patrons can see the event on stage. The pathway must be smooth, and free of bumps and ruts. The slope at the entry area from snack bar is in compliance. However, the grass entry area from the concrete after the snack bar is not free of ruts and bumps.
- Recreation would like to purchase an ADA compliant portable access path that offers a safe well-drained surface, firm and stable for wheelchair access, stroller or walkers for easier access. (See Goal 4-#10, p. 199). At minimum, Recreation will grade an access area for a smooth surface prior to the start of the 2017 Amphitheater events to be in compliance.
- A handicap accessible ramp is needed for the portable EZ Stage. Currently, Recreation is seeking support from the Acton Lions Club to help defray the cost (estimate: \$5,581 including estimated freight charges) to purchase. (See Goal 1-#10, p. 193) The portable stage cannot be used by community groups without having a ramp.
- Additional handicap parking (temporary signage) is placed during higher attended events such as July 4th and special ticketed concerts. Recreation would like to add two additional permanent handicap parking spots in the parking area located close to the amphitheater. Currently, there are only two designated handicap parking spots (van accessible) that were installed when the Park was constructed. To meet ADA compliance parking ratios, an additional handicap parking space is needed. Recreation would like to add two parking spaces to help meet the growing demand. The slope where the current handicap parking spots are located needs to be addressed. The current handicap parking spaces originally constructed were not placed on a less than 2% grade. (See Goals 4-#27 and #41, p. 201)

- Handicap accessible portable restrooms are provided near the amphitheater area on a paved surface. The addition of a permanent facility will greatly improve the experience and accessibility for all.
- The upper gravel multiuse parking area has two paved parking lots that abut it on each side. One side opens up to the upper field parking area parking and the other side to the Miracle Field. At this time, there is no plan to pave the multiuse gravel lot as it is used as an ice skating rink during the winter months. In the future, adding an accessible walkway from one area to the other will need to be addressed when a Sports Pavilion is constructed near the Miracle Field.





Arts in the Park

When NARA's construction was completed in September of 1999, a celebratory Grand Opening was held. That was the start of events at NARA! Since that time, the amphitheater has become the hub for all kinds of outdoor events in Acton. Not only is the amphitheater used for Town concerts, it's a perfect venue for a variety of cultural and diverse events. The amphitheater has also been the foundation for many successful fundraising events ranging from suicide awareness & prevention to raising funds and collecting food to support the Acton Food Pantry. In addition, the amphitheater can be rented out for private use.

Each year, outside organizations and/or individuals approach the Recreation Department to initiate their special interest event at NARA Park. As NARA's popularity has grown, so has the amount of needs and special requests from the applicants. We want to promote cultural arts and diversity in our Park and as part of this effort the Recreation Department plans to develop a Cultural Arts Policy outlining how to use the Park's facilities to host these events. **(See Goal 5-#1, p. 203)** These events should be performer/applicant funded. **(See Goal 5-#4, p. 203)**

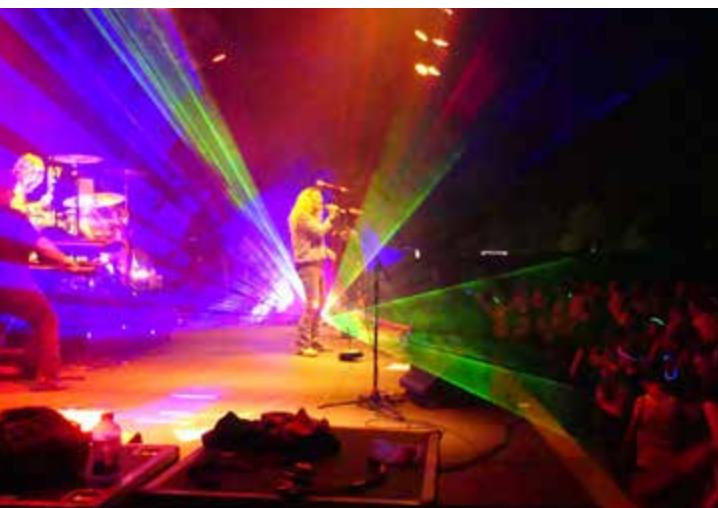
Each year NARA events start out with a festive Winter Carnival, held on the first Saturday of February. Events continue throughout the year wrapping up with Monsterbash in October. The vast quantity of events brings thousands of guests of all ages to the park annually, not only from Acton, but from all over New England and beyond.

The Recreation Department administers the use of the amphitheater and its daily operations. Daily operations consist of maintenance, landscaping, site permitting, event planning, fundraising, marketing and site preparation. The general expenses to operate this sector of the park include: electricity, irrigation, portable toilet rentals, structural repairs, scheduled maintenance of buildings (amphitheater, storage shed, roofing **(See Goal 4-#25 and #26, p. 201)** and multipurpose shed,

landscaping (both upkeep and enhancement), trash pick-up, light equipment installation/dismantling for seasonal operations, security, snack bar equipment and supplies, signage, folding tables and chairs, and general supplies. Other added costs associated with events that are not part of daily operations include: production costs, light tower rentals, bus shuttles, event signage, staging, lighting and sound equipment, Police and Fire details. Getting the information out to the public about our events with virtually no funding for purchased advertising is critical. New methods such as a permanent message board would be a great platform. **(See Goal 5-#3, p. 203)** Expenses noted above do not include the labor costs of Town staff, entertainer fees, or private contractors.

Each year the Recreation Department seeks funding from our local businesses to support the cost of the numerous community events offered throughout the year. The generosity of our local businesses has helped us grow and stand out from other towns. We would not be able to offer these wonderful events if it were not for their support, many that continue to give each year. Other revenue sources are obtained by private citizen donations, ticket fees, onsite donation collection, snack bar sales, vendor fees and facility rentals.

During the summer months, free concerts are held on selected weeknights offering a variety of genres ranging from classical, country, swing, rock n' roll and more. Over the last few years, the Recreation Department has added low-cost ticketed concerts with great success. These concerts feature national touring acts performing the music of Led Zeppelin, Fleetwood Mac, Pink Floyd, and the Beatles. In addition to the tribute bands, one of the biggest ticketed concerts has been The World Famous Glenn Miller Orchestra. According to the NARA Master Plan Survey results, the most highly rated concert choice was classic rock n' roll music.



Arts in the Park (continued)

Acton's biggest celebration of the year, the Independence Day Celebration, is organized by the Recreation Department. The attendance averages around 12,000 +/- yearly. This event was formerly held on the high school campus and then was moved to NARA upon park completion. Planning for this event begins a year in advance. To safely and effectively orchestrate an event of this magnitude there is a lot to plan for including: public safety, budgeting, site logistics, staffing, fireworks, entertainers, production needs, parking, vendors, lighting, toilets, signage, advertising/press releases, fundraising and more. Due to the high expenses to operate this event and the extremely low donations collected onsite from attendees, the possibility of a nominal admission fee may be needed in the future to offset the high cost. **(See Goal 1-#7, p. 193)**

To uphold the quality of entertainment that is expected at a NARA Concert, Acton Recreation would like to contract with a larger promoter to have several national and name recognizable acts perform at the Amphitheater. These concerts would then be run entirely by the promoter as well as taking on all related issues such as weather, ticket sales, advertising, band negotiations, etc. **(See Goal 5-#9, p. 203)**

In addition to the summer concert series and special events, Acton Recreation has hosted a variety of free theater productions including "Beauty and the Beast" in 2008, "Cats" in 2011, Walden Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in 2015 and a Pop Up Performance of "As You Like It" performed by Walden Shakespeare in 2016.

(See Goal 5-#8, p. 203)

As part of the summer activities at the amphitheater, the Recreation Department has offered movie nights, marionette shows, and street performers. After a summer chock-filled with entertainment, the season concludes with Acton Recreation's very popular annual Monsterbash event in mid-October.

Acton's population is richly diverse and we are very proud that NARA has become a popular venue for offering arts and cultural experiences from various regions of the world. These events have taken place over the past 10 years and have been well-attended and well-received. They include: Essence of India, Sri Lanka Day, Chinese Music & Dance Night, Pakistan Day, Chinese Cultural Day and marionette shows featuring fables and folklore from around the world. **(See Goal 5-#4, p. 203)**

Not only is the Amphitheater used for events, the new Picnic Pavilion is a superb location for hosting evening concerts like a jazz quartet or Irish fiddlers, which have been hosted there in the past at our free summer concerts. It could be a nice venue for a Tastes of the Region event. The Bathhouse Pavilion has been the stage for many events over the years including Monsterbash, Winter Carnival and Marionette Shows.

(Goal 5-#5, p. 203)

Music is not the only cultural art celebrated at NARA. Acton Recreation would like to plan for future Environmental Art installations and exhibits. Heron's Dream, a relatively new sculpture, commissioned by the Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council in 2013, was added to the park and has received rave reviews, see page 55.

(See Goal 5-#7, p. 203)

Acton Recreation would like to see an Earth Day event added to annual events at NARA Park pending funding from donors to support this opportunity.

(See Goal 5-#11, p. 203)

Events at NARA continue to grow each year and draw higher caliber entertainers and larger audiences, following a steady course of continued success. However, with success comes greater demands and new challenges such as a lack of onsite parking for large events and year-round restroom facilities. As we continue to grow and predict future needs, we strive to maintain awareness of the necessities by prioritizing needs versus wants. The Acton Recreation Department works diligently to provide the citizens of Acton the best experience possible at NARA.

As NARA Park matures, there are many needs that are yet to be met, many of them large in scope. Establishing a "Friends of NARA Park" will aid greatly with oversight and input to support the future needs of the park.

(See Goal 5-#2, p. 203)



Plaque and Sculpture of Heron's Dream



Eaglemania, July 3, 2015



Family Fun Time, July 3, 2015



Arts in the Park event photos



Arts in the Park event photos





Left: Essence of India • Right: Tanglewood Marionettes



Top: Softball field • Bottom Left: Dog Day Jubilee • Concert Overflow Parking on NARA Fields

Upper Fields

The fields are used year-round for activities like NARA Summer Camp and programs, sports leagues, corporate outings, special events, walkers, sledding and field permit rentals.

The upper field area consists of seven-acres of multiuse turf fields including a full-sized softball field. The parking lot for upper fields, used by field users and special event patrons, is not large enough to accommodate regular use. There is a plan in place to add 17 additional parking spots along upper Quarry Road. (See Goal 1-#12, p. 193). This will help with the heavier field use demand. In order to address large concert parking, the Recreation Department has experimented with overflow parking on the main ballfield (see photo opposite page). Calculations from the Engineering Department indicate that 150 cars can be accommodated on the ballfield. During the summer of 2015, the field was used on three occasions to park cars. On one evening more than 150 cars were parked with no noticeable damage to the field.

In order to accomodate improved access to the upper fields for emergency vehicles, overflow parking, and field maintenance equipment, a new landscaped driveway to the upper fields is planned for the spring of 2017. (See Goal 4-#43, p. 201)

The Recreation Department administers the use of fields including permitting, regular maintenance and field improvements. Recycling containers were purchased with grant money and will be installed for the 2017 spring season. (See Goal 3-#4, p. 197)

The fields are primarily used by Acton resident and non-resident leagues. Throughout the year, the most frequent users include: Acton-Boxborough Youth Soccer (ABYS), Acton Adult Softball League (AASL), Acton-Boxborough Youth Softball (ABYSB), Acton-Boxborough Youth Lacrosse (ABLAX), Acton Boxborough Regional High School (ABRHS) Ultimate Frisbee, Acton-Boxborough Pop Warner and the ABRHS Monday Night Quarterbacks.



Left: Acton Town Fair at upper fields, June 2009 • NARA campers



Acton-Boxborough Youth Soccer

Upper Fields (continued)

Facilities revenue is generated by field permits obtained by sports organizations, camps, adult leagues and corporate outings. Acton youth leagues are not charged for use of the fields, however, youth leagues are expected to contribute towards field maintenance and field lining.

NARA fields have been home to the Old Gold Rugby Tournament held annually each July. This event draws over 400 rugby players and fans.

In the winter, the upper fields are heavily used for sledding, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. In the spring, summer, and fall, the fields are heavily used by Town leagues, NARA Camp and by permitted organizations, as well as the occasional walker and runner.

The fields have an irrigation system fed by a well that was drilled during park construction. The system was designed specific for irrigation systems with a pumping capacity of 20-gallons per

minute. The system installed was residential grade and it has been recommended by an irrigation professional that the system should be replaced by a commercial system in five years (circa 2020) (**See Goal 1-#13, p. 193**). Extensive and increasing repairs to the irrigation system have been incurred. These expenses include sprinkler head replacement, water pipe repairs, in addition to costs to winterize each fall and as well as opening the fields in the spring. In 2004-2005, a sub-drainage system was added to help with ponding areas on the ballfield after storm events.

Routine turf maintenance is critical to the health of the NARA ballfield. The expense of maintaining a high quality turf grass at NARA must be shared by the Recreation Department and the user groups. A yearly (long-term) maintenance plan and budget must be developed. The last major aeration, overseeding, and fertilization was done by Gatsby Grounds in 2012. It will be important that youth leagues play a larger role in yearly field maintenance. (**See Goal 1-#5, p. 193 and Goal 3-#12, p. 197**)



Upper Fields (continued)

In late fall 2009, the field suffered major vandalism by a vehicle causing more than \$25,000 worth of turf damage. A person was charged with the crime and assessed a fine that was never paid, leaving Recreation to fund all field repairs.

The following items are ranked in Section III, "Goals and Objectives."

(a) Additional Shade at the Upper Field

We plan to address this often heard request in a number of ways: adding shade trees (See Goal 2-#3, p. 195), and putting roof structures over the softball field dugouts. (See Goal 4-#12, p. 199) In 2016, a 20' x 30' tent was placed on the south end of the upper field.

(b) Improved Accessibility

Improved access to the drinking fountain at the south end of the upper field was completed in 2016 by an Eagle Scout. (See Goal 4-#20, p. 199) Recreation is planning to have a natural stonedust ramp from the drinking fountain to the ballfield designed and constructed. (See Goal 2-#5, p. 195) Recreation has discussed designing an accessible trail running along the base of slope along the parking lot side of the ballfield and joining the existing paved path near the softball backstop. Final design of the new ballfield accessible path will be done when the Sports Pavilion is constructed.

(c) Recreation has received numerous requests to install a second softball diamond at NARA

Two fields allows for softball tournaments to be played at NARA. Preliminary design discussions started in 2015. (See Goal 4-#24, p. 201)

(d) Sports lighting for the ballfield

This would include the softball fields and multiuse field (See Goal 2-#9, p. 195).

(e) Tennis Courts. (See Goal 4-#42, p. 201)





NARA Playground, Spring 2015

Upper Fields (continued)

The NARA Playground was made by Landscape Structures and is located in the lower part of the park, next to the beach. It's a 65'x125' play area for elementary-aged children. The surfacing is playground engineered wood fiber that is replenished about every two years. The playground consists of a large climbing structure with various ways to climb up onto it, many different slides to exit as well as a bridge from one platform to the next. The playground has a few rocking elements and climbing pods. There is one tire swing, multiple belt swings, and a handicap accessible swing. The playground is compliant with ADA standards as well as national playground standards. It is inspected by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) seasonally to comply with all safety standards. The CPSI will make a report with any maintenance issues and send them over to the Natural Resources crew for any repairs. There is a water fountain located at the entrance. (**See Goals 4-#34 and #38, p. 201**)

In 2012, the wooden rail fence around the playground needed to be replaced. It was rotted and falling over. It was replaced with a black, chain-link fence that is still in great condition five years later. Signs were placed on the gate to the playground that asks parents and guardians to keep the gate shut so younger children don't wander outside the play area unattended.

The playground had suffered erosion issues due to poor drainage. After a rainfall, ground water would infiltrate and surface water would pour down the walking path, often flooding the playground. In 2013, the Recreation Department addressed this issue by purchasing materials and accepting the donated services of J. Redmond Corp. to re-do the drainage underneath the wood fiber, and put in a system where a pipe collects the water and drains it outside of the play area. Since this has been addressed, there have not been any major flooding and drainage issues. (**See Goal 3-#3, p. 197**)

The community has expressed their concerns about not enough shade within the playground area and often will choose not to use the NARA Playground during the hot summer months. In 2014, the Recreation Department applied for and was awarded CPA funding to add two additional shade structures to NARA Park. In 2016, a new shade structure was placed on the beach in alignment with the existing two shade structures. An additional shade structure was added in the playground that required movement or relocation of a few playground equipment pieces. (Goal 2-#2, p. 195). In terms of more structures, the Recreation Department would love to add a splash pad to the park. Location is yet to be decided, but it makes sense to keep it by the playground and beach. (**See Goal 4-#33, p. 201**)

The NARA Playground is open year-round and gets a lot of use from park goers and NARA Camp during the summer months.



Volunteers help spread mulch at playground, September 2012



NARA Boardwalk

Walking Trail

The paved pedestrian trail is six feet in width and approximately one mile in length, circling the park perimeter. The paved surface is still in good condition, with the exception of several eroded areas near the main ball field requiring short sections to be improved. Park benches require ongoing repair and replacement due to public demand, wear and tear. Building a gazebo by the bridge along the walking path, would be a great addition to the park (**See Goals 4-#29 and #40, p. 201**). This perimeter trail is extremely popular for walkers throughout the year. Winter plowing of the trail has been the responsibility of the Highway Sidewalk Plowing Crew and is at the northern most end of their route. During snowy winters as in 2015, the trail can go unplowed for extended periods. Coming up with an alternative plowing method is something Natural Resources is researching.

Recreation and Natural Resources are planning for the arrival of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT), scheduled to open during the summer of 2017. The BFRT enters NARA Park and joins with the existing walking trail for a distance of approximately 300 feet. The path will be widened to a 12-foot area where the trail and the BFRT are combined. Concerns have been raised about safety for people walking the trail and policing bikes that would ride around the trail where it is only

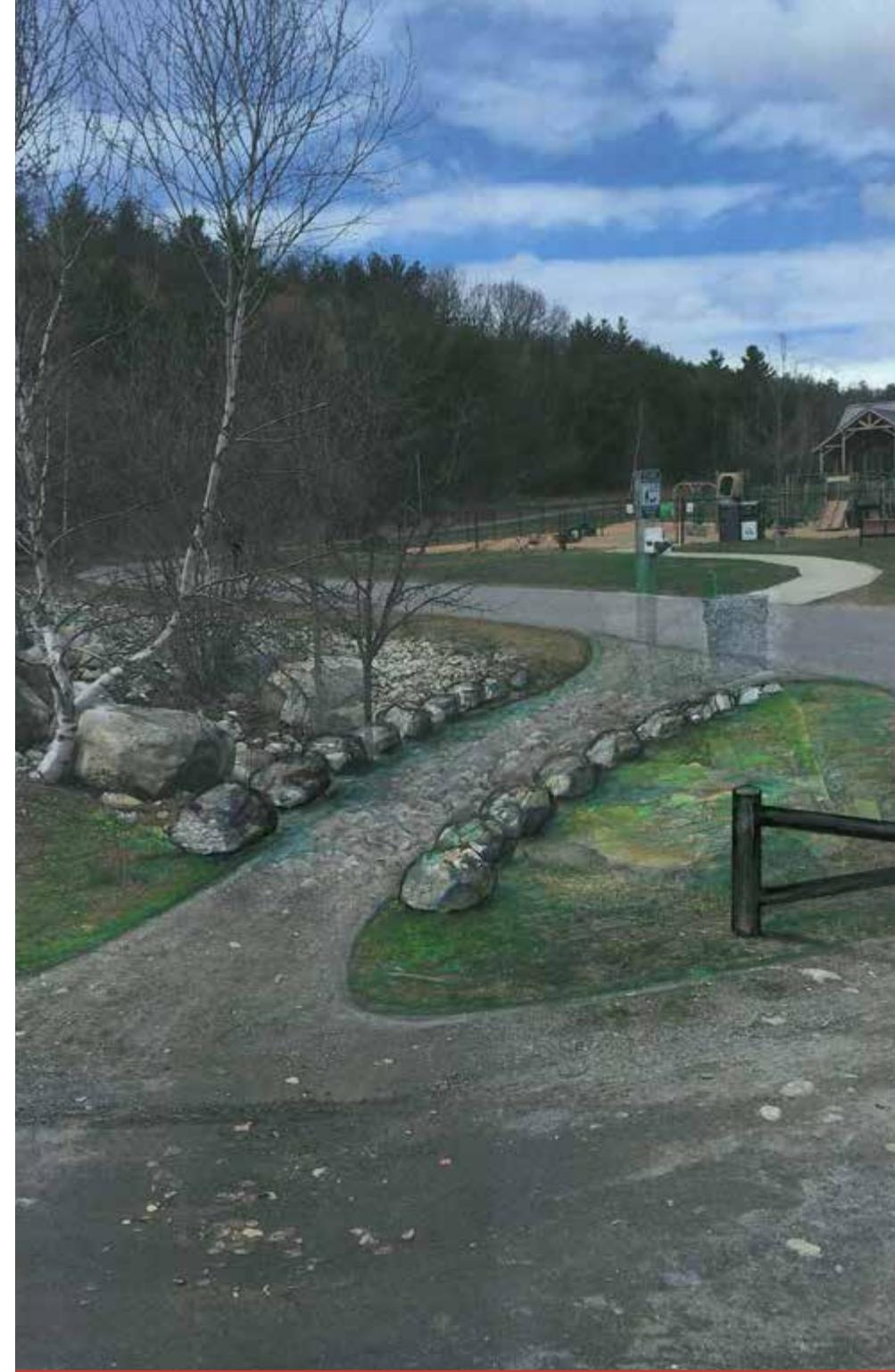
8-feet wide. The Recreation Department is considering the installation of signage restricting bike use within NARA Park to the 300-foot portion of trail that will be 12-foot wide, prohibiting bike use for the remainder of the 8-feet wide trail.

The boardwalk that bisects the pond and connects the beach with the opposite shoreline of the pond creates a 1/2 mile loop trail around the entire pond. It provides opportunities for fishing and observing wildlife, as it wraps around the wildlife impoundment that is the outlet of the large central wetlands complex. The boardwalk was constructed with the support of volunteers and will require replacement as it is nearing the end of its useful life (**See Goal 4-#22, p. 199**). Handicap accessibility onto the boardwalk must be maintained (**See Goal 4-#3, p. 199**).

The perimeter trail is used year-round for various walks and 5K races including the Miracle League's Family FunFest annual fundraiser, Acton Recreation's 5K Race, Dash n' Bash 5K, Kids Fun Runs, Relay for Life and more.

Another improvement under consideration is to reroute the trail where it currently merges into both the upper and lower parking lots. Providing alternative safety routes away from parking lot traffic would improve safety.





Conceptual drawing of walking path for access when inner road gate is closed



Walking path constructed in Summer 2016



NARA Beach

Beach

NARA's Beach consists of a 500' swimming area, boating, and fishing on a 9-acre man-made pond. The pond is surrounded by an approximate ½ mile paved and handicap accessible walking path. The swimming area on the beach is marked with buoys and lane lines in the summer to show the safe areas to swim. To make our swim area available to all users, we have taken steps to make our beach accessible by having mobimats and a mobichair to access the water. On the north end of the beach, there is a volleyball court set-up for beach goers. The beach has two shade structures and in 2014, the Recreation Department applied for and was awarded with CPA funding to add two more shade structures. Both of these structures were installed in Spring, 2016. One is located with a poured concrete pad closer to the beach entrance, and the other was installed in the playground. (**See Goal 2-#2, p. 195**) There are a few Adirondack chairs and umbrellas for the beach users to relax under during the hot summer months. As these age, regular replacement or repairs are needed. Additional sources of shade will be provided by new trees planted along the beach sidewalk and on the lawn overlooking the pond. The Recreation Department purchases beach sand every two years to replenish the sand that erodes into the water. (**See Goal 4-#14, p. 199**) The beach is groomed by the Natural Resources staff as frequently as possible during the summer operational season according to staff and equipment availability. However, the department desires a weekly grooming schedule to enhance the quality of the beach. The entrance onto the beach will eventually be enhanced by adding a concrete slab and shade structure to the location where the lifeguards are stationed. (**See Goal 4-#18, p. 199**) The beach kiosk will have the concrete pad around it widened for handicap access. (**See Goal 4-#19, p. 199**)

Many citizens expressed concerns about the pond having high bacteria levels in the survey that was sent out in 2015. The Recreation Department has funding to aerate the pond by installing an aeration system in 2017. (**See Goal 2-#1, p. 195**) NARA Pond water quality is tested once per week from May

through August by the Board of Health, who oversees NARA's Beach permit. Very rarely, swimming in the pond is shut down due to water quality issues and remains off-limits to its users until bacteria levels subside. The aeration system will pump additional oxygen into the pond to augment the natural circulation of pond water, which will help with keeping the bacteria levels low. Nutrients enter the pond during storm events, which can cause bacteria counts to spike for short periods of time. More information on pond detailed water quality is found on pages 86-91.

During the 2015 beach season, NARA Park had 601 beach memberships that include family, individual, couple, and senior passes. In addition, many daily beach passes were sold to people who just wanted to spend the day at the beach without becoming a member. The beach is used for NARA's Summer Camp for swimming blocks throughout the day. Various events are also held on NARA's beach throughout the year that include but are not limited to: Recreation Dept. Summer and Fall Campouts, Boy Scout Campouts, RJ Grey Jr. High Annual Cardboard Boat Races, volleyball rentals, Fire Rescue drills, weddings and other functions, and recreational classes like swimming lessons. The beach is staffed with seasonal lifeguards from Memorial Day through August to keep its patrons safe while swimming and boating. The boats are a very popular attraction to the pond and will need to be replaced every 5-7 years. (**See Goal 4-#31, p. 201**)



Fall Family Campout, September 2014

Beach equipment that requires routine replacement includes beach adirondack chairs, patio tables and patio umbrellas. (See Goal 4-#8, p. 199)

In addition to the beach itself, the Recreation Department also runs a snack bar out of the bathhouse. The snack bar sells daily beach passes and food concessions consisting of hot dogs, pizza, chips, candy, ice cream and soda. They also rent out the pedal boats and canoes. The Bathhouse Pavilion is rentable throughout the year for various functions. Additionally, it has an office utilized by Waterfront and Camp staff as well as bathrooms with a changing area. Beach operations annually are Memorial Day through late August.





R.J. Grey Junior High School Annual Cardboard Boat Races



Cardboard boats do float!



Bruce Freeman Rail Trail ground breaking ceremony, June 25, 2015

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

Plans for the development of a regional “Rails to Trails” project along the abandoned Penn Central Co. Rail Line had been in the works long before construction at NARA Park began. Owners of the abutting property, “Rex Lumber,” voiced numerous concerns about the town developing a public park next door. In addition, Rex Lumber was facing a regional rail trail planned to run on the state-owned Right of Way bisecting their property. Town officials met a number of times with Rex Lumber representatives prior to construction of the park. The Town made two major concessions to Rex Lumber. The first concession was an 8' high fence to be installed at the Town's expense, along the boundary between Rex Lumber and the future NARA site, to keep people from entering the lumber yard. The second concession was that, when the time came to build a rail trail, the town would look for an alternative location for the BFRT by possibly placing it on Town property and not on the State-owned 60' wide Right-of-Way running through the Rex Lumber site.

Construction of the BFRT began at NARA Park in March 2015 with the removal of mature shade trees along the east side of the pond. The 12' wide BFRT bike path will run for a length of 300' concurrent with the 6' wide existing NARA perimeter walking path. The remainder of the perimeter trail at NARA will remain a 6' wide walking path free of bikes. In addition to signage along the BFRT within the NARA property, kiosks will be placed at both entrances to the Park. (**See Goal 1-#6, p. 193**)

Recreation Department planning for the arrival of the BFRT to NARA Park has focused on five main objectives:

- (i) Restricting regional bike travel to the designated portion of the NARA perimeter trail.
- (ii) Improving the snack bar area at the bathhouse to accommodate larger summertime crowds. This will involve additional tables, more shade structures; added concrete patio area; larger size and offerings at the snack bar, portable concession parking area, food truck space and bicycle racks. (**See Goals 2-#4, p. 195 and Goal 4-#11, p. 199**)
- (iii) Upgrade bathhouse parking lot control measures.
- (iv.) Address restroom overuse at bathhouse. There will be a need for more frequent septic pumping, restroom maintenance and additional portable toilets. Recreation will need to work on a partnership with the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to help defray this cost directly incurred by the Recreation Department.
- (v.) Establish a NARA Bicycle Policy. (**See Goal 1-#6, p. 193**)

Our research has determined that a serious problem exists in Westford where a lack of planning for public parking facilities along the BFRT have negatively impacted neighboring Chelmsford, where some rail trail parking is available. Eleven additional parking spaces will be added to the NARA bathhouse parking lot to accommodate BFRT users. Recreation will be burdened with regulating this limited number of added car spaces and ensuring that Acton residents, beach goers, and facility renters are not negatively impacted by the parking demands of a regional rail trail.

Boy Scout Volunteer Cleanup

NARA Park

05-10-2007



We greatly appreciate the support of our volunteers!



R.J. Grey Junior High School and Acton-Boxborough Regional High School volunteers



Lush perennial gardens at the Bathhouse Pavilion

Landscaping

As highlighted in the Town-wide survey, the landscaping at NARA Park can be divided into management areas. Primary to all landscaping activities is the need to provide public shade trees in all areas of the park where people congregate. There have been challenges keeping new plantings thriving, due to the gravelly nature of the soils. We have also made efforts to provide naturalized areas around the pond and bordering wetlands to provide a good habitat for wildlife.

AREA 1: BATHHOUSE (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

(a) Bathhouse Parking Lot

In 2000, we were awarded a "Mass Releaf" Grant and 24 fruit trees were purchased and planted in the landscape islands throughout the parking lot. Several of the fruit trees have died and need to be replaced. The most recent pruning occurred in 2015, when Lincoln Tree donated a day of pruning during "Arbor Day" activities.

(b) Bathhouse Plantings

Extensive shrub plantings have been installed creating a visual separation between the bathhouse patio and beach. In 2011, an Eagle Scout added to the shrub collection.

AREA 2: PLAYGROUND & BEACH SHADE TREE PLANTING (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

Shade trees have been planted in this heavily used area since 2000. Five Amur Cork trees were planted in 2003 with limited success. Additional shade trees are planned for the perimeter of the children's playground. There have been several tree failures in this area over the years. Additional shade at NARA Park is frequently requested and is mentioned often in the town-wide survey. (See Goal 2-#3, p. 195)

AREA 3: PICNIC PAVILION (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

A bio-retention area and forebay was installed in 2015 with additional shrub plantings to be done in 2016. A planting plan for shrubs and shade trees will be done in 2017, to include the exterior of the Picnic Pavilion and plateau north of the pavilion. An irrigation system was installed around the Picnic Pavilion in 2014.

AREA 4: TREATMENT WETLANDS (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

Along with the interior meadow, this is the largest naturalized planting area in the park. All stormwater leaving the amphitheater parking lots and Quarry Road is treated as it travels through these bio-retention basins before eventually entering the wildlife impoundment at the north end of NARA Pond. The treatment wetlands area was first planted in 2003, soon after the detention ponds were constructed. Additional plantings occurred in 2007, with funding provided from a 319 Non-Point Source Pollution Grant. This naturalized planting area does require some level of routine management to control the colonization of cottonwood and European buckthorn. In 2014 and 2015, elderberry shoots were added to diversify food supply for migratory bird species. A sculpture was installed in the largest of the basins in 2013.

AREA 5: AMPHITHEATER PLANTINGS (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

The slope at the rear of the amphitheater has been planted with shrub species since 2005. Most of the shrubs were gifted to the park from Kennedy Nurseries at the end of their summer/fall sales season. Shrub species such as beach plum, witch hazel, lilac and viburnum have thrived in this environment. Since 2008, evergreens have been added along the edges of the interior road at the rear of the amphitheater. These substantial evergreens were gifted to NARA Park by Brewster Conant. Additional evergreen plantings have been discussed for the slopes behind the amphitheater seating area.



Landscaping (continued)

AREA 6: BALLFIELD PLANTING AREA (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

(a) In 1998, 14 sugar maple trees were planted around the perimeter of the main ballfield. Damage to these shade trees from large recreation field mowers has substantially impacted the health of the trees; and several need to be replaced.

(b) Crabapple Allée

In 2000, crabapples were planted on both sides of the perimeter walking path on the east side of the main ballfield. The crabapples are generally in good health and are routinely pruned.

AREA 7: WILDLIFE IMPOUNDMENT (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

Stormwater entering NARA Pond via the park's extensive treatment wetlands complex must first pass through the wildlife impoundment. The wildlife impoundment was constructed as the final stage of pond excavation in 1998-99. The impoundment was lined with organic material collected and stockpiled from a pond on the NARA site, pre-dating the construction of the park. We treat the wildlife impoundment as a naturalized feature of the park allowing native species to colonize. In 2014, pond lilies were added to the pond.

AREA 8: NARA POND (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

Perimeter Walking Path-Edge Plantings

Natural Resources has maintained a mowed grass strip around the main pond and benches have been installed every 200'. Shrubs, mainly willow species, have begun to colonize the pond's banks. We manage the introduction of non-native species and encourage dense thickets for wildlife habitat. Several Eagle Scout projects have contributed to the pond edge planting. Starting in 2014, elderberry has been

introduced to the pond edge. Some additional pond edge plantings are proposed in association with the construction of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in 2017.

AREA 9: MIRACLE FIELD PLANTING (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

The Miracle Field was constructed in 2012, and a detailed planting plan done by Landscape Architect Kim Ahern was installed in 2012-2013. A new shade structure, with a 25' x 25' hip canopy was constructed behind the backstop in 2015. A copy of the Kim Ahern Planting Plan can be viewed in the appendix.

AREA 10: SPORTS PAVILION PLANTINGS (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

Once the Pavilion, constructed from modular houses, has been completed and opened to the public, a detailed planting plan will be developed. The area around the pavilion structures and hardscape lend themselves to the introduction of additional shade trees and shrub border plantings. Plantings will be planned around an expanded 20-car lot that ends with a turn into the Sports Pavilion gravel parking lot.

(See Goal 4-#15, p. 199)

AREA 11: PERIMETER TRAIL (See Goal 3-#1, p. 197)

(a) In many areas bordering the one-mile paved trail, trees and shrubs require occasional pruning to keep them from blocking access of emergency vehicles.

(b) There is a culvert next to the interior road gate across from the bathhouse that was paved over to provide an alternative route for walkers, baby carriages and the John Deere Gator (when the gate is closed). Boulders lining this culvert were relocated. (See Goals 4-#16, p. 199)



Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (continued)

What can the Recreation Department do to enhance your experience at NARA? The new bike trail opens up a recreational opportunity that the Acton Recreation Department would like to offer.

Acton Recreation would like to purchase Surrey Bikes that can be rented and used only on the Rail Trail. A return on investment would be achieved by income generated by rentals. This new park amenity would give family-shared open air recreational opportunities, enhancing quality family time, and a recreational activity unique to this area.

(See Goal 4-#30, p. 201)

It is anticipated that the rail trail will be open to the public by the summer of 2017. Plans are underway to move the NARA summer camp headquarters from the bathhouse to the new sports pavilion at the north end of the property. A separation from the bathhouse will help to allow for better camp control and an increased level of camp safety.

The safety and security of the park patrons is of the utmost importance. We also know how much of a gem NARA Park is and are committed to keeping the park pristine. Given an estimated 1,000 bikers per day that will come through NARA Park as reported by the Chelmsford Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), we may need to increase our staffing to include park rangers, grounds crew, and/or police detail to address safety, overcrowding and site issues. Other measures (in addition to staffing) with regards to security could include security cameras, alarms, new locks, etc. **(See Goal 1-#3, p. 193)**

With the anticipated completion of the BFRT in the summer of 2017, Recreation is planning for arrival of more than 1,000 bikers per day coming through NARA Park, as reported by the Chelmsford Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee. One modification would be to add a picnic pod where the rail trail meets NARA for a small sitting area. (See Goal 4-#37, p. 201) Another modification to our existing bathhouse facility will be the construction of a food truck pull-off area along with a larger concrete patio area to accommodate visitors. The proposed modifications can be seen in photographs above. (See Goal 2-#4, p. 195)

In addition, a sidewalk linking the Bathhouse to the pond trail will be added at the lower parking lot. At present, there are 12 concrete tables at the bathhouse; plans are to increase the number to 20. Acton Recreation will work with the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to play a role in funding the bathhouse improvements.

A new kiosk for BFRT (Bruce Freeman Rail Trail) users will be installed at the lower parking lot to provide information about NARA to these new users. (Goal 2-#6, p. 195) The existing kiosk located at the beach gate will be enhanced with educational panels to include a park map and information about the park and surrounding areas. (See Goal 2-#8, p. 195) Recycling containers will be placed on the new "Cafe NARA" patio space at the bathhouse. (See Goal 3-#4, p. 197)



Existing sidewalk at Bathhouse • Proposed food truck pulloff

AREA 11: INTERIOR MEADOW

The meadow areas along and near the hillside behind the amphitheater are being maintained purposefully as meadow, to encourage the native plant and animal species suitable to this type of habitat. In addition to numerous species which occur here naturally, an assortment of relatively uncommon native wildflowers are being introduced here on a small scale each year to enhance these areas. Such enhancement has been possible largely because of ongoing efforts each year to remove a few specific invasive plant species which tend to threaten native wildlife. With the systematic removal of purple loosestrife, multiflora rose, and Oriental bittersweet from the bottomlands at the base of the hill, these areas are becoming increasingly suitable for some unusual native wildflowers such as closed gentian (*Gentiana clausa*) and great lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*), both of which have been planted in some of these areas with encouraging results. The more common Joe-Pye-weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*), swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) and native goldenrods which occur here are likewise benefiting from the elimination of the harmful invasives. The pond itself has been enhanced with white water-lily (*Nymphaea odorata*), which has



established prolifically near its shores in response to deliberate plantings of its tubers, anchored to the bottom. Similarly, with the removal of the highly aggressive spotted knapweed and other invasive plants from the upland areas somewhat closer to the summit of the hill, these more elevated areas are becoming increasingly suitable for plantings of various wildflowers which grow well in relatively dry meadows. Proceeding generally from the left to right sides of the hill as seen from the boardwalk, one can find various-sized patches of lance-leaved coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*), dense blazing-star (*Liatris spicata*), Culver's-root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*), bee-balm (*Monarda didyma*), western wild lupine (*Lupinus polyphyllus*), butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*), purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), willow amsonia (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*), and a large quantity of New England aster (*Sympphyotrichum novae-angliae*). A few crabapple and spruce trees add a healthy vertical dimension within the core of the meadow, but with these few exceptions, trees are best discouraged in these areas to prevent any encroachment which in nature leads to a gradual succession of habitat from meadow to forest. The meadow areas along and near the hillside behind the amphitheater are being maintained purposefully as meadow, to encourage the native plant and animal species suitable to this type of habitat. In addition to numerous species which occur here naturally, an assortment of relatively uncommon native wildflowers are being introduced here on a small scale each year to enhance these areas. Such enhancement has been possible largely because of ongoing efforts each year to remove a few specific invasive plant species which tend to threaten native wildlife. With the systematic removal of purple loosestrife, multiflora rose, and Oriental bittersweet from the bottomlands at the base of the hill, these areas are becoming increasingly suitable for some unusual native wildflowers such as closed gentian (*Gentiana clausa*) and great lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*), both of which have been planted in some of these areas with encouraging results. The more common Joe-Pye-weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*), swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) and native goldenrods which occur here are likewise benefiting from the elimination of the harmful invasives. The pond itself has been enhanced with white water-lily (*Nymphaea odorata*), which has become established prolifically near its shores in response to deliberate plantings of its tubers, anchored to the bottom.



Top: Heron's Dream Sculpture

Bottom: Wetland Construction





AREA 4: TREATMENT WETLANDS

The bio-retention basins were designed with several purposes in mind, first to treat stormwater runoff from the parking lots near the amphitheater, and secondly, to provide a wildlife corridor through the middle of the park. Many shrubs with value for wildlife have been planted throughout the basins.

Gaga Pit

In 2014, the Recreation Department purchased a Gaga Pit for its summer camp participants. Gaga was originally an Israeli version of the game dodgeball. The players throw the ball at each other with their hands, and are eliminated if the ball hits them below their waist. The Gaga pit is a large octagon area made with plastic panels, and is assembled each year and placed by the playground for NARA Summer Camp.



NARA Campers enjoying a game of Gaga!

Volleyball Courts

BEACH PARKING & PARK ENTRANCE

The dual courts were installed at NARA in 2010 as collaborative effort with the High School Girls Volleyball Coach with the assistance of the Town of Acton Natural Resources Department. Town staff excavated the site and the Recreation Department purchased a portion of the initial sand to create the courts. Recreation processes user permits and funds ongoing routine maintenance that includes sand replenishment, nets, and trash removal. The Recreation Department is looking for additional sites outside of NARA to offer volleyball. The addition of these courts has been well-received with increasing demand over the past several years. The courts are booked throughout most of the summer. In addition to these courts, there is a seasonal volleyball net setup at the end of the beach.

Regular court users include the Recreation Department for volleyball classes and NARA Summer Camp, youth and adult leagues, and private parties, as well as park guests. The courts may need to be relocated if this space is needed for expansion of facilities to meet the growing needs of the Park. (See Goal 4-#28, p. 201)





Lower NARA parking entrance from Ledge Rock Way

Beach Parking & Park Entrance

BATHHOUSE PARKING

As the Park continues to grow as a regional destination, so does the demand on the limited 123 parking spaces currently available. The parking limitations and fair allocation to Acton residents are of the utmost concern and need to be addressed. The bathhouse parking lot as well as the upper lot are heavily used by NARA patrons consisting of beach users, picnic renters, playground users, daily walkers, recreation programs, and NARA events. In 2017, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail will be open to the public. The demand forecasted will greatly impact NARA operations resulting not only in patron complaints but added costs not offset by rail trail users. There will be 11 designated parking spaces for rail trail users at the bathhouse lot. The Recreation Department will need to balance the new demand from the rail trail users with the existing needs of Acton residents and NARA patrons. There are limited resources to control the parking lot and the need to be able to address the parking demand is imminent. The Town is receiving vocal and written complaints from residents that there is already too much use at the park for the limited resources available. The Recreation Department is looking into options to lock the parking lots at night, when the park is officially closed (signage is currently posted), but this conflicts with wanting to serve Acton residents who are regular users during non-operational hours, such as early morning dog walkers and runners. A safety issue that the department has been addressing is the use of the interior road by non-authorized vehicles despite posted signage stating "no unauthorized vehicles." In 2016, the Natural Resources Department installed two manual gates, one at the lower entry and one at the upper entrance to control access of the interior roadway. Other control options discussed include control of the lower lot (and possibly the upper lot) by a manned ticket booth, non-manned booth, or security gates.

Limiting BFRT users to the 11 spaces being provided will require a level of policing that Recreation has not yet faced. Encouraging

Limiting BFRT users to the 11 spaces being provided will require a level of policing that Recreation has not yet faced. Encouraging BFRT patrons to use other lots along the trail may help to alleviate demand for parking at the bathhouse parking lot. One solution Recreation is considering is replacing the existing volleyball court with a 20 car lot dedicated to people renting one of the picnic areas. It will also serve as a hard court recreation area for summer camp to support basketball, hockey, etc. (See Goal 4-#28, p. 201) As mentioned, a manned booth at each parking lot entrance may become a reality as we better understand the true impact of the rail trail over the next several years.

PARKING CONTROL STUDY AND IMPLEMENTATION

With the continued increase in attendance each season at NARA, control of the parking lots has become a major situation that needs to be addressed. In 2016, additional staff was hired to oversee the beach parking lot due to more demand than we could accommodate.

With the rail trail coming online in 2007, the demand for both parking lots at NARA will be even greater. A Parking Control Study to consider a gated entry with a booth or possibly metered parking at both lots is needed. Once the study has been completed and reviewed, Recreation would like to move forward to implement the recommendation. (See Goals 1-#1 and #2, p. 193)

Park Entrance

NARA Park is a regional destination. Today, it lacks an official entryway sign signifying that you have reached your destination, and welcoming patrons who visit the park for the first time or their thousandth time. The image pictured is a sketch of what we would like to have made, designed by Tom Tidman and with a cost estimate for work by Leo Cavilier, Inc. In 2013 and 2014, Recreation applied for CPA funding for an entryway sign, which was not awarded.

The Recreation Department is going to pursue having signage added to the attractions sign at Exit 42 off Route 2 to list NARA Park, with a directional arrow to Route 27 North. (See Goal 2 - #7, p. 195)

We would like to keep the park users educated about NARA and having a bulletin board near the entry for easy viewing would enable another method of communicating information to our patrons.
GOAL 2 / #8, p.195)



Conceptual Park Sign at Ledge Rock Way Entrance

NARA Park Lighting

NARA is beautiful during the day, but equally as lovely in the evening. The demand for use of the park after daylight hours has become a routine request for facilities rentals as well as many Town-hosted events throughout the year.

Night lighting is a major need for a multitude of reasons, first and foremost the safety and security of park patrons.

As of 2016, existing permanent outdoor lighting at NARA is located in these areas of the park:

1. Bathhouse Pavilion: Four flood lights at the bathhouse pavilion, a few single-bulb fixtures on the outside of the building, and four single-bulb barn-style fixtures hang from the bathhouse pavilion ceiling. The inside of the bathhouse as well as the bathrooms have standard indoor lighting.
2. Picnic Pavilion: Flood lights illuminate the patio area of the pavilion. The pavilion has hanging light fixtures as well as cove lighting that illuminate the building at night and low voltage landscape light fixtures built in to accent the stone piers.
3. Amphitheater: On the stage there are two large halogen flood lights that white-wash the stage as well as two large halogen flood lights that are anchored to each side of the front of the pavilion towards the grass. There is a flood light that is on the back of the amphitheater that helps to illuminate the back loading dock area. These lights are not part of the stage lighting used during a performance. The two shed buildings behind the stage have a total of four, single-bulb fixtures affixed to outside of the buildings. There is lighting inside both of these buildings.
4. Upper Gravel Parking Area: The gravel parking lot has two halogen pole light fixtures. These lights were added for night ice skating as well as illuminating the parking area during events. A timer is needed to program the lights for night skating.

For the Town's Independence Day Celebration, a large amount of portable lighting is required. Many light towers are rented as well as borrowed from nearby towns to light the inner roadway and various areas as in and around the park. The Town Forest trail, the major access path, is illuminated with dozens of long strands of portable

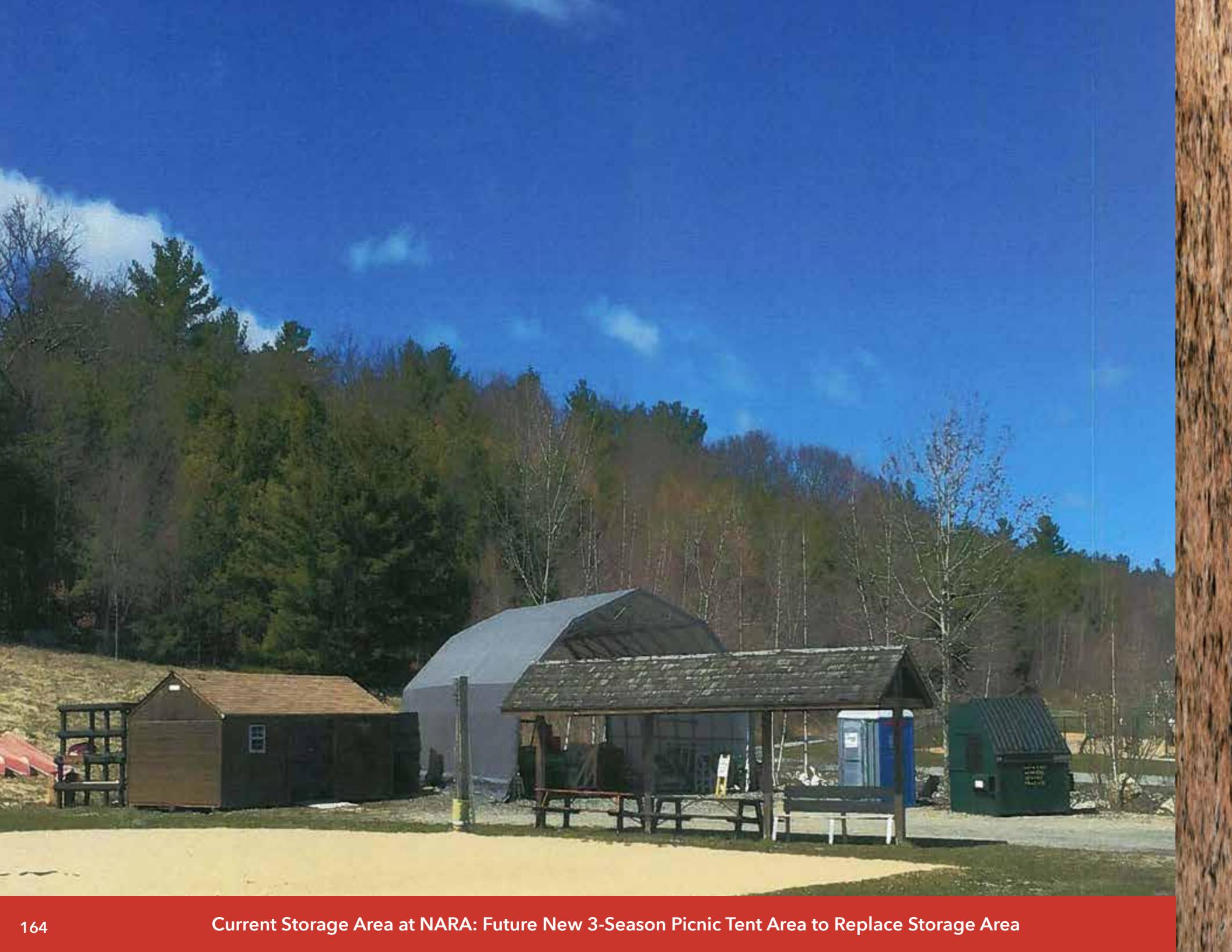
construction lights operated by many generators along the route. The addition of permanent lighting on the trail would be a win-win all around from safety concerns to labor costs.

NARA Park's extensive night use demands parking lot lighting for both the upper and lower lots. Adequate parking area lighting has been needed and not addressed for many years now. Portable light towers are currently being used when there are major events, however, they are not always available and at times, may need maintenance.

The upper portion of Quarry Road lacks street lighting. This is a heavily-used area of the park with both cars and pedestrians entering and exiting the park.

In the evening, there are many citizens who regularly walk their dogs or exercise around the perimeter of the park. Adding solar lighting around the perimeter pathway would not only help to increase safety for the user, but also augment the users' experience. Solar light bollards or light posts would also assist patrons who attend events or rent the facilities in the evening hours. (See Goal 1-#15, p. 193)

The Recreation Department would like to see a NARA Park Light Study and implementation of a lighting plan so we can move forward to provide a safer and more secure park. (See Goals 1-#9 and #15, p. 193)



Current Storage Area at NARA: Future New 3-Season Picnic Tent Area to Replace Storage Area

Storage Area

In the early days of NARA, a large aluminum framed green canvas Army storage tent was used to store landscaping and park equipment in the same location as the large gray tent today. This tent was damaged beyond repair during a large winter storm in 2007, and was replaced in 2008 with the current gray tent. Once again weather damaged the storage tent in 2011 resulting in the purchase of a new exterior cover.

The large gray tent is located by the volleyball courts to store seasonal items and equipment including paddleboats, canoes, signs, grills, the John Deere Gator, folding chairs, traffic barricades, firewood for events, and more.

The Recreation Department received feedback from the community through the NARA Master Plan survey about the area being unsightly. The Recreation Department would like to move the tent to a new location and make this space a rentable three-season 30' x 40' tent site with a new bioretention area. The schematic to the left shows the layout of where we plan to place the new tent area. (See Goal 4-#5, p. 199) A possible destination for the storage tent is near the Miracle Field in the upper end of the park.

Next to the gray tent, there is a wooden shed that stores lifeguard equipment, event supplies, snack bar stock, and maintenance equipment. The Recreation Department is planning in 2017 to relocate this shed to the north end of the beach to provide more space for the future rental area and easier access to beach equipment. (See Goal 1-#4, p. 193)

The dumpster and portable toilet which have been located to the front right side of the gray tent will be relocated. The dumpster will be placed against the bathrooms and storage closet, just across the road from where it is now. A screening fence will extend off the bathhouse building so the dumpster will not be visible from the entrance of the park. (See Goal 4-#2, p. 199) The portable toilet will also be screened and set apart from the future rental area.

A possible relocation of the volleyball courts to Jones Field will enable this space to be used for picnic pavilion parking only. Approximately 22 parking spots can be made available.

As park equipment ages, replacements are needed. The John Deere Gator is utilized for maintenance tasks, such as hauling beach equipment, landscape materials and garbage pickup. This vehicle is scheduled for replacement in the next two years. (See Goal 4-#7, p. 199)



Time on skates

The Town of Acton Recreation Department hosted a free skate party night Jan. 23 at NARA Park. Two more parties are scheduled for Jan. 30 and Feb. 13 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Photos are also available online at wickedlocal.com or boxborough@wickedlocal.com.

WICKED LOCAL PHOTOS
BY JAMES JESSON



Elsa Abramovich, 2, sits by the fire with her mother Amanda of Acton.



Acton Recreation Director Cathy Fochtmann fuels a fire.



Children form a conga line on ice.



Children and adults enjoy the ice. The party also featured hot chocolate at NARA Park.



Sleider, 7, of Concord, skates.



Stephanie Chang (left) 10, of Westford, motions to her young try a figure skating move.



Ice Rink

Concerned about unsafe ice conditions on the pond, Recreation wanted to offer a safer location in Acton for ice skating. There used to be a man-made public ice skating rink set up on the Concord Road Field on Concord Road in the early 1990s to mid-2000s. This rink was difficult to maintain and damaged the fields each winter delaying opening of the fields in the spring. In 2012, a permeable surface gravel parking lot was added in the upper field area adjacent to the Miracle Field to provide additional parking during heavy field user times and a large ice rink during the winter months. The Natural Resources crew floods the upper gravel parking lot from a nearby water source installed during the construction of the Miracle Field. There are pole light fixtures that illuminate the area of the rink for night skating, but presently the lights have to be turned on and off manually. A timer needs to be installed to enable the lights to be scheduled for evening use. This would help meet the demand for night skating. The Recreation Department would like to have a timer installed prior to the 2017 skating season. (See Goal 1-#8, p. 193)

In the future a permanent fireplace and/or fire pit that can be used for ice rink and special events at NARA is desired.

The Recreation Department has conducted special skate night events and open skate evenings where lights will be turned on, pending staff availability. The rink is open to the public and use of the rink is at your own risk.



Night Skating at NARA, February 2015



Miracle Field Construction, Spring - Summer 2012

Joseph A. Lalli Miracle Field



Miracle Field Completed, September 2012



Here's a story of a perfect private-public partnership - the placement, design and construction of the Joseph Lalli Miracle Field in Acton. It was made possible by the Town of Acton and the Miracle League of Massachusetts, whose founders reside in Acton. Lauren and Andy Richardt formed the Miracle League of Boston, a local franchise of a nationwide organization, Miracle League, which sponsors baseball opportunities for children with disabilities. They were the first league formed in Massachusetts. The mission of the nationwide organization is to provide support for creating a fully handicapped accessible baseball field in every city throughout the US. Their motto is "Every child deserves a chance to play baseball." (See www.miracleleague.com.) After several years operating a very successful program in Boxborough with 90+ participating children from 40 surrounding towns, the Richardts were looking for both a permanent home for their league, designed after the national model, and sufficient sponsorship support to finance it. They took on the non-profit organization name, "Miracle League of Massachusetts" (See www.miracleleagueofma.com) and told their story to the Acton Recreation Department and many potential supporters. But we were stymied by the lack of an appropriate site to build this field.

Things began to come together in late 2010, when Town of Acton Natural Resources Director Tom Tidman came up with an "out of the box" proposal - what if the new field were tucked into a corner of Town property currently utilized by the Department of Public Works, adjacent to NARA Park, and connected to the new expanded NARA parking lot that we had just acquired funding for? Board of Selectman Chairman Mike Gowing was brought into the discussion and the idea grew steadily into a reality. Given the blessing of the Town Manager, Board of Selectmen and Department of Public Works, Tom signed on the assistance of George Dimarakos, partner of Stamski & McNary, an Acton Engineering firm, to develop the site plans. The field would tuck nicely into this currently wooded site, adjacent to massive piles of loam and other construction materials, with proper engineering and drainage. Once the site plan took shape, Tom invited Kim Ahern of Kim Ahern Landscape Architects to participate by creating a landscape plan for the facility. A beautiful plan resulted, which included birch and maple and native shrubs. Now there was an image to take to potential donors that told the story. Local philanthropist Steven Steinberg offered to match up to \$100,000 in donations by naming the new facility

in honor of his former business partner, the "Joseph Lalli Miracle Field", a gift that was accepted by the Town.

With the approval of Town Meeting and plans in hand in spring 2012, the race was on to construct the field in time for a September 15, 2012 start of the Miracle League fall season. The projected budget for the project was set at \$425,000. Local firms stepped up to donate their time and equipment. There were two great advantages to the site - it was located next to the stockpiles of base material available to construct it, and J. Redmond Corp., located up the street, signed on to do the excavation. Jay Redmond's team spent endless hours getting the site prep just right.

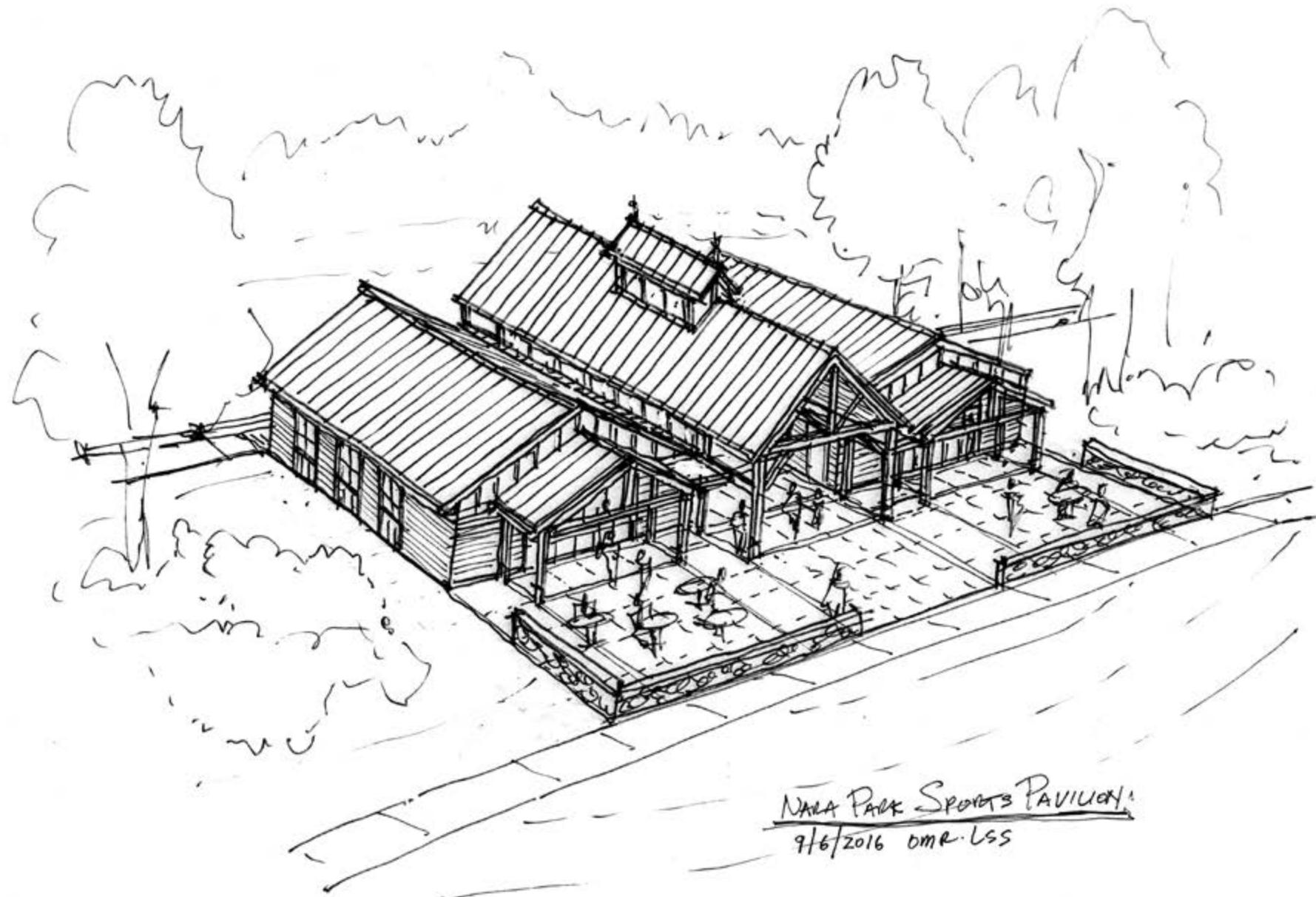
The fall opening occurred on time. The Joseph Lalli Miracle Field fits in beautifully next to a larger 7-acre soccer field and softball field, integrating a large handicap accessible parking and drop-off area adjacent perfectly within the general field parking area. Since the 2012 opening, additional improvements have been made. Construction of a facility sign, "Miracle Field" on Quarry Rd. by Eagle Scout Eric Lovrud was completed in 2013. A 25' x 25' hip roofed Sunbrella shade structure and paved area, was installed behind home plate for Miracle Field patrons in 2014.

Over time the rubber surface will need some maintenance and repairs. (See Goal 4-#32, p. 201)



Miracle League Game Day!





NALA Park Sports Pavilion
9/6/2016 OMR-LSS

Sports Pavilion

The need for year-round public restrooms, especially during the spring and fall soccer seasons, has been a request from parents and NARA walkers. Recreation has placed portable toilets around the park to address the demand. With the opening of the Miracle Field in the fall of 2012, a proper handicapped "family" bathroom became necessary. This was in line with long-term plans for the Miracle Field that called for a snackbar and bathroom facility nearby.

Design funds for a "Comfort Station" were sought in 2013 and \$25,000 was awarded to the project through a CPA grant. Representatives from the Miracle League of Massachusetts, Acton Recreation Department, and Miracle Field designers worked with architects from the Office of Michael Rosenfeld (OMR Architects) to design a comfort station to be outfitted with an office, snack bar, storage area and most importantly, public bathrooms with a handicapped accessible bathroom. Many conceptual designs were considered and in the spring of 2014, a final design was selected. OMR had the design priced out for construction, with the cost to build estimated at \$652,327.

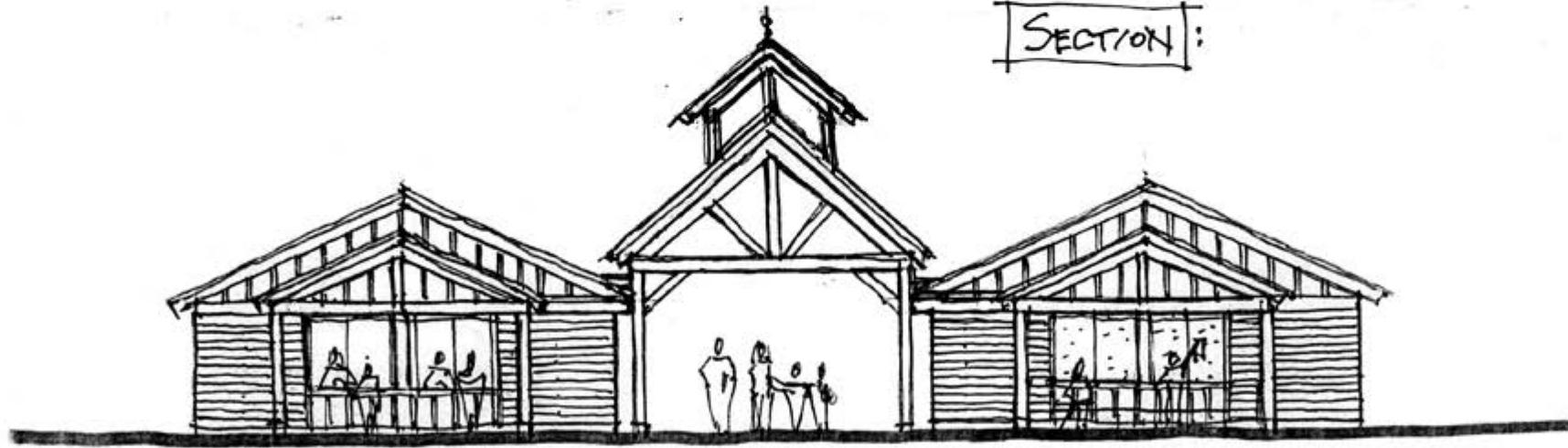
Fortunately in 2015, the Town was offered two modular houses by local businessman/contractor, Jay Redmond of J. Redmond Corp. The houses measured 26'x 40', dimensions very similar to the original OMR design. The donation of these 10-year-old buildings that were well-made and in good condition helped to solidify the project. Naturally, the modular houses would need to be moved to the site and completely renovated. The modular houses were moved to the NARA site in March 2016. Recreation applied for construction funding for the renamed "Sports Pavilion" through the CPA process in 2015. A grant for \$350,000 was approved at Town Meeting in April 2016. A completed Sports Pavilion will address many outstanding Park and Recreation Department needs. (See Goal 4-#1, p. 199)

Plans include:

- Providing office space for the full-time Recreation staff.
- Moving the headquarters for NARA Summer Camp from the Bathhouse to the new Sports Pavilion.
- Addressing the needs of athletes participating at the Miracle Field
- Providing year round restrooms for NARA patrons
- Snack bar and storage space.
- Expanding parking at the upper lot by extending parking into the walking trail towards the Sports Pavilion, approximately 20 car spaces. (See Goal 4-#15, p. 199)



SECTION:

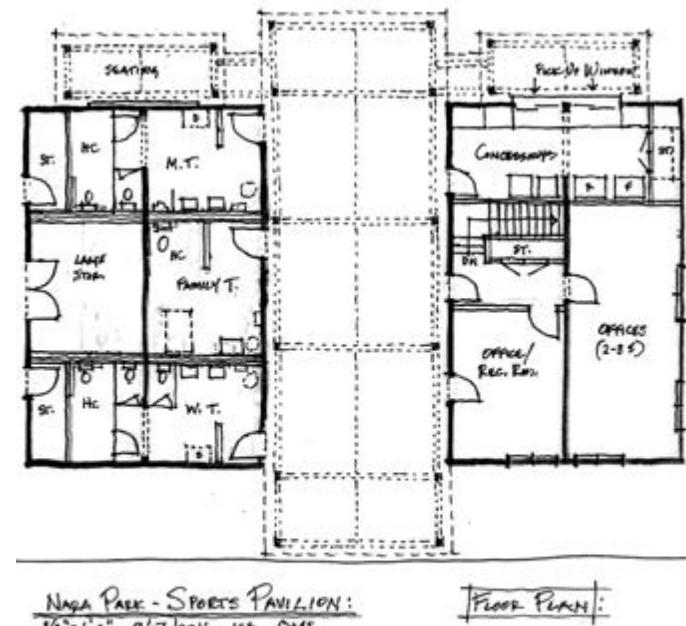


NAPA PARK - SPORTS PAVILION:
1/8"=1'-0" 9/7/2016 LSS OMR

EAST ELEVATION:

The following represents a time-line for design and construction of the Sports Pavilion:

- 2015-2017 Fundraising for construction phases
- Fall/Winter 2015 CPA presentations for construction funding
- March 2016 Modular buildings moved to NARA site
- April 2016 CPA funding approved at Town Meeting
- Summer 2016 Obtain foundation permits
- Fall 2016 Work with architect on interior remodeling
- Spring 2017 Septic system design and permitting
- Summer 2017 Building Permit
- Summer 2017 Initiate interior redesign
- Fall 2017 Complete handicap bathroom construction
- Fall 2017 Pour slab for patio
- October 2017 Open public bathrooms
- November 2017 Open renovated Recreation offices
- Summer 2018 NARA summer camp operations begin from new Sports Pavilion



Top: Conceptual floor plan



Beauty and the Beast Performance at the Amphitheater, 2008



Recreation Survey



NARA Park Beach and Picnic Pavilion



NARA MASTER PLAN SURVEY

The following charts represent the results from questions asked of the general public from June 25 to September 14, 2015.

Note: Public comments in response to survey questions are listed on pages 209-233.

TEXTBLOCK:

The Natural Resources Department which includes Conservation, Recreation and Cemetery, is in the process of creating a NARA Park "Master Plan," to guide its maintenance, growth and development for the next 10 years.

Your input is greatly appreciated and is extremely important to the continued development and future direction of NARA Park. Please respond on behalf of your household.

Thank you in advance for taking this survey--it should take approximately 5-7 minutes of your time.

***Do you visit the Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area (NARA)?**

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes		100%	402	97.1 %
No	0		10	2.4 %
No Response(s)			2	<1 %
Totals			414	100%

If "Yes," how often?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Everyday	0		15	3.6 %
1-3 Visits Weekly		100%	117	28.2 %
Monthly			178	42.9 %
1-2 Times Yearly			93	22.4 %
No Response(s)			11	2.6 %
Totals			414	100%

What amenities does your household use at the Park?

1 = Daily, 2 = Weekly, 3 = Monthly, 4 = 1-2 Times Yearly, 5 = Don't Use

Answer	1	2	3	4	5	Number of Response(s)	Rating Score*
Perimeter Trail for Exercise						374	3.1
Perimeter Trail for Dog Walking						302	4.3
Volleyball Courts						291	4.8
NARA Snack Bar						299	4.3
Bathhouse Bathroom						323	3.8
Beach/Swimming						328	4.1
Fishing						292	4.6
Playground						335	3.9
Picnic Facilities						311	4.2
Amphitheater (Events)						352	3.8

*The Rating Score is the weighted average calculated by dividing the sum of all weighted ratings by the number of total responses.

(Continued) What amenities does your household use at the Park?

1 = Daily, 2 = Weekly, 3 = Monthly, 4 = 1-2 Times Yearly, 5 = Don't Use

Answer	1	2	3	4	5	Number of Response(s)	Rating Score*
Sledding Hill						347	4.1
Ice Skating Rink						306	4.6
Upper Sports Fields						334	3.9
Softball Field						307	4.5
Miracle Field						304	4.7
Portable Restrooms						335	3.9

*The Rating Score is the weighted average calculated by dividing the sum of all weighted ratings by the number of total responses.

What do you think of the Park's maintenance?

1 = Exceeds Expectations, 2 = Above Average, 3 = Average, 4 = Below Average

Answer	1	2	3	4	Number of Response(s)	Rating Score*	
Field Maintenance						381	2.0
Lawn Care						385	2.1
Structures (Picnic Pavilion, Bathhouse Pavilion, Amphitheater)						389	2.0
Pond/Beach (May-August)						351	2.4
Playground						351	2.3
Gardens						356	2.3
Equipment Storage						305	2.5

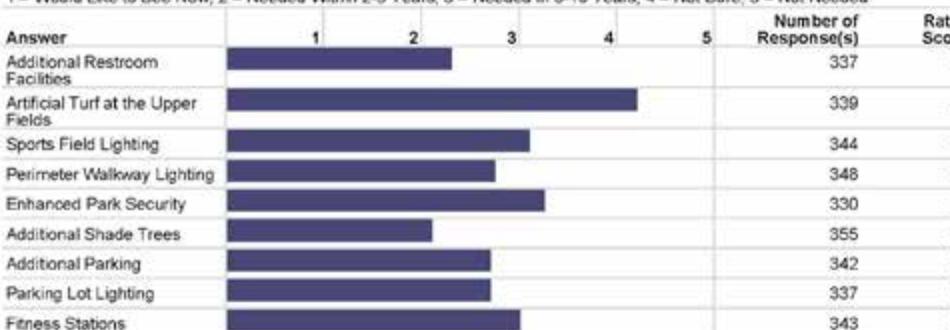
*The Rating Score is the weighted average calculated by dividing the sum of all weighted ratings by the number of total responses.





Thinking about the future, what amenities would you like to see at NARA?

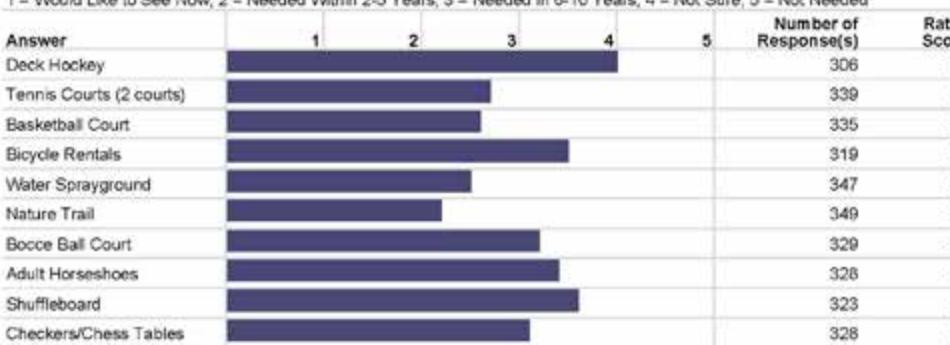
1 = Would Like to See Now, 2 = Needed Within 2-5 Years, 3 = Needed in 6-10 Years, 4 = Not Sure, 5 = Not Needed



*The Rating Score is the weighted average calculated by dividing the sum of all weighted ratings by the number of total responses.

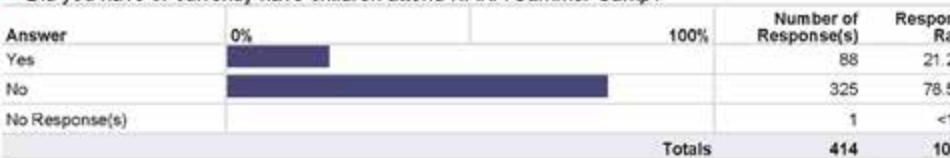
Thinking about the future, what activities would you like to see at NARA?

1 = Would Like to See Now, 2 = Needed Within 2-5 Years, 3 = Needed in 6-10 Years, 4 = Not Sure, 5 = Not Needed



*The Rating Score is the weighted average calculated by dividing the sum of all weighted ratings by the number of total responses.

*Did you have or currently have children attend NARA Summer Camp?



If you did or currently have children attending NARA Summer Camp, can you please rate the following? If you have a suggestion, please comment below.

1 = Excellent, 2 = Above Average, 3 = Average, 4 = Below Average, 5 = Needs Improvement

Answer	1	2	3	4	5	Number of Response(s)	Rating Score*
Your Child's Safety	1	2	3			97	2.4
Your Child's Experience	1	2	3			96	2.5
Staff Knowledge	1	2	3			93	2.5
Hours of Operation	1	2	3			94	2.3
Variety of Activities Offered	1	2	3			95	2.6
Quality of Camp Equipment	1	2	3			92	2.6
Online Registration Process	1	2	3			87	2.6
Cost/Value	1	2	3			93	2.2

*The Rating Score is the weighted average calculated by dividing the sum of all weighted ratings by the number of total responses.

***Are you holding or have you held a NARA Beach Membership?**

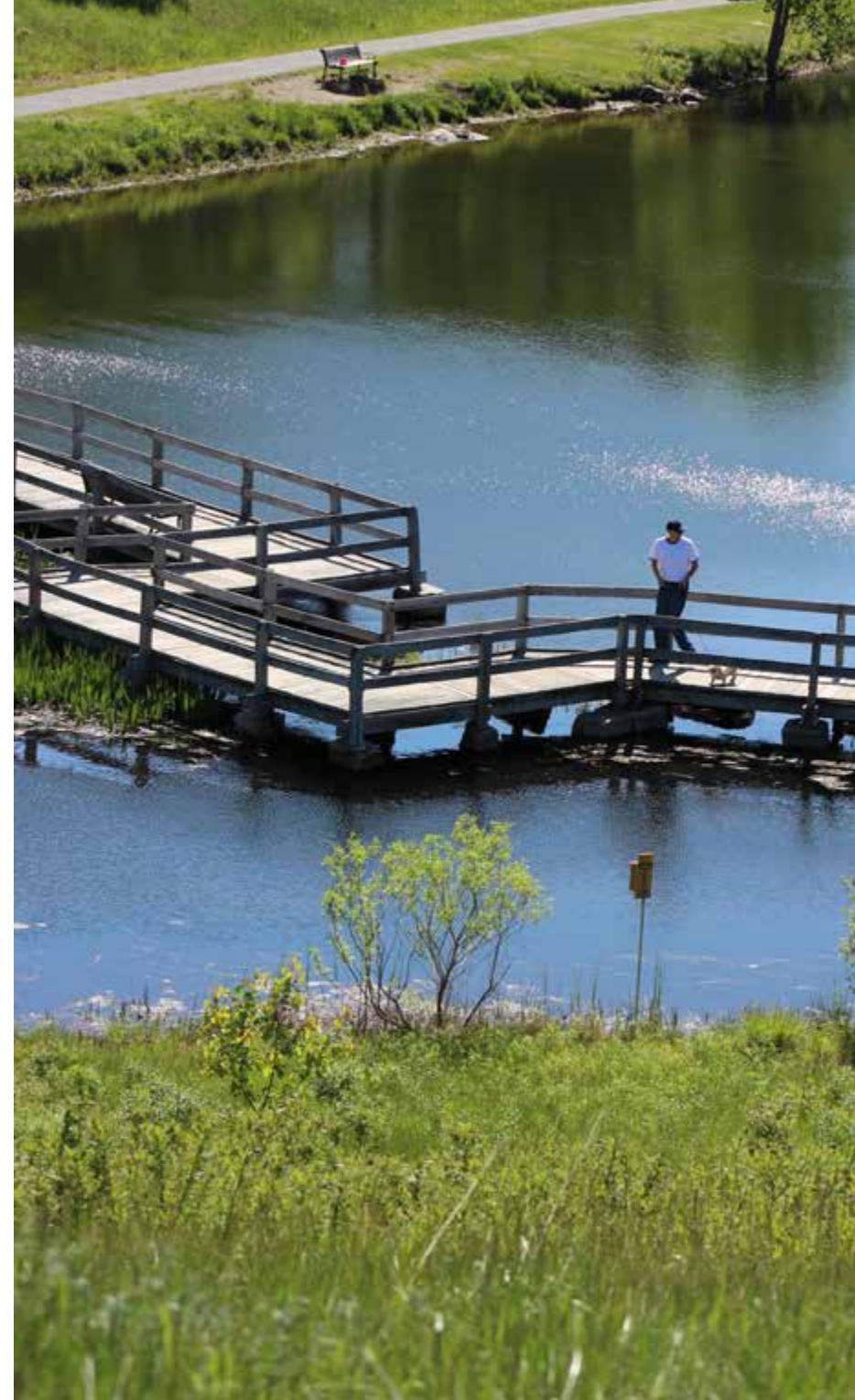
Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	12	100%	100	24.1 %
No	88	100%	312	75.3 %
No Response(s)			2	<1 %
		Totals	414	100%

If you use NARA Beach as a member or a daily drop-in, do you like the quality of services that you receive and what improvements do you think are needed in the future?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Like the Quality of Services	35	100%	118	71.9 %
Do Not Like the Quality of Services	15	100%	27	16.4 %
		Totals	164	100%

***Do you attend NARA Concerts and/or Special Events?**

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes	40	100%	321	77.5 %
No	15	100%	92	22.2 %
No Response(s)			1	<1 %
		Totals	414	100%





***What style of music do you like?**

1 = Definitely Attend, 2 = Might Attend, 3 = Would Not Attend

Answer	1	2	3	Number of Response(s)	Rating Score*
Classical Music				392	2.0
Jazz				392	2.0
Big Band				392	2.1
Classic Rock				392	1.9
Heavy Metal				392	2.7
Reggae				392	2.2
Contemporary				392	2.1
Rap/Hip Hop/Turntable				392	2.6
Country				392	2.3
Bluegrass or Folk				392	2.0

*The Rating Score is the weighted average calculated by dividing the sum of all weighted ratings by the number of total responses.

***Would you attend outdoor theater at NARA?**

1 = Yes, 2 = Possibly, 3 = Not Interested

Answer	1	2	3	Number of Response(s)	Rating Score*
Shakespeare				405	1.9
Comedy				405	1.7
Musical				405	1.7
Drama				405	1.9

*The Rating Score is the weighted average calculated by dividing the sum of all weighted ratings by the number of total responses.

***Do you or have you attended Acton's July 4th Celebration at NARA?**

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			291	70.2 %
No			119	28.7 %
No Response(s)			4	<1 %
			Totals	414 100%

What did you like or dislike about Acton's July 4th Celebration? Any suggestions?

1 = Exceeds Expectations, 2 = Really Like, 3 = Like, 4 = Dislike

Answer	1	2	3	4	Number of Response(s)	Rating Score*
Family Fun Time (afternoon)					202	2.4
Free Concert Performance					255	2.0
Parking Proximity					246	3.2
Free Bus Shuttle Service					231	2.6
Fireworks					273	1.6
Food Vendor Offerings					223	2.8
Safety					236	2.2

*The Rating Score is the weighted average calculated by dividing the sum of all weighted ratings by the number of total responses.

Please provide additional input if not addressed in prior questions.

87 Response(s)

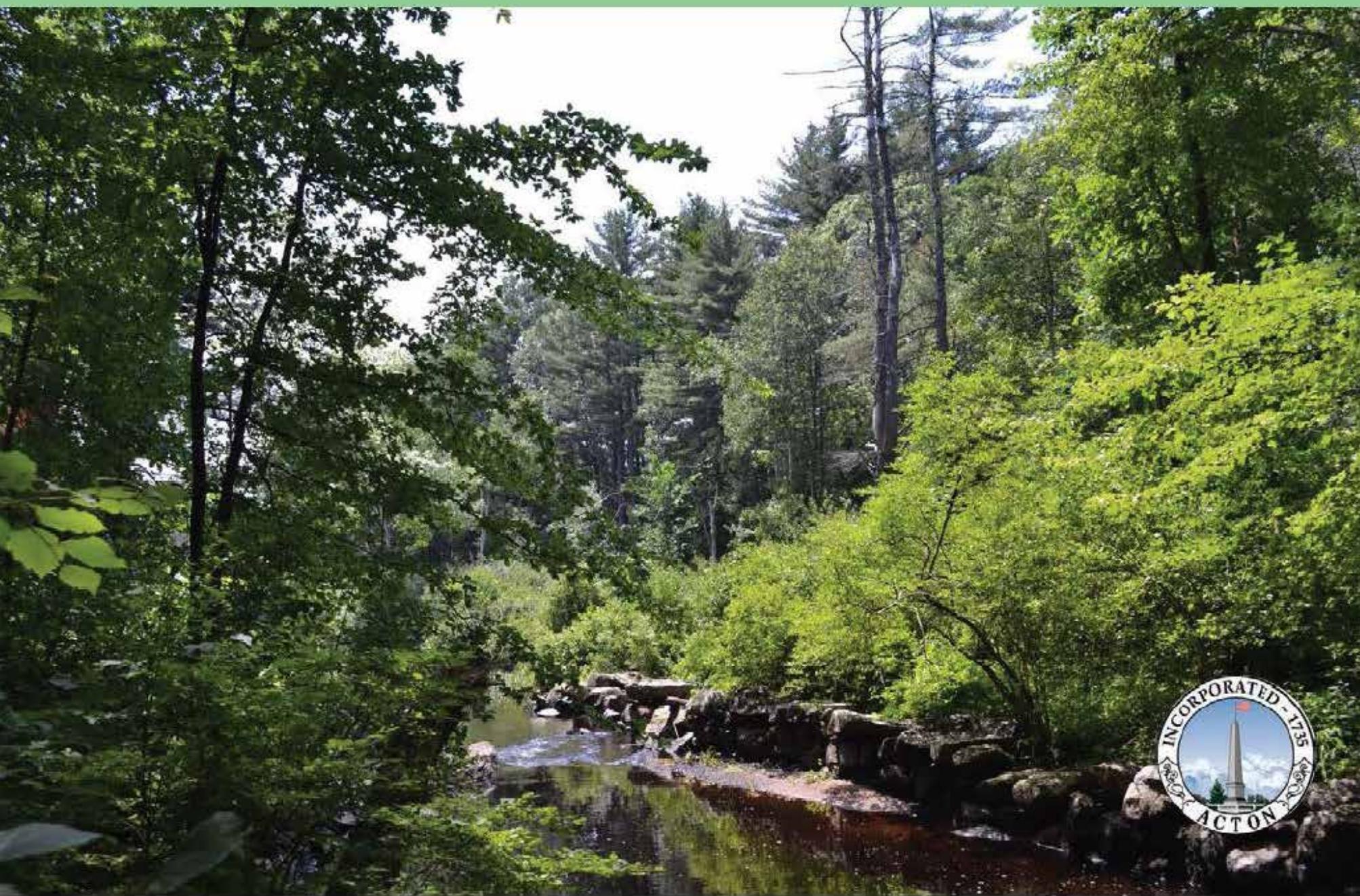
*Because NARA is open to the general public, are you an Acton resident?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			378	91.3 %
No			35	8.4 %
No Response(s)			1	<1 %
		Totals	414	100%

*What are the ages of people in your household? Please check all that apply.

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Younger than 18			272	66.1 %
18 - 24			78	18.9 %
25 - 34			34	8.2 %
35 - 44			133	32.3 %
45 - 54			185	45.0 %
55 - 64			73	17.7 %
65 or older			60	14.5 %
		Totals	411	100%







Future Expansion

Park users frequently comment positively about the maturing of the NARA landscape & gardens, noting how quickly the rough edges have softened. We've also heard from people saying, "please don't add more structures, the park is complete now." As part of the Master Plan discussion, we have extended our recreation vision to the properties surrounding NARA, understanding that NARA is quite complete as it stands, twenty years into its existence.

Several key privately-owned properties adjacent to the park have the potential to become valuable open space assets should they come on the market. Each of the abutting parcels mentioned in the paragraphs to follow express geographic attributes that could be advantageous to expanding the NARA footprint and the recreation experience in north Acton. Each of the properties mentioned in this section has been ranked with a high score in the Open Space & Recreation Plan 2014 - 2021.

Parcel C5, 38-1 abuts the east side of the park, directly adjacent to the pond. Much of the property is currently paved and sits next to the 60'-wide State-owned Bruce Freeman Rail Trail right-of-way (ROW). This land could add critically needed additional public parking for users of the BFRT and could significantly reduce parking issues at the bathhouse parking lot. (See Goal 6A(a), p. 205) In addition, should the Town make it a priority to acquire this parcel someday in the future, strong consideration should be given to moving the BFRT onto the State owned ROW and off the NARA walking path. (See Goal 6A(b), p. 205) Moving vehicles in and out of NARA Park during large events has always presented challenges. Finding a secondary egress location

allowing traffic to enter onto Main Street North of Ledge Rock Way would greatly reduce existing delays. Parcel C5, 38-1 could play an important role in improving NARA Park event vehicle circulation. (See Goal 6A(d), p. 205)

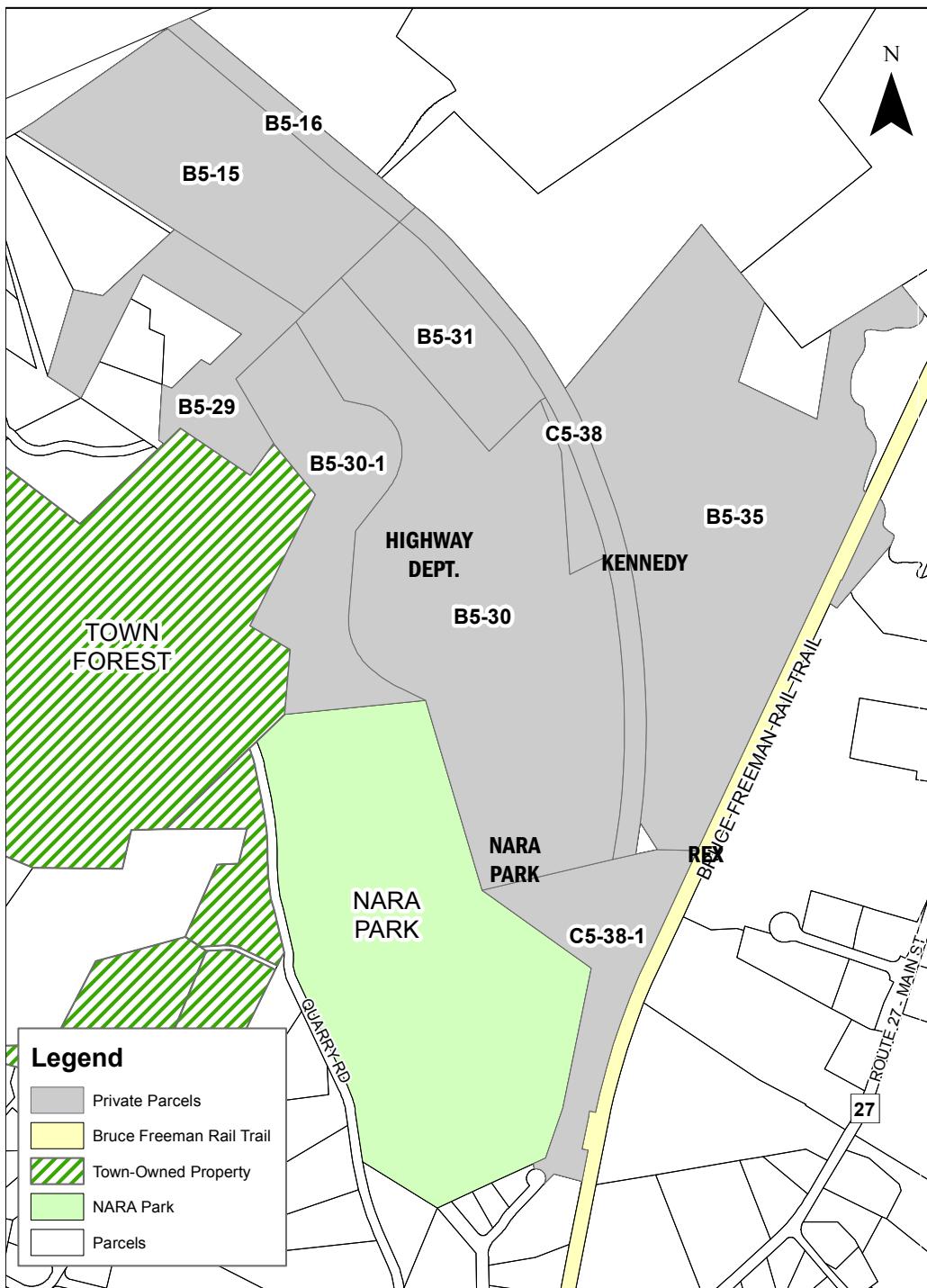
Also located on the east side of NARA Park (adjacent to the ball fields) are parcels B5, 30, 31 and 35. These represent three undeveloped parcels similar in historical use to NARA prior to construction of the park - each is an abandoned gravel mining site. Parcel B5, 30 is a 32.6 acre property with evidence of past gravel operations; the land is currently 30-to-40 year old second growth white pine forest. The majority of this parcel is high dry land with some wetlands at the north end of the site. This is a property sufficient in size and shape to facilitate additional turf fields abutting the existing NARA ball fields. A portion of this property could be set aside for the Highway Department to expand their materials yard, which in turn could allow for additional recreation development on the 14-acre Highway Department property, parcel B5, 30-1. (See Goal 6B(a&b), p. 205) Two inline skating rinks have been discussed for the Town owned (Highway Department yard) property next to the Miracle Field. Additional parking could also be accommodated at this location, accessed from Quarry Road. (See Goal 6C(a&b), p. 205) B5-30 could also become the site of a photo voltaic field sufficient in size to render NARA Park an energy-neutral municipal facility. (See Goal 1-#14, p. 193)

Parcel B5, 30 abuts an abandoned railroad "spur line" heading in a westerly direction towards Westford. It splits from the B&M main-line at Parcel C5, 38-1, where the previously-mentioned BFRT parking lot

is envisioned. This could become a wonderful rail trail connector to the BFRT, allowing access from neighboring Westford. The future rail trail is situated on parcels B5, 16 & 38. (See Goal 6D(a), p. 205) The owner of parcels abutting this area have discussed providing the Town with possible future easements.

See a map on the next page illustrating the locations of each of the privately owned parcels mentioned in this section.

PROPERTY	PARCEL SIZE	OWNERSHIP STATUS	POSSIBLE RECREATION USE
C-5-38-1	9.16AC	PRIVATE	ADDITIONAL PARKING, DIRECT ACCESS TO BFRT ACCESS TO LEDGE ROCK WAY
B5-30	32.6AC	PUBLIC	ADDITIONAL BALL FIELDS, COMMUNITY CENTER, WALKING PATHS, ADDITIONAL PARKING, ACCESS TO FUTURE RAIL TRAIL, HIGHWAY MATERIAL STORAGE YARD, SOLAR PANELS
B5-30-1	14.9AC	PUBLIC	ADDITIONAL BALL FIELDS, PARKING, NATURE TRAIL
C5-38	5.5AC	PRIVATE	FUTURE RAIL TRAIL TO WESTFORD
B5-16	2.2AC	PRIVATE	FUTURE RAIL TRAIL TO WESTFORD
B5-29	7.68AC	PRIVATE	PORTION OF LOT COULD BE USED FOR ACCESS TO FUTURE RAIL TRAIL, NATURE TRAIL, EXISTING SHRUB & TREE COLLECTION
B5-15	19AC	PRIVATE	ACCESS TO FUTURE RAIL TRAIL, NATURE TRAIL
B5-31	8.5AC	PRIVATE	ACCESS TO FUTURE RAIL TRAIL, NATURE TRAIL
B5-35	33.9AC	PRIVATE	BALL FIELDS, ACCESS TO BFRT, PARKING & ACCESS TO RT. 2 ACCESS TO FUTURE RAIL TRAIL





Family sand castle construction at the beach, 2015!

III. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

10-YEAR ACTION PLAN





Acton Minutemen Musket Volley at Winter Carnival



Goals & Objectives

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2. Meet Taxpayers' Expectations Through Improved Customer Service.....194
3. Preserve, Protect, Enhance Park's Natural Environment.....196
4. Construct and Maintain Facilities to Meet User Needs.....198
5. Expand and Enhance Arts and Culture202
6. Potential Expansion Opportunities.....205

1. DEVELOP LONG-TERM PARK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:

- a) Water Quality Control and Maintenance
- b) Turf Management - (user fee contribution)
- c) Parking Lot Management - (capacity issues, expansion possibilities)
- d) Facility Park Rentals
- e) Building and Septic System Maintenance
- f) Landscape/Invasives Management
- g) Stormwater
- h) Noise Complaints/Crowd Control
- i) Energy Consumption
- j) Resource Management
- k) Pet Control
- l) Purchase Abutting Properties (See Goal 6)
- m) Security Oversight



NARA Master Plan - Action Plan Ranking												
Goal 1: Develop Long-Term Park Management Strategy					1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-6 Years	7-8 Years	9-10 Years			
Goal	Rank	Location	Project	Referenced on Page(s)	2016-17	2018-19	2020-21	2022-23	2024-25	Estimated Cost	Total Estimated	Funding Source
1	1	Lower Parking Lot	Parking Control Study: Study to consider gated entry with booth/possible metered parking area (both upper and lower parking areas)	161		x				\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	CPA
1	2	Lower Parking Lot	Implement/Construct parking lot booths and/or meters based on recommendation of study	161		x	x			\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	CPA
1	3	General	Enhanced Park Security (Personnel-May through Oct)	114, 146	x					\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	General Fund
1	4	Lower Park Area	Relocate storage shed to end of beach to house daily beach equipment and aeration system. Relocate patio tent. Relocate gray storage tent	165	x					\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	General Fund/Staff/Recreation
1	5	General	Field user groups-recoup costs not being covered by charging fees	129	x					\$ -	\$ -	Recreation
1	6	Perimeter Trail	Establish a Bike Policy at NARA	145	x					\$ -	\$ -	Recreation
1	7	General	Charge nominal fee to enter NARA Park for July 4 th Celebration	118		x				\$ -	\$ -	
1	8	Upper Fields	Timer on Skating Rink lights	167	x					TBD	TBD	Recreation
1	9	General	NARA Park Lighting Study	163		x		x		TDB	TBD	General Fund/CPA
1	10	Amphitheater	Update NARA staging to include handicap ramp, portable staging units	112, 114		x				\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	General Fund/Grant Opportunity/Donation
1	11	Amphitheater	Security system for Amphitheater	114		x				\$ 10,000	\$ 100,000	General Fund/Grant Opportunity
1	12	Quarry Road/Miracle Field	Add 17 additional parking spots along upper Quarry Road	113, 127		x				\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	General Fund/Staff
1	13	Upper Fields	Irrigation replacement with commercial system -current is aging, and is residential grade.	129			x			TBD	TBD	CPA
1	14	General	Solar power / panels (OSRP)	163			x			TBD	TBD	General Fund/Grant Opportunity
1	15	Upper Fields	Park Lighting Study Implementation: Street lights on Quarry Road, Town Forest Trail, solar lighting on pond path and upper and lower parking lots (OSRP)	113, 163		x	x			TBD	TBD	General Fund/CPA

2. MEET TAXPAYER'S EXPECTATIONS THROUGH IMPROVED CUSTOMER SERVICE OBJECTIVES:

- a) Provide additional shade around Park
- b) Ensure swimmable pond
- c) Provide safe walking path, free of bikes
- d) Manage weekend parking and crowd (party control)
- e) Provide consistent quality control of bathrooms
- f) Ensure rental areas are clean and ready when guests arrive
- g) Updated website, social media access to events
- h) Better lighting along pathways
- i) Better strategy for people exiting park after larger events
- j) Information/educational signage



NARA Master Plan - Action Plan Ranking												
Goal 2: Meet Taxpayers' Expectations Through Improved Customer Service				Referenced on Page(s)	1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-6 Years	7-8 Years	9-10 Years			
Goal	Rank	Location	Project									
2	1	Beach/Pond	Aeration System for the Pond (OSRP)	87, 139	x					\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	Funded
2	2	Playground	Shade in Playground	133, 139	x					\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	Recreation
2	3	Beach/Pond/Upper Fields	Additional Shade Areas: Trees, Structures	130, 151	x	x	x			\$3,500 each year	\$ 21,000	Recreation/Donations
2	4	Beach	Enhance Snack Bar Operations	103, 145, 147		x				\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	CPA
2	5	Upper Fields	New shade tent for field users	130			x	x		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	Recreation
2	6	Lower Park Area	Kiosk for Bruce Freeman Rail Trail	147		x				\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	Recreation/Minuteman Tech
2	7	General	NARA Park Sign at Rt. 2/27 exit (OSRP)	147, 162		x				\$ -	\$ -	State Funded
2	8	General	Educational Bulletin Board	162	x					\$ 300	\$ 300	Recreation
2	9	Upper Fields	Sports Field Lighting	130			x			\$ 420,000	\$ 420,000	CPA



Picnic Pavilion Construction Photos, December 2013 - March 2014

3. PRESERVE, PROTECT, ENHANCE PARK'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
OBJECTIVES:

- a) Protect water quality, control and treat non-point source pollution
- b) Control invasives in central wetlands
- c) Install signage around park: explaining efforts we make to ensure protection of water/wildlife
- d) Enhance natural areas along pond edge - add shrubs and control pond edge erosion
- e) Develop bio-retention area near volleyball/tent area
- f) Continue to add native wildflowers to meadow
- g) Improve organic treatment of turf areas
- h) Implement a strategy for maintaining pine stand adjacent to interior road
- i) Protect a diverse, healthy fish population
- j) Offer eco-educational programs



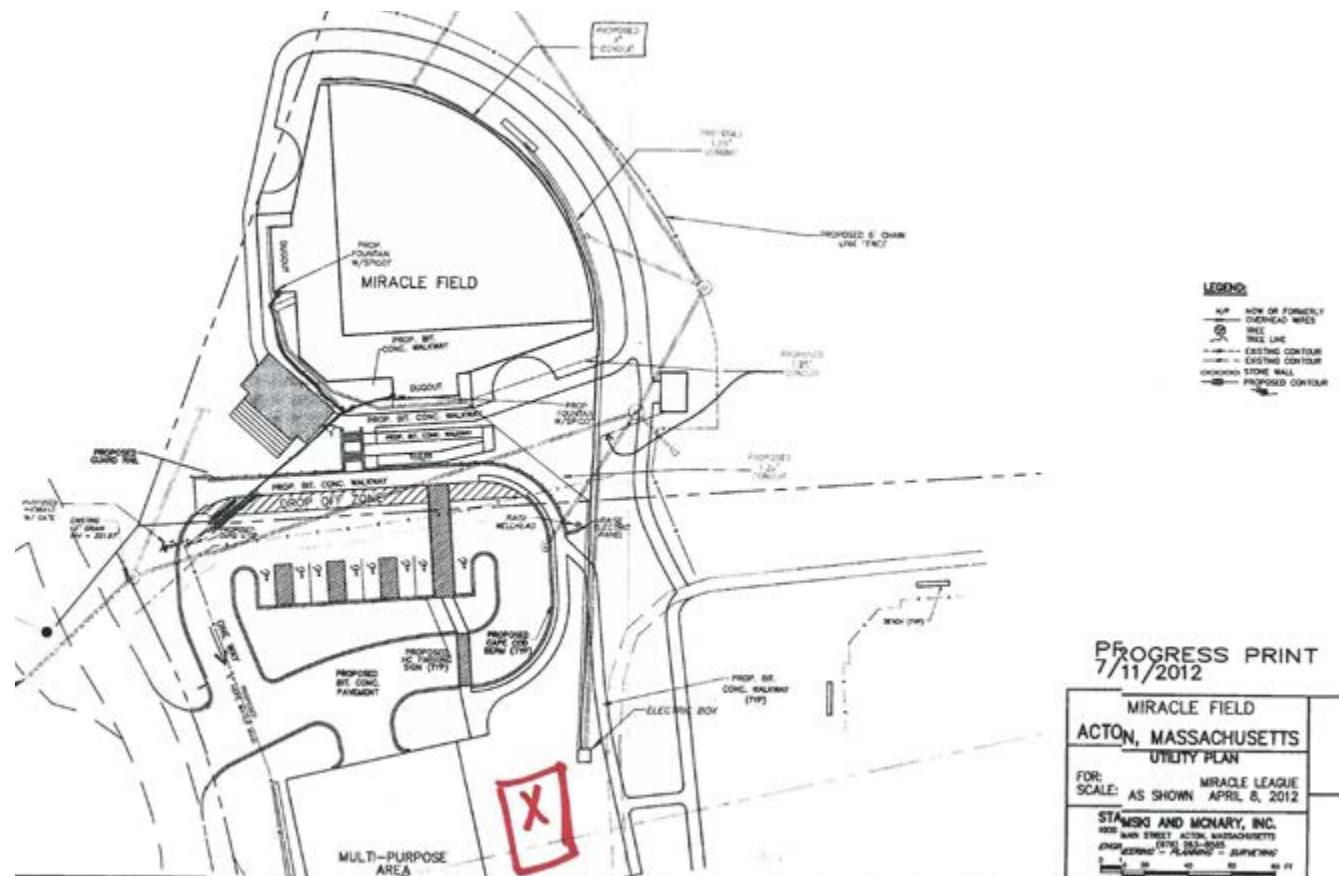
Flowers in bloom at NARA

NARA Master Plan - Action Plan Ranking												
Goal 3: Preserve, Protect, Enhance Park's Natural Environment					1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-6 Years	7-8 Years	9-10 Years			
Goal	Rank	Location	Project	Referenced on Page(s)	2016-17	2018-19	2020-21	2022-23	2024-25	Estimated Cost	Total Estimated	Funding Source
3	1	Landscaping	Trees & Shrubs: A) Landscaping B) Hardscapes C) Invasives D) Turf Management E) Mulch. Investigate Champion Tree program for long-term cultivation of specimen trees. Add a garden surrounding the drinking fountain at upper parking lot entrance onto the interior road, preserving wheelchair access	113, 129, 151-155	x	x	x	x	x	\$10,000 each year	\$ 100,000	Recreation/General Fund/Donations
3	2	General	Control of non-point source pollution, protect water quality	79	x	x	x	x	x	\$1,500 each year	\$ 15,000	Recreation
3	3	Beach/Pond	Beach erosion, shoreline erosion, play surface erosion	86, 87, 133		x				TBD	TBD	Recreation
3	4	General	Recycling	101, 105, 127, 147	x					TBD	TBD	General Fund, State Grants
3	5	Natural Environment	Ensure a healthy sustainable fish population in pond	83, 86	x	x	x	x	x	TBD	TBD	State Grants



4. CONSTRUCT AND MAINTAIN FACILITIES TO MEET USER NEEDS OBJECTIVES:

- a) Add lighting on the walkway from picnic pavilion to bathhouse
- b) Improve public bathrooms for BFRT at Bathhouse
- c) Construct public bathrooms for Miracle Field/leagues
- d) Install parking control structures at parking lot entrances
- e) Contract for bathroom facilities/janitorial services
- f) Improve snow/ice removal of walkways
- g) Develop long-term planting plan for park
- h) Installation of mini-picnic pods around park
- i) Add shade structures
- j) Repair or replace boardwalk
- k) Improve handicap facilities
- l) Add second softball diamond



NARA Master Plan - Action Plan Ranking												
Goal 4: Construct & Maintain Facilities to Meet User Needs				Referenced on Page(s)	1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-6 Years	7-8 Years	9-10 Years	Estimated Cost	Total Estimated	Funding Source (*FBRFT = Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail)
Goal	Rank	Location	Project		2016-17	2018-19	2020-21	2022-23	2024-25			
4	1	Miracle Field	Sports Pavilion: Design and construct a sports pavilion to include restroom/concession and office space	101, 173	x					\$ 750,000	\$ 750,000	CPA/Donations
4	2	General	Dumpster relocation and screening	165	x					\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	Recreation
4	3	Lower Park Area	Enhance bridge/boardwalk handicap accessibility	135		x				TBD	TBD	CPA
4	4	Lower Park Area	Café NARA - Expansion of Bathhouse Snackbar-Pavilion	103, 145, 147	x					\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	FBFRT/General Fund
4	5	Lower Park Area	New 3-season picnic tent on surfaced area	165		x				\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	FBFRT/Recreation/General Fund
4	6	Picnic Pavilion	Restroom - Handicap unisex stalls	109	x	x				TBD	TBD	CPA
4	7	General	John Deere Gator (replacement)	165		x				\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	General Fund
4	8	Beach/Pond	Adirondack chairs, tables, umbrellas	141	x	x	x	x	x	\$2,000 per year	\$ 10,000	Recreation/FBFRT
4	9	Amphitheater	Widen pathway in front of snack bar	114	x					\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	TBD
4	10	Amphitheater	Mobi-Mats: Roll out these portable wheelchair accessible pathway covers for events	114		x				TBD	TBD	Recreation, Grant
4	11	General	Install bicycle racks	145	x					\$ 1,900	\$ 1,900	Complete Streets Grant
4	12	Upper Fields	Install dugout roofs at NARA Softball Field	130	x	x				TBD	TBD	Acton Adult Softball League, Acton Girls Softball League
4	13	Picnic Pavilion	Electrical hook-up for projection/AV equipment	105	x					\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	Recreation
4	14	Beach/Pond	Sand replenishment (60 Cu Yd yearly, approx. \$20 per Cu Yd) and grooming maintenance	139	x	x	x	x	x	\$3,000 per year	\$ 15,000	Recreation/General Fund
4	15	Landscaping	Expand parking area at upper lot into the walking trail towards the softball field, removing six boulders along the trail shoulder (20 spaces).	153, 173	x					\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	CPA
4	16	Landscaping	Rearrange boulders in culvert off the interior road near present gray storage tent	153	x					\$ -		Recreation Staff
4	17	Picnic Pavilion	Install three pervious pavement parking spaces on grass below lower rain garden for permitted patrons	109	x					\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	General Fund
4	18	Beach/Pond	Install concrete pad with shade structure for beach monitor	139	x					TBD		Recreation/Grant
4	19	Beach/Pond	Widen concrete pad around beach kiosk for handicap accessibility	139	x					\$ 1,500		Recreation
4	20	Upper Fields	Need to improve accessibility from drinking fountain onto fields	130	x	x				\$15,000 per year	\$ 30,000	General Fund/Recreation
4	21	Picnic Pavilion	Design AV and Sound Equipment	105	x					\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	Recreation/Donations
4	22	Lower Park Area	Replace Pond Boardwalk	135		x				\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	CPA/Donations



Amphitheater View from the Meadow

NARA Master Plan - Action Plan Ranking												
Goal 4: Construct & Maintain Facilities to Meet User Needs				Referenced on Page(s)	1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-6 Years	7-8 Years	9-10 Years	Estimated Cost	Total Estimated	Funding Source (*FBRFT Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail)
Goal	Rank	Location	Project		2016-17	2018-19	2020-21	2022-23	2024-25			
4	23	Amphitheater	Add LED stage lighting (\$300 per fixture/4 per year)	112	x	x	x	x	x	\$1,200 per year	\$ 12,000	Recreation
4	24	Upper Fields	Construct 2nd Softball Field	130			x			\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	CPA/Leagues
4	25	Amphitheater	Replace Amphitheater roofing shingles	117			x			TBD		General Fund
4	26	Amphitheater	Stain buildings and paint poles, sealing woodwork	117	x		x		x	TBD		General Fund
4	27	Amphitheater	Level grass area to meet ADA compliance	114	x					TBD		Recreation
4	28	Lower Park Area	Convert volleyball court to 20-space parking/recreation lot	159, 161	x					\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	CPA
4	29	General	Add park benches	135		x		x	x	\$ 1,000	\$ 6,000	Recreation/Donations
4	30	Lower Park Area	Add bicycle rentals and storage (OSRP)	146		x				TBD	TBD	FBFRT/CPA/Recreation
4	31	Beach/Pond	Replace NARA Boat - lifespan 5-7 years	139		x			x	\$ 5,000	\$ 10,000	Recreation
4	32	Miracle Field	Maintenance/repairs as needed for rubber field surface	171						TBD	TBD	Miracle League of Massachusetts
4	33	Lower Park Area	Install splash pad	133			x			\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	CPA
4	34	Playground	Replace playground	133					x	\$ 350,000	\$ 350,000	CPA/Donations/General Fund/Recreation
4	35	Amphitheater	Replace folding chairs (300)	109				x		TBD	TBD	Recreation
4	36	Picnic Pavilion	Design and install Picnic Pavilion weather panels	105, 114				x		TBD	TBD	Recreation
4	37	Lower Park Area	Add picnic pod near rail trail entry	147			x			TBD	TBD	FBFRT
4	38	Playground	Improve playground access and structures (OSRP)	133			x			\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	CPA
4	39	Amphitheater	Repair/replace irrigation system at amphitheater	113		x				\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	General Fund
4	40	Lower Park Area	Install a gazebo along pond path near bridge	135		x				\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	Minuteman Tech/CPA
4	41	Amphitheater	Maintain driveway	114				x		\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	General Fund
4	42	Upper Fields	Install tennis courts	130					x	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	CPA
4	43	Upper Fields	Add upper field vehicle access driveway	127	x					\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	Recreation Fund

5. EXPAND AND ENHANCE ARTS AND CULTURE

OBJECTIVES:

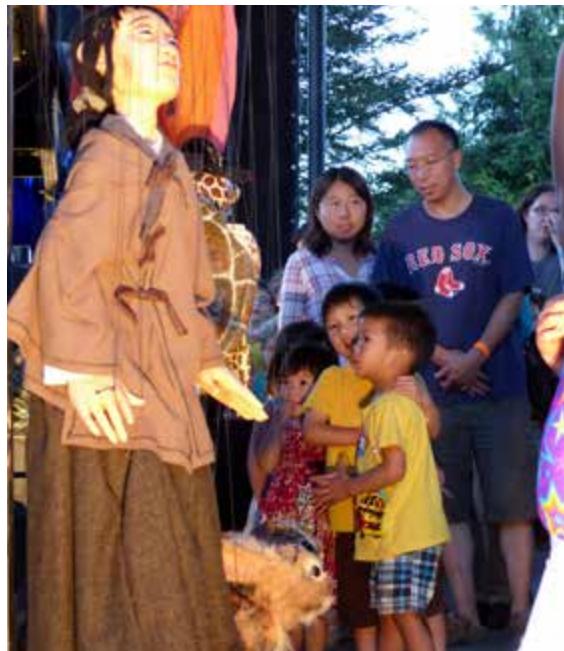
- a) Add sculptures, either temporary or permanent
- b) Design system to control music/sound exiting the bowl area
- c) Design and purchase sound panels for stage
- d) Add theater to summer event calendar
- e) Design stage curtain system
- f) Enhance/improve signage around town highlighting events at NARA Park
- g) Establish a "Friends of NARA Park Committee"
- h) Develop an annual Earth Day event at NARA
- i) Charge nominal fee to enter NARA Park for July 4th Celebration
- j) Contract with larger promoter to have national acts perform at the Amphitheater
- k) Add additional summer attractions at the Picnic Pavilion "Tastes of the Region" - music, wine, local brewery, local food - maybe four times throughout the summer— evening event 6:00 - 9:30 p.m.
- l) Expand parking at NARA to accommodate guests



NARA Master Plan - Action Plan Ranking												
Goal 5: Expand and Enhance Arts and Culture				Referenced on Page(s)	1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-6 Years	7-8 Years	9-10 Years			
Goal	Rank	Location	Project	Referenced on Page(s)	2016-17	2018-19	2020-21	2022-23	2024-25	Estimated Cost	Total Estimated	Funding Source
5	1	Amphitheater	Promote and expand events at NARA by special interest groups (i.e. Cultural Council Grant Recipients) and generate a Cultural Events Policy	117	x	x	x	x	\$ -	\$ -	N/A	
5	2	General	Establish a "Friends of NARA Park"	119		x			\$ -	\$ -	N/A	
5	3	Amphitheater	Install better/improved signage around town highlighting events at NARA Park	117	x	x			TBD	TBD	Recreation	
5	4	Amphitheater	Host international dance and music events	118	x	x	x	x	\$ -	\$ -	Performer Funded	
5	5	General	Host evening events at the Picnic Pavilion	119	x	x	x	x	TBD	TBD	Recreation/Donation	
5	6	Amphitheater	Study to design system to control sound exiting the bowl area	112		x			\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	General Fund	
5	7	General	Host environmental sculptures exhibit	119		x	x	x	\$ -	\$ -	Artist/Acton Boxborough Cultural Council	
5	8	Amphitheater	Host summertime theater	118	x	x	x	x	\$ 2,000	\$ 20,000	Recreation/Donation/Grant	
5	9	Amphitheater	Contract with larger promoter to have several national acts perform at amphitheater	118		x	x	x	- \$	-	Performer Promotor	
5	10	Amphitheater	Design stage curtain and install	112		x			\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	CPA/Donation/Grant	
5	11	Amphitheater	Develop an annual Earth Day event at NARA	119		x	x	x	\$6,000 per year	\$ 48,000	Donation	



Eaglemania



Tanglewood Marionettes



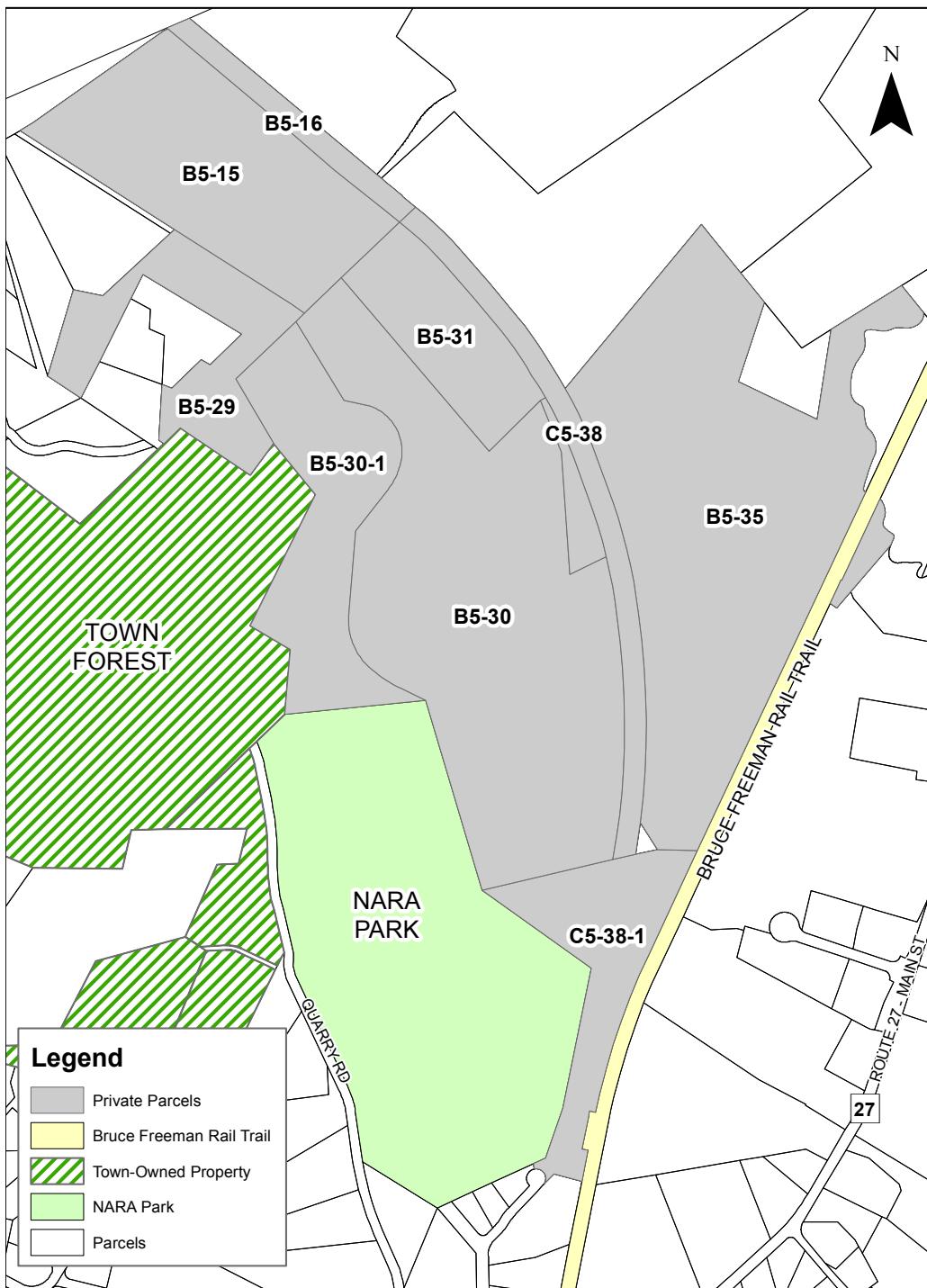
Tusk-Ultimate Fleetwood Mac Tribute

6. POTENTIAL EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES

- A. Purchase Rex Lumber rear parking and drying sheds (C-5, pcl. 38-1)
 - a) Create Bruce Freeman Rail Trail dedicated parking
 - b) Place BFRT back on regional Right of Way
 - c) Restore green buffer between pond and Rex paved surface
 - d) Secure public access route to Rt. 27
- B. Purchase Kennedy Land (B-5, pcl. 30) (B-5, pcl. 35) (B-5, pcl. 31)
 - a) Move Highway Department storage/materials yard to Kennedy land
 - b) Develop additional ball fields on Kennedy land
 - c) Reserve location for North Acton Fire and Emergency Response Station
 - d) Secure a route from Kennedy property to Rt. 27
 - e) Future access to Rail Trail spur-line to Powers Road, Westford
 - f) Put Conservation Restriction on north section of Kennedy as protected open space
 - g) Photovoltaic field on Kennedy
- C. 14-acre Highway Department Storage Area (B-5, pc. 30-1)
 - a) Add two inline skating rinks
 - b) Add additional parking lot to service Miracle Field, inline rinks
 - c) Add secondary exit route through Kennedy Land
- D. Purchase development rights to abandoned spur-line to Westford
 - a) (C-5, pcl. 38) (B-5, pcl. 16)



Fireworks



Potential Expansion Opportunities Map



Left to Right:
Mike Gowing, Selectman; Event Performer;
Lauren Rosenzweig Morton, Selectman;
Pam Harting-Barret; Selectman, Janet Adachi,
Selectman, Cory Atkins, State Representative,
James Eldridge, State Senator

IV. REFERENCES

The Ecology of NARA Park

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Early morning at NARA Beach

V. RECREATION SURVEY PUBLIC COMMENTS

PLEASE NOTE:

Section V. Public Comments

The following public comments, given in response to questions in our Master Plan Survey, conducted June 1-September 1, 2015, have not been edited or altered.



Winter Carnival

Survey of Public Comments *What do you think of the Park's maintenance?*

- Our answers are based on summer-only use, and we leave it to our son's family, here year-round, to answer for their use.
- My comments: The orange plastic fence left up beyond its stated use detracts from an otherwise handsome site.
- Whoever designed this survey is not thinking - how would any normal person know about the equipment storage facilities????
- Beach often covered with Geese poop! Yuck! Can't it be combed off at the beginning of the day?
- Playground has a few areas/items in disrepair. Squeaky swings!
- Need to charge to people the don't belong or don't leave in Acton , I was a regular visitor and after I saw people using bad language and drinking on the parking lot same as the beach is a really waste
- Perimeter trail around pond littered with paper, plastic and butts on a daily basis. Very poor maint in this area.
- The maintenance staff exceeds at their job. BIG thanks.
- Beautiful and serene
- We need better bathroom facilities. Especially portapotties around the fields. By definition they are disgusting but these ones are just horrible.
- Also, event parking is insufficient. I shouldn't have to get to NARA 45 mins I advance to snag a parking spot.
- The snack bar could expand its offerings. It doesn't have to be anything gourmet but cold pizza that runs out within 1/2 hour of arrival is disappointing.
- My husband and I do not have kids yet, but when we do I would guess we would use the sledding hill, ice skating rink and fields. (As well as using the playground and pond more often)
- There should be a better solution for equipment storage that keeps the maintenance equipment out of sight or housed in a building that aligned with the overall character of the park.
- I would love to use the beach and pond, but the fact that it is stagnant water that, at times, has had high bacteria counts has led me to avoid allowing my children to swim or play in the pond.
- I love NARA. It is very well maintained and managed. Amazing asset for our town.
- My family used to use the playground and the upper field as well when our son was younger. In addition, our son attended NARA day camp for 5 years.
- I love NARA and all it offers, even the things my family has never or seldom used. There are so many options at NARA for the community.
- Miracle Field, although we do not use it, is very impressive and a wonderful resource. Kudos for having this in our town!
- The bath house could be cleaned a little more frequently.
- Nara is maintained beautifully. Definitely a plus! Thank you!
- The beach sand could be a little thicker.
- During this past weekend the bathrooms could have used more attention, they were dirty and should have been cleaned on a regular schedule (i.e every 1/2 hour or hour. The parking lot's need to be swept and weeded. The weeds in front of the car spots are often full of weeds and other growing infestations, along with some trash. I would also like to see better recycling of plastics at the beach area and I assume you could use rain barrels off of the snack bar gutters to collect rain water plants.
- Expressed no opinion regarding maintenance of areas I never see or use.
- Nara Park is a gem. It's beautifully maintained. The wooded trails are well marked and lovely all year round. It would be nice



What do you think of the Park's maintenance? Continued

to have a couple of basketball courts, I'm surprised that there no hoops.

- The only negative aspect I would change is the noise pollution from the industrial? complex and the shooting range, but there's nothing one can do about that, I suppose!
- Storage area often seems unorganized and messy.
- We would love to go swimming there but every time we do, some gets sick afterwards.
- The walking paths are always a mess from people that do not clean up after their dogs. The trash cans are always overflowing with trash/garbage.
- The bathrooms really need to be expanded. Or possibly a separate bathroom area for the summer campers. I understand it can be hard to keep up on daily restroom cleaning but by end of day those bathrooms are a mess. Plus the kids leave their stuff all over the bathhouse. A possible smaller bath house for the campers with changing area and lockers might be helpful.
- A lot of the equipment is exposed to winter weather.
- Playground needs shade
- I cannot comment on most of this.
- NARA park is beautiful. Note: I put "Monthly" for my use, but more accurate is weekly in the summer and during heavy snow months.
- Equipment area looks junky. Would prefer it disguised with trees or other plantings or behind a fence. It's an eyesore in an otherwise pristine environment. Looks industrial.
- Often allot of dog droppings on path, and dogs off leash and not controlled by owners.
- Problems with dog feces left on the walkways and lawns. Need a bigger sign to clean up after your dog. Follow the lease law. There are many dogs unleashed. There should be a fine for not following the dog care rules.
- I have noticed that the bathhouse toilets are usually a disaster. I've preferred the port-o-potties than dealing with the soggy, messy toilets in the bathhouse.
- As a winter walker, I clean up after my dog. Many don't. I would appreciate more signage nagging after those lazy people who

Survey of Public Comments

just bag the poop and either leave it in a pile, or throw it in the woods. There have been more than 10 trash barrels/disposal units provided, and yet there is always a depressing amount of dog litter everywhere.

- Equipment storage near entrance looks ugly
- Should have N/A as an option for above.
- Outhouses are not cleaned regularly enough
- We love this park! A little disappointed with the new grills as it creates a hazard for running kids. Maybe stone surrounds might help.
- The Pond is disgusting in the summer. It is a great to use in June but as the summer progresses, it is dirty and by the end of august, I won't let my kids swim in it.,
- The pond is a goose toilet and we do not swim in it. Period. We drive to Lincoln (have purchased membership at their town pool which knocks the socks off NARA swimming).
- Love the concerts. Playground needs MORE SHADE.
- Lots of poison ivy by path on far side of pond at top of hill where soccer fields start.
- I am particularly stunned by the gardens, the beauty of the structures, the way everything has grown in, the artistic layout of the bridge and bathhouse, placement of bird feeders.
- It's very well thought out and a gift to the community.
- THANK YOU!!
- We would frequent the park far more often if the playground had some additional activities and shading. It's often just too hot to be out there.
- We used it more when my child was younger (he is now a teenager.) for sledding, the playground, and for sports games and practice (soccer.) We would have used the beach more often when my child was young, but it offered little to no shade. My husband currently uses it for fishing, a few times a year. We might attend the 4th of July celebration in any given year.
- Everything is great at NARA. However, playground could use more shade.
- Indoor showers would be great!

Survey of Public Comments *What do you think of the Park's maintenance? Continued*

- The walking trail is great. While the park is generally a beautiful resource, the overall maintenance seems to have slipped a bit in recent years; more trash around trail and in water, more weeds and over growth and unchecked areas of poison ivy (right side of trail as you top hill after the bridge over the pond.) There's always the issue of dog owners who do not clean up after their pets.
- NARA is beautiful and well maintained.
- I would love to see a new larger playground created at NARA. One of the major drawbacks of the current location is how hot and sunny it is. If the location must remain than some covered seating areas and/or tents over the play structure. The beach is very pricey for day visitors.
- Go to Nara more in summer months. Very little rest of year
- The equipment storage is sort of an eye sore but at least it's tucked away
- I think it is very important to plant some large shade trees
- Around/in the playground area and new picnic pavilions.
- Parking for winterfest was non-existent this year. The upper lots weren't plowed, and while we would have loved to attend, we left since we couldn't park. This was a travesty.
- You need more umbrellas on the beach.
- Monthly doesn't apply very well -- we use seasonally, weekly spring and fall, not so much other seasons.
- Biggest problem is parking for a big event. A painful troubling problem especially for seniors and handicapped.
- I don't visit often enough to really have an opinion. In general things look fine.
- The beach is great, but the water gets gross and the guards tend not to clean up the pond area, so we tend not to swim after June. Just an FYI - when I worked as a lifeguard in Harvard we all had to pick up trash for 15 min a day, might want to implement that at NARA. I have been to the clean ups run by AFN and there is need. The playground is fun, but so sunny and hot - a few trees planted over there would make a world of difference.
- The bathhouse gets very dirty and could use more toilets, it is very dark and dingy.
- I really only attend the July 4th fireworks, so don't have any opinion about maintenance.
- NARA is a beautiful park.
- Restrooms at bathhouse could be maintained better. beach/water has too much geese poop, although last year was better.
- You need to do a better job with the bathroom facilities. For such a nice Park, the bathrooms are **ALWAYS** a disaster. Nothing flushes, you are out of supplies, and there should be a reminder to patrons to keep the facility clean.
- There is not enough shade. The water is too murky.
- AASL maintains the softball field, so I consider that "Exceeds Expectations", but I would be more satisfied if the Town put resources into that maintenance too.
- Some don't apply to me, but on average all is ok. More storage for Softball field would be great, and better restrooms near sports fields would be helpful (vs. porta potties).
- Don't go often enough to notice.
- We love the park.
- Gray tent is an eyesore.



NARA Garden bed

Thinking about the future, what amenities would you like to see at NARA?

- More shade structures or umbrellas on the beach please!
- Bathroom always locked. Useless.
- Educational board / station about Nathaniel Allen
- Sign showing name of the park
- Additional softball fields
- I would like to see all amenities continue to be wheelchair accessible. This is one of the best wheelchair accessible town parks.
- Some adirondack chairs up on the hill overlooking the pond in the shade would be nice :-).
- Would like to see a comfort station for the Miracle League area. Kids in wheelchairs shouldn't have to use portapotties.
- All towns have their community swimming pools except Acton. The high school pool opens during summer for 3 hours once a week on Sunday. A few communities have their pools but not all of us are fortunate enough to live there. These pools also have waiting lists. Plus, some of the residents of these communities may not want to go to their community pool and want a place where they can hang out with people from other communities.
- Our town needs an indoor heated community pool.
- Public swimming pool!!!!!!
- I'd like to see the restrooms opened during seasons other than the summer!!
- Time for dogs to play at park off leash maybe off-season when there's no soccer. Only up at soccer field, not by beach or water.
- Please enforce the no authorized vehicles from driving up and down the walking Path. Has increased significantly with the Pavilion. Too many cars driving up and down the hill and parking on the hill!
- I would like more of a reason to visit NARA. Was there a lot more when my kids were younger at the fields, concerts, playground, etc.
- Tennis courts
- It would be wonderful to have a town pool, preferably with a bubble so it can be used year-round. We could have a swim team and lessons and family time.
- Artificial turf is a very bad idea. It is much more painful to fall on. Kids can play rough even when not playing any official sports game. Let's keep the real grass. Real grass is also more

Survey of Public Comments

- sports game. Let's keep the real grass. Real grass is also more attractive.
- It would be nice to have extended rest room hours throughout the year.
- Also, maybe a security person could walk the park as there has been a creepy guy hanging around NARA for months. The police have been notified by several different walkers but police cannot do anything about him.
- Public swimming pool!!!!!!
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- It would be nice to have extended rest room hours throughout the year.
- Also, maybe a security person could walk the park as there has been a creepy guy hanging around NARA for months. The police have been notified by several different walkers but police cannot do anything about him.
- Artificial turf creates a lot of heat. There has been recent studies and tv reports of this, plus it does not allow proper drainage to the aquifer below.
- This is the only place in town that seniors have a safe place to enjoy Acton's natural beauty. Please don't ruin it with additional structures that obstruct the view. The pavilion will never make

Survey of Public Comments *Thinking about the future, what amenities would you like to see at NARA? Continued*

back in rental fees what it costs to build and maintain.

- I answered this prematurely. Basketball hoops would be great!
- Larger skating facilities would be awesome. Bathroom facilities by the sledding hill and skating area would be great. A warming hut by both would make it much more user friendly for small children. Lights for skating/sledding in winter, and softball/soccer in summer would make facilities much more available.
- I used to use the swim area a lot when my kids were little, but they lost interest at about age 8. If there had been a raft to swim out to and jump from, we would have enjoyed the beach for more years.
- Would love to see a pool. The public pool options in Acton are non-existent, and the private options are only for the very affluent.
- Additional Softball Field (Would Like to See Now)
- I don't think turf fields are necessary at Nara. Please keep grass fields! Turf fields at School street would be better. Nara is beautifully maintained. School street fields are a mess.
- Keep bicycles off the walk ways. Very dangerous, got run over once.
- Would really like to see tennis and basketball facilities
- I think the facilities are great and meet needs currently. Fitness stations could be really cool, but I put "Not sure" because they seem like a luxury rather than a necessity. I marked additional restrooms and additional parking as needed in 6-10 years assuming use will increase/population will grow.
- I would be strongly opposed to artificial turf on the fields.
- Want enhanced security not to protect us but to protect and preserve the Park. We feel safe there but don't want people leaving trash after hours or using Beach without paying.
- Bike racks, sidewalks on nearby roads to allow people to walk to park, events, new Rail Trail
- I love the park at dusk without lighting. The more you can keep/adopt the park to national park standards the better. Keep it natural and encourage stewardship. Also be good citizens of neighbors.
- The playground NEEDS a shade structure.
- So many children have sporting events at NARA, would like to see actual bathrooms at the fields, a concession stand during peak events. Port a pottys are limited and stink and kids go pee in the woods! disgusting
- Pull up bar for adults would be nice to have AT the playground (so parents can use it). Monkey bars are not a good fit for adults.
- With night rental of pavilion, it would be nice to have lit restrooms nearby.
- Pool instead of pond with bacteria
- Restrooms up by amphitheater/upper fields are needed
- Like the bird watching...more planting for native birds...
- Would like to see restroom facilities available all year.
- The emergency boxes like at college campuses would be good. Some video monitoring would be good too.
- A restroom up by the soccer fields would be very helpful and much appreciated.
- Actually would love to see an indoor party hall that Actonians can rent in the Winter time.
- Change the pond to swimming pools and splash park.
- Wow fitness stations would be great!
- Volleyball courts are out of code. They are turned into the sun instead of sideways to the sun as called for by prevailing standards. Turn the volleyball courts sideways, make them actually usable instead of the eye-burning torture grounds they are now.
- Better designed parking at the upper fields would be helpful. Getting in or out when one group is ending and another is beginning is VERY challenging because of how it is designed.
- Are cars allowed on the paved walkways? I see them driving sometimes for events - its not clearly marked at all
- I would also love to see a closed in dog park where dogs could run unleashed.
- Would like decent restrooms by sports fields
- Playground has no shade.
- Beach has no shade.
- Playground is too far from beach.
- Long Lake is much better.
- I think it is nice as it is. An additional restroom at the soccer field end of the park would be nice.
- If the unpaved lot by the upper fields were paved, that would be great!
- Would like restrooms at the top near the amphitheater.
- Would love to see fitness stations incorporated into the perimeter trail.

Thinking about the future, what amenities would you like to see at NARA? Continued Survey of Public Comments

- Turf fields are in addition to grass fields but not instead!
- If this is to be truly for everyone then forget artificial turf Focus on shade trees and benches and adequate lighting.
- I think there needs to be a large chlorinated pool. The pond is gross for swimming and we stopped going there as a family as a result.
- FITNESS STATIONS!!!! That would be awesome! As would lighting around the perimeter. Trees too, please get trees planted ASAP. If these are added, then I think you will potentially need more parking, but it seems fine with the new Miracle Field lot. It might be nice to have a trash can or two placed around the perimeter for the people who drop their dog poop bags all over (so gross and inconsiderate).
- Wild flower garden? When the bike trail goes through I may use it more.
- Picnic area next to Miracle Field.
- Please add additional restrooms and have them open year round.
- Another softball field would allow AASL to expand and have a more social feel with 4 teams on 2 adjacent fields on the same nights.
- I love the idea of making the perimeter trail lighted and with fitness stations, and obviously parking to go with those improvements. A lighted ball park would be huge, allowing softball games to continue past dusk, making the park more usable for sporting events. Permanent and serviced restrooms is non-discretionary if NARA is to become a more mainstream town park.
- Most countries overseas have these fitness stations in most of their parks now! What a great way to service the residents with these exercise equipment outdoors.
- Great ideas!
- Bicycles for bike trail not for use in the park.
- Make NARA smoke free area.
- Softball tournaments
- Outdoor area for yoga Tai Chi, Qigong, etc.
- The new Bruce Freeman bike trail will be coming through later this year or early next year. Seems like some accommodations will need to be made (bike racks, more restrooms, better snacks...).
- I'm a little concerned that the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail will disrupt the serenity of the park.
- Need additional baseball and softball facilities.
- Swimming pools!!!!
- Would love more winter activities - x country ski, snowshoe.
- Would be great to have more activities to do there to keep everyone busy.
- Roller rink for teens and adults, seniors!!
- Umbrellas for the beach, to rent
- Way more seats, chairs on the beach
- The buoys and rope for the lap swimmers is getting messed up, little kids and teens with toys and water guns are using it instead. The more people who join, the more water will have to be available. Must leave room for older people to exercise by lap swimming!!Many complaints about this among my friends.
- If tied to mountain biking trails as mentioned in the previous question.
- Basketball courts and water sprayground ASAP please!
- Picnic tables that you don't have to rent
- All great ideas.
- These would all be very nice additions!
- A few more possibilities to consider: Antique auto event, outdoor art show event



Night Performance at Amphitheater

Survey of Public Comments

Thinking about the future, what amenities would you like to see at NARA?

- Group exercise program for adults/seniors.
- "Ironman" competition for younger people.
- Radio Control boat event in the pond.
- Hot air balloon event (is NARA large enough?)
- Basketball, shuffleboard, bocce, horseshoes, all great ideas. But equipment has to be readily available at different times, not just summer.
- Also, kayaks and paddle boats would be great. They had them in past but don't see them anymore.
- I like how Nara has a natural focus. There's lots of hard surface courts already available around town at the schools.
- There are already tennis courts right around the corner. Perhaps platform tennis (played outside in the winter!) would be an interesting alternative.
- Where would the people riding bikes go? If they are on the walking trails, it makes it awkward for people who are walking.
- I think any of the above would be a great addition. At this point my kids are probably beyond the water sprayground but love them when they were younger and I think it would be a nice addition to the park.
- Town swimming pool
- Use the basketball and tennis courts at the schools, we don't need them at NARA.
- I would love to have a public pool anywhere in Acton!
- Note: All the things I'm interested in are marked "Needed Within 2-5 years", though again they are not really a "Need" - more a "Want",

- these would be cool, though NARA is already awesome!
- A community pool.
- Would like horseshoe pits with a bench at each end. Do not want any paving such as for tennis or basketball courts. Keep NARA natural. Do not turn it into amusement park.
- Having bicycles ridden on the walkway presents a risk to walkers. Fast out of control bicyclist are an occasional problem
- Water Sprayground is an accident waiting to happen.
- Already have conservation trails
- I believe a town or neighborhood pool would be a huge hit. swimming lessons and more people would use the park. The pond has a bad reputation around town with regards to water quality.
- Yoga and ballet and dance classes and any other activity to get people outside being healthy is a plus.
- I think the existing "nature trails" in woods are fine.
- It would be nice to see some of the items mentioned with programs coordinated by the senior center.
- Look at Lincoln park in Lexington, MA It's beautiful Also, the town swimming pool in Lexington--beautiful.
- We like the peacefulness of NARA.....
- Bocce would be a great addition to NARA!
- A water sprayground would be amazing especially if it was close to the playground. I would love to see some of the other features added but a sprayground is the #1 choice.



Summer Concert



Winter Sports

- Bike rentals would be great if the Bruce freeman rail trail ever gets to the next stage.
- Fitness classes
- There already are great trails through the adjacent town Forest. I don't think new trails need to be added, maybe just more signage promoting existing trails.
- You must start opening the pond for ice skating. It's ridiculous that it's not open. I understand liability issues, but it's easy to measure the ice and clear off snow.
- Pickle Ball
- Focus on those old time things great parks are known for. We don't have to satisfy everything everyone wants. Just the basics. Leisure strolls with benches to relax under tall shade trees. Think of the great urban parks in New York and Chicago.
- A water sprayground and a nature trail -- such wonderful ideas. Bike rentals, once the Bruce Freeman is done, would be very welcome and a great addition. I think tennis and basketball would be nice, but there is basketball up at Robbins Mills and they are underutilized. We use the trails regularly behind Nara and they could easily be transferred into nature trails, I bet an Eagle Scout could use a project and that would be a good one.
- Not sure about the need for a nature trail, given the adjacent conservation trails (Town Forest/Wills Hole).
- More music events
- The water sprayground is a great idea!
- love the idea of a spray park!
- Nature Trail already exists at Will's Hole/Town Forest, across the street
- These are ALL great ideas. All will put NARA on the map, and bring more people to the park, which I imagine is your goal, our goal. Start with lights, parking, and facilities (the foundation to a good park) then add these activities as funding becomes available. Just like building a house, you first have to handle the utilities and infrastructure, then later you furnish it. Adding a Bocce Ball Court is great idea, but if done prematurely it won't get used.

If you did or currently have children attending NARA Summer Camp, can you please rate the following?

If you have a suggestion, please comment.

- Grandchildren have attended. And seemed to enjoy it.
- I have not enrolled my children in NARA summer camp because I'm not comfortable with having my children swim in the pond due to high bacteria count. Also, the counselors (from what I've heard) are predominantly teens. Concerned that they would be appropriately watching my children near a Body of water - safety concern.
- The recreation dept staff was excellent. The supervision of children by the teen level was a concern at times. Had a few situations that could have been better addressed/prevented if more mature staff were involved.
- Very unorganized! I would not recommend to anyone. Inexperienced and disengaged high school kids in charge of young children. Not sure how safe this is. Community Ed camp is much better.
- Our son loved NARA camp for 5 years.



Survey of Public Comments *If you did or currently have children attending NARA Summer Camp, can you please rate the following? If you have a suggestion, please comment. Continued*

- Cost/Value rating is meant to indicate pricing is favorable relative to other camps (and that it makes sense, given what's offered)
- My son loves Nara Camp. He has special needs and I could not be happier with the staff's ability to help and support him and make sure he has a great time.
- I only sent my daughter one year because I did not like the fact that there was not an indoor option when there is very wet weather or very very hot weather.
- My kids are at Nara Park for most of the summer. The hours and cost are better than most day camps. The staff is wonderful. My boys look forward to going every year. It is wonderful to see the same councilors year after year. We always miss the ones that don't return. My oldest son can not wait to become a councilor and run the camp himself!
- Third year my kids will be spending most of the Summer at NARA Camp and they love it.
- My kids enjoy NARA Camp. We like that it is an affordable option and the hours work well for working families. I love that they are outside all day and not in a classroom or in front of a screen.
- If we had children we would send them to NARA Camp -- sounds like a wonderful experience. For us day camp was an essential part of our childhood.
- It has been 3-4 years since my child attended the camp, but she was not happy with the camp, as she had more common sense than some of the counselors, and was keenly aware of it. She requested not to go back.
- gaga pit is awesome
- The counselors did not seem to pay much attention to the campers, and some of them seemed too young and bored. The swim lessons were average as well.
- My youngest daughter went to camp for a couple years for 1 week each time. For the most part things were fine but a few years back the young woman who was her camp councilor was snarky and rude whenever I asked her questions about the week. My daughter said out of all the councilors that week she was the only one that she didn't like. I should have reported her attitude.
- William loves the camp. It is his favorite but we are light skinned and have to watch our exposure!
- Having seen how lax the counselors are with the kids playing in the water, I have no intention of ever signing my child up for camp at NARA. Those counselors are bored and disinterested, and I've seen this over multiple summers I've been at the beach with my family.
- The summer my son went, they couldn't swim due to unsafe water frequently and there wasn't much to do. Also, no good shelter on stormy days.
- For what my child experienced the cost was fine. I found the quality of the counsellors to be below avg. we went elsewhere after one season.
- I observed the staff and the children, and did not feel that my child would be adequately supervised, so I did not enroll my child.
- The problem with the camp was it was too hot. No where to go for some AC. And sometimes the water is smelly.
- For post-care (currently 4-5:30PM), I would like to see the hours extended to 6PM (4PM-6PM)
- When my child attended camp, she complained that there were no indoor areas for her to go and when the pond was closed it was not a good experience for her. She only went one summer because of this.
- Better staffing, as the couple times my kids went the teens working as counselors were not very fun or enthusiastic. More variety of activities and better facility for camp. The facilities may be better now if the camp uses the upper pavilion.
- Online registration would be so much better if I could select my child, then click boxes for each week desired. As it is, I have to reenter all the information for every week they are registered. very time consuming.
- I think the cost of the camp is competitive, but the added field trips get pricey. You should contact the Maynard Boys and Girls Club to see how they keep costs down with their field trips.
- My kids aren't old enough.
- We will in the future, our kids are too young right now.
- Did not do summer camp for kids as of yet, but these are all areas that should be continually improved as the park becomes more mainstream.

If you use NARA Beach as a member or a daily drop-in, do you like the quality of services that you receive and what improvements do you think are needed in the future? Continued

- The beach area could use more shade areas
- We have our own pond for swimming, but we support fully all efforts to make this a good site for residents.
- Please comb all the geese poop off the beach at the beginning of each day. It is SO yucky when your small child is stepping in it or playing with it and there was SO much of it!
- Don't trust water quality
- Need more beach space and pond needs to be bigger.
- Food, ms jade and bathroom facilities can be improved.
- We never joined again after the first year
- The water quality really dropped off over the summer so we stopped going
- The beach could be cleaner. Dig down a little & you'll find trash.
- I did many years ago.
- The pond suffers from a general perception that it's polluted by geese, which impacts usage of the beach/pond.
- The pond appears dirty and is littered with garbage. As mentioned previously, I would NOT consider swimming in it. I also think that the fees are too expensive.
- The facilities and staff are great the water quality is the primary concern. Not sure how that can be changed.
- I don't go, but my friend couldn't afford the pass this year. Can the price come down?
- Love NARA beach. Great for young children.
- It should be more geared to Acton Residents. Not sure any really go and no one checks id's.
- It was when the kids were younger.
- Needed more bathroom hours as I would take them when I got home from work and the bathrooms were locked.
- I don't know what services you mean! Lifeguards seem great, very friendly, but I don't know about the candy sellers or anyone else.
- It would be nice to have more healthy options at the snack bar.
- More shade. Also it's very expensive to come as a family for a few hours, even as a resident. The per person charge means it costs as much to park at the ocean beach.
- Everything about the beach is great except the cleanliness of the

Survey of Public Comments

- water. My son complains of goose droppings in the water and has stopped using the beach because of it.
- Also, Acton residents should not be charged to sit on the beach, especially if they do not want to swim.
- Many residents are afraid of the water quality of the pond and it should be tested daily.
- Would like to see the bathrooms expanded, on the third there were long lines to use the bathrooms.
- Better recycling near the beach, one for trash and one for plastics, etc.
- We do not purchase memberships because of the likelihood of bacteria in water by a certain point in summer. We don't do drop-in because it is too expensive, especially considering resident fees are only \$2 less than non-residents.
- Need improved bathroom facilities. Toilets used to be backed up a lot, a few years ago. I haven't been there much the past couple of years to know if it's improved or not.
- Would be great if there were a way to keep people from feeding the ducks and geese. When they do, the birds leave droppings, no fun for anyone.
- stopped buying the pass because of lack of shade, location of playground, and the water quality. Long Lake in Littleton is a better option for us and is closer to our house too.
- Beach is good /OK for young kids. Not a sufficient environment for swimming lessons or swim teams. Stopped getting a pass when kids got to that age.



Survey of Public Comments *If you use NARA Beach as a member or a daily drop-in, do you like the quality of services that you receive and what improvements do you think are needed in the future? Continued*

- We used the beach when kids were young and learning to swim.
- It is only attractive as a swimming area for young kids. Please see my elaborated comment at the end.
- Sometimes there's just too much goose poop.
- Need more shade on the beach
- The water quality is usually not that great
- It's a beautiful beach. Water is excellent, clean, refreshing. Perfect.
- Wish the water was a much better quality.
- Would like to see cleaner restroom changing facilities.
- More shaded seating
- I like the fact that there is a life guard and that you can get something to eat or drink if you haven't packed your own cooler.
- Need better water quality and testing. I am afraid the testing is not frequent enough to catch elevated bacteria levels.
- We stopped getting a pass because only my child and I used the beach regularly, not my husband, which made the family pass a poor economic choice (and I was told I could not purchase a two person pass). After that, my child nearly drowned in front of a lifeguard, and I haven't been back to determine if safety improvements have been made since that incident.
- Services are fine. Water quality is not great. We need a pool for daily swimming (and we have done swim lessons at high school but that is not where we pay to enjoy hours of free swim -- it's nicer outside in summer.
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- Services are fine. Water quality is not great. We need a pool for daily swimming (and we have done swim lessons at high school but that is not where we pay to enjoy hours of free swim -- it's nicer outside in summer.
- I did not think that I would use it enough (when my child was young) to justify the cost of the membership.
- Haven't used it in the past 5 years. Would have liked to have more shaded areas with pavilions or structures.
- The beach area is barely used by residents. Non-resident fees ought to be much steeper to return this asset to the residents. Otherwise, I would not support using town money for ANY improvements to the beach/playground area.
- The few times we use the beach per year, the services have been great.



Watermelon feast

If you use NARA Beach as a member or a daily drop-in, do you like the quality of services that you receive and what improvements do you think are needed in the future? Continued

Survey of Public Comments

- I think that the day pass is expensive for what it is. If you can't discount the whole day maybe certain hours that are cheaper.
- More umbrella chairs
- No one monitors the beach after hours. I've seen many people go swimming & leave debris on the beach but do not clean up after themselves.
- Water quality is the main concern, as we do not use the beach/pond after July. Improving water quality would be very beneficial.
- More umbrellas!!
- Foot hit rock at bottom -- no response -- somebody else will too. Pond is unusable late summer.
- It seems overall quality of service went down over the years, especially life guarding. What bugs the most is that there are still a lot of people sneak up on the beach; as well as life guards always stop their work day much earlier than they suppose to. This is really bad. It would be also good to see more security presence after 4 PM.

- I like the people, they seem nice. It just needs to be cleaned up more. I would also love to see a bunch of shovels, trucks, pails etc in a big bin, that would be a huge boon.
- Better snack bar.
- You should make the NARA beach pass laminated and clip-able to a key ring. I don't even use it because its stuck in my wallet somewhere.
- Beach cleanup of goose droppings, and depth/quality of sand was our only complaint over years of going there multiple times a week
- NARA beach is great! Certainly more activities surrounding the beach during a weekend visit would be great (all the ideas you mentioned above).

What did you like or dislike about Acton's July 4th Celebration? Any suggestions?

- Again, we only attend the fireworks, as we live at the end of "Quarry" (misnamed by David Abbt) Rd.
- You need to put in a sidewalk on Route 27 (main street) so that people can safely walk from great road up to Nara
- It gets a bit crowded, and the trample walk from the back parking lots can be tricky for older folks. Your lighting is excellent. It's just that there are lots of people, and then the huge wait to exit the lots is not fun.
- More food vendors needed.
- Needs more handicapped parking on high attendance days.
- Need a vendor to sell hot dogs!
- I wish there were some healthy options like gluten free burgers or wraps and fruit.
- 2015's 4th Celebration was on the 3rd, when the 4th was a Saturday. Missed it this year because of this.
- Need more parking.
- Usually out of town visiting family during July 4th weekend, so typically do not attend the Acton events.



Summer concert at twilight

Survey of Public Comments *What did you like or dislike about Acton's July 4th Celebration? Any suggestions?*

- The survey should include not applicable. Fireworks overall done exceptionally well!
- The walking path lights are great! Parking is not likely an item that can change when facing the once a year crowd.
- Healthy food choices would be nice. Oh--and could you get rid of the mosquitoes and make sure it doesn't rain? Thanks.
- The only food available is hamburgers and hot dogs. I would really like to have some other options. Why do we need to have 3 different places to buy hamburgers, couldn't at least one offer different kinds of food?
- Nice for families with kids.
- Issue is getting out of the parking lot near Nagog Park. It takes > 1 hour after the concert
- I live so close to the fireworks that I can see them from my yard very well! For us, the fireworks could be a little higher in the sky. I hope that we could have some even better ones in years to come. If there is a fund to help buy great ones, make that obvious in the town paper or signs.
- Please extend family fun time for young children who aren't interested in the concert.
- It is great to have a First Aid tent and police and staff patrolling to keep the event family-focused. Thank you
- The information on the shuttle was non-existent. With a bunch of little kids in tow, we couldn't wait long so had to haul them through the woods.
- Tough event with little kids. I can see it being better in a few years
- The pushing and shoving at the end of the night for the shuttle bus service needs to be addressed. Especially with so many young children in attendance. May want to consider limiting the size of the strollers people take on the shuttle bus - this is typically the biggest problem as they take up too much room.
- Exiting parking after celebration could use considerable logistical improvement. Took much longer to exit than the previous years.
- My husband and I do not attend concerts or plays only because I am deaf, otherwise we would.
- We are also vegetarian so we do not eat most of the food offerings at 4th of July.
- We always love the 4th a Nara! Would enjoy Boston Pops or Big Band music some years, but realize this may not appeal to the young families you are seeking to attract.
- Could use more parking areas, especially for an event this large, but the shuttle service is convenient and makes up for the lack of parking
- Exiting after the fireworks along Nagog Park is a real problem, it should be 2 lanes going out or there should be traffic control.
- Lack of parking is awful. Why build a town park with very little parking or access??? We are a family of 6 and it is just too difficult to get to fireworks at different times and meet up. Also very difficult to get back to our car. You can't just decide to go at last minute. It is really difficult and a hassle for a small town to watch our local fireworks. Much better at the High School years ago! Anyone in town could pop in and go back then. Too difficult now.
- Eaglemania was great and would like to see them back in the future. You could have them as a paid event. I wish the fireworks were a bit longer, however they were great!
- I have not attended and likely will not attend because I have heard so many negative comments about the traffic.
- Need both more parking and the rail-trail completed yesterday!
- The incredible amount of people attending this event every year demands that there be more water and food vendors. The lines are always far too long and the selections not varied enough.
- We don't go early in the afternoon anymore, the day has become too long & the park, too crowded.
- Band could be better and improved sound might help.
- The exit procedure was uncoordinated, resulting in two hours to leave park.
- We have stayed away due to crowds. We usually park at the office parks and go in through the wooded trail to watch the fireworks only.
- We've never braved the crowds. Have only heard that trying to get out of there is a nightmare. We also have young children though so that was always a consideration as it makes an already late night even later.

- Parking is a problem at NARA, and walking through the woods to parking lots is not safe for people with vision / physical handicaps. Leaving the parking area to get back home takes too long.
- We live close enough that we walk to Nara for the fireworks.
- More food offerings and afternoon activities for the whole family
- Excellent take and program
- Walking through the lighted woods is enchanted but then trying to get out of the parking area is a nightmare. Traffic congestion in the entire area around NARA after the event is enough to prevent us from going at all.
- Parking or commuting is tough. Even the busses get stuck in the traffic. Would be nice to have bus shuttles that are separate from private traffic.
- We enjoy the fireworks, but live close enough that we don't need the parking or buses. But speaking as an abutter, I appreciate the efficiency of the police guided busing, and the safety it provides for everyone including those of us who live on the street the buses utilize.
- Need hot dog vendor - Bring back Kayem!
- Amazing event! I would suggest adding more healthy food options. Also, the food is too different from year to year. It's hard to plan when you don't know what the offerings will be.
- How about Clover Food or other healthy food trucks? Or maybe Bamboo Chinese or Monsoon Indian restaurant would like to set up booths?
- The fairyland walk on the lit path in the woods is magical! It's a long walk to carry both chairs and a picnic dinner. That's why more food options would be helpful. Thank you!!
- We attended once put it took way too long to leave afterwards so we don't go more.
- I don't like parking off site but I think the town does a good job busing everyone. It is only once a year for the 4th of July.
- I love the hike through the forest but would prefer not to listen to generators....install ac for lights!
- Need someone in lot directing traffic. People just walk in front and in back of cars without looking...kids running through, etc.
- More parking enforcement is needed in neighborhoods nearby. More traffic direction after fireworks.
- The parking and bus service were so crazy getting out of the park after the fireworks we don't attend anymore. With a small child, a 3 hour wait to get home that late is just unacceptable.
- Shuttle service makes it manageable, otherwise I would not attend unless I got there very early
- Parking off site could be improved if you had more shuttle buses. If you don't get to the of site parking super early, you miss the fireworks because the bus lines are huge.
- Parking exiting is not great with shuttle bus routing. We learned to park at the shopping plaza after the first year when we got to our car at 11 pm and then waited another 2 hours to exit (we were behind a shuttle stop).
- It was crowded and inconvenient and loud so stopped attending.
- Disliked the parking options but don't want to spend a lot of money building lots for one event.
- Arriving is fun. Leaving is a nightmare even with the bus service. Not sure what you can do.
- The parking is the biggest problem. Walking through the woods is quicker than waiting for the shuttle bus service (but it is great that there is a shuttle bus service.) The walk through the woods could be a safety hazard, however.
- Leaving the venue through the forest or even waiting on line for buses is crazy.
- There's no covered standing/sitting areas to provide coverage from rain. Kids get tired. People trample over each other through the forest.
- I am so so sad that you are not holding the fireworks on the 4th this year.
- Move the fireworks celebration to a more easily accessible part of town. The high school? NARA is horrible. Takes HOURS to get home.
- Lots of mosquitoes and heard it takes a long time to get out of parking lot. That's why we've never gone.
- Like the fireworks, it is much easier to get to than Boston, we don't come for anything else.
- We don't come for anything else

Survey of Public Comments *What did you like or dislike about Acton's July 4th Celebration? Any suggestions?*



- I did not like the afternoon events as there is not enough shade at Nara on a hot day.
- The parking is too far, but the biggest issue is leaving the parking lots at Nagog. There's little traffic control, especially for foot traffic blocking the lot exits, and the flow out of the lots is much too slow.
- We stopped going because it's so awful getting out of the parking lot at the end of the night!
- The parking lot for the free shuttle service is a real pain to get out of at the end of the night. WE didn't move from our spot for over an hour.



- Great venue for 4th of July. The only problem we had...which was a few years ago...the walk from the shuttle bus to NARA was very buggy. Not sure if anything can be done about that...just use bug spray...but that would be the only complaint.
- There are not enough family fun activities for the kids so the lines get very long. My daughter had to wait over 30 min to go in a bounce house.
- The lines for the shuttle buses are way too long.
- Overall a nice town event that we really like
- We have attended the firework display once and have not done it since due to the difficulty of getting out of Nara.
- Would like to lights minimal during fireworks.
- Getting out at the conclusion of the fireworks has deterred my family from attending this event
- The only people I know that attend this event, park somewhere and watch from their car because the traffic is so bad.
- Like I said parking is a pain.
- Parking is tough. There are just too many people. It took us one hour to get out of the spot we were in behind Nagog Park and so we never went back.
- It's a great day/evening. I can walk there, so I don't count for parking.
- Would love to see more food offerings!!!
- We usually just show up for the fireworks. Do now not attend because of parking/traffic. Do not like waiting for shuttle, which is also uncomfortable.
- I wish you would specify a better time frame for the fireworks. "At dusk" is tough to plan for.
- We did not like leaving the fireworks event by walking through the woods to the office complex parking lots. It was way too many people leaving all at once and felt unsafe. I'm not sure what alternatives there are, though.
- Not enough transportation options. Getting to parking, and getting a car out of parking takes hours.
- July 4th celebration is probably the biggest event at NARA I've seen. Parking and departing is the tricky park, and the mosquitoes are awful. Improving those two aspects is my only suggestion, everything else is fantastic!
- I wish you would specify a better time frame for the fireworks. "At dusk" is tough to plan for.
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Please provide additional input if not addressed in prior questions.

- A community pool would be a huge plus for the town. The pond is beautiful but water quality is a serious issue.
- Parking always a problem at most events
- Let food trucks in. Daily. Would be a nice place to have lunch. daily
- Clean the dam trail and water edge on the back side of the pond. Service the benches .. REPAIR
- Add more benches everywhere
- Install real bathrooms around the park
- Add outdoor music to snack bar for atmosphere
- We would like to see more walking trails and covered picnic space near the snack shop. Keep up with making all areas wheelchair accessible.
- Better snacks might make NARA a destination for a lot of people (hey, let's go there for lunch!).
- I also liked the name better when it stood for North Action... I do not like the rename to a person's name. This is the people's park!!!!
- I think we need multilingual signage. There are park users who do not speak English and I've seen some violations. Like changing babies on picnic tables, ew..
- I am sensing that NARA has become an attraction for Lowell residents on weekends and late afternoons to the extent that residents should be charged a parking fee in the summers. I love the diversity, and Acton is a diverse town. We can't easily support urban populations (big numbers of visitors). A parking fee could help with staff and facilities.
- Please double check the signage in the upper lot. The sign saying authorized vehicles only is covered up,
- Also, staff should walk the path hourly or every two hours - especially in the summer - to monitor for trash and smokers - especially on weekends.
- Keep NARA a small town park for use by tax paying residents. Do not add more amenities and build it up. Already disproportionately used by out of towners. All non residents during summer weekends. Why? Is this the goal? Unclear if town is purposely trying to attract out of towners to use beach and

Survey of Public Comments

facilities vs. making NARA more appealing to residents. Try to figure out why Acton residents do not go to NARA. What keeps them away? Perhaps beach should be open to residents only as in other towns. Or, charge for out of town parking stickers as in other towns. Also.. Need more transparency about water quality. Most folks are wary about swimming in pond due to past water quality issues. Need to publicize if these have been resolved. If not, need to focus on cleaning the pond to attract Acton swimmers.

- It is very hard to spend time at NARA in the summer due to lack of shade. We tend to come more often in the spring and fall when it is cooler.
- What we would like to see at NARA.
- When the Bruce Freeman Trail is built close to NARA, please include some sort of connection to it. THANKS!
- I would never allow my family to swim in the disgusting pond! Pools are needed at NARA with an affordable membership. Many people can't afford Quail Ridge, Thoreau, etc.
- Enjoy the recent summer concert series held each year @ NARA Park. Suggest continued support for these concerts. Also suggest NARA Park supply seating (folding chairs) during all concerts, as sometime I come directly from work and do not have time to pick up a folding chair to bring with me to sit and listen.
- I really like the original structures at the park. Their clean, contemporary lines and materials are strong, striking accents to the park. The newer buildings are more traditional and banal to me, except for the pavilion, which has a simpler effect. I hope that future architecture will be more in line with the original buildings. Even if the town pays more for hiring (or rehiring the original) architect, the overall appearance of the Park is more interesting and inspirational with the cleaner, simpler, but striking look of the original bath house and amphitheater. High end materials such as the copper (?) used on the showers create visual interest and add to the overall heft of the park.
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Survey of Public Comments *Please provide additional input if not addressed in prior questions.*

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- I also like the sculpture that was recently installed. More of these would be welcome, showing Acton as a strong supporter of the arts.
- NARA Park is a gem. There appears to be many out f town residents that use the park, especially on Sundays. There should be a park fee for out of town residents to use the non-swimming park facilities. This would help reduce the burden on the town of maintaining the facilities.
- I would also like to see enhancements to the outdoor skating rink: bigger rink/multiple rinks, music, refreshments
- Overall, I use NARA for it's playground, walking trail, and pavilions. I think that an effort needs to be made to make the pond more swimmable (i.e. find a way to control bacteria count). I don't know if this is even possible, but I would consider visiting the beach/pond if improvements were made. I think that there needs to be more shade - especially on the playground. Would love to see bike rentals!
- We live a distance from NARA, so we don't use many of the amenities. In order to draw us to NARA more often, we'd like items that can only be found at NARA. A set of bocce courts would be awesome!
- I wish that there were bike trails and trails that extend beyond the loop.
- Nara Park is a great town asset with lots of potential. Shade would be great especially for the playground. I would also like to see some more emphasis on encouraging town use and/or making it a revenue stream for out of towners. It seems that it is regularly over run by out of towners especially on the weekends...perhaps a fee based access for non-residents could be implemented.
- Blues music: would attend.
- A BIG issue for me is the the pedestrian walk connecting the front parking lot to the back has been used heavily this summer by unauthorized vehicles. This has increased with the rental use of the pavilions. people shuttle their food/equipment to and from using their cars and going at speeds higher than should be allowed. The walkways are very active with kids, elderly and strollers. Please enforce.
- Have some outdoor community ed classes to encourage use of NARA during all seasons.
- I totally love the water at the pond!! Mainly I want there to be a place where there is peace in order to swim and float past the beautiful scenery without having to see and hear big blo-guns, fights between kids, swearing and screaming.
- I think it would be good to have more tables and chairs on the deck area, so swimmers can come out and actually buy lunch(not just snacks) and sit with friends to eat. Umbrellas for these tables too. Occasionally, have a day just for "seniors" and "kids" and "moms and babies" "dads and kids", etc.
- I also think that relatives of members should be allowed in WITH their relative, for free. I have 4 grandchildren who come seldom, but I can't always pay for that.
- Above, it tells me that I haven't completed certain questions, but I have!! OK???
- In general, NARA park is great.
- We watched NARA go from a gravel pit to a wonderful town resource. Thank you and congratulations for all of the effort that goes into it. We appreciate that you are always looking for new ways to serve the town, and consistently trying to improve things.
- Parking, parking, parking, parking, parking, parking, parking!!!!!!
- Better "access" to parking for events.
- Test water quality, improve sandy beach.
- Free beach access for Acton residents.
- Move fireworks back to the High School.

Please provide additional input if not addressed in prior questions.

- Add Shuffleboard, bocce, horseshoes, basketball (3 seasons)
- Add Kayaks and paddle boats (3 seasons)
- NO NO NO turf fields!!!! Grass is great!!!!
- Thank you for the hard work of maintaining/running NARA. It is a beautiful place to walk, picnic and go to concerts. Any of the above additions would be wonderful!
- This may be unrelated but I would love to see some sort of recreation building / town swimming pool on the plan for Acton. We moved here a few years ago from Colorado where every town in the Denver metro area had a rec building w/ pool for residents. The high school is not conducive for family swim and my feeling is that with our high property taxes surely some sort of indoor town pool (similar to Sudbury) could be an option.
- Thank you for providing this forum. It suggests that the long term strategic planning will be approached thoughtfully.
- There should be more trees.
- Dogs regularly go in water and yet there is a high charge to swim for humans.
- It would be great if the amphitheater were open for local acts. So many good bands in town. So many good acapella groups at the high school. Our kids need a place to perform and watch their friends.
- Like to continue to see soccer (referred to as upper sports fields.)
- Pricing on pavilion rentals is very high, and I've found the long lead time for booking and confusing on-line/in-person process to be problematic
- I am impressed with NARA, how much it has improved, both in functionality and looks, since it was installed. I would say that Acton could use an indoor recreation area, with pool, gym facilities, exercise classes.
- Acton. The life-guarded beach is great for parents with small kids - but it really falls short for adults and teens.
- It would be disappointing if more town \$\$ were spent on turf or lights when what the town really lacks is a more natural feeling swimming area.
- Also, there is something I did not indicate in an earlier question, about possible tennis courts at NARA. When I used to play tennis, there did not seem to be enough courts around Acton.

Survey of Public Comments

- Nara Park? Is this in Acton?
- These questions are difficult to answer because we use the park several times a week (walking path, beach, Stroller Strides, playground, soccer) during the warm months (April - October) but only come 1-2 times in the winter to sled. It would have been a better survey to ask people about park use at various times of the year.
- I had a beach pass once when my kids were small. There is no shade. The playground equipment gets too hot.
- Dog walkers should be welcomed, but they should clean up after their pets -- in the 10+ years I have been going to NARA, this has not happened. It is one of the reasons I use the park less and less. Bike riders on the walking trails are also a hindrance.
- The number one thing that this family would like to see would be improvements to the pond itself....
- Swimming would be far more attractive for adults and teenagers, if the pond were bigger/deeper or perhaps just had some deep rocky areas on the far-side, so that experienced swimmers could dive, rope-swing, and jump from - It is interesting to note that most local teenagers and adults will drive far from Acton to get to ponds, rivers, and quarries... even though NARA is right in Acton. The life-guarded beach is great for parents with small kids - but it really falls short for adults and teens.
- It would be disappointing if more town \$\$ were spent on turf or lights when what the town really lacks is a more natural feeling swimming area.



Theater performance by NARA Campers

Survey of Public Comments *Please provide additional input if not addressed in prior questions.*

- Our family uses Nara quite a bit. Our kids play soccer and have lacrosse practice at Nara. We go fishing at Nara. We go to Nara to walk, run and ride bikes. My kids attend summer camp and we rarely miss the town fireworks. I have enjoyed watching Nara grow and seeing the enhancements that are added every year. I always see maintenance crew around working. They do a fantastic job. The camp councilors and life guards at Nara are amazing and my children love them.
- Overall, I think the next big things to focus on at Nara are lighting for the upper field and walkways and additional restrooms/bathhouse.
- A designated area for skate boards or rip sticks would be great!
- We really enjoy all the summer events - concerts, movies, beach, road races. NARA is a wonderful asset to Acton and we love it!!!
- We used much more when kids were younger.
- Never liked the fact the residents had to pay to swim.
- I do not enjoy the people that come that are DEFINITELY NOT Acton residents. They are basically kids who have kids. they are loud, speak in their native language, fool around, wear clothes in the water. they hang out there to BBQ & wait until life guards leave to use the beach for free. They are loud and partake in wild behaviors that I do not want my children to see or be a part of. They horse play in the water & make it uncomfortable to be there. I know it is a public place, & they have a right to come, but it looks to me that they are NOT residents. They typically come on the weekends and in the evening. as a result I feel uncomfortable bringing my children on the weekends. so we stay away and I am a pass holder. I did notice last year you tried to enforce a large group gathering perment. I do not know how that went or if it was enforced. I am considering hosting a family event and renting the pavilion but i am hesitant to do so because I do not want to deal with the nonsense
- Please keep NARA natural. We do not want excessive development just to add amusing activities. It should be a semi-wild environment with homes for birds and animals and a place for people to gain respite from over-development of our community. We love the Rain Garden and other plantings, would appreciate even more trees and shrubbery. The growth we want to see is green.
- And where else in Acton can one see the night sky? Perhaps offer more night activities. We respect that the Park closes at dusk but it would be nice to be able to go in legally to view the stars. We would be willing to pay for this as a Recreation offering.
- We are upset over having bicycles on the perimeter path as part of the Rail Trail. Can't we please keep this area for walking? Very stressful trying to stroll with bikes whizzing by!
- Also, our taxes pay for it and as it gets busier in future we want Acton residents to have priority in being able to park at the Park.
- Thanks for asking for our input!
- Really disappointed that the Fourth of July celebration will be on July 3rd. Does not make sense. Was really looking forward to attending the 4th of July festivities, but now can't because they're on the 3rd.
- A lot of seniors use the walkway for daily walks. They are not involved in the family events or the swimming, but still appreciate the area. Keeping the walks clear in the winter would be difficult, but much appreciated.
- The park may get a lot of new (and some out of town) traffic due to new rail trail. I don't know if this is good or bad, but it probably should be planned for. Some suggestions:
 - Bike racks
 - Beefed up snack store with lots of seating (and advertising along the trail)
 - Extra parking for trail users
 - Have more movie nights - maybe some adult classic or cult movies along with newer children's movies.
 - Should have had a NARA Camp option on how many time we use the property. We are there daily in the summer and then its monthly rest of the year. Also there was no question on if we use the property for special events; Scouts, Winter Carnival, Rugby, etc.
 - The playground needs trees.
 - Outdoor pool would be excellent addition to the park. Outdoor lighted basketball court would also be wonderful. Survey was hard to fill out because use frequency is determined by season for different activities.

- The park has taken on a presence of out of town users in the afternoon and evening as well as the weekends. I have spoken to many of the dog walkers and they to are also from out of town. This is a very unique location that offers an area to bring the town together in one place. Acton for years has kept to it's respective neighborhoods. Please spend time with your data and be sure to get as many residents input as possible. The youth of the town should have an outdoor place that is safe and clean to allow them to learn and enjoy the outdoors. Good luck and thank you for your effort.
- I wish we could use the beach in the summer but it is too sunny with not enough shade and the water just doesn't seem clean.
- In the past few years when I have gone to NARA after 6pm, it seems like it is open to non-residents. I am not happy about this
- We really enjoy all the summer events - concerts, movies, beach, road races. NARA is a wonderful asset to Acton and we love it!!!
- We used much more when kids were younger.
- Never liked the fact the residents had to pay to swim.



Summer Concert

Survey Public Comments

- I do not enjoy the people that come that are DEFINITELY NOT Acton residents. They are basically kids who have kids. they are loud, speak in their native language, fool around, wear clothes in the water. they hang out there to BBQ & wait until life guards leave to use the beach for free. They are loud and partake in wild behaviors that I do not want my children to see or be a part of. They horse play in the water & make it uncomfortable to be there. I know it is a public place,& they have a right to come, but it looks to me that they are NOT residents. They typically come on the weekends and in the evening. as a result I feel uncomfortable bringing my children on the weekends. so we stay away and I am a pass holder. I did notice last year you tried to enforce a large group gathering permianted. I do not know how that went or if it was enforced. I am considering hosting a family event and renting the pavilion but i am hesitant to do so because I do not want to deal with the nonsense
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Survey Public Comments

Please provide additional input if not addressed in prior questions. Continued

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- Outdoor pool would be excellent addition to the park. Outdoor lighted basketball court would also be wonderful. Survey was hard to fill out because use frequency is determined by season for different activities.
- Really disappointed that the Fourth of July celebration will be on July 3rd. Does not make sense. Was really looking forward to attending the 4th of July festivities, but now can't because they're on the 3rd.
- A lot of seniors use the walkway for daily walks. They are not involved in the family events or the swimming, but still appreciate the area. Keeping the walks clear in the winter would be difficult, but much appreciated.
- It is a nice pond, and the summer membership price is very reasonable. It would be nice if more of the shade awnings were added--they are taken early. And the bathrooms really need to be improved. The gardens are beautiful and the snack shack is nice, but they tend to run out of food after the campers eat lunch. My kids like the playground as well, but it could use some more shade as well.
- While concerts at the amphitheater are fun community events, there is quite a lot of noise that travels to the surrounding neighborhoods, which becomes disruptive when concerts have a late end time. I would like to see the 10 pm concert end times eliminated or reduced as much as possible as they are very disruptive, especially to the many families with small children living in the area (and to the adults in the area too!).
- It would be nice to have more shade trees and garden style plantings with some additional seating.
- Prefer to keep focus on non-commercial activities and amenities.
- Organized camp OK.
- Would not like to see further development of sports stadium atmosphere.
- Would not like to see additional courts for tennis and basketball etc put in.
- Like the more natural ambience it has now.
- Don't spoil what is working and in harmony with the town's character.
- I like the beach but we are busy in the summer and to get a whole season pass is not worth the money but we never use the beach

at all because I would have to pay \$25 for my family to go, for that money I might as well go to the ocean! I wish there was a more affordable option so we could. Use the beach. Because of the cost we don't go at all, and don't use the trails or playground either because my kids would ultimately want to use the beach and I can't pay that amount.

- Lighting is only needed if you extend park hours every day.
- Swimming at NARA pond was a big mistake. Acton needs an outdoor town pool! The neighborhood pools are too exclusive -- many many families are in search of an affordable swim club & swim team option for kids.
- AS NEARBY RESIDENTS, WE FEEL THAT THE MUSIC IS TOO LOUD AND TOO FREQUENT DISTURBING THE SERENE NATURE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.
- ALSO, WE WOULD SPEND MORE TIME AT NARA SWIMMING WITH OUR FAMILY IF IT WAS LESS CROWDED ON WEEKENDS WITH OUT OF TOWN PEOPLE. RECOMMEND REDUCE FEES FOR ACTON RESIDENTS, ESPECIALLY OVER 65 WHICH IS FREE AS DOES MASSACUSETTS (DCR) STATE PARKS AND INCREASE FEES FOR OUT OF TOWN PEOPLE.



Please provide additional input if not addressed in prior questions. Continued

- Very nice additions in recent years. When park is rented out for an event i.e. Kids PMC ride, it would be good to put up signage for the regulars that the walking trail will be closed that day in advance of the event.
- look forward to the continued expansion on NARA.
- I feel lack of parking in the number 1 concern. Nara Park should not duplicate things available else where in Acton such as tennis courts.
- We really enjoy NARA park and are thankful for how well taken care of this park is. A pool or spray park would be absolutely amazing!
- We love Nara Park. Even in the winter.
- Spray fields for Mosquitos.
- Provide a rec room for ping pong, air hockey.
- instead of sideways to the sun as called for by prevailing standards. Turn the volleyball courts sideways, make them actually usable instead of the eye-burning torture grounds they are now.

Survey Public Comments

- The playground equipment is in drastic need of updating. It is the one playground in town that we do not visit. There is no shade, only 2 swings and outdated structures. Would hope that it is the first item on the list to get updates. Can Boxborough residents be treated as Acton residents in terms of beach memberships, etc.? Please. I have signed up, and paid for, many trips that were cancelled, but did not receive my check back for a few weeks. I would prefer to pay by check, but have the check held, and if the event was cancelled then the check would be returned or destroyed. Only cash the check if the event is going to go. Only cash the check if the event is going to go.
- Seems like there are a lot more non-residents that use the beach than residents. It think it should cost more for non-residents.
- We have liked the various culture days (Indian, Chinese.)



July 4th



Essence of India

Survey Public Comments

Please provide additional input if not addressed in prior questions. Continued

- We have been using NARA quite a bit more recently because we now take our grandchildren there and are very pleased with everything.
- Volleyball courts are out of code. They are turned into the sun In past years you did more kids shows, such as puppet shows and other performances. I would love to see that. Also would like you to add movie nights on a big screen in the amphitheater.
- I prefer music from the last 20 years so I would love more of those offerings.
- Enjoy seeing dogs use park as long as picked up after.
- Plowing in winter months to allow for walking year round?
- I was an Acton resident until 2 years ago and I am still in a neighboring town, so I walk the trails and paths regularly. I work for the Chamber of Commerce and we feel this is a tremendous resource for the community at large. The more variety you can provide the better. The camps and beach are a wonderful resource for many people. Keep up the great work. It is a terrific site and I love the new pavilion.



A day at NARA Beach



VI: APPENDIX

1. **2001 COMMITTEE RECREATION TIMELINE**
2001 Committee Timeline of Short History in Acton mgh.pdf
2. **BEA PERKINS**
NARA RECREATION COMMISSION HISTORY
Recreation Commission History 1957-1991, Bea Perkins Rec CommissionHistory.pdf
3. **BILL MULLIN**
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
MEETING MEMO
Memo from Bill Mullin March 14 1996 talking points to League of Women Voters Meeting.pdf
4. **BILL MULLIN**
NARA COMMITTEE:
OUTLINE FOR 1996 TOWN MEETING
Memo from Bill Mullin March 30 Outline for Presentation for Town Meeting.pdf
5. **BOARD OF APPEALS HEARING, 1991**
Board of Appeals Hearing 1991.pdf

6. CONTRACT OF POND EXCAVATION

Contract Documents: Excavation of a Recreation Pond and Related Site Grading, Quarry Road, North Acton, Contract Number: 3/29/96-593 Prepared by Town of Acton Engineering Department, February 1996

- *Contract Excavation of Pond Con Num 32996-593.pdf*

7. MASS RELEAF FUNDING

- *mass releaf fund 6152000.pdf*
- *trees for nara.pdf*

8. 2001 COMMITTEE RECREATION TIMELINE

- *2001 Committee Timeline of Short History*

9. MEMO RE: NARA PARK FROM TOM TIDMAN TO BOS - STATUS OF GRAND OPENING SEPTEMBER 10, 1999

- *Memo to BOS from TT and NM NARA Status 9 10 1999.pdf*
- *NARA Status Interdepartmental Memo to BOS Sep 10 1999.pdf*

10. MIRACLE FIELD ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

NARA Park & Miracle Field Accessibility, Assessments Performed 4/2014, Open Space and Recreation Plan 2014 - Section 12-G14

- *Appendix G-14 NARA and Miracle Field Accessibility Assessments.pdf*
- *Section 12-G14 NARA and Miracle Field Accessibility Assessments.pdf*

11. PINE-SWALLOW REPORT

Environmental Investigation, Proposed North Acton Recreation Area and Pond, Prepared for Town of Acton Recreation Commission, Prepared by Pine & Swallow Associates, Inc., Environmental Scientists, Engineers and Designers, 867 Boston Road, Groton, MA 01450, 508-448-9511, June 8, 1989

- *Pine-Swallow Report.pdf*

12. TOWN MEETING ARTICLES

- *All NARA TM Articles.pdf*
- *Town Meeting Articles.pdf*

13. WHITE PAGES

- *White Pages.pdf* by William Mullin

14. U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) SWIMMING GUIDELINES

- *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency epa Swimming Guidelines.pdf*

15. FROM THE FILES BRUCE STAMSKI OF STAMSKI & MCNARY, INC.

- *Detail of Proposed Pond Shallow Area.pdf*
- *Letter from Bruce Stamski.pdf*
- *N.Acton Rec Area Broucher.pdf*
- *N.Acton Rec Area_Analysis of Options for Operations.pdf*
- *N.Acton Rec Area_Estimate of Cost.pdf*
- *N.Acton Rec Area_Locus Plan.pdf*
- *Nara Bid Opening.pdf*
- *Nara Grading Plan 1.pdf*
- *Nara Grading Plan 2.pdf*
- *Nara Grading Plan 3.pdf*
- *Nara News Paper Clipping.pdf*
- *Nara Park Plan_Color.pdf*
- *Nara Planting Plan.pdf*

Tom Tidman, Director of Natural Resources, reflects after the fabulous celebration of the town's annual July 4th Celebration with over 12,000 in attendance.



Town of Acton Recreation Department
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