

STAFFORD RECREATION COMMISSION

Mr. Bill Morrison, First Selectman, Stafford

January 12, 2025

Re: Major Improvement Priorities

Dear Mr. Morrison,

The Recreation Commission historically has assembled a set of priorities for major maintenance or general improvements for town expenditure future planning and to support grant applications. The Commission has updated our list of major improvement projects in the table below. The intent is to facilitate discussion for future planning for Board of Finance, Grants & Community Development office, Public Works department and Board of Selectmen. The most costly items are listed in relative priority order. The Commission cannot overstate the need to develop a permanent Recreation Department / Director. The Commission recommends expansion of the Summer Recreation program with enhanced programming and swimming lessons.

	Description of Major Improvement	Estimated Cost / Other thoughts
1	Establish and staff a formal Recreation Department staffed with a Recreation Director . The position would deliver recreation program offerings, manage revenue streams and related grant applications, communicate with the public, establish a strategy for recreation, and partner with existing activities to deliver to a wide audience of Stafford residents. This should dovetail with repurposing Staffordville school as a Recreation Center / Community Center / Senior Center.	Merge duties with Community/Senior Center director. Coordinate recreation programming for youth & adult activities. Engage outside instructors for activities. Manage all participant administration including registration, volunteer / coach recruitment, risk management, etc. Take on responsibilities to apply for grants focused on recreation activities, working in conjunction with the town Grants specialist. Advertise and communicate via electronic means and brochureware.
2	Build a new multi-use field used for general youth & HS sports competitions & practice space. An artificial turf at SHS can substantially alleviate bottlenecks elsewhere by enhancing the availability of a surface. Any action to implement an artificial turf should be accompanied by a track widening and resurfacing that is wider than the current footprint. OR New grass surface with irrigation is top priority. Lights on the new surface is also a high priority. Assume 4 acres minimum for a surface 100x150 yards & parking.	Considerations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop existing 5+ acres at Kealy Field Install Artificial turf costs at SHS ~\$1.8M (2023 estimate) either on varsity soccer field with lights or on football field (lights existing) but widen the surface & track Other plots of land in town have been ruled out, each for their own reasons.
3	Enhance usability of the Legion Ice rink: Leverage Parks staff to enhance and maintain the existing Legion rink to its maximum usefulness. Consider hockey boards even if not a full-sized rink configuration. (Parks preparation work in 2024 was great!)	Cost of new hockey boards: \$75,000 ... money would need to come from private funding and/or fund raising. Contacts Tom Topping, Steve Munn.
4	Rebuild Hyde Park Skatepark . Cost estimates obtained. A committee of interested citizens have shown interest. A new skatepark built with concrete structure is likely the most durable and best value. Private donations can be sought. Any new surface at Hyde Park should include outdoor Pickleball as well. Need to consider Olympic Field as an alternate location, but that requires a secondary location for youth football weekend games. An artificial turf as SHS could satisfy this requirement.	Concerns about policing Hyde Park so project should dovetail with security camera project. Enhance the west side gate to allow authorized vehicles to navigate along the fence adjacent to the river for better police and emergency vehicle accessibility. One new skatepark quote with concrete pad and structure estimated at \$150K, from 2022. Matt Martel is POC.
5	Security cameras at recreation facilities that don't have them. NOTE: ARPA funding is no longer available as of 12/31/2024	Kealy Field, Hyde Park, Olympic Field, Staffordville Lake. Expanded police surveillance must be included with this camera deployment; Cost estimate \$165K for a 27-camera solution (Bruce Davis, 9/2022 ARPA notes)
6	Lighting for parking at Kealy field adjacent to batting cage and in Route 19 parking lot. Lighting upgrades to replace old technology lights with new energy efficient lighting is a large cost saving on electricity alone.	Similar lighting was installed in 2022 at the Kealy parking lot at Hydeville Road \$10-15K; Energy efficient lighting for upgrades costs depend on the task; reference SHS soccer field lighting estimates in #7

7	Complete lighting deployment at SHS varsity soccer field. Preserve the value of the previously installed underground infrastructure investment. The original plan also envisioned a full set of bleachers. Potential to include this project with #2 above, but this can be useful as an interim step since #2 is many years out	Original field installation built out the underground infrastructure. 2022 cost estimate = \$315K based on \$285K cost in 2019 for SHS stadium field. Extend time of field use in fall and spring.
8	Disc Golf The ideal location is the school campus area around Levinthal Run. Private funding can be leveraged if a location can be approved.	Resurrect ideas and constraints from Karl Molitoris-led initiative a few years ago. Locations included SHS/SMS school campuses, Dennis Pond Hiking trails, Hyde Park/Olympic Field. Contact Neil Hoss, Luke Adolph.
8	Indoor Pickleball	Leverage Staffordville school building. Minimal cost, and private funding sources would cover.
8	Indoor Floor Hockey	Leverage Staffordville school building. Minimal cost, and private funding sources would cover.
8	Beach Volleyball	Leverage Staffordville school property. Minimal cost, and private funding sources would cover.
8	SHS track re-surfacing	Previous cost \$250K, generally funded as part of both education / selectman budgets.
8	Splash Pad	For summertime use. Not sure who the sponsor is for this or what it would cost. Benchmark in Somers or Portland.

Respectfully submitted,

David Bachiochi, Chairman
Stafford Recreation Commission

Copies To:

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Recreation Commission membership

Devin Cowperthwaite, Director of Public Works, publicworks@staffordct.org

Board of Finance via Steve Geryk, chair

Stafford CFO via treasurer@staffordct.org

Amber Wakley-Whaley, Grants & Marketing Office amberw@staffordct.org

	Completed or Removed Major Improvements	Project Considerations
C	Fitness Paths & Apparatus a) School complex at Levinthal Run b) Hyde Park, Olympic Field hybrid c) West Stafford school d) Staffordville beach area	With the planned installation of 8 Fitness Apparatus stations along the Levinthal Run project on tap for 2025, this project was removed from the list. It may be resurrected for other locations if the Levinthal Run stations are popular.
C	Create a walking path alongside Levinthal Run to improve safety to get walkers off the road surface. A bike path sized width seems best, widening the existing surface for best maintenance.	Engineering design for Levinthal Run walkway from SHS to SMS is complete and includes Fitness Apparatus stations. Grant funding from CTDOT TRIP (\$883K) and ARPA (\$550K) are being leveraged, with completion expected in the fall of 2025.
C	Several improvements at Olympic field . MOSTLY COMPLETED a) Re-surface the field, install irrigation, re-align goal posts (goal posts complete). b) Expand parking. Lower fencing to improve sight lines. c) Building upkeep for youth football and general use, primarily renovation of the bathrooms. d) Likely eliminate future use for adult softball if a strategy in place.	STEAP grant award \$128,000 plus \$93,000 town investment for phase I announced 11/16/2020! a) Includes improvements to playground, basketball courts, field irrigation, and building renovation architectural design An overall recreation strategy is needed before embarking onto phase II.
C	Portable Ice Rink to substantially lengthen the winter skating season and augment the Monson Road skating rink. 11/12/2021: Proposal to install both a hockey rink and family skating rink at the Olympic field location was rejected by ARPA	EZ ICE quotes from 2021: \$38,779 \$14,574 for full skating rink 85'x200' and \$24,205 for full hockey rink 85'x200' NOTE: ARPA funding is no longer available (12/31/2024)