

**NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP
PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
2017 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Parks and Recreation Board is pleased to submit the Parks and Recreation Board 2017 Annual Report as required by Section 2204 of the Second Class Township Code. This report is a summary of the financial activities of the Parks and Recreation Department, use of park and recreation facilities, programs, services, and Board and staff leadership.

Financial Activities

The operation of the Parks and Recreation Department is funded by revenues generated by property taxes, donations and program fees and charges. The property tax is revenue earmarked for those expenses identified for administration and parks maintenance. The revenues generated through program fees, ticket sales, the banner program, rental of facilities and non-resident fees offset the expense of the recreation programs. Parks and recreation operating expenses include salaries, personnel fringe benefits, contracted services, supplies, park maintenance and liability insurance.

Operating Budget: Expenditures are disbursed to three categories within the parks and recreation operating budget: Administration, Participant Recreation and Park Maintenance. Expenses associated with the overall management of the department are charged to Administration. Expenses associated with the implementation of programs are charged to Participant Recreation, and expenses associated with the maintenance and operation of park facilities are charged to Park Maintenance.

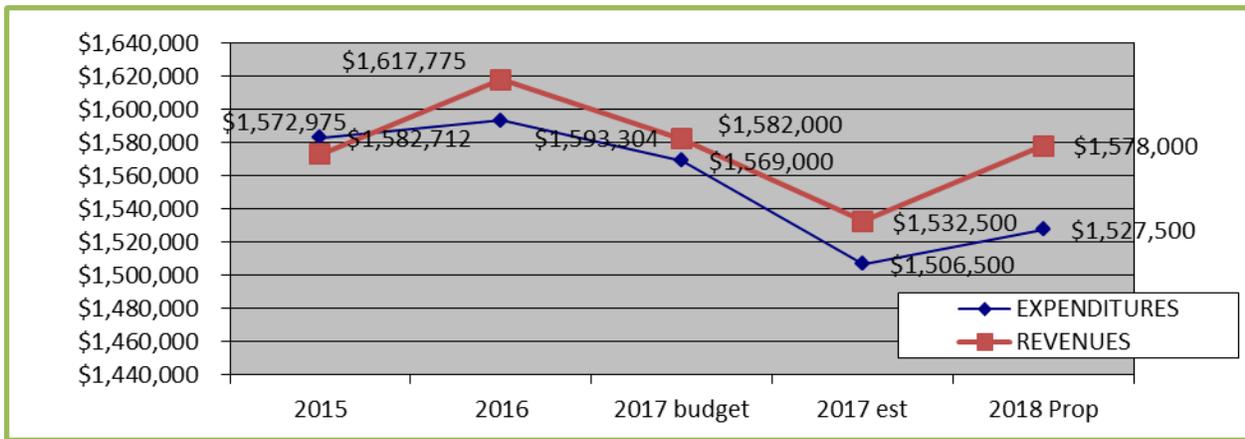
Annually, at the budget presentation meeting with the Board of Supervisors, the Parks and Recreation Board presents an estimated year-end of the operating budget in comparison to the approved budget. The budget proposal showed all three categories by 2017 year end having a significant decrease in expenditures. Even with a few line items showing more expense than budgeted, the overall cost to operate the Parks and Recreation Department was less than budgeted. This occurred due to a combination of the following: combined salaries and program instructor fees in the Participant Recreation category were less because program revenue was less than forecasted; ticket sales were less resulting in less commission; again this year, an additional employee, who is budgeted in the Parks Maintenance category, chose to opt-out of medical insurance which resulted in a savings of \$30,000. Other reductions are scattered throughout the budget due to lesser wage taxes, insurance, and the staff's conscious effort to control spending

It was projected that revenue would be less than budgeted due to less participation. That held true for the programs. Enrollment in the Preschool Potpourri Program held throughout the school year is less than the previous year and participation in what was once popular programs such as sandlot baseball, driver's education and zumba have declined causing more cancellations of programs. We believe the decrease in program participation can be attributed to the continuing competition with organizations such as the YMCA, Tyler Park Center for the Arts, new fitness

centers in the Township, Community College programs, surrounding Townships and our own Library and Senior Center. However, further review will show that other charges such as facility rentals, summer camp fees, and special event fees came in higher than budgeted. These increases resulted in total charges for services coming in more than 99.5% of the approved budget.

Although there was a decline in overall camp registrations of 50 children from 2016 to 2017, overall camp revenue was a bit higher than expected due to higher participation in the camps which have higher fees such as Quest and Camp Adventure. Increase in facility rentals can be attributed to more tournaments. The increase in special events is due to an increase in trip participation, a program that is hit or miss.

This chart shows the comparison of expenditures to revenues.



Capital Budget: The purchase of capital equipment and land and the cost of new construction or renovation of existing facilities is funded by the parks and recreation Capital Reserve Fund which is separate from the parks and recreation Operating Budget, the township General and Capital Reserve Funds. Monies obtained for this fund are generated by a number of items: transfers from the recreation operating budget, interest, builders’ impact fees, fees-in-lieu of open space, loans, grants, and sale of recreation assets.

The capital budget proposal includes the Civic Center Improvement Project that has been discussed for the past few years. The first phase which included the relocation of the lighted softball field to make room for additional parking was completed in 2016 and has proven to be a worthwhile investment. The remaining improvements include the construction of interior park trails (paths) that would connect the Recreation Center and fields to the paths in Tyler State Park, concrete/asphalt pads under the bleachers on the fields to allow for accessibility, new lights for the baseball/football field, a new basketball court, and repaving of interior park roads and parking lots. Since the new estimate of costs is higher than what was submitted to PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) for the grant, the Parks and Recreation Board recommended the elimination of some of the paths, elimination of the new basketball court and postponing some park road and parking lot improvements. The construction of restrooms on Civic Center 2 remains on the project list as the initial bid results exceeded the Township’s budget. The project will be rebid in 2018. In addition to these projects other projects and items were scheduled out for 10 years. A review of the equipment leases and cost estimates

for the anticipated expenditures and projects determined that additional monies will be needed or the Parks and Recreation Capital Reserve fund will be in a deficit in the not too distant future.

The Parks and Recreation Board and Department proves to operate within the budget the Board of Supervisors approved and continues to meet the community's expectations and needs.

Programs and Services

The Parks and Recreation Department remains committed to offer quality programs. The Recreation Center serves as the hub of the many programs offered year round including the enduring programs such as Preschool Potpourri, Camp Adventure and the Annual Halloween Happening

The Recreation Center also serves as the home to many other long-standing recreation programs that allow residents of all ages to participate in sports such volleyball, floor hockey, karate and tennis as well as a limited number of fitness classes such as tai-chi and yoga. Due to the demand for more active fitness programs, it is necessary to utilize other facilities. Classes are offered at the Senior Center in the evening and at the Welch Elementary School gymnasium.



In addition to using public facilities the Parks and Recreation Program Staff partners with local recreation services providers who operate businesses that provide sports and fitness programs. 2017 partners included Bucks County Ice Sports, Fit Life, RJS Fit and Spring Mill Athletic Club.

Evidence of the magnitude of programs, special events and services offered is found on the website as well as in one of the quarterly Parks and Recreation brochures mailed directly to residents. More than 100 programs not including camps, preschool potpourri and special events were offered in 2017.

Special Events continue to be an integral piece of the program offerings. Throughout the year, Park and Recreation offers a variety of events which brings hundreds of Northampton residents together. Generation after generation has come to enjoy favorite special events such as the Bunny Hunt, Fishing Derby, Bucks Fit 5K Run, Book and Bedtime with Mrs. Claus and Halloween Happening. The Sights and Sounds of Summer Series make summer evenings fun and entertaining at the amphitheater in the Municipal Park. Opportunities are available for businesses to become involve, sponsor and make donations that support these free events. The Northampton Lion's Club has been the main sponsor of the Sights and Sounds of Summer Series for over 25 years. Businesses who donate time, money and/or goods are listed in the Recreation brochure as well as on the website and on fliers distributed at the events. These events not only provide entertainment but promote community pride, provide a venue to meet one's neighbors, create memories and ultimately enhance the quality of one's life.



In addition to the programs and activities offered within the Township, trips to many different venues are scheduled to the likes of the Bronx Zoo, Paper Mill Playhouse, NY Botanical Gardens and annually to a New York holiday show. Although residents of all ages are welcome, it appears that, aside from the holiday show, most trips are enjoyed by those of retirement age. On the average 48 people attend each trip.

Summer Camp continues to be the largest of all programs offered. Planning for the upcoming summer begins in September with evaluation of the past summer. Changes for the season that may affect the budget are discussed and decided upon by the time the budget is presented to the Supervisors. However, some changes are unforeseen such as the loss of school facilities. Program staff has learned to become flexible as use of school facilities is never set in stone. In May of 2017 the Township staff was made aware that Richboro Elementary, home to Camp Expedition and a Little Discoverers' camp, would not be available. The camps were relocated to Churchville Elementary and were conducted simultaneously with the half day Explore Camp. This caused a reduction in the overall number of participants. From 2016 to 2017 there were 52 less total campers in all of the five Township run camps. However, the enrollment for the full day Camp Adventure which is held at the Recreation Center had 166 campers, a number not seen since 2008. Although it was only 4 more campers from 2016 it was 50 campers more since 2014 when total campers at Camp Adventure was 116. Building the enrollment back since the recession has been frustrating. One can never predict how many children will be enrolled in any of the camp programs. Many factors including the state of the economy, new competition and the change in demographics, to name a few, affect enrollment numbers. Even with the fluctuation in enrollment, the revenue generated from camp registrations always exceeds the cost to operate these programs. This is due to the fact that tuition fees are evaluated each year and staffing, the largest expense, is confirmed only as registrations come in.

In addition to the Township run camps, week long specialty camps are offered. These are camps that are instructed by contracted services. Twenty four different specialty camps took place in 2017 over the course of 10 weeks with a total of 175 participants. These camps are especially appreciated by those parents whose children are not enrolled in summer long camps. These camps also cover the associated expenses since the programs will not take place unless minimum enrollment is met



The Preschool Potpourri Program offered throughout the school year is another program that has grown to meet the demands of the community. What started as a two day a week program in 1990 for 3 – 5 year olds is now offered five days a week with separate classes for 3 year olds, 4 year olds, and 5 year olds. Specific age group offerings are adjusted based on the enrollment. The current 2017-2018 program enrollment is 54 children in 4 classes. It is the goal of the program to provide children of preschool age with a learning experience that will have them entering the next stages of education with enthusiasm and confidence. Again, enrollment fluctuates but staff makes adjustments so that the program supports itself. This program is vital to the success of the department as the families are introduced to more of what the Township Parks and Recreation department has to offer year round.

Camp Adventure and Preschool Potpourri keep the Recreation Center active throughout the entire year and produce the bulk of the program revenue. In fact, fees generated from camp exceed 30% of the costs associated with the camp program. Fees also offset costs of the operation of the pool for the camp programs.

Campers are given the opportunity to swim during the summer. The Township and the Northampton Valley Country Club entered into an agreement which allows for the Parks and Recreation department to manage the swim club facility Monday thru Friday from Memorial Day to the last week in August with the main focus being the camp programs. Having the availability of a swim club contributes to the success of the camp program. Being within walking distance to the Recreation Center permits the day camp participants to participate in swim lessons, swim team and open swim. Swimming is offered to the other Township run camps throughout the summer. A swim team and swim membership is offered to supplement the costs to operate the pool as well as offer the community additional activities



Despite the decline in program participation, it appears that we continue to reach new audiences. 834 new households were created in the website database in 2017. In an effort to encourage new residents to participate a “New Resident Welcome Letter” with a coupon for a movie ticket or a discount

on programs was mailed in September to those who moved into the Township from January thru August 2017. Only a small percentage of letters were acknowledged. Different incentives will be offered depending on the upcoming season. The department continues to utilize social media and has instituted text messaging to participants in the event of emergencies and updates.

In an effort to keep the services current, strong and fiscally viable evaluation of the programs and monitoring of enrollment takes place continuously throughout the year. Over the years the department has seen much more competition with commercial recreation providers as well with other Township services from the Senior Center and Library. In an effort to reduce competition the Library, Senior Center, Parks and Recreation and the Township Administration have been meeting regularly to help better understand each operation, stream line policies, alleviate any duplication of services and assist one another in promoting the other departments’ services.

Offering programs and camps, selling discounted ticket and maintaining the parks is not the only service Parks and Recreation provides. Residents continue to look to Parks and Recreation to help memorialize the memory of a loved one with the purchase of bricks and trees at the Garden of Remembrance and benches throughout the parks. This past year one family wanted to do more than a brick, tree or bench. Since their son grew up playing tennis at the Civic Center tennis courts they wanted to do something there. It was decided to dedicate a gazebo at the courts in memory of their son. The entire cost of the structure was funded by the family.



Parks and Recreation sees the value in creating partnerships with local businesses and in turn offers businesses ways to showcase or advertise their products and services. A sponsorship

program provides businesses opportunities to support the Parks and Recreation programs while promoting their business. This program includes placing an ad in the quarterly brochure, purchasing banners to display in the Recreation Center and on the ballfield fences and contributing to the cost of special events which in turn provides them with additional advertisements at the event and on the website. Again there is an inordinate amount of competition for businesses' marketing funds and soliciting support is difficult.

The number of people who take advantage of what Parks and Recreation has to offer as well as the amount of revenue generated by the programs and services offered is proof that Parks and Recreation provides a service that is truly valued by its residents.

Facilities

The Parks Maintenance Crew, Public Works, the sports groups and private contractors work cooperatively to provide daily and preventative maintenance on the fields and in the parks. In addition to maintaining the general upkeep of the parks and recreation center the crew is also responsible to assist the program staff with the set up and break down of recreation center programs, summer camps, swim club programs and special events. Furthermore, the Park Crew maintains the bocce court at the Senior Center addresses other minor maintenance issues there as well as assists the Senior Center staff in the preparation and facilitation of special events.



The unprecedented amount of rain in the spring and summer created difficulties in maintaining the parks. The grass continued to grow during July and August when typically the crews typically deal with special projects. Making matters more difficult, one of the three man full-time crew was injured and out of work. This resulted contracting out mowing for the month of August and part of September.

Repairs and preventative maintenance are funded by the recreation tax millage which continues to be 1.5 mils. Since this allocation was instituted in 2009 it has remained constant at 1.5 mils while the overall Township tax has increased.

Parks and Recreation is responsible for the maintenance and operation of the five active parks and the Recreation Center. The facilities are not only utilized by the general public and recreation program participants but by organized sports groups for their seasonal sports and off season clinics.

Capital Improvements

The Parks and Recreation Capital Reserve Fund is money set aside for the purchase of land, equipment and for renovations to the Parks and the Recreation Center. This account is funded by a number of items: transfers from the Recreation operating budget, interest, builders' impact fees, fees-in-lieu of open space, loans, grants, and sale of recreation assets.

Projects that need to be funded by the Recreation Capital Reserve Fund are identified each year.

The capital projects completed in 2017 are as follows:

- Two Recreation Center HVAC units were replaced. Once the remaining two units in the main section are replaced in 2018 the only replacement left would be the main unit in the gymnasium. That replacement is scheduled for 2021 at an estimated price of \$75,000.
- The dance room received a new dance floor, new glass-like mirrors and fresh paint.
- The front doors were assessed. These double glass doors are very heavily used and were installed when the Recreation Center Renovation project was completed in 2001. A number of recommendations were made including replacement of the entire glass doors and aluminum frames. Proposals ranged from \$5,100 to \$14,498. After careful consideration and consultation with the various vendors, it was determined that the existing doors and frames were in great shape, only the hardware, such as hinges, closure devices, bearings and exit devices needed replacement. During installation it was determined that replacement of the hinges was not needed bringing the final cost to under the \$5,000 that was budgeted.
- The main interior gym entrance double doors were replaced and painted
- Eleven additional interior frames and doors were painted
- The Pheasant Run basketball courts were repaired. Repairs to the backboards and the field will be completed in 2018

In December of 2016 the Township was notified that the grant application for another round of improvements to the Civic Center Complex was approved. The approved improvements include the construction of interior park trails, new lighting for the baseball/football field, new lighted basketball court and parking lot rehabilitation. After further review of the available space, the cost estimate and the fact that Council Rock School District has allowed the basketball league to utilize the lighted basketball courts at CR High School South, it was decided that a new basketball court is not justifiable. An electrical engineer was contracted for the lighting project. The completion date for the entire grant project is December 2020. As it stands now in order to complete the projects listed the PR Capital Budget falls short and will be in a deficit unless funds can be obtained.



Board, Staff, Leadership, and Training

The Northampton Township Parks and Recreation Board is appointed by the Board of Supervisors to terms of 5 years without compensation. The volunteer seven member board is tasked with enhancing the quality of life of the citizens of Northampton Township through parks and recreation facilities and services. It is their responsibility to recommend to the Board of Supervisors policies, services and a budget that will enable the Parks and Recreation Staff to provide the residents the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from quality facilities and services.

The 6 full time and 2 part time administrative and program staff have a combined total of 170 years of dedicated service. The staff is dedicated to providing a quality program. All eight staff members either grew up in Northampton Township and raised or are raising their family here. The Parks crew remains at 3 full time staff with 5 seasonal staff to assist with maintaining the parks and facilities as well as assisting with program facilitation. Over a hundred seasonal employees are hired annually to staff the preschool, camps, and swim club programs.

Full-time staff is given the opportunity to attend a variety of training programs to stay current with the many aspects of managing and offering recreation services. Part-time staff receives job training by in-house staff. Active-shooter training was conducted by the Northampton Township Police Department for the recreation center staff. Recommendations were made to insure control and safety.

Summer staff receives annual training so that expectations and policies are understood. DVIT provides training DVD's that are appropriate for maintenance and lifeguard positions. Camp staff must attend a mandatory full day of training. Guest Speakers, interactive team building and lectures are all part of the full day training. New this year was an additional half day of training where counselors met at their work sites the day prior to the first day of camp to regroup with their co-workers and leaders. This proved to be a success as the staff became familiar with the facility and discussed policies and procedures specific to the work place. The results of the enhanced training were immediately felt with positive comments received by returning staff and positive feedback by many parents at the end of the summer.



The Director remains an active member of the Pennsylvania Parks and Recreation Society (PRPS) serving on two committees. One as a member on the Licensing of Recreation Programs and the other position is Program Co-Chair for the Annual Conference. PRPS is the principal state organization promotes quality recreation and park training, networking, and leadership opportunities for those working and volunteering in the field.

Membership in the National Recreation and Park Society is also maintained as it allows the staff to have access to publications, trainings, networking and internet forums which address common and not so common issues and trends specific to Parks and Recreation throughout the United States.

Northampton Township Parks and Recreation is a member of regional organizations including the Bucks County Recreation Council and the Bux-Mont Swim Club Managers Association. Both forums allow recreation providers another avenue to gather information relevant to the department's operation.

Being active in professional organizations provides opportunity for gathering knowledge and networking ultimately increasing efficiency and leadership skills.

Current Staff levels are adequate to meet the current needs of the Department in providing quality facilities and programs to the community.

Summary

The Parks and Recreation Board believes that the existing facilities, recreation areas, and leadership both on the Board and Township staff level is adequate and effective in providing quality recreation services to the community.