

## **FINAL WORKING DRAFT**

### **A FOUR TOWNS RECREATION PLAN**

Prepared with supervision by the Four Towns Steering Committee  
and

Under the auspices of The Mayors and Councils of  
Chester Borough  
Chester Township  
Mendham Borough  
Mendham Township

Funded by a Grant from the State of New Jersey

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAFT**

The following document is a final draft iteration of the Four Towns Recreation Plan. It has been issued in this form to facilitate access to the Plan and its contents in their entirety, to inform those interested residents of its particulars. The Plan has been submitted to the municipal representatives of the Mendhams and Chesters for review, previous to this issue, for consideration by the general public.

It is available in this form in recognition of its size and with the knowledge that fully informing the public of the scope of the Plan is not a reasonable expectation, during the typical time frame available, during the public presentations soon to be announced. The Steering Committee, after dedication of long hours of study and discussion of the many topics addressed within this Plan, are intent that any public interest and all residents of the Four Towns have an opportunity to consider the entire document, to inform opinions which they may then relate during the public hearings.

The Steering Committee of the Four Towns Recreation Plan has arranged to offer the Plan document in PDF form on the municipal websites and to submit Plan copies to local news agencies together with notices of upcoming public meetings. These are anticipated to occur in mid to late October and will be scheduled in community facilities, also to be announced.

The Steering Committee invites all interested residents of the Mendhams and Chesters to take advantage of the opportunity to understand more concerning a hopeful future of recreation planning within the Four Towns. This Plan is a unified proposal describing a framework for coordinated recreation system planning and resource sharing. It is based on recognition of the tradition of cooperation that has long been the foundation of youth sports and civic associations in the Four Towns and presents opportunities for residents to further their unmet preferences for diverse outdoor pursuits by unifying access to the remarkable assets of the combined systems.

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## **THE FOUR TOWNS RECREATION PLAN MISSION STATEMENT**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Steering Committee for the Four Towns Recreation Plan is established by agreement of Chester Borough, Chester Township, Mendham Borough, and Mendham Township. Its purpose is to create a planning framework to redirect the administration, management, programming, service, and improvement of elements of the recreation system commonly utilized by residents of the Four Towns.

Similar revenue, manpower and service resources are committed annually by each community for operation of active sports facilities. These are programmed by local sports associations for use by teams drawn from the Four Towns.

The underlying premise of this proposal is; that each community and all participants in organized programs can benefit by a single, shared management system. Just as the communities are integrated socially by common schools, churches, associations and activities of daily life, it is proposed that a unified recreation system can enable and sustain active use facility initiatives more efficiently than by single purpose.

Shared manpower, equipment and materials resources, applied according to a systematized plan for renovations and new facility development will reduce local impacts and improve political viability within each partner Town. The ability to close facilities for repair, by shifting load to neighbor systems will assure adequate time for redevelopment and more economical construction sequences. Unified planning will present continuous channels for communication, enabling each administration to select options for future development that are most appropriate to their unique capability and to negotiate for the increase of other, less suitable features in neighboring locations.

### **INCENTIVES**

The Committee proposes that sharing resources and partnering with aligned interests to respond to stressed infrastructure and diverse recreation demands will be enhanced in a variety of ways. These include:

- Economies in purchase of equipment and materials.
- Reduction of excess duplicate facilities.
- Options for balancing changing program participation
- Ease of providing for new sports.
- Collaboration on best management practices for facility maintenance.
- Flexibility to “rest” fields or to perform major renovations.
- Increased visibility and participation by aligned interests in sharing system goals.
- Enhanced political access and potential to broadly encourage popular support.
- Increased potential to find accommodations for “special interests” activities.
- Dramatically increased leverage with County, State, and sponsor opportunities for funding and partnering.
- A broad base and unified purpose to solicit private contribution of time, work, and funding.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Mission of the Four Towns Steering Committee is: To create a framework enabling cooperation and a unified planning process shared by the communities of Chester Borough, Chester Township, Mendham Borough, and Mendham Township, for the purposes of promoting, improving and sustaining recreation systems of those communities.

Goals of this mission include:

- 1) Improving service characteristics of the combined recreation system by enhancing access, safety, convenience, accommodation, and aesthetic qualities of all facilities.
- 2) Balancing service shortfalls by exploitation of resources available in any partner Town.
- 3) Economizing maintenance operations through joint planning/sharing of materials, manpower, and equipment.
- 4) Response to new facility initiatives by sharing space potentials, funding promotion, and political endorsements.
- 5) Establishment of an open, integrated communication system between recreation, public works, and administrative components of all partner towns.
- 6) Identification of reasonable, equitable forms of participation and proportioning of the commitment of each community.
- 7) Conduct of an open process, committed to sharing its deliberations with any interested party and open to consideration of comments, proposals, or ambitions of any representative of a local purpose.
- 8) Identification of external fund sources and opportunities to partner with agencies or interests outside the Four Towns.

## **PREFACE – THE FOUR TOWNS RECREATION PLAN**

The following recreation plan has been prepared to assist a systematic approach to planning for future improvement and management of recreation sites and facilities within the Four Towns (Chester Borough, Chester Township, Mendham Borough, and Mendham Township).

This plan deliberately focuses upon outdoor recreation systems and developed facilities regularly programmed for the benefit of area residents. It is purposefully exclusive of indoor activities and does not evaluate characteristics of the many existing programs sponsored by the recreation agencies operating in the four municipalities. Open space resources and trailway systems are not evaluated in depth except as their presence or connectivity has a particular direct influence upon the service characteristics of a particular site or activity type.

It is based in general upon inventory, observation and assessment of existing sites, constructed features and program delivery systems operating today within the Four Towns as derived from field observations and as reported in a series of interviews with Township citizens, representatives of sports associations and representatives of the Four Towns.

Objectively, this plan seeks to identify a sequence of practical responses to physical conditions, organizational characteristics, or service deficiencies that exist now or will likely emerge as the Four Towns continue to grow, diversify, and respond to recreation opportunities.

This plan represents in part an intention by the Four Towns to adapt, as practically possible, to the current status of management of recreation infrastructure and delivery systems and to begin to implement a philosophical and statutory framework capable of anticipation of and planned responses to recreation system challenges and opportunities.

A variety of opportunities and several substantial issues will confront the Four Towns as actions are considered for priority. In aggregate the four systems and their citizen's organizations present excellent resources and an unusually large array of options for modification of its recreation system. Presuming that a reasonable balance between cost, opportunity and motivation exists, enabling shared planning and capitalization of future recreation objectives, the Four Towns working in a concerted, cooperative effort hope to achieve system goals more efficiently than by acting alone.

Traditional and accustomed formats for site utilization and operational circumstances may require deliberate and substantial reorganization to better distribute or organize service support systems or change current local land use.

To this end it will be incumbent upon the four administrations to define, from among many possibilities, a philosophical model and commitment that shall be directed toward the sharing of these services. Recreation is and will remain a uniquely subjective and discretionary option of municipal leaders. No legal mandate exists defining or enforcing the supply of recreation systems. Scope and character of these is based chiefly on the will of administrative agencies according to their appreciation of their constituents' needs and in context of the political realities in current time.

The Four Towns Plan is intended to identify strategies for advancement of shared recreation objectives and to forward informed, balanced proposals to exploit the aggregate of human and physical resources across the entire Four Town service area.

## **INTRODUCTION – AREA CONTEXT**

The Four Towns study area is a section of western Morris County of approximately fifty five square miles encompassing Chester Borough, Chester Township, Mendham Borough, and Mendham Township. Its physical characteristics are predominated by rolling, forested hillsides composed of variously stony soils deposited by glaciations. Two town centers (Mendham and Chester) are the historic and present commercial and civic nuclei for surrounding suburban and rural neighborhoods constructed in the Townships largely after their political separation from the Boroughs.

The Area's historic rural character began to change radically in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century as the New York metropolitan area flourished and as many of the white collar workers employed there sought the country life or access to large tracts as locations for construction of their stately homes. As a result of this new influx of people, area population has doubled since 1960. The influence of this dramatic increase has been felt primarily in the Townships as large, vacant land areas there enabled subdivisions of farms and estate lands into numerous, high end single family residences.

Predictably and as is uniformly the case in towns with such rapid expansion, local recreation development initiatives lagged well behind the increase of population. Facilities that had traditionally been adequate to support a slowly growing population were swamped by a doubling of new residents and a massive influx of children. Urgent necessity to expand schools, construct roadway and utility infrastructure, redistrict and lure rateable enterprises and increase all aspects of public service cast recreation and parkland development into a comparatively low placement among more pressing requirements for commitment of available financial resources.

The Four Town's traditional recreation systems were organized around existing athletic fields constructed in few town parks and in conjunction with the needs of community schools. School situated venues sustained the bulk of active use programming but were lost to expansion of school buildings and parking lots as additions were quickly placed to meet burgeoning demand. These additions eliminated or reduced former lawns and ball fields utilized as school and community recreation space, placing greater emphasis on area recreation sites.

As the Township continued to grow in population, it changed in character as well and in the preferences and disposition of new residents toward the type, scope and delivery of major sports programs (baseball, football and soccer). Recreation organized to supply services, facilities, administration and maintenance consistent with the expectations of exurbanites is different from the Township's historic model in three essential characteristics. First and most important is service itself. Recreation facilities and programs are identified as factors that represent the perception of quality of a community and are, like utilities, viewed by some as an entitlement of residency. The second is availability of services similar and equivalent to previous experiences from diverse other municipalities. The third is quality and context. Compared to older, more urbanized communities where recreation has grown and diversified in the past, the experience of adapted, makeshift multi-use facilities, as were constructed by local labor in the Four Towns, were not uniformly regarded as ideal, in comparison to facilities remembered from experience in former home towns.

In great measure, the very cumbersome task of wholly shifting administrative experience to new and more responsive models for the scope of services and the character of facilities, appropriate

to changing expectations, has lagged well behind area growth and variety in the popular expectations for recreation programs and their supporting facilities.

A reflexive philosophy is possible in a community of 2,000 like-minded citizens when a new ball field is needed, but not necessarily useful in a circumstance where many different interests compete for more, better or different facilities. As rural communities grow and diversify in experience and preference for a host of “new” activities, a planning mechanism that anticipates expansion and determines a strategy for response to changing options should be in place. Where forward looking planning for recreation does not occur or where system expansion is not a practical fiscal option, reliance upon citizens to achieve their own, best possible circumstances, simply continues. A piece by piece aggregation of facilities placed wherever opportunity enables, grows in response to momentary expedience, irrespective of adequate support or considerations or whole community need. In general, the recent past of the Four Towns has been characterized by this sort of reflexive policy with respect to recreation. It has produced a fairly large opportunity for those activities popularized by tradition, and cultural importance, such as baseball, football and soccer but has failed to create sufficient opportunity to engage preferences for individual pastimes and the preferences of the old, very young and to a large extent, the average working adult.

Physical open space and opportunities within available land dedicated to recreation is today, exhausted in the Boroughs but abundant in the Townships. State and County owned parks, open space parcels and game lands have been set aside for public utilization within the Four Towns municipal limits. In addition, several large land tracts now dedicated to recreation have recently been acquired by both Townships, adding to an already impressive inventory of properties excluded from future residential or commercial use. Watershed associations, land conservancies, local landowners, and others have similarly collaborated with Township, County, and State agencies to secure yet other land tracts as open space. In aggregate, the enormous land resource set aside and the confluence of recently adopted regional land use restrictions, which will act to limit future subdivision, have contributed to assurance of a Four Towns future with more than ample open space and opportunity to elaborate outdoor nature related activities.

The inventory of new sites capable of supporting programmed recreation activities, particularly those able to support organized group activities, have also been increased very significantly, particularly by the acquisition of The Parker Road tract and Highlands Ridge Park in Chester Township and St. John’s and The Seeing Eye tracts in Mendham Township. The bulk of future, development of constructed recreation features will occur on or in association with these parcels as they each represent very adaptable physical characteristics or proximity to already developed facilities with the sensible potential to expand current community features into parks with regional utility.

Programmed use of the Four Towns traditional recreation sites has increased dramatically, driven by the ambitions of well organized, determined groups of baseball, soccer, lacrosse and football enthusiasts. Today, available developed space is saturated with programs and is chronically stressed to the point of beginning to degrade under the combination of too much use and too little maintenance.

Expansion of other forms of local recreation to meet passive, outdoor, educational, cultural, social and spontaneous use needs has not grown or been diversified in measure equivalent to the doubling of the resident population or to changing trends in outdoor recreation or to the

satisfaction of those residents, less intrigued by sporting events and inclined to court sports, a quiet read, pleasant gardens or simply watching others at play.

As the Townships have demonstrated their purpose to respond to Four Town's recreation future by important acquisitions of land, and the Boroughs have constructed new facilities or renovated existing venues, subsequent actions would logically seem be expected to include a focus shift, creating new opportunities in day use facilities, in spontaneous individual activities, in social support features, convenience facilities, aesthetic character or simply, to increase passive opportunities. The stage is set for such additions, but is immediately complicated by acute need for active use fields and facilities supporting the several large and influential organized sports associations as well as a growing demand for synthetic fields, lighting systems and other very costly alternatives to undertaking ever more difficult to manage scheduling issues created as most sports spill over their traditional season limits and squeeze already full system utilization even more.

In recognition of the fact that the Borough and Township administrations must proportion funds, employees, and equipment for recreation relative to all other municipal needs and that significant work remains simply to remediate important system deficiencies, this report evaluates prospects for shared service, planning and development strategy proposals that appear practical, reasonable and possible within the current political/administrative context of the Four Towns.

## **CHESTER BOROUGH IN OVERVIEW**

Chester Borough is the smallest of the four subject towns in size, population and in remaining opportunity for expansion of its outdoor recreation inventory. Its outdoor system is fundamentally unchanged since the construction of Collis Park. Three sites comprise the system; Memorial Park, Collis Park and Grove Street Park. These total approximately 5 acres of developed space and are usefully diverse in opportunity. Two baseball fields, two tennis courts, two playgrounds, a basketball, and volleyball court are the principal structured recreation features. Memorial Park includes a rare and valuable feature in its band shell.

Grove Street Park is one of only two parks within the four towns that now qualifies as a community park. Additional of a restroom and an activity/meeting rooms is underway here, coincident with a variety of other site work renovations. This building is an important commitment to the quality of Borough recreation.

All of Chester Borough's park sites are excellently situated to enable a real potential for pedestrian and bicycle access for adjacent neighborhoods. All are well maintained and attractive despite minimal landscaping and site amenities. Given their age and their intimate relationship to the retail and residential sections of the Borough, the rudimentary character of development of these public assets attests to the municipalities' policy relationship to public recreation. Important opportunities to enhance the aesthetic of the Borough center while diversifying a fairly limited compliment of family and day use leisure pursuits have not been capitalized.

Chester Borough relies exclusively on exterior opportunities for access to hiking, picnicking and activities in natural circumstances. Fortunately, these activities are numerous and excellent in public parklands surrounding the Borough. Chubb Park, Black River Park, Hackelbarney Park,

Bamboo Brook, Highlands Ridge, Turkey Brook Park, and a shot of other excellent undeveloped and reservation type opportunities actually surround the Borough.

Organized sports are an important cultural theme in the Borough and the legacy of durable civic service ambition of citizens associations today represented by Chester PAA, the Pastime Club, Chester Little League, West Morris Soccer, Twin Borough Bears, Chester Track and Cross County, and Mendham/Chester Lacrosse are prominent among these.

The Borough is capable of complimenting and supporting local baseball activities and in fact, provides two of the best constructed and supported fields available to Chester Little League teams. It is incapable of offering substantial opportunity in support of soccer, lacrosse, football, track or other of the predominant recreation forms. Spatial characteristics of current site and limited availability of expansion sites within the Borough will likely perpetuate this circumstance. Consequently, Borough youth and their participating parents are reliant upon facilities of Chester Borough, Mendham Township, Mendham Borough and the school systems for sports venues and upon the various sports associations for programming other than in baseball.

Chester Borough presents an interesting and potentially exceptional relationship to the objectives of this study. It represents less than ten percent of the aggregate of population and is the least well provisioned with developed outdoor recreation facilities of the four participating communities. In addition, it is heavily dependent upon exterior resources to meet its citizen's preferences for organized activities. With the exception of two baseball fields, the Borough's available facilities are useful primarily to adjacent neighbors.

As a joint planning and management system for the Four Towns is conceived, it will be essential to separate the Borough's local recreation planning initiatives from proposals negotiated for the benefit of the combined interests of the Four Towns. Minority representation by population and little capability for significant improvement of shared programming within exiting public space will tend to minimize the Borough's influence on issues selected by proportional representation. Commitment to proposed creative alternative modes of responsibility for joining resources to improve both physical and management systems, involving the Four Towns, will be prerequisite to enabling satisfactory inclusion of the Borough's cooperation.

## **CHESTER TOWNSHIP IN OVERVIEW**

Chester Township shares the same recreation history and present as Chester Township but has fashioned its system according to opportunities derived from a generous gift from the Chubb family to the Township. Chubb Park has until recent time been the sole expression of the Township's purpose to support outdoor recreation. Fields at that site have been increased in approximate balance with growth of the locally run baseball and later, soccer programs. Its utility as a significant fairground has been maintained consistently and annually host carnivals, 4 H fairs, horse and dog shows and a variety of large scale events benefiting various organizations. It is an accustomed and important destination for area residents and as it is the most prominent fairground remaining in western Morris County.

Piecemeal expansion of athletic fields, courts, a skating area, and play areas at Chubb Park has been advanced at a leisurely pace throughout the last decades of the twentieth century, creating a



somewhat diverse opportunity for active recreation types. Later enhancement of the site by linkage to State and County owned parklands and recent additional of a pedestrian path encircling the skating pond has significantly expanded the sites day use attraction.

Conditions of the land gift to the Township restrict the capability to expand facilities by additional of structures and rudimentary utility service extensions into the site have imposed discouraging cost aspects to development of restroom facilities, irrigation system and lighting infrastructure.

The majority of facility development at Chubb Park has been constructed by local resources in a sequence of minor expansions along a bisecting driveway corridor. Meadow areas have been regraded and reclaimed as baseball and soccer fields as opportunity and available resources allowed. Consequently, facilities are arranged in a long series and proximity relationships between play fields and play grounds, entry and destination are less than ideal. Notwithstanding, such inconveniences, this is the mainstay site today for both Chester's organized sports.

Black River Fields are the next most important developed recreation facility in the Township inventory. Two full sized soccer fields and a youth baseball field are supported by parking and a restroom in along narrow strip. This park was created in the late 90's to meet the rapidly increasing needs of the West Morris Soccer Club. This site is flanked by the Chester Pool (a public, member supported utility) and a large undeveloped field areas owned by the West Morris Regional High School Board of Education. The Black River Middle School abuts the pool site and provides a rudimentary baseball field, a steeply sloping meadow and two basketball courts. Relationship of the school site to the park is blocked by the pool, restricting the utility of one to the other.

The combined utilization of Black River Fields and the adjacent lawns of the Board of Education constitute the best and most programmable situation of fields supporting soccer and lacrosse. The potential for development of this site pair into a first rate practice and game venue is limited only by its ownership by the School Board, which constrains the prospects of development.

A portion of Highlands Ridge Park adjacent to the Black River Fields, a recent acquisition by Chester Township, is undergoing a partial development to create a new youth baseball field, multi-purpose field, parking and a substrate for a future baseball field. When completed (2009) these two additional fields will balance the Township's current need for athletic fields and will create a complimentary adjunct to existing programming.

The project is conjoined effort of the Chester Board of Education and the Township, the former providing funding, the latter land.

The Township undertook an aggressive campaign of land acquisition in the 90's and has secured an enormous resource in new park land and open space. Addition of Highlands Ridge Park, Tiger Brook Park, the Evan's preserve, The MacGregor preserve, and the Allen and Knight tracts, has multiplied the Township's public land hold many times and preserved natural land resources for nature study, hiking, camping, and unstructured outdoor recreation, beyond foreseeable need. Excepting Tiger Brook and the Evan's preserve where path system, parking and entry improvements have been placed, the lands are largely unmarked and undisturbed. Continuing planning to increase trailway linkages to County and State lands will someday yield a

remarkable pedestrian, bike and equestrian trail system throughout the Township and may facilitate a degree of alternative transportation opportunity.

Historically the Township has relied upon the resources and initiatives of its sports associations, service societies and externally motivated interests for the delivery of the most prominent forms of organized recreation. It has provided and shared in preparation of lands, fields and infrastructure improvements to sustain these and provides public works services for routine aspects of maintenance and repairs. A consequence of this relationship is a tradition of reactionary supplementation of needs expressed by large, well organized groups but a fairly comprehensive neglect of opportunities for individual purposes and spontaneous day use activities. Play areas, courts, assembly areas, civic spaces, shelters, pavilions, picnic areas, gardens, special purpose developments and assemblies of diverse family oriented day uses do not exist in significant quantity. Restrooms and drinking fountains occur in only one location for minor day uses. As initiatives supported by substantial popular demand will likely never present them in a fashion that meets the Township's threshold level to trigger their development. If a system balance is to be achieved, the philosophy and practice of recreation planning as currently practiced will need to evolve.

Chester Borough represents a historical and practical significance to the Township that has and will continue to link the two despite their political separation. The Borough serves as the community center and central business district for both municipalities. Shopping, dining, entertainment and service businesses attract residents of the surrounding Township in daily commerce. In a real sense, the Borough provides cultural and social opportunities that simply do not exist in the Township. As future recreation schemes emerge, this relationship should be exploited as the vitality of the townscape is a character not otherwise available in the Township's more common rural situation.

The Chester's remain much more consistently aligned socially than their political realities and cooperation in expansion of recreation opportunities suggests. Youth of both jurisdictions grow through the same primary and secondary system and schools, participate in the same leagues and teams, ride the same buses, shop in the same stores and meet in the same churches. Their interrelationship is parallel at the individual and family level to the extent that coaches and sports organizations can not readily identify their player's by community.

## **MENDHAM BOROUGH IN OVERVIEW**

Among the four subject towns Mendham Borough exhibits the greatest diversity of outdoor recreation features as well as the most complete community park in the entire system at Borough Park. In addition to its own municipal resources, the Borough is immediately adjacent to the newest and best of the Township's recreation features, as well as the High School site. Its recreation history is analogous to that of the Chester's, as the Borough and Township were formerly part of a single entity.

As important as any other vestige of that circumstance is the fact that Mendham Borough became the default winner of the Pastime Club, which is undoubtedly the most durable, and influential champion of recreation in the Four Towns region. Its tradition of sponsoring and funding athletic interests of all forms, within the Mendham's and its annual Labor Day carnival

and fireworks have established a comprehensive form of recreation system support that clearly has a durable character which may serve as a model for this study.

Mendham Borough's best developed outdoor recreation sites are Borough Park and West Field. Borough Park is an ideal community park as it features a variety of active, cultural and day use features, is completely supported with utility infrastructure, includes a restroom and has pedestrian linkage to residential areas, the business district, schools and the Community Center. It includes three baseball fields, four tennis courts, basketball courts, play areas, sitting areas, spectator provisions, dugouts, irrigation systems, court lighting on site and adjacent on street parking, is supported by sidewalks on all sides and is adjacent to a day care center. It is unusual to find such a comprehensive park site in exactly the correct relationship to its community.

West Field was created on a very uncooperative land parcel to supplement the Borough's accommodations for soccer. Though it usefully accommodates an activity group not well supported otherwise in the system, West Field is limited to rectangular field sports and of little general recreation utility otherwise.

In addition to achieving a substantial balance of a variety of active and organized recreational activities relative to its resident population, the Borough has capitalized the stream basin of India Brook in a series of parcels that provide continuous pedestrian and bicycle activity through natural lands that traverse the entire Borough. Borough lands terminate at the Township's India Brook Park enabling a truly diverse pedestrian use opportunity, nature study substrate and seasonally great trout fishing.

More recent achievements include the assembly of a loop trail, which enables walkers to complete a circuit generally around the Mendham Village, along the courses of several pathways, easements and a former roadbed.

Mendham Borough is the hub of the Mendham's. It is home for the shops, churches, schools, restaurants, and the base location for civic and social activities. Unlike Chester Borough, Mendham Borough is not closely bounded about its village center. Its boundaries extend north and south to enclose large area of gracious private estates and newer suburban subdivisions as well as farmland parcels and parting of two stream corridors.

Compared to the other three municipalities, Mendham Borough is the most complete in terms of system diversity, the number of facilities developed in the Borough and in balance of activities within system recreation sites. Standing alone, its needs and facilities would be in approximate balance. In fact, it does not stand alone, its sports programs are linked with shared delivery systems in all major sports and is completely reliant upon those organizations for delivery of spring and fall activities for hundreds of its children.

Issues facing the Boroughs sports fields occur in two primary categories. The first can be characterized as ageing issues, which are represented by deterioration of field surfaces from chronic heavy use and inadequacy of equipment (fences, backstops, utility sport). Recent growth of area sports particularly in soccer and lacrosse has focused even greater demand upon all contributing resources, simultaneously increasing their need for repair. The second is simply one of limited space for additional development within the Borough. The last easily convertible space occurs at the Cosma Tract, which the Borough has attempted to advance to development in previous administrations but without sufficient support to initiate any modifications.

The most probable opportunities for future expansion occur on tracts in surrounding Township lands. These potentials and the partnering of motives considered in the Four Towns Plan is an apparent expedient to accomplishing future growth.

## **MENDHAM TOWNSHIP IN OVERVIEW**

Mendham Township wraps around Mendham Borough on all but the south side, encapsulating the traditional “Town Center” with a comfortable buffer of suburban homes and estates. Mendham Township residents relate similarly to their Borough as do their counterparts in the Chesters; dining, shopping and socializing in the commercial establishments clustered there. Two small residual community hubs persist in Brookside and Ralston sections of the Township but these are more traditionally than economically important. Population of the Township is fairly uniformly dispersed across its area with the greatest density occurring east of Mendham Borough along the Rt. 24 corridor and lowest occurring in the southwestern arm of the Township’s horseshoe shape. Like Chester Township, large open space land tracts of privately, municipally, Federally, County and agency owned properties surround and protrude into the Township body. These include: Lewis Morris Park, Clyde Potts Reservoir and Dismal Harmony Reservation, India Brook and Buttermilk Falls, The Schiff reservation and lands of Jockey Hollow Park. Until quite recently The Townships recreation facilities were scattered at two schools, Brookside Community Park or at fields located in the Borough. Creation of Wysong Park and Ralston Field began a continuing process of supplying more Township facilities. This commitment has recently added important land acquisitions of India Brook Park, St. Johns Academy and reinforced by privately sponsored acquisition of a parcel increasing the Schiff reservation. Almost all of the Township’s recreation sites are challenged by topography, wetlands influences or existing adjacent development, rendering most aspects of new playfield and constructed support system placement costly and spatially restricted. The St. John’s site and Middle School site are notable exceptions to this characteristic and these now constitute the best opportunities within existing land stocks to increase ball fields or large scale facilities.

The Township’s recreation system is fairly unbalanced without resources of the Borough and adjacent public recreation lands to draw upon. Important shortfalls occur in courts, playgrounds day use facilities and support systems and in general reflect the circumstance that very little development of public recreation facilities has occurred in the Township. The most recently developed sites (Wysong and Ralston) have exhausted their large available spaces and are already functioning at capacity. A new field at India Brook is coming on line for play but is of unknown capability or popularity and St. John’s fairly large and convenient potential requires a public access road improvement prior to being available. The administration is moving toward opening of new opportunities as quickly as reasonably possible but for the short term, will do very well just to keep pace with current needs. Like residents in Chester Township, few of Mendham Township’s residents live in immediate proximity to the nearest regularly programmed athletic fields and few live in neighborhoods inclusive of parks or playgrounds readily accessible by foot or by bike. This will continue to force reliance upon automobile transport for the majority of public site activities and unfortunately will continue to impose large component cost factors upon new development issues for creation of driveways and parking areas to support visitors.

Other traditional facilities within the Township are emergent as matters for significant modification or reevaluation according to more current motives. These are the facilities at the Brookside Pool and Community Center where some of the most venerable of area traditions still provide regular opportunity. These have become dated according to greatly increased levels of participation and by their own inability to be meaningfully increased to adapt to those programming levels. The Community Pool in particular is in a crisis condition having fallen below registration levels needed to sustain the operation of activities here by fees. The Middle School site may be regarded similarly except that unlike the previous two, its situation is one arisen from genuinely poor and wholly uncreative initial planning and construction. Playfield areas here are among the most useful potentially, of any in the system. Almost all of that potential has been squandered on inefficient design and inappropriate development of margins and entry features. If the school board recognizes this situation and agrees with the Township to recreate the entire space to optimize its utility, several very adaptable fields, with full utility support could be economically developed. The contingency of course, is that adequate availability of scheduling opportunity can be assured for recreation and that a significantly increased shared maintenance responsibility be established. A great deal of work is required here regardless of ultimate use just to create a compliant public space. As that matter is being addressed in planning, the coincidental creation of a decent master plan vision for the whole site would be a useful consideration.

Property acquisitions recently, completed have resulted in addition of significant land and building infrastructure at India Brook Park and St. John's Academy. These sites are not yet programmed for municipal recreation functions and both have significant constructed features, which will require maintenance and management upkeep regardless of use. In the case of the former Seeing Eye facilities at India Brook, several very competent structures are particularly important as they are assets in themselves and should be occupied as quickly as practically possible to convert liabilities into functioning assets. At St. John's, a new access drive from Township streets is needed to enable programming of fields that are useful and adaptable for a variety of sports in their current condition. This is a straightforward project requiring little initial cost to achieve but must await availability of those resources.

The Township's potential to contribute a variety of novel recreations based on its new sites is potentially more important to a Four Town's collaboration than its ability to balance system playfield needs. Completion of a driveway to provide access to two multi-purpose playfield areas is certainly, timely and exactly responsive to some current system deficiencies, but in the long term, the costly structures at India Brook are a convertible resource capable of providing a broad array of cultural, social and day care/camp recreation types that are responsive to much greater resident service and facility deficiencies.

Mendham Township has a few formidable adjustments to complete relative to its oldest facilities and will experience difficult prioritizing spending commitments while attempting to preserve potential of newly acquired features and simultaneously responding to system sports field demand. Its best options appear to sharing the load of playfield increase with the Four Town participation and focusing local priorities on capitalizing the wonderful opportunities presented by the Seeing Eye and Middle School. The Township has been foresighted in its acquisitions and consequently has secured appropriate space to fulfill all of its recreation needs locally. The expense and timetable involved in that capitalization may not be as attractive as distributing some of its resources as shared commitments under a Four Towns Plan. This should be conditioned by recognition that Mendham Township has the current capability to resolve most of

the system multi-purpose field deficiencies within its inventory of sites. Its internal strategy then should be to first identify specifically which facility types in which sites should be available to Four Towns planning and which, if any reserved for local purposes.

## **PURPOSE AND PROCESS OF A FOUR TOWNS PLAN**

***The Four Towns Steering Committee is in agreement that a strategy of proactive planning for future development based on the deficits observed within any component town may be better resolved by examining surpluses or opportunities across all four communities and as possible, balancing entire system need against entire system capability. A goal of the Four Towns enterprise is creating a new and different focus upon whole system objectives for future expansions.***

Objectives of the Four Towns Plan are based on the experience of existing recreation conditions in the Four Towns by administrative representatives of each. These observations have yielded an accord that though the Towns are linked: by traditionally similar forms of recreation delivery; by shared educational systems and by residency, each town's recreation system functions independently with respect to administrative and operational tasks. Likewise, each requires resources, manpower and facilities that may duplicate those identically provided, in the neighboring Towns.

As population growth in the Townships and in Mendham Borough has increased to a condition where future population increase will occur slowly, until build-out is reached, all four of the planning partners are now in a similar condition with respect to having met emergent school and public infrastructure demands which have dominated all other fiscal considerations in the past several decades.

As popular involvement with the provision of organized sports has grown dramatically, according to the skillful management of citizen directed programs, need for provision of new fields and recreation sites has proportionately increased. Fiscal limitations to municipal construction of needed facilities and renovation of existing system features, as capital projects undertaken by municipal tax revenues, has typically been supplemented or replaced by fundraising and privately sponsored initiatives of the sports associations. As these associations extend across municipal boundaries to derive membership, they enjoy a traditional capability, greater than competing interests, to target available site space opportunistically rather than in a sensible relationship to community planning objectives. This has manifested itself in regional hubs (Chubb, Black River, Borough Park, Wysong/Ralston) which have been propelled by sports special interests and represent the purposes of organized sports primarily. This custom is supported by the Four Towns as a conventional "bargain" between municipal administrations and their citizen "vendors" but is one fundamentally incapable of response to whole system recreation deficits or to develop new facilities in a complete and sustainable fashion. The legacy of this form of piecemeal improvement has been the predominant model for and design influence now extant in the bulk of developed recreation space within the Four Towns.

***The Four Towns Committee has observed that a unified system of communication between the sports associations, recreation and the public works departments has been an overall system deficiency that complicates service operations and scheduling.***

Annual allocation of line item budgetary commitments for recreation system maintenance and repair represents the most significant revenue support of area facilities distributed by the Four Towns. These resources are administered through the respective public works departments as an unclassified component of general work items within their annual budgets. These resources are apportioned over the course of the subsequent year according to the Public Works Department's

evaluation of current priorities or, where special circumstances occur, as directed by the Administration. The DPW Departments are not furnished with an annual budget anticipation report, prepared by the Recreation Department, prior to submission of Public Work's annual request. Consequently, particular needs for field, equipment or support system renovation, special requirements for maintenance, mowing or material supply or task man hour estimates for anticipated construction are not clearly communicated or are left to evolve according to circumstances as they arise daily. As the Recreation Departments have no budget allocation for capital projects under their own jurisdiction, the capability to initiate purchase of a new piece of equipment to replace a system failure can be undertaken only if the DPW can juggle budgets to enable the work. Similarly, scheduling of games for the many sports being programmed in the Four Towns is variously communicated to the DPW by Recreation, by an association member, by individual contact or not at all. As all sports programs are frequently influenced by weather or unexpected other scheduling changes, preparation for timely mowing, line striping, cleanup or other routine tasks is absolutely dependent on a measure of lead time being possible.

A means of constant update is necessary to achieve quick response. The sports associations that accomplish this best get the best results. A uniform response system is not in place in the Four Towns and as various sports play in various locations at some or all of the town's sites, inadequate communication of work that is needed, frequently in the same day, can result in frayed tempers and impaired inclination to cooperate.

Creation of a form of master scheduling and coordinated networking between those groups is seen as essential to produce a shared appreciation of task timing and to balance the capabilities of maintenance manpower with varying seasonal service requirements.

***The Four Towns Committee has observed that more efficient subdivision of responsibility based on the geographic characteristics of the service area is likely to be a more common sense response to many repetitive maintenance operations than is the current practice.***

***The Four Towns Committee believes that a unified system of best practice maintenance procedures applied to all system fields in a similar fashion and timetable will produce optimum conditions for play and enable sharing of management continuity regardless of which department performs required tasks.***

Physical relationship of recreation site locations to Public Works Department locations varies significantly as a function of the doughnut and horseshoe shapes of Chester and Mendham Townships relative to their respective Boroughs. Consequently, many recreation sites are physically closer to the DPW of a neighboring town than to the home town. The service of these has always been attended by the respective municipalities despite the fact that a great deal of identical routine maintenance is performed in support of sports associations utilizing facilities in all four jurisdictions. Nonetheless, a variety of different service relationships between the municipalities and the sports associations have evolved.

For example, Chester Township has acquired a new grooming machine to better support the management of infields. The Mendham Little League has remarked specifically about the vast improvement this equipment has brought to its fields. In a circumstance where this type of equipment could be shared by the partner communities similar improvement could certainly be anticipated and uniformity of the entire system, simultaneously improved.



Other maintenance regimes followed by public works in support of association programmed facilities, are likewise dissimilar from town to town, varying by service level as well as by applied practices. These vary from full responsibility (Mendham's) to almost none (Black River practice fields), despite the fact that they are seasonally managed for the purposes of the same sports.

Surely, a unified practice of maintenance for facilities of the same type is more appropriate to creating an equitable expectation for whole system facility conditions than the various circumstances that now occur. Creating mutually understood maintenance criteria, regardless of agency performing the work, is fundamental to this purpose.

***The Four Towns Committee observes that a more representative process of selection of priorities for future system expansion should replace the reactive planning model traditionally followed. Establishment of a Four Towns inventory, representing all resources and needs for facility types as well as creation of a priority of system specific objectives, according to greatest popular significance, is considered an essential purpose of the Four Towns process.***

Conventionally, new capital improvements supported by tax revenues have been placed according to the initiatives of special interests within the Four Towns. Each municipality has responded at some level to organized popular support for a particular type of facility or to increase facilities for ongoing programs. Consequently, constructed features across the system are not particularly diverse except with respect to organized sports.

Members of the Four Towns Committee have considered the disparity between sports facilities and all other forms of conventional outdoor recreation opportunity within the service area. It has been observed that significant deficiencies do exist, particularly within the Townships as a consequence of more recent development in response to sports field needs and separation from the Boroughs (where facility balance is much better).

As a response to this imbalance future recreation improvements should seek to prioritize underserved recreation forms or at least, to incorporate appropriate ancillary features into mainstream active use development proposals. Enabling such a process requires an informed understanding of recreation features most useful to the general public to; support spontaneous individual purposes, family activities, fitness and exercise, children's play, group events, cultural programs, day camping and passive uses. Determination of which of those alternative activities, will be most appropriate according to the ambitions of area residents, will be best informed by creation of a definitive survey system and a workable feedback mechanism that enables assembly of an updateable data base to compile and evaluate public opinion of existing features as well as preferences for future opportunities.

Capability to represent underserved elements of the population across all four communities and draw upon the aligned support of similar interests, will reinforce their influence in planning, enabling a more balanced facility priority selection in future decision making.

***A purpose of the Four Towns Plan is examination of system deficiencies, in a unified planning context, with elected representatives of all of the partner towns to determine if, by a shared commitment of resources, ambitions larger in scope than may have reasonably been undertaken by any single community could be accomplished together.***

The Four Towns Steering Committee consists primarily of elected municipal representatives, administrators and recreation directors. Within the tenure of their service and according to their involvement with community recreation and issues encountered in recent years, each has developed a perspective relative to commonly observed, unmet recreation opportunities or of repetitive issues brought to their attention by area residents.

Committee members recognize the potential synergy of municipal partnerships, with each other, as well as with agency and private interests. Similarly, the competitive advantage gained by partnering positions combined initiatives far above independent applications for Federal, State and County level agency support for grant and assistance programs. *(This plan document is exemplary of a current program of grant support offered by the State of New Jersey to communities that have agreed to collaborate by joint planning in response to service infrastructure needs and to program development initiatives by resource sharing. By entering an accord to study and document system partnership opportunities, the Four Towns have qualified for a \$30,000.00 grant to enable preparation of this plan.)* As this technique will be emphasized by County and State agencies as a preferred technique for small communities to economize municipal service cost, those that elect to establish unified planning will continue to compete more favorably for development funding than communities acting singly.

***The Four Towns Committee observes that large indoor facilities may be beyond the reach even of the combined support of the partner communities but believes that if private partnerships can be secured, that high quality, well run, diverse indoor opportunities may be delivered at reasonable expense.***

The Four Towns Committee has discussed a preliminary list of facility types reported to be commonly requested by area residents or those that have been explored in past attempts to introduce more diverse services to their communities. Typically these have not been advanced to development as a consequence of their scale, cost, timeliness or ability to engage adequate political support in the context of prevailing fiscal conditions. The anticipation that some among these ambitions may be realized by directing a unified, coordinated effort and the aggregate resource potential of the Four Towns, the Committee has undertaken further examination of potentials for elaboration of the most prominent of these, as topics within this plan. The topics considered most reliably representative of frequently expressed recreation system need are these: Indoor facilities to provide individual health and fitness training; Community day care, day camp and summer camp opportunities; cultural programs, fine and performing arts programs; indoor swimming, swim lessons, exercise swimming and water sports; outdoor “blue water” pool, swim training; indoor sports courts and training field spaces; lighted sports venues; synthetic surfaced field spaces; multi-sport camps; bicycling and dirt biking opportunities; skateboard, rollerblade, roller device opportunities (skate park); hockey (roller, street and ice); fitness/ running track; lighted tennis, basketball courts; children’s play equipment areas and uniformly across the entire system, restrooms. Many among these facilities can be adapted to existing park settings but others; particularly the large scale indoor facilities are single concept considerations as they are dependent on available site space and utility infrastructure and very broad support among the resident population base or regional participation, as by membership.

***The Four Towns Plan process is envisioned as a separately evolving support resource, acting in cooperation with the duly constituted, elected representatives of the partner communities, one without statutory authority, operating in an advisory capacity to the four local governments.***

The Four Towns Plan is conceived as a mechanism for increasing options, expanding opportunities and multiplying leverage for all four of the partnered communities. It is intended to facilitate support for initiatives raised in any one town as well as those proposed for benefit of the whole service area by: representing residents of the entire service area to define future plans for the recreation system; sharing spatial resources; redistributing programming to relieve scheduling stress; planning new facilities to meet area needs and eliminate duplication of facilities; realigning maintenance service operations to enable more efficient distribution of work; systematize procedures, equipment and manpower to increase efficiency and economize material purchase agreements; improve communication between sports associations, public works departments and the municipalities by engagement of the three in regular dialogue to balance service system capabilities with task parameters that are commonly understood and shared.

Its primary activities are anticipated to address recreation systems alone, engaging in a continuing process of identifying system deficiencies and unmet opportunities and in preparation of strategies to resolve or meet them. Mechanisms of resolution of system issues will be advanced by preparation of considered, evaluations of cited need, in the context of whole system priority for response. Where legitimate need is found and direct responses occur within the existing physical and service capability of the four towns, these shall be represented to municipal governments in a clear statement of purpose and with a complete description of consequent system influences, with a recommendation for official support. Where substantial capital projects are considered, the Four Towns Committee will function to build support among area residents through preparation of case statements and conduct of presentations detailing purpose, strategy and anticipated funding sources. It will simultaneously conduct outreach to potential partners in the public or private sector by leveraging the combined influence of the Four Towns to gain advantage under available assistance programs and by solicitation through the auspices of the many influential area residents.

*The Four Towns Committee recognizes that the citizens of the Mendham's and Chester's constitute a regionally influential presence consistent with their position in area business and social communities. It recognizes as well, that in aggregate, thousands of the same area residents are directly linked to their communities by participation in sports, service and social associations. These residents are seen to represent a large, capable and involved resource, one not yet aligned by purpose to apply their influence toward achievement of common objectives. The Committee is aware that the greatest impediment to accomplishment of the fundamental goals of a vital Four Towns Plan will be the task of overcoming the universal human resistance to change. Aware, that sports associations have traditionally exerted their efforts irrespective of local political preferences and that the greatest service accommodations in all of the towns derive from the conjoined influences of those associations, The Committee believes that it is a small but difficult extension of policy needed to shift the entire planning philosophy toward continuity with that experience*

In a large part, this plan is predicated on the belief that common recreation objectives can be prioritized by importance, presented as justified, balanced proposals and by virtue of being popularly understood, will be broadly supported within the Four Towns.

Ultimately, recreation issues and initiatives will grow in comparative importance in the Four Towns as is consistent with maturing communities. Enabling this process requires nurture of a

popular culture supportive of new recreation initiatives, which in turn empowers local representatives to comfortably represent previously low priority issues.

The Four Towns Committee has dedicated a concerted effort to prepare a plan process that is based on unbiased evaluation of existing administrative, programmatic, operational and physical characteristics of recreation systems across the Four Towns. It has considered many of the jurisdictional, logistic and financial challenges that are predictable in response to proposals that seek to reorder traditional modes and expectations for recreation delivery. It has assembled an informed anticipation of the nature of popular unmet system demands and compiled an assessment of deficiencies observed within existing sites and constructed facilities. It recognizes and has considered at length potential methods to empower those groups currently engaged in recreation service and to elicit support of those whose preferences have not yet been satisfied.

The proposed approach to this process is envisioned as follows. A case statement representing purpose and means relative to particular issues will be prepared. Recommendations for system reorganization to be undertaken sequentially and generally parallel to and independent of the conventional responsibilities of existing local government systems will be developed. When these have been prioritized and can be described as clear and complete actions, they will be presented to elected officials of the Four Towns for consideration and if acceptable, recast for incorporation into municipal recreation policy.

## **FOUR TOWNS DEMOGRAPHICS**

The Four Towns are culturally and compositionally very similar in terms of racial character, educational background, occupational types and family composition. They differ only in terms of density and total population. General demographic characteristics of the Four Towns are as follows:

	<u>Chester Borough</u>	<u>Chester Township</u>	<u>Mendham Borough</u>	<u>Mendham Township</u>
Total Population	1651	7890	5176	5596
% under 18 years	24.8% (409)	30.5% (2406)	26.8% (1387)	32% (1790)
# Households	609	3323	1781	1788
With children < 18	34%	46%	36.6%	47%
Median age	39	40	42	40
Average family size	3.15	3.29	3.13	3.27

The Four Towns are comparatively similar in terms of income and are among the wealthiest communities in the county and state. Median family income statistics are as follows:

	<u>New Jersey</u>	<u>Morris County</u>	<u>Chester Borough</u>	<u>Chester Township</u>	<u>Mendham Borough</u>	<u>Mendham Township</u>
Median family Income	\$67,035	\$94,684	\$106,260	\$133,586	\$129,812	\$146,254

Children of families in the Four Towns attend area public school systems primarily although many attend private schools in the region, particularly in older grade levels. Three primary school systems operate in the Four Towns, they are the Chester Board of Education, the Mendham Borough Board of Education, and the Mendham Township Board of Education.

Secondary schooling for these three districts is conducted at the West Morris Mendham High School.

Enrollment in these schools is approximately as follows by grade groups:

Chester Schools

K-2 (Dickerson School)	469
3-5 (Bragg School)	463
6-8 (Black River Middle)	445
	=====
	1377

Mendham Borough Schools

K-4 (Hilltop Elementary)	361
5-8 (Mountainview Middle)	289
	=====
	650

Mendham Township Schools

K-4 (MT Elementary)	518
5-8 (MT Middle)	476
	=====
	994

West Morris Mendham High School 1313

Generally, both Borough's are dissimilar from both Townships as each Borough has fewer at home children (35%) compared to 45% for the Townships and a slightly larger percentage of population (15% vs. 10%) over 65 years old. Average family size is uniform at approximately 3.2.

Population growth in the Four Towns service area has slowed to an annual rate less than one percent and the growth rate within the two Boroughs is now a function of the change in new incoming family size compared to the family size characteristics of those moving out. In general the population of residents in the 0-5 year old subdivision is declined slightly but has fluctuated near 7% over the past decade suggesting that school populations will vary up or down according to variations in annual group sizes, rather than by increasing or decreasing overall trends.

Demographic characteristics indicate that the Four Towns are nearing a build out condition and that area population will increase at slower rates until that condition is reached. Consequently, area recreation system futures will be influenced more as a function of diversification and introduction of recreation modes or types not now existing and less by growth of existing programs except where current physical or operational characteristics may be limiting growth potential. For example, where field space availability is too small, team size grows as a response and more players, play less, resulting in retirement of some usually the least proficient) from the program in subsequent years.

The Four Towns area will be dealing as much with facility quality issues as quantity shortfalls within the next five years assuming current needs are met and somewhat exceeded. This may be

seen as good or bad news. As many of the older facilities, that have traditionally founded the system, are compared to newer facilities, constructed to meet more rigorous standards, the former will decrease in attraction and utility until they are renovated or replaced.

Community demographics will be most significant in the influence of change, as incoming residents replace those that have lived in and represented the communities formerly. Gradually, changing expectations of more recent and more numerous residents from other communities will move agendas for recreation service and facility preferences toward the character of those previously experienced, elsewhere.

## **POPULATION DISTRIBUTION**

Population distribution in the Four Towns area results as a consequence of the historic land use of the region. Greatest concentrations of current residential development occur within and immediately surrounding the two Boroughs. Areas between the Boroughs along Routes 24 and 519 are of moderate density consisting of newer homes constructed in subdivisions of former farmland tracts. The Township perimeter lands are least developed in density, particularly in Chester Township west of Route 206 and north of route 519. These lands are those occupied by preserved lands, farms and estates.

Developed recreation features in the area occur relatively near the Boroughs in almost all cases enabling fairly ready access to those locations for the bulk of residents. Those areas least conveniently related to developed recreation sites are those located in the southwest corner of Mendham Township and those separated by The Black River Wildlife Management area from the bulk of the Township. Generally however access from any area imposes a maximum drive of approximately six miles. This distance may be deceptively long in terms of time as the bulk of area secondary roads are narrow winding and posted at very low speed limits. Consequently, a six mile ride might easily consume 15 minutes. This factor will remain inequitable for some and will likely not influence the future placement of facilities particularly as the bulk of available opportunity for development occurs adjacent to the Boroughs.

Population distribution will always tend to frustrate ideal recreation planning as the prospect of neighborhood parks or pocket parks fails to be useful in most of the low density neighborhoods of the Four Towns (where pedestrian or bicycle access is reasonable). In addition, the tradition of recreation complexes (Chubb and Borough Park) is accustomed as the preferred format for delivery of sports programming and is emerging in newest iteration at the Black River Fields complex. Consequent of these two factors, the probability that local neighborhood recreation will evolve to provide system balance is small.

The accompanying map illustrates the density of regions of the Four Towns by utilizing a common symbol representing the location of existing homes.

## **EVALUATION OF FACILITIES**

Evaluation of facilities is an essential part of this process but one that is extremely subjective. Such subjectivity is uniformly at the heart of representations of the nature of recreation systems resources and needs. Frequently, these results in “counting” a space utilized for a given purpose

as a “field, court, or park” regardless of its appropriateness for that purpose. Within the Four Towns, such spaces exist. Some have evolved into more complete facilities by subsequent addition of conventional accessory elements and some remain spaces with names preserved as a traditional appellation.

System baseball fields are a useful example of this circumstance. Many are constructed within the Four Towns and they vary remarkably in size, equipment, surface condition and support. Each so called “field” is quantitatively equal to the other in statistical value though it may differ radically in utility or quality. In almost all such instances, the resident baseball associations have adapted to conform to field shortcomings by trying to pair more capable fields with more capable players. While a practical and workable approach the resulting experience for young athletes learning the sport is characterized by playing on small, poorly equipped, marginally surfaced fields, presumably, waiting in their turn for the big leagues. If this is an accustomed experienced, it remains a poor experience, on which can be rather directly corrected, given the incentive and capital resources.

Regardless of quality, size or character, an outdoor public space is named according to accustomed use or according to conformance with definitions prescribes by policy of that municipality. As none of the four subject towns represent any objective criteria for recreation venue types accustomed purposes and activities occurring on those spaces are uniformly “counted” as some character of field, regardless of their degree of competence to sustain that activity in a wholly satisfactory manner.

Subjectivity of perspective is exactly analogous to the variety of characterizations that may occur for a single physical reality. In deliberations of recreation ambitions this influence is an impediment uniformly presented as persuasive or dissuasive arguments. For example: respondents to this study have cited the desire to have facilities “as good as” (name nearby town); others observe “ours are the worst in the system.” As counterpoint example, some interviewed with respect to municipal responsibility have observed; “this field was good enough for my kids” and “those people are never satisfied.” How strongly such views are asserted, none has any objective utility and neither will advance an agenda or resolve a dispute.

The influence of very subjectively informed relationships between administrative policy and popular interests in the Four Towns has been propagated by a uniform tradition of local administrations providing space and varying degrees of maintenance and improvement to sports organizations in exchange for comprehensive management of program. Thus, without a consistent model for facility characteristics, support or management, a variety of itinerant solutions to momentary needs have been created.

Coincident with this philosophy, interests that aligned around baseball, football, soccer or followed well established traditions of resident service groups (PAA, Pastime Club, Brookside Community Club) have flourished to varying degrees and represent the default model for administrative consideration of the recreation systems. As a consequence, today’s facility profile and planning agenda is dramatically lopsided in bias towards organized recreation delivered on home made substrates by resident organizations.

When recreation need is perceived by proportionately small, but well organized groups of residents very intent advancement of their special interest, their prospect of success increases in direct proportion to their commitment.

An unfortunate planning mismatch of this arrangement is that the organized sports interests are linear and seek continuous improvement or independence to produce their own, while administrations are periodic and variously inclined to completion of optional recreation service balance. If a shared vision for the quality of experience to be created for area residents can be characterized, a sequential process for accomplishment of objectives contributing to those characteristics is most likely to emerge. If such a baseline is not examined, quantified, and understood by the authors of policy in the same terms as their constituents, systematic improvement will always lag behind response to special interests.

In subsequent pages some of the significant developed recreation sites and their attributes are depicted, described and evaluated. Evaluation terms and the system utilized to establish a comparative basis are determined by the author and are presented to illustrate or sustain observations presented in discussion in following text of this report.

Determinations represented for system elements are based on plan study, field observations, reported conditions and representations of use, programming and management history. Determinations are comparative across all four jurisdictions and may be qualified by discussion of circumstances, which may underlay the cause, or method of the subject facilities development.

## **FACILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM**

Terms of this system include:

Description:	common name for activity
Size:	appropriate for design use
Space:	adequate to minimize interference with adjacent uses minimize risk during intended utilization
Perimeter:	Adequate to enable access, adjacent movement and spectator accommodation comfortably
Access:	direct, continuous recognizable, barrier free
Safety:	reliable separation from vehicle movements hazardous site surfaces, adjacent coincident activities
Compliance:	meets recommended minimums for activity type as stipulated by applicable standard
Surfaces:	smooth, regular, uniform across play area
Equipment:	backstops, goals, barriers, fences
Accessories:	bleachers, team areas
Support features:	restrooms, drinking fountains, circulation routes, shelter, shade
Context:	relationship to complimentary activities, play areas, sitting areas, parking areas
Aesthetic:	attractive, comfortable, accommodating
Other:	various according to situation
Maintenance:	general condition
Utilities:	Infrastructure – lights, irrigation, electric
Site Selection:	utility of site to purpose
Site Development:	effective development for purpose
N.A.	Not applicable



N.C.                      Not considered  
Ratings are the following numerical system  
0 – Poor  
1 – Substandard  
2 – Adequate  
3 – Good  
4 – Ideal

## **EVALUATIONS: CHESTER BOROUGH PARKS**

### **A. GROVE STREET PARK**

Chester Borough's Grove Street Park is one of only two very complete neighborhood parks in the Four Towns. When pending construction of restroom facilities and a new park center building are complete, this will join Borough Park in Mendham as the sole representatives of such completeness.

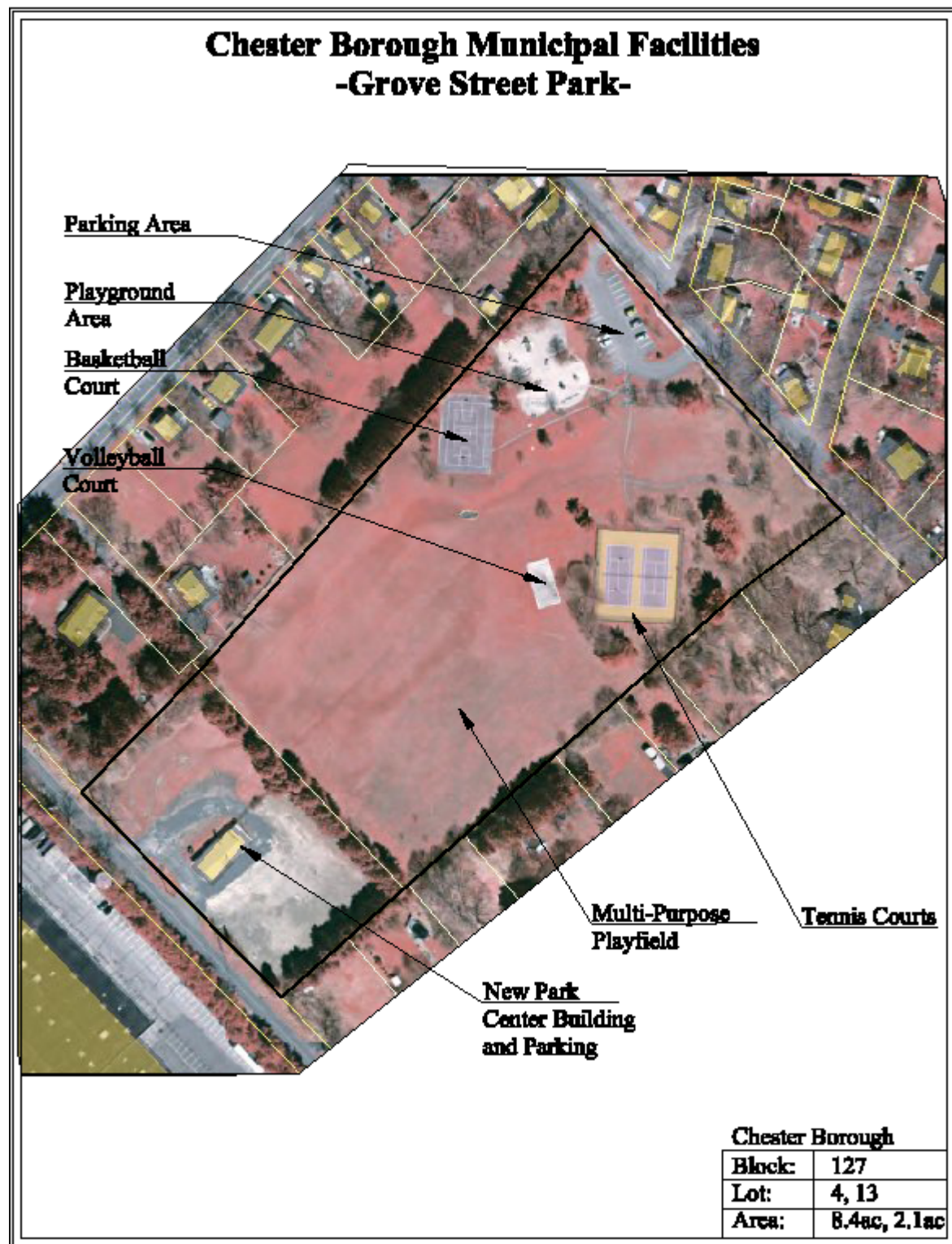
The park includes a small parking area, tennis courts, a basketball court, a multi-sectioned play equipment area, a few benches, a volleyball court and a too steep but pleasant play field. A path recently constructed across this field has unfortunately further diminished its utility but has provided connection to the park center area.

Grove Street Park is a great concept for service to its neighborhood but doesn't adapt altogether well with its steep site. Barrier free issues occur between adjacent streets and activities and separation between play areas and the new park center are not ideal. Notwithstanding, these minor defects, the park is an excellent model for repetition.

The park center building, now under construction represents an important step forward in the Borough's recreation resource inventory. It includes large programmable indoor space, which presumably will be available to host meetings, parties, and program support for day camping, crafts, and special recreation programs.

The basketball court at Grove Street Park is programmed by Chester Summer Basketball as one of three outdoor court spaces scheduled for play in their outdoor youth league. It is marginal in surface condition and equipment but apparently useful in this application.

## GROVE STREET PARK MAP



# EVALUATION SHEET - GROVE STREET PARK - CHESTER BOROUGH

DESCRIPTION	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
GROVE STREET PARK																	
TENNIS COURTS	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	31
BASKETBALL COURT	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	30
VOLLEY BALL COURT	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	28
PLAY AREA	2	3	2	1	2	1	1	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	32
PARK CENTER	This is an excellent large and attractive structure still under construction. It is a substrate capable of becoming a vital element of the Borough's recreation pictures presuming program support is a complete as the building.																0

## **B. MEMORIAL PARK**

Memorial is a uniquely visible open space element in the townscape of Chester Borough. It is well known to area residents as the site of arts and crafts shows, antique shows and other annual celebrations held along the village streets. It is familiar as well to past and current recreation programs as a multi-purpose field and a preferred location for baseball. Its field is one of the oldest, best prepared and supported of baseball fields in the Four Towns. It has been managed and improved over decades by the Chester Little League including construction of a restroom/concession/storage building, which has distinguished this field from all others until very recently. The site is well maintained and comparatively lightly utilized as it is formatted for baseball primarily.

Memorial Park has a valuable visual significance to the Borough but is only moderately exploited. The gazebo is a familiar and popular venue for musical presentations and as an event control feature. Its architectural charm and context would benefit by some elaborations of adjacent spectator accommodations, garden borders or distinctive landscaping elements that increase its utility to welcome shoppers to a pleasant sitting experience or social space. Similarly, a perimeter pathway punctuated with benches or small garden features would provide an excellent and attractive opportunity for exercise, walking, dog walking or strolling with a child or companion in the context of a shopping visit to the Town. Memorial Park is an example illustrating the typical municipal reference to parks in general. It is a perfect opportunity to create a beautiful contribution to the town center aesthetic and to create complimentary use spaces, sitting areas, historical references, gardens or a significant memorial area to attract and sustain visiting shoppers. The fact that it has not been accomplished is a statement reflecting the town's sense of place.

## MEMORIAL PARK MAP



# EVALUATION SHEET - MEMORIAL PARK - CHESTER BOROUGH

DESCRIPTION	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
MEMORIAL PARK																	
BALLFIELD	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	45
GAZEBO	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	NA	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	36

### **C. COLLIS PARK**

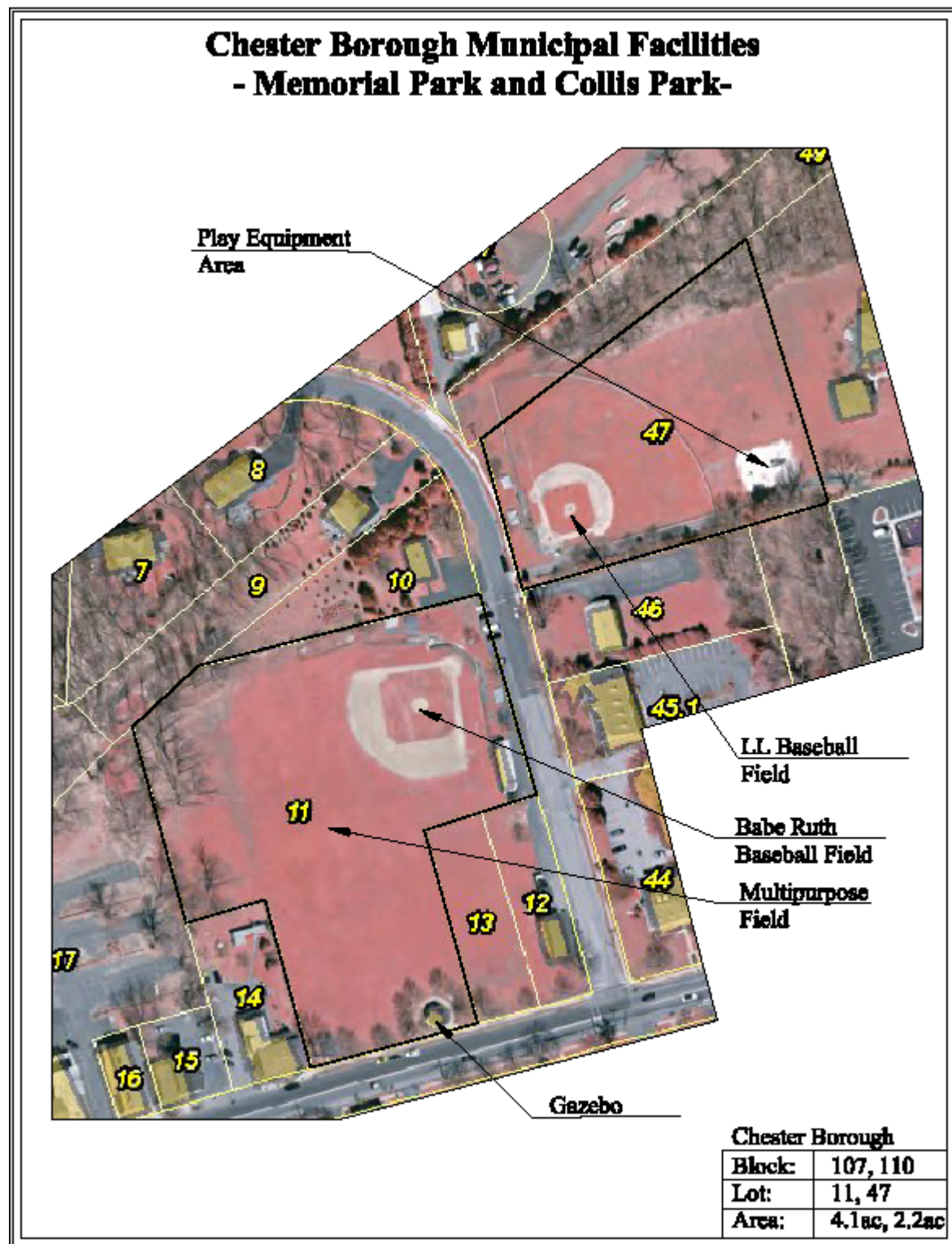
Collis Park is a small site nearly adjourning Memorial Park that provides two nicely prepared facilities. The first, a relatively new and very completely appointed youth ballfield, is the most technically conforming field in the Four Towns inventory. Consequently, it is also the most well regarded of small fields by Chester Little league users. The other significant feature is a small, somewhat exposed play equipment area occurring beyond the outfield fence of the ballfield.

Parking availability may be an inconvenience when both fields are in use, but available restrooms and a food service feature at Memorial yield a potential for a comfortable experience here.

Collis Park would benefit extremely by introduction of landscaping and a pathway system as complete as is the ballfield, otherwise it is a very competent small facility. Collis Lane is a noteworthy consideration in the context of the two adjacent athletic fields. Though a quiet, low volume street it is a through road and a potential bypass for the Town center. This roadway should be modified to incorporate several quelling devices to reduce traffic speed and to alert drivers. The risk potential of the existing condition is very high and the context of closely related functions on opposite sides of the street, inherently worsen the proximity problem.



## COLLIS PARK MAP



# EVALUATION SHEET - COLLIS PARK - CHESTER BOROUGH

DESCRIPTION																
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	TOTAL
COLLIS PARK																
YOUTH BASEBALL FIELD	4	3	1	3	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	41
PLAYGROUND	3	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	35

#### **D. CHESTER POOL**

The Chester Pool development is the sole modern concession to outdoor swimming in the Four Towns areas. A conventionally configured 25' x 50' meter tank in a rectangular deck constitutes the primary feature of the complex. It is supported by restroom and concession areas, a small control office, a wading pool, play area, and lawn areas the facility is designed in a traditional manner as a swimming and competition pool with limited utility in the main tanks for small children and non-swimmers. A small wading pool feature is available to accommodate this group. The site occurs at the top of to the local landform and consequently, is fully exposed to wind and sun. A few trees and a number of fabric shade structures have been erected to provide some relief from the sun. A sand volleyball court and several other small courts have been created in an adjacent lawn panel on the western side of the complex and a fairly large lawn, sunbathing area occurs on the south end of the site.

The entire complex is surrounded by chain link fence, which effectively restricts circulation around the site where the Middle School fields and Black River Fields border the facility. Its site choice reflects an odd planning decision as the pool occupies a position in the center of a variety of related general public uses but is not integrated with those and actually impairs improvement of their use relationship.

The pool operates as a public utility supported by membership fees. It is available to residents of the Chester's but interestingly, is managed by personnel in the employ of the YMCA.

The Chester Pool is a notable example of the potential of popular influence to achieve creation of the recreation resources by persistent, well organized political pressure and some good fortune. It is reported that a gift of an area resident to the municipality, one designated for purposes of creating a pool, was leveraged by organized residents to influence the Borough's administration to authorize creation of a membership supported utility. This sort of situation is likely a model for future, large scale, large budget additions to the recreation systems at the Four Towns area. It illustrates the power of collective influence of citizen's groups as well as the practical facility of merging aligned interest of adjacent communities to support systems beyond their independent capability. Facilities of the Chester Pool are not rated.

## **EVALUATIONS: CHESTER TOWNSHIP PARKS**

### **A. CHUBB PARK**

Chubb Park is the largest developed park area in the Township system is the most diverse and preserves important future opportunity for expansion. Curiously this park also exemplifies characteristics that occur throughout the Four Towns system and which demonstrate some of the pitfalls of reactive development process.

Chubb Park is regionally significant resource that annually hosts fairs, shows and holiday events each with thousands of visitors. It includes six baseball fields, three soccer fields, a skating area, tennis courts, a play area, an exercise loop path, parking for hundreds of cars and linkage to adjacent County and State owned open space reservations and park lands.

Chubb Park has traditionally supported the Chester Little League and West Morris Soccer Club on its fields, annually providing space for the bulk of the baseball program and game fields for soccer. The Chester cross-country program practices weekly here in the fall on existing trails and open field spaces.

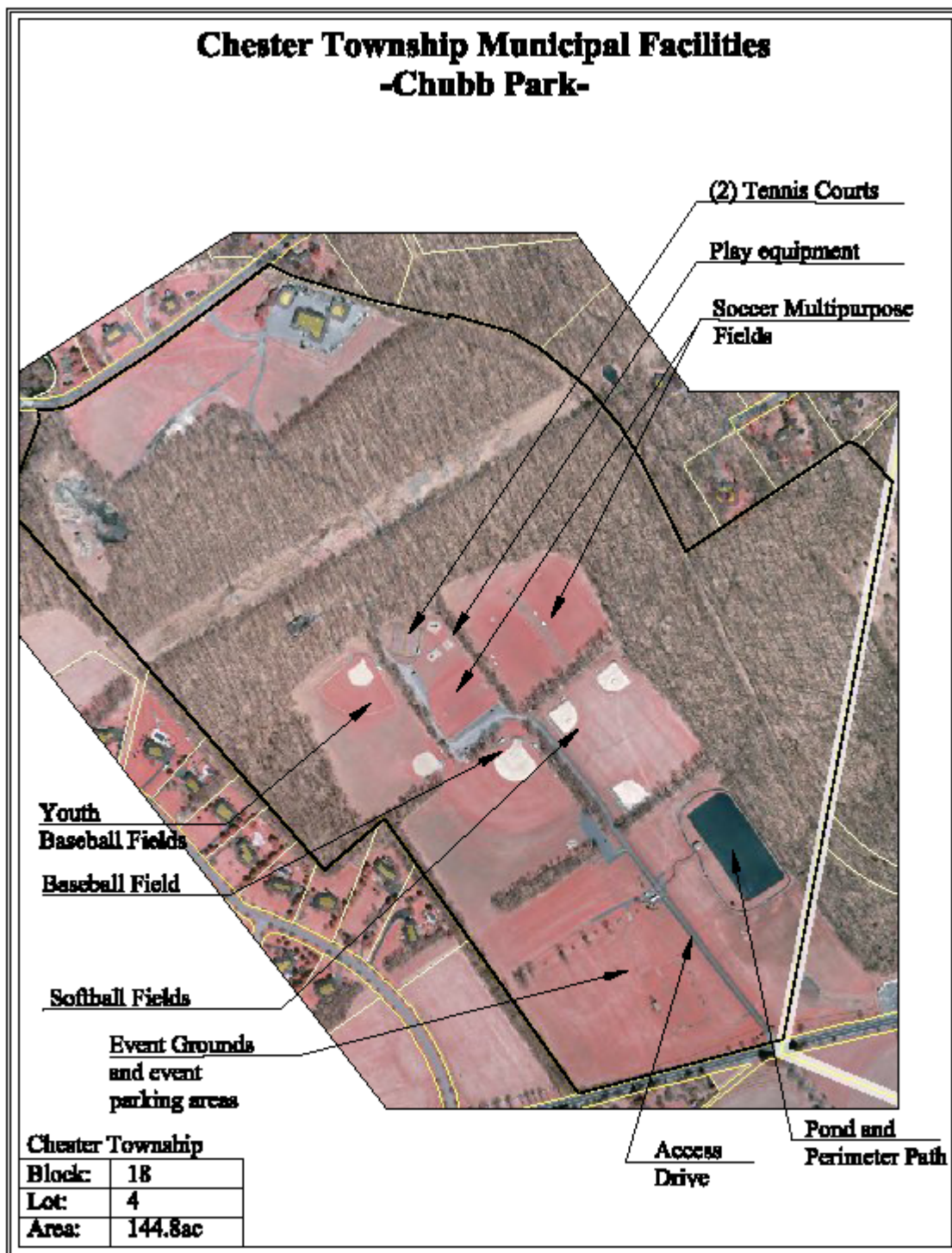
Despite its traditional and enormous utility, Chubb Park is grossly deficient in utility infrastructure and in appropriate accessory structures. A large restroom is the most singular of these deficiencies but pavilion structures, an indoor activity/meeting facility and some permanent facility to support group food service opportunities are similarly prominent omissions.

Rarely occupied fairgrounds and the skating pond occupy the frontal aspect of Chubb Park while community use features occur out of view from the park entry in field areas in the “back yard” of the site. If this assures seclusion, it certainly also discourages visitors to the play areas and tennis courts at the extreme end of developed space.

Chubb Park is a wonderful substrate, capable of sustaining a large day use attendance in diverse activities. Shortfalls in personal support, utility infrastructure, and inappropriate relationship of activities limit this opportunity.

Future potentials for increasing Chubb Park’s service utility include: restroom, shelter structures, expansion of the pathway system, and renovation and elaboration of utility systems. Creation of an additional play equipment area in conjunction with a sitting area located in a position near the skating facility will amplify the attraction of both.

## CHUBB PARK MAP



# EVALUATION SHEET - CHUBB PARK - CHESTER TOWNSHIP

DESCRIPTION																
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT
CHUBB PARK FACILITIES																
SENIOR FIELD	2	3	3	1	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	1	1	2	35
FIREMAN'S FIELD	2	2	3	2	3	1	2	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	2	30
LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD	3	3	3	1	2	1	3	3	1	3	3	2	1	2	3	37
SOFTBALL #1	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	3	1	24
SOFTBALL #2	2	2	1	3	3	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	0	1	27
SOFTBALL #3	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	2	2	0	0	1	17
SOCCER (SMALL)	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	3	3	2	2	1	1	2
SOCCER UPPER	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	28
SOCCER LOWER	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	1	27
FAIRGROUND	This facility is not rated. It deserves more utility support, a restroom and a large shelter but remains the most useful in the region.															
SKATING POND	Not rated. No useful comparison exists. This facility is excellent and rare. Huge plus for the system.															
WALKING PATH (AT SKATING)	A great small facility except not barrier free. Alternate access should be added and entire pathway extended to loop through frontal region of park site.															
TENNIS COURTS	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	40
PLAY AREA	2	3	2	1	2	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	1	3	2	33

## **B. BLACK RIVER FIELDS**

The Black River Fields are the best sports venues for their purposes within the Chester Township System. Two full sized soccer fields and a “little League” standard baseball field are supported by a restroom building and are all adjacent to a large parking area. The soccer fields are two of the soccer system mainstay fields as they are large, uniform, properly graded and drained and comparatively well supported. The restroom/concession stand distinguishes this from all other system complexes and communicates a sense of purpose and permanence not found elsewhere.

All three of the playing fields here are among those best reviewed and most sought for soccer, lacrosse and baseball play by area associations.

As the Black River Field complex is viewed from the road, it appears that the complex is very large. In fact, only those developed field spaces and parking areas on the western side of the site are a part of the Township owned Facility. The remaining area of mowed grass meadow is a site space owned by the West Morris Regional High School District and is an area, which has been leased and utilized by the Chester PAA and subsequently the Township as multi-purpose practice space. It remains in an unimproved state due to the circumstance that neither the Township nor area sports associations are willing to invest in improvements without assurance of long term control of the site. It is important to understand the interrelationship of these two parcels as they are wholly interdependent functionally but separately owned.

The recently constructed Black River fields are reliant upon adjacent undifferentiated turf space for versatility beyond their own capability. A large meadow parcel (owned by the West Morris Regional Board of Education) lies east of the new fields and provides limitless variations for set up of soccer and lacrosse’s practice. Though little developed, this is one of the most useful sites in the Four Towns. As no permanent feature has been created here, the field is versatile, enabling very quick reorganization suited to play or practice for a variety of age levels in either soccer or lacrosse.

This practice field is an extremely valuable resource and should be secured from the Board of Education for conversion to developed fields. It is sufficiently large to create up to four multi-purpose fields adaptable to any purpose and still reserve sufficient useful space for parking and baseball field construction, court development or numerous smaller day use features. It has the capability to establish a complex of facilities that will absorb the current demand for soccer, across and football and will provide full sized, regularly configured fields at reasonable cost.

Lands and facilities of the Chester Middle School about the Black River Fields on the west. These include a baseball field and a steeply sloping open field area that may be used for practicing. Neither of these offer important utility as the baseball field is deficient in construction and poorly sited and the open field is not needed for current programming or apparently, useful for spontaneous purposes.

Support of adjacent sports activities can be importantly improved by creation of a substantial shelter and sitting area and a play equipment area in available space near the restroom. Compliments that increase spectator comfort provide some shelter and occupy younger siblings in attendance of the primary sports events will dramatically improve the

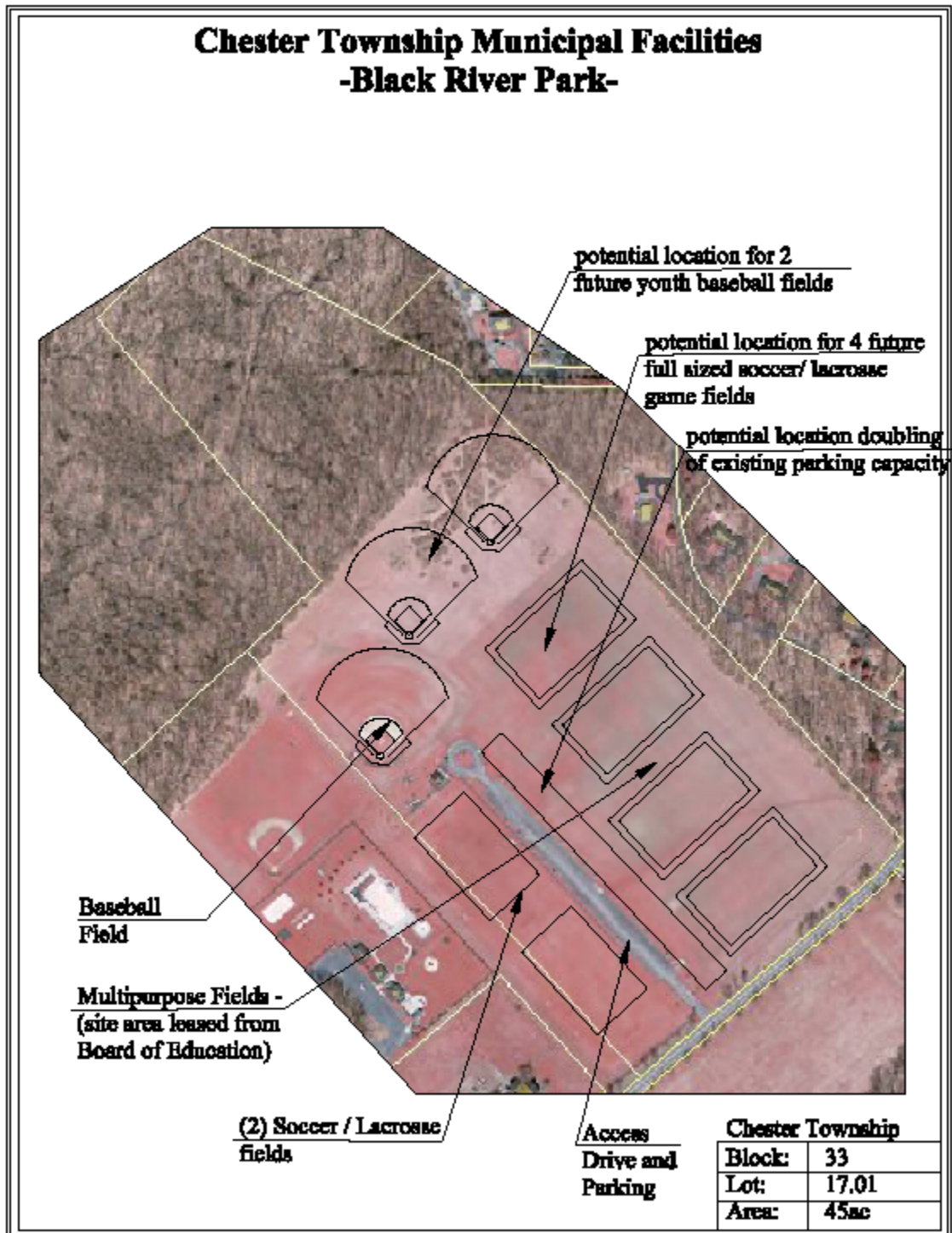


fields family support capability and will add a real element of diversity, beyond sports purposes.

*NOTE: The practice field areas adjacent to Black River Park are worthy of special attention in the present context of sports field issues that influence the baseball, soccer and lacrosse programs serving youth of the Four Towns. This is noted here, out of sequence with subsequent text sections, to alert the reader of this site's unique significance and to inform that its potential is viewed to have the most influential capability as a response to a variety of "deficiencies" later described. The site, considered in combination with lands of the Black River Fields, Black River Middle School, and Highlands Ridge Park has the potential to accommodate all of the Four Town's current playfields needs projected into the immediate future. The possibilities that may be created here are; consistent with the preference for large centralized complexes of facilities represented by the sports associations; well centralized within the service area; well connected to all remaining regions of the Four Towns by arterial roadways and atypically, economical to construct as a consequence of the large gradually sloping open field space existing here. The Black River practice field presents a keystone element enabling sensible response to all major athletic field issues. As it is owned by the Regional High School Board of Education, it seems to present an ideal Four Towns planning collaboration target as currently, it is not controlled by any single Town but is important to all four.*



## BLACK RIVER FIELDS MAP



# EVALUATION SHEET - BLACK RIVER FIELDS

DESCRIPTION																
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	TOTAL
<b>BLACK RIVER FIELDS</b>																
SOCCER SOUTH	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	39
SOCCER NORTH	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	39
BASEBALL FIELD	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	43
PRACTICE MEADOW	4	4	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	4	2	2	1	2	4	36
MS BASEBALL	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	26
PARKING AREA	The parking area and driveway constitute a standing hazard to pedestrian crossing and a nuisance when the lot is full. Barriers and crossing should be added to increase safety.															0

### **C. HIGHLANDS RIDGE PARK**

Highland Ridge Park is a recently acquired site formerly occupied as a field testing facility and research center by Bell Labs/Telechordia. It is distinctive due to the presence of an entire network of roadways that subdivide the site. These enable pedestrian exploration of the varied terrain and natural communities of the meadows, wetland and forested hillside areas that predominate on the site.

Currently, the Park is not developed except for picnicking, pedestrian uses and sledding on adaptable portions of the site. The Township however is engaged in a construction project here to install a new full sized baseball field, a new youth baseball field and a multi-purpose field. These are anticipated to be available for use in 2009.

Highlands Ridge Park is ideally suited for spontaneous day uses, for hiking, nature study, picnicking and sunbathing. The network of roadways sustains these generously. Its hilliness and numerous wetlands leave few site areas large and flat enough for active use development but many opportunities for courts, passive use spaces, play grounds or group gathering features remain.

Highlands Ridge Park is physically adjacent to and soon to be integrated with Black River Middle School, Black River Fields, and already joins the Evans Preserve. As it is considered in the context of a sequence of related activity spaces, Highlands Ridge becomes the likely focus of interest for future indoor development (the barn structure), court sports or special activities venues. Its utility for active uses as athletic fields will be exhausted by current development.

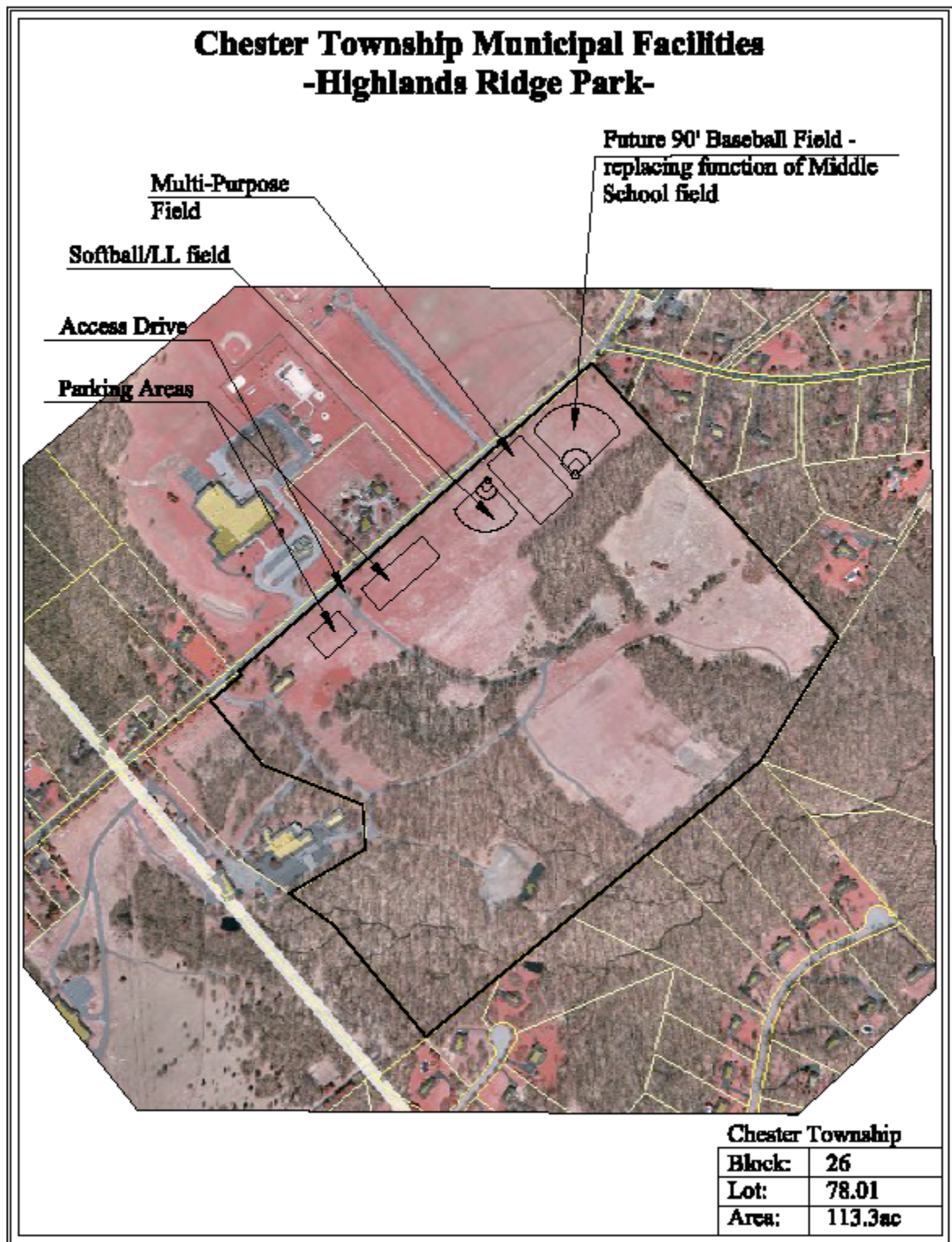
Highlands Ridge Park has a unique existing potential to satisfy needs of both cross country programs for a local training and competition course. Currently, both programs compete at Brundage Park in Randolph and the Mendham Club trains in less than satisfactory circumstances along the rail bed sections of the Patriots Path system.

Minor improvements of the existing roadway system within Highlands Ridge by route marking and minor staging area improvement near the parking lot will create a venue where athletes can train along a course that loops and is visible from central viewing points, enabling timing and supervision of runners.

In the event that adjacent lands of the Lucent tract become available as recreation land (awaiting Chester Borough's acquisition), the combined parcels will yield a host of new potentials including existing structures and the capability to support a YMCA facility.

Playfields at this site are not yet developed sufficiently to warrant rating

## HIGHLANDS RIDGE PARK MAP



# EVALUATION SHEET - HIGHLAND RIDGE PARK - CHESTER TOWNSHIP

DESCRIPTION	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
HIGHLAND RIDGE PARK																	
SLEDDING HILL	2	2	2	3	2	NA	3	1	NA	1	3	3	NA	1	3	NA	26
PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM	3	3	3	1	NA	NR	2	1	1	1	3	4	2	NA	NA	NA	24
NEW FIELD SPACES	Are not yet evaluated. They are under construction however, their should used potential and physical proximity to the Black River Fields is complimentary and will reinforce the utility of both.																0

#### **D. PARKER ROAD RECREATION SITE**

The Parker Road site is discussed here even though it is only nominally developed and currently not programmable for any particular activity. This is because the site is currently being considered actively by Chester Little League as a potential recipient of its interest and funding support for the purposes of expansion of baseball fields.

This site is the location of a failed subdivision subsequently purchased by the Township as a recreation site. To date its development consists of an entrance drive, a small parking area, a gate and an entrance sign and information board. Otherwise, the site is predominately forested and has a pair of overgrown field areas on the eastern end. A disturbed earth area apparently formed as an access driveway bisects the site, approximately following the toe of slope of a rocky, wooded hillside. The natural surface condition of wooded areas is discouraging to development being very rocky. Northern portions of the tract are comparatively low in the landform, exhibiting wetlands and dense vegetation.

This is not a prime land development site and will be costly to prepare for sports fields, as topography, stony soils and surface water will require significant work and site grading to prepare for nearly level field substrates. Nonetheless, this site can be developed in part at reasonably moderate cost. It should not be considered an optimal location for general park development but will sustain picnic sites, small play areas, courts and pathway systems. These features if carefully placed, working with the landform will certainly produce a secluded, well shaded and buffered park site.

Part of the motive to examine Parker Road as a location for ball field expansion is the notion that adequate seclusion is possible here to enable placement of lighting systems. This prospect is reasonable but will influence the nearest three or four residences on the eastern side of the site. They are adequately well separated from the best field construction site areas but will likely not be perceived as that. Additional buffering will likely be necessary to reinforce the screen effect produced by hedgerows separating the park from residential rear yards.

## **EVALUATIONS: MENDHAM BOROUGH PARKS**

### **A. BOROUGH PARK**

Borough Park is the rare example of a home grown recreation site that has matured usefully as a modern park facility. It is nearly ideal in its location, site, adjacent development and diversity of available features.

It is additionally distinctive as its landscape is mature and provides a sense of unity and integration with the enclosing, streetscapes, and neighborhoods. Its accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists from adjacent neighborhoods is safe, attractive, and pleasant.

Borough Park is significant regionally owing to its long tradition as host of the Labor Day carnival and fireworks, and significant locally as long time home to baseball and football organizations and location of some of the few public tennis courts available in the vicinity.

The park offers a mix of activity types including: baseball (3 fields), a multipurpose soccer/football field, and two groups of tennis courts, basketball courts, play and sitting areas, a volleyball court and gazebo. These facilities are supported by food service and restroom accommodations within a relocated, renovated residence. The site is accessible from three vehicle access points and can be reached from all sides on foot. Adjacent uses include a day care center and firehouse, enabling use and programming of daily or special events.

Borough Park has a variety of age and development related issues (proximity to parking, seasonal surface water at infields) and various accessory systems repairs (fencing, backstops at lower field) but is managed in good overall condition. Its upper field is among those most preferred by the Mendham Little League and its tennis courts are without equal with respect to appropriate context and support.

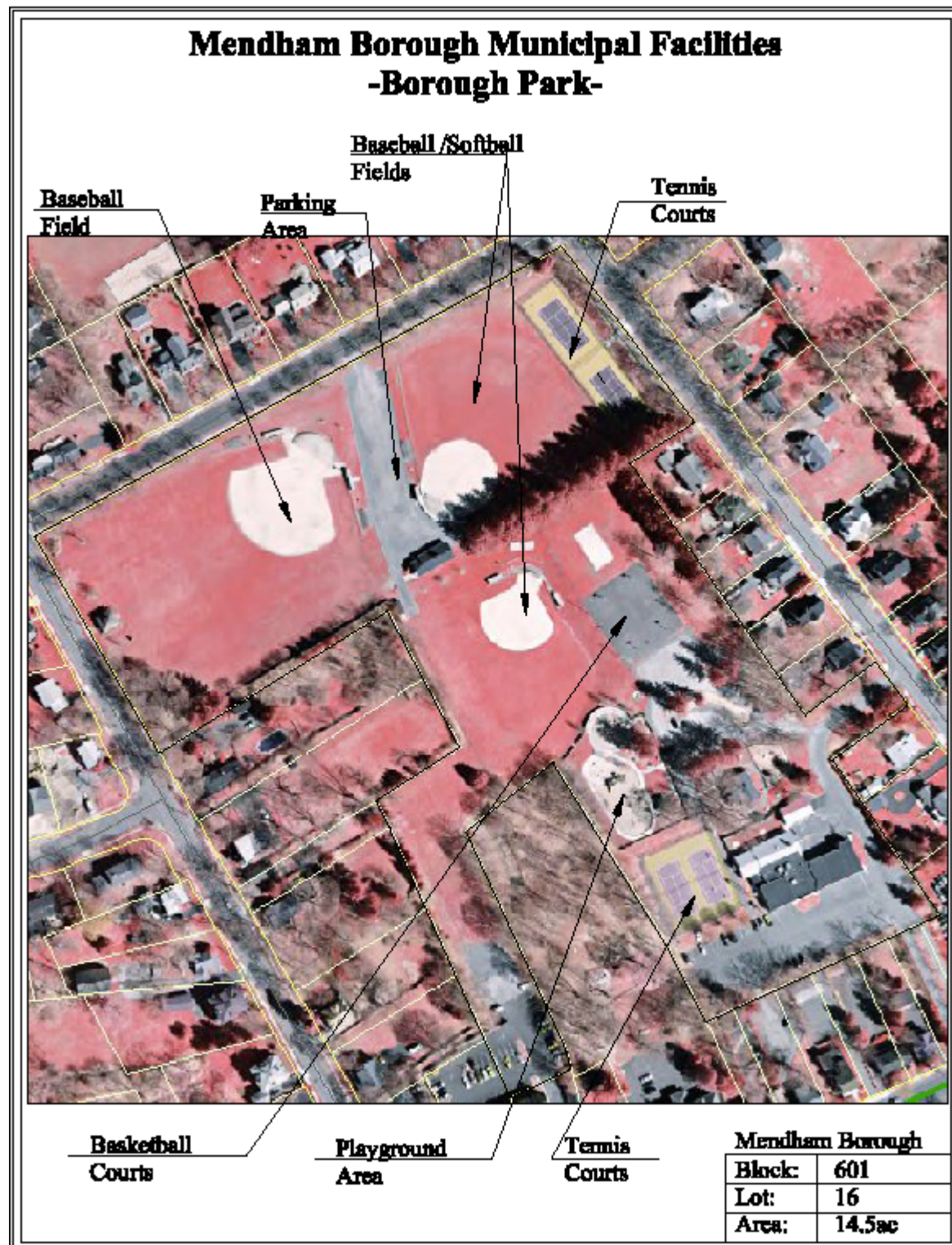
The two youth baseball fields are reported to present chronic programming issues due to seasonal wetness and the lower field fencing and backstop deserve replacement as a priority.

A football overlay field has been a much needed resource for support of the Twin Boro Bears football program but reportedly has not recently been utilized to sustain their beleaguered program. Restoration of this function would materially improve very difficult programming issues facing that program.

Like Memorial Park in Chester, Borough Park is too little decorated and offers too few beautifully landscaped passive or social spaces. Perhaps this circumstance could be improved by adoption of projects by a joined effort of the Historical Society, Garden Club and Shade Tree committee with town service groups to create significant spaces celebrating area character, pride or community involvement.



## BOROUGH PARK MAP





# EVALUATION SHEET - BOROUGH PARK - MENDHAM BOROUGH

DESCRIPTION	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
BOROUGH PARK																	
90' BASEBALL	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	40
UPPER 60' BASEBALL	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	37	
LOWER 60' BASEBALL	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	32	
UPPER TENNIS COURT	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	32	
LOWER TENNIS COURT	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	43	
BASKETBALL	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	37	
VOLLEYBALL	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	37	
PLAY AREA	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	47	
PARK CENTER	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	4	3	2	47	

## **B. WEST FIELD**

West Field is a specialty field created to meet local demand for soccer venues. Two playfield areas and a parking lot have been produced on a very challenging site here but this has been and remains among the most sought and utilized fields in the soccer system.

The upper field is a very small soccer practice/play venue but one well suited to the younger divisions of play. The lower field provides space for generously sized regulation (360' x 225') field or for two cramped small sided fields. Steep slopes falling away from this field on two sides yield routine ball chasing opportunities, but this is a very desirable venue according to West Morris Soccer.

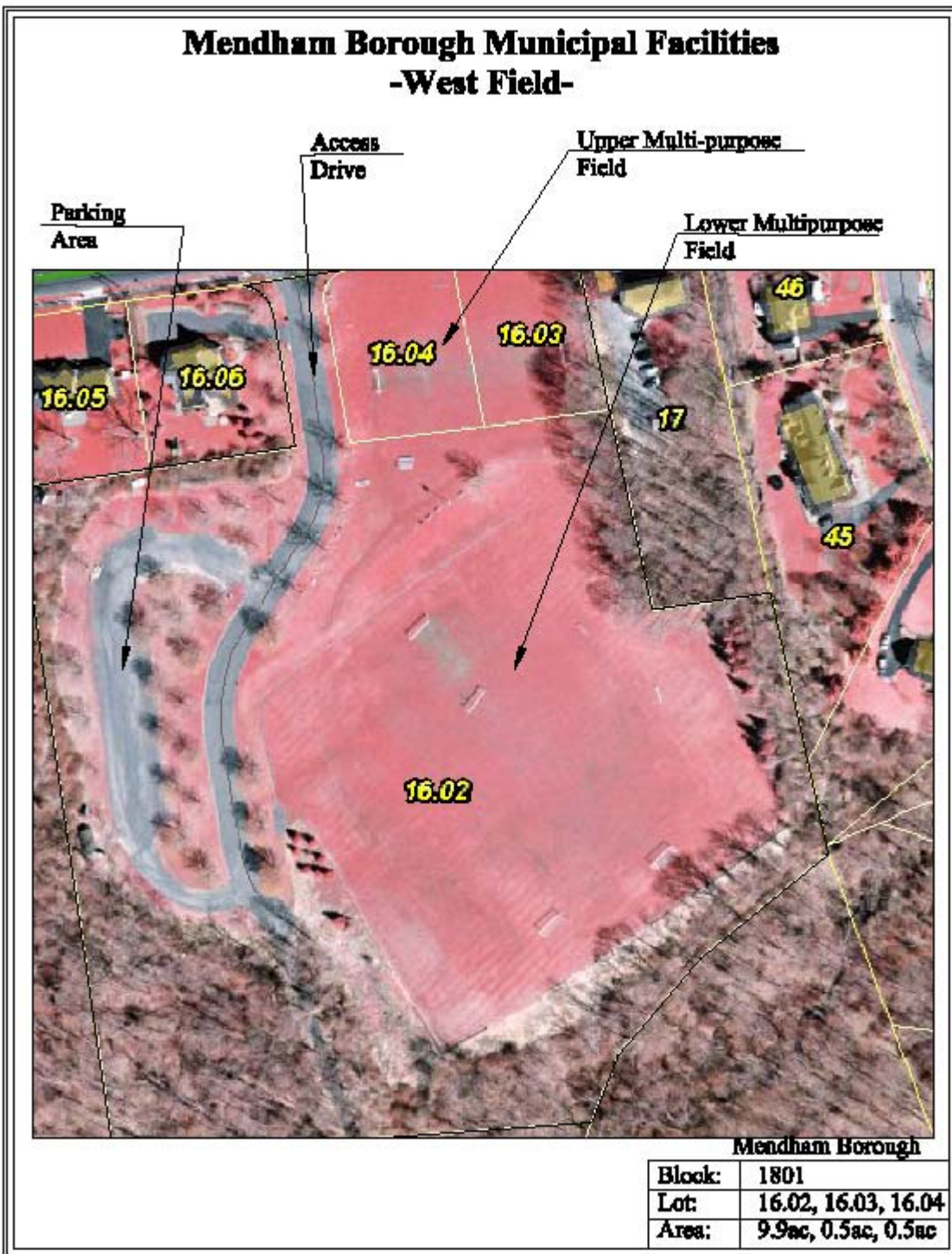
Despite non-compliant barrier free characteristics and steeper than optimal crossing slopes, this site is very attractive, settled comfortably into the landform and thus, sheltered somewhat from the elements. It is accessed by a winding, tree lined driveway and a parking area that in part overlooks the lower field. This enables escape to a warm car on brisk fall days.

A porta-john is available but this is the sole concession to spectator support or comfort on the site.

West Field is very well liked by soccer and lacrosse associations but is represented to be overused and periodically damaged. A recently completed renovation sequence may restore field surfaces to a satisfactory condition but its fundamental soil characteristics will continue to be impacted by normal utilization and if not regularly and thoroughly aerated, will soon degrade again.

As in instances, which occur throughout the Four Towns, West Field would improve immeasurably by addition of a restroom, drinking fountain, small shelter and a tiny play area and some benches. Its future uses will be conditioned by a restrictive covenant of transfer required by the former land owner. This limitation apparently applies to the type of activities that may be developed or programmed within the site and is sufficiently restrictive to remove West Field from consideration as a viable prospect for alternative uses.

## WEST FIELD MAP



# EVALUATION SHEET - WEST FIELD - MENDHAM BOROUGH

DESCRIPTION																
WEST FIELD	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	TOTAL
UPPER FIELD	2	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	2
LOWER FIELD	3	3	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1
																31
																32

### **C. PASTIME FIELD**

The Pastime Field is a unique expression of the Pastime Clubs sustaining interested in and commitment to recreation in the Borough and in the Four Towns area. It is a single full size baseball field in a larger turf substrate supported by an aggregate parking area. This field is “home” to the Pastime Athletics a semi-pro baseball team reported to be the longest established in Morris County.

Its location at the end of Valley Way terminates a long entrance drive into the sense of a much older and more rural experience of baseball than is commonly offered.

This affect and the social motive that initially produced the field and sustains it now are exemplary of what has been and what may be achieved by persistent support of a public purpose.

The field itself is recently improved and well maintained despite its location on a very low lying and water sensitive site. The influence of high water table and surface runoff poses distinct issues in the spring or other protracted rainfall events but as the bulk of this fields intended function occurs in late spring and summer, it typically provides a reliable substrate.

The Pastime Field is one where additional development or expansion is unwarranted and likely not possible regardless, due to the influence of wetlands, flood plains and seasonable water table.

Its continuing programming in support of the Babe Ruth and Athletics scheduling is a reasonable level of occupation for this field as its capability to sustain very heavy use in any form of saturated condition will quickly damage the soft soils and the turf.

## PASTIME FIELD MAP





EVALUATION SHEET - PASTIME FIELD - MENDHAM BOROUGH

		DESCRIPTION																
PASTIME FIELD		SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
BASEBALL FIELD		3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	38

#### **D. GARABRANT CENTER**

The Garabrant Center is among the best features of Mendham Borough's recreation system as it addresses a very common and important need for programmable indoor space for area social associations as well as the special needs of any resident group. It is a simple, neat and commodious structure with a large assembly room, bathrooms, and complete kitchen. Women's clubs, area seniors, the Garden Club routinely meet here and it is available to any group or association purposes by reservation.

The Garabrant Center is one of two (Brookside Community Club) such opportunities occurring in the Four Towns though a third similar function is under construction at Grove Street Park in Chester Borough. Competent indoor meeting rooms large enough and adequately equipped to host a variety of meeting and event formats, particularly those with food service are an indispensable component of recreation system success. These facilities enable development of durable social connections between similarly inclined residents and demonstrate a tangible intention of the municipality to support its civic structures. As importantly, social activities in a regularly scheduled format foster a culture of service and typically, outreach in responses to perceived needs within the community or in service of greater ambitions in the world community.

The significance of support of this type of activity cannot be overstated as a desirable planning objective within the recreation future of the Four Towns. While local organizations act to deliver recreation programs and to provide manpower and capital resources in maintenance of municipal systems, forums where their issues and accomplishments can be shared with others are vital to continuity. Communication of the mission and ambitions of the many diverse groups serving social and recreational opportunities within the Four Towns is prerequisite to achieving cooperation rather than competition as each interest seeks to improve its circumstances.

The Garabrant Center is not illustrated on plan or evaluated by facility.



## **E. FRANKLIN ROAD**

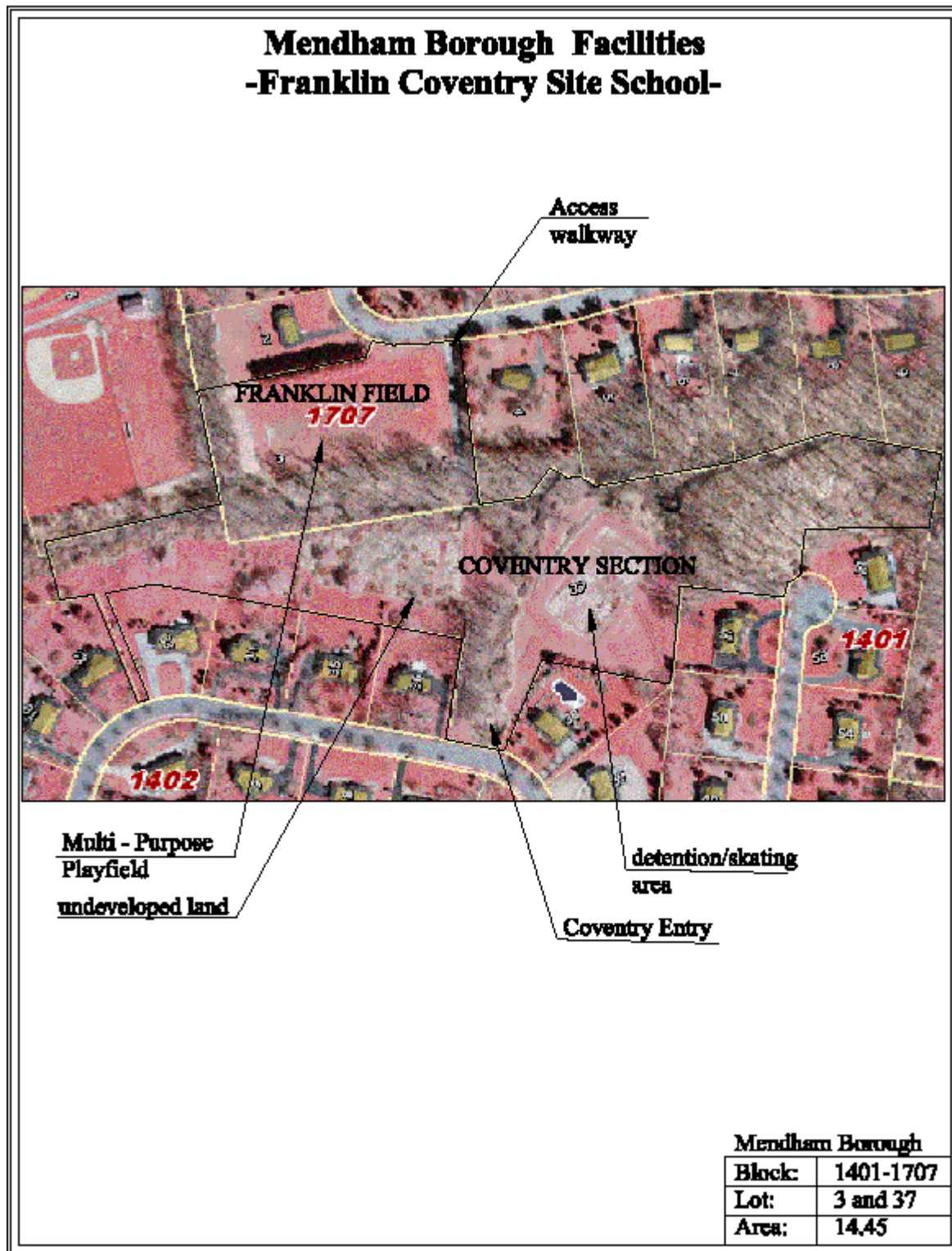
The Franklin Road site also known as Franklin/Coventry is a facility created in site spaces squeezed into the open holes of surrounding subdivision. It is useful for its current purposes, a multi-purpose athletic field but not distinguished by any significant virtue other than proximity to the High School and “pond” skating area.

Its athletic field is regularly used for soccer practice by West Morris Soccer and hosts a large number of games. The field is quite typical of system fields being adequate in playing area size, limited in its perimeters and not inviting for spontaneous recreation purposes. It is reported that parking, or more properly, the lack of on-site parking is a distinct limitation and somewhat frequent problem adjacent to the field. When game circumstances occur here, visitors park where possible at curbside on surrounding streets, inconveniencing the residents. This limitation is likely not reversible by parking area construction on-site as space is not available to create a usefully large space without reducing field size.

The other site component (Coventry) is endowed with a pond or a drainage control structure which has an intended utility for ice skating. This element of the site could be developed into a much more diverse and attractive neighborhood park feature by inclusion of a shelter, sitting area and small play area. Its proximity to the athletic field presents an opportunity for this site to perform many more functions than currently available.

In a recreation future where additional space is improved for the joined purposes of soccer and lacrosse (Black River and St. Johns) scheduling of this field could better serve the extraordinary need of the Twin Boro Bears. As both soccer and lacrosse programs are arranged to function more efficiently on paired fields or complexes and as the recreation football program is now reduced to play on a single High School practice field, the opportunities for both may be improved by this measure of reorganization.

## FRANKLIN ROAD MAP



EVALUATION SHEET - FRANKLIN ROAD TRACT - MENDHAM BOROUGH

DESCRIPTION	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
FRANKLIN ROAD TRACT																	
MULTI-PURPOSE FIELD	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	29
SKATING POND	3	2	1	2	NR	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	26

## **F. MOUNTAIN VALLEY PARK**

Mountain Valley Park is a vestige of a formerly significant recreation element in the Borough. As home to the “Mud Hole” this site likely evokes some fond memories of its past function for older residents. In recent years, this site has been sanitized while an aging dam structure was replaced. It now features a neat, excavated shoreline, a new footbridge, an encircling pathway and sand “beach”, volleyball area.

Though constrained on all sides by wetlands and stream encroachment issues, this pond and the passing brook remain as magnetic as ever for passive use and streamside play. The large parking area here, designed to accommodate hikers and bikers on the Patriots Path provides convenient access to the pond shore and provides a great lunch break opportunity or short walk base for area residents. The ponded area is available for skating under satisfactory conditions as posted by the Borough and though infrequently available, is reported to have been opened for use for a protracted time in January of 2009.

Creation of a large shelter structure at the water’s edge and extension of a nature trail or boardwalk element through the wetland areas north of the brook would significantly enhance the day use capability of this site. Incorporation of a diverse play equipment area and sitting area behind the former diving wall would complete a small neighborhood park experience in a rare, excellent setting.

Facilities at Mountain Valley Park are not rated.

## MOUNTAIN VALLEY PARK MAP

### **Mendham Borough Municipal Facilities -Pastime Field and Mountain Valley Park-**



#### **Mendham Borough**

<b>Block:</b>	<b>501</b>
<b>Lot:</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Area:</b>	<b>33.1ac</b>

## **G. HILLTOP SCHOOL – MENDHAM BOROUGH**

The Hilltop school is aptly named as it occupies a perch thirty feet above its associated playfields. Consequently all forms of access and circulation within this site require ramp, stairs or a lot of energy. Not surprisingly, the athletic field space is not barrier free but as it is not essential to the school objectives, this appears not be an issue.

The Hilltop fields are useful recreation resource and amazingly, are well liked by both the youth baseball and adult women's softball programs. That fact is an important observation, as it informs an understanding of the relationship between local sports organizations and their government structures. Private residents are sufficiently flexible in their intention to deliver recreation and apparently so uncritical of their opportunities that almost any space will suffice.

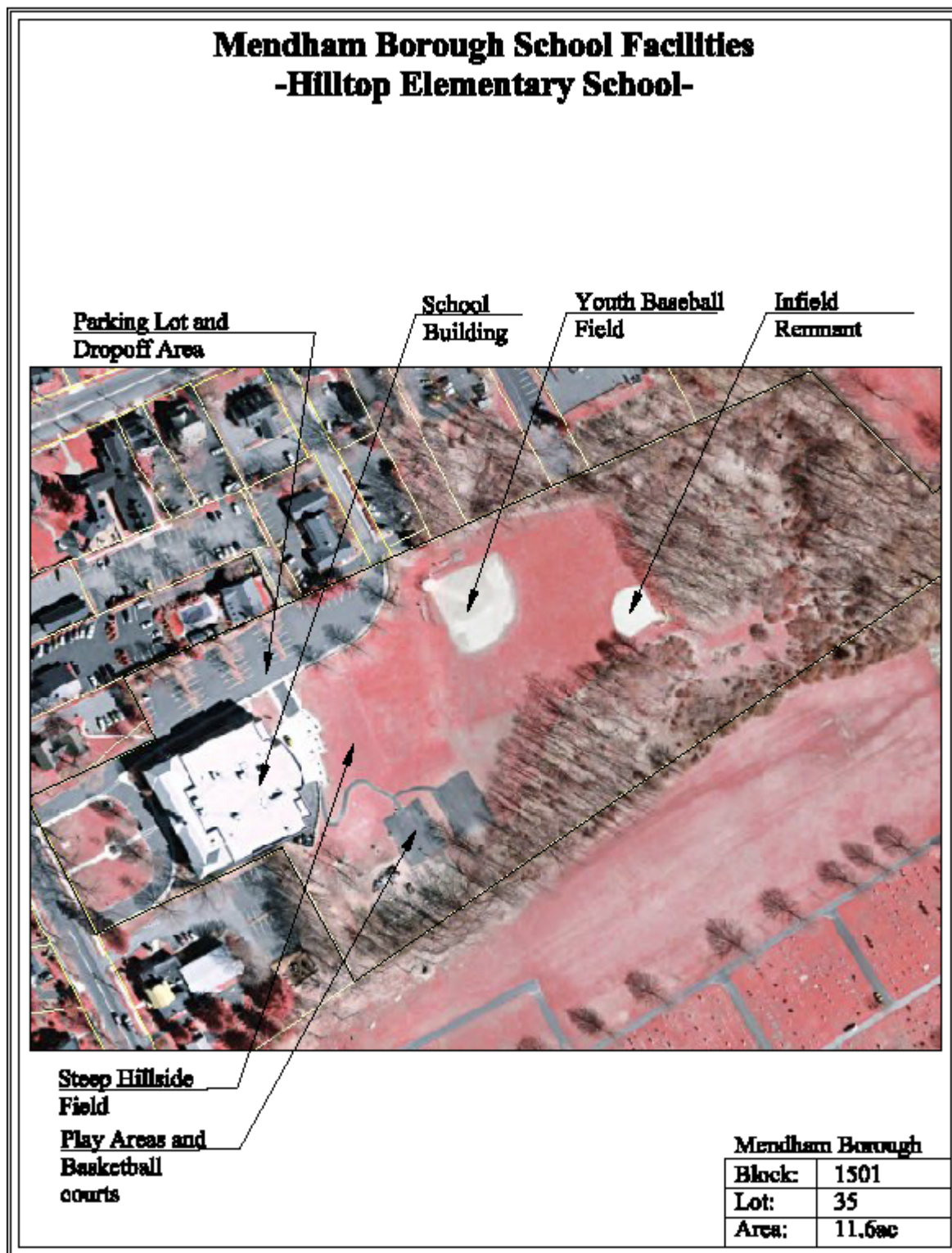
These are two seriously deficient fields and though they occupy a very pleasant little site have few other advantages to recommend them. These are fields just like those that our parents played on as kids, despite the fact that they exist in a real world expected to respond to codified requirements, standards of safety and sometime, minimal expectations of comfort, convenience and support.

Available space here is adequate for a single baseball field, which if properly located on the site and appropriately supported by perimeter improvements and linked to adjacent parking by an accessible route could result in a great single use venue. The site is well sloped, adequately drained and sufficiently large to create a 220' field with proper perimeter space, spectator accommodations and complete utility support. Adjacent forested lands, though restricted by wetlands buffers are useful as a picnic site or location for a sitting area. The school playgrounds and courts enable an element of attraction for non-participants that are so typically absent in the system.

Other potentials for the Hilltop School site include removal of the lower small infield space and nominal surficial regrading and refinishing to produce a short sided soccer or lacrosse field. The high well sloped surface and better than typical soils have a potential to replace the function of improbably poor, small fields at Mountainview and Mendham Township Elementary schools.



## HILLTOP SCHOOL – MENDHAM BOROUGH MAP



HILLTOP SCHOOL SITE		DESCRIPTION															
BASEBALL FIELD	2	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	2	1	3	3	2	1	2	1	23
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL

HILLTOP SCHOOL SITE		DESCRIPTION															
BASEBALL FIELD	2	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	2	1	3	3	2	1	2	1	
	SIZE																
	SPACE																
	PERIMETER																
	ACCESS																
	SAFETY																
	COMPLIANCE																
	SURFACES																
	ACCESSORIES																
	EQUIPMENT																
	SUPPORT																
	CONTEXT																
	AESTHETIC																
MAINTENANCE																	
UTILITIES																	
SITE SELECTION																	
SITE DEVELOPMENT																	
TOTAL																	



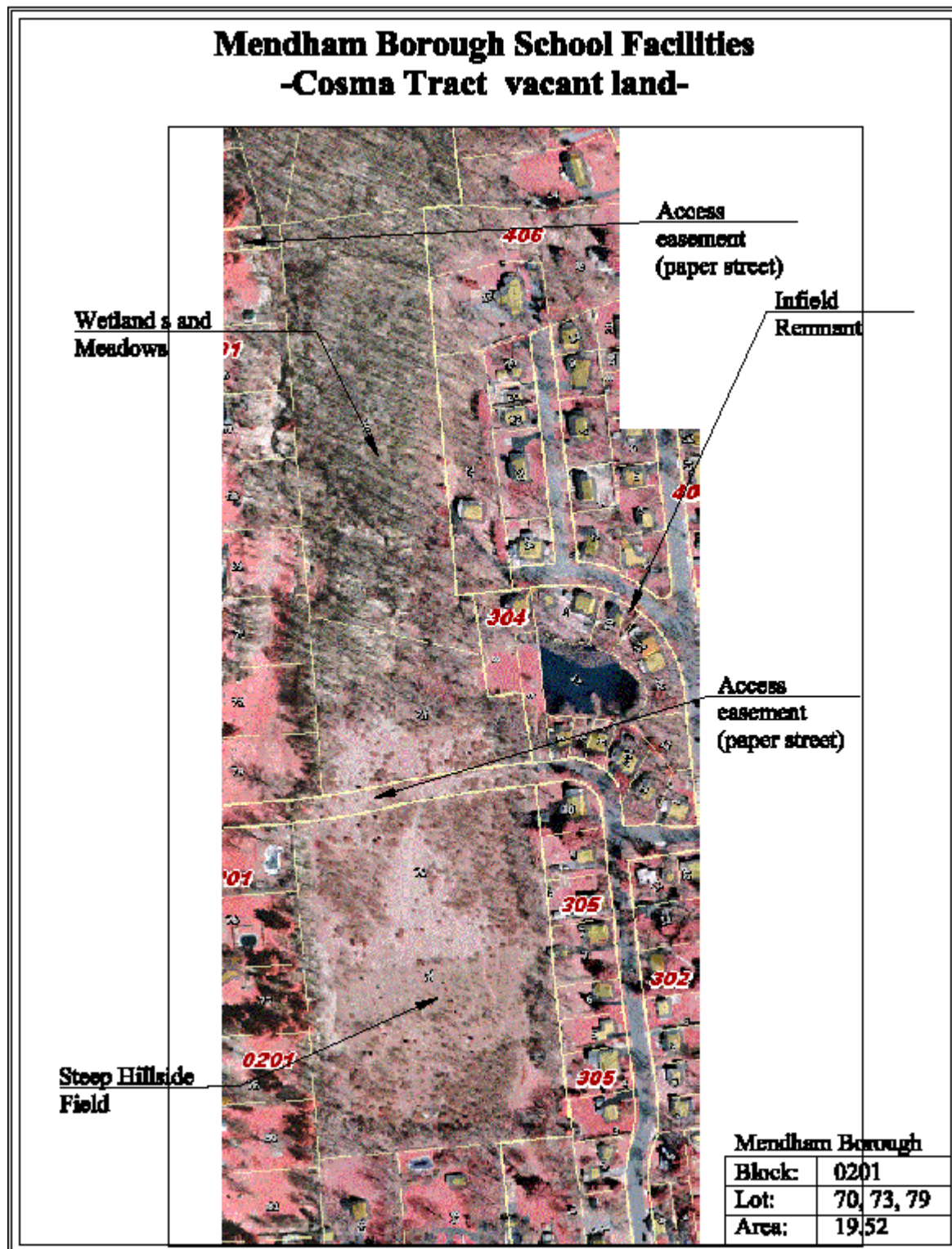
## **H. THE COSMA TRACT – MENDHAM BOROUGH**

The Cosma Tract is a vacant land parcel owned by the Mendham Board of Education acquired to protect space for future school development. Long unutilized except for neighborhood play, this site remains a potentially useful prospect for expansion of recreation facilities in excellent relationship to residentially developed surrounding lands.

The site is surrounded by single family residents on the east, west and south sides and may be accessed from the dead end of Cosma Place or from a preserved access easement on the western site boundary. It is characterized as sloping overgrown meadowlands on the southern half of the tract, flattening to heavily overgrown wetlands and their transition areas across the northern half of the site. These are category 1 wetlands and include a 300' transition area, which limits development potential dramatically.

This influence, coupled with the sensitivities of the surrounding neighbors, likely present a combination of restrictive factors that will preclude extensive development here even though the southern meadow slopes are sufficiently large to accommodate two multi-purpose fields and appropriate parking. As the Four Towns planning process offers far better and less controversial options than development of playfields here, the most appropriate future potential should probably be directed at development of a small neighborhood park including a multi-purpose playfield, courts, picnic areas a shelter and restrooms and a somewhat extensive multi-purpose perimeter lane to enable walking, jogging and exercise related activities. The lower site half will never be elaborately developed but remains an excellent location for nature trails and a link to India Brook.

## THE COSMA TRACT – MENDHAM BOROUGH MAP



## **SITE EVALUATIONS: MENDHAM TOWNSHIP PARKS**

### **A. MEADOWWOOD PARK**

Meadowwood Park exhibits vestiges of previous occupation and has good prospects for creation of small courts, a family or group picnic site or for outdoor training and dedicated activity space for scouts or similar youth organizations. Otherwise its probable best use is for hiking or as an element of pathway extension toward the Chester Township trail system.

Some interest has been reported of consideration of this space as a potential for creation of active use field spaces. Such notions should be strongly discouraged as beyond its natural system quality this site is topographically unsuited to preparation of large field spaces. Development here would be a comparatively poor commitment of resources as many spaces much better suited to active use development exist elsewhere.

A plan somewhat recently prepared for this site is reported to have proposed development of a variety of site improvements including a youth baseball field at the location of an existing public works tree and leaf processing site existing within the forested area of the site. This proposal would likely produce a charming and isolated ballfield but like so many of the Borough sites occurs upon an extraordinarily challenging landform, requiring very high site preparation and earthwork expense to create a facility which could far more inexpensively place at St. Johns or elsewhere in the Four Towns system. This opportunity should be very carefully considered prior to commitment of construction resources.

## MEADOWWOOD PARK MAP

### Mendham Township Municipal Facilities -Meadowood Park-



Mendham Township

Block:	113
Lot:	4
Area:	48.7ac



## **B. RALSTON FIELD**

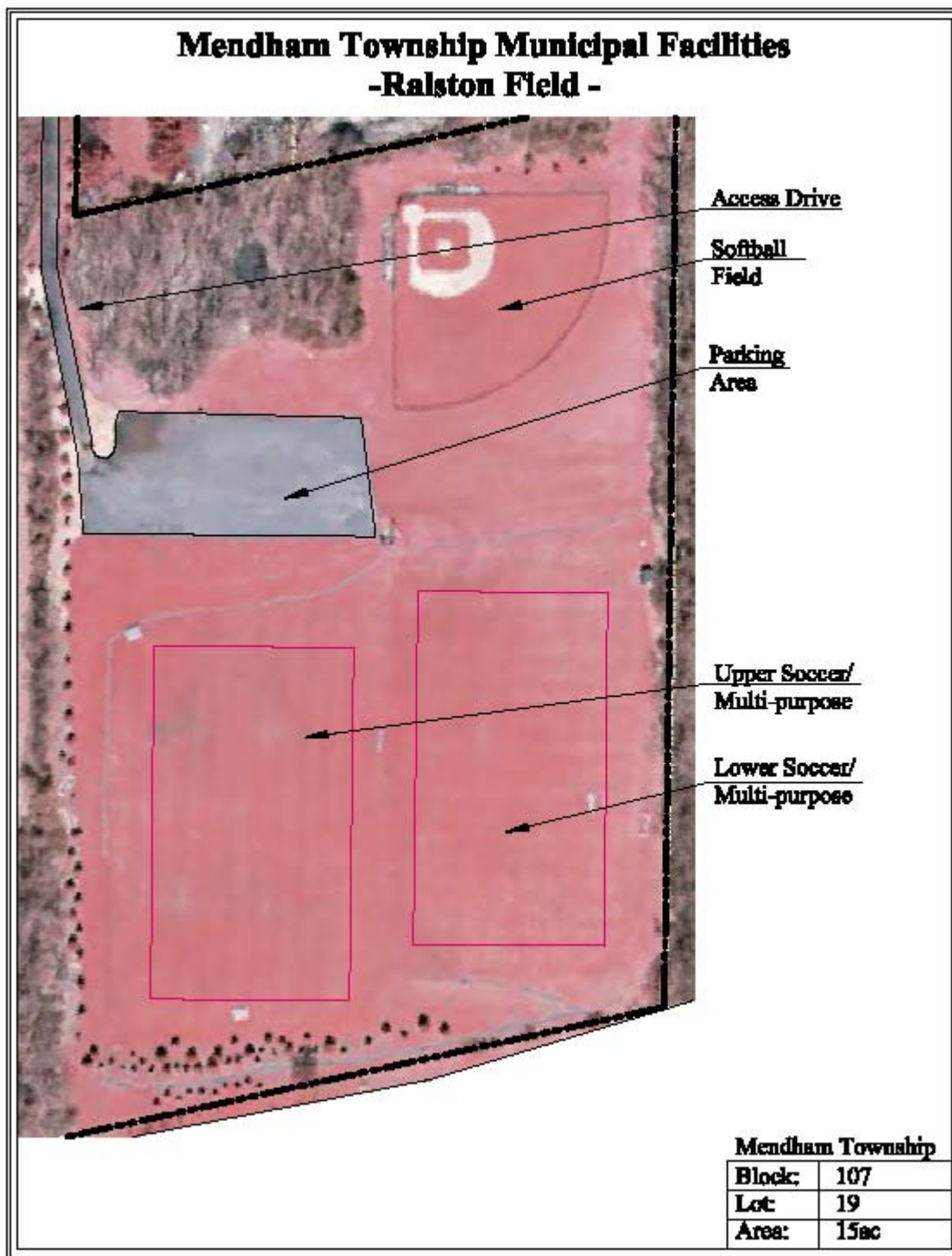
Ralston Field as its name suggests is a pure active use space. It was created in response to a need for soccer fields and elaborated by inclusion of a well constructed youth baseball field. Subsequently, a pathway and buffer plantings have been added to the site and the aggregate parking area has recently been linestriped to better organize a chronic parking problem. Comparative to the majority of system fields in the Four Towns this facility is well and uniformly graded. Its fields are arranged on usefully large terraces and deep drainage swales or precipitous descending hillsides near the touchlines have been avoided. The decisions applied to preparation of substrate conditions of these fields and the consequent utility of each to support its intended activity set a useful example for future development within the system. The important goal of recreation facility design is to support the target activity well, these accomplish this purpose. As a result, they are cited as among the best fields in the Four towns system by the user groups responding to interview within this study.

A variety of improvements could be applied here to improve the aesthetic and comfort level of a relatively stark site. Prominent ones include linkage to Wysong, by an attractive pathway with benches, picnic sites and viewpoints toward the fields that can better support somewhat bleak spectator prospects. As true of most of the system sites, placement of a restroom facility here particularly one combined with a sitting area, shelter or concession stand will dramatically improve the experience of those not fond of standing in the sun and wind as games proceed. Such an addition will likely be particularly useful to support the operation of a running track enclosing the upper field which addition is now pending. If adequately elaborated this site can fill prominent voids in the Township's spectrum of adult and family opportunities while enhancing the sports motif that caused the development initially.

The Ralston Field is vitally important to current programming of West Morris Soccer Club and is the sole venue available to the girls division of lacrosse. The level of utilization here is very heavy through the spring and fall seasons, which will result in increasingly damaging compaction. Site soils are not competent to resist compaction and in combination with saturation can be fairly quickly damaged. Persistent aeration of this field should be assured.

Preparation of a running track surrounding the upper field will complicate some of the joint use characteristics of the site but will be enormously important to the track program. In the event that such a facility can be created, the prospect of joining the Chester and Mendham spring track programs and increasing monetary and manpower resources may become a reality.

## RALSTON FIELD MAP



**EVALUATION SHEET - RALSTON FIELD - MENDHAM TOWNSHIP**

DESCRIPTION	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
<b>RALSTON FIELD</b>																	
BASEBALL FIELD	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	43
UPPER MULTI-PURPOSE	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	43
LOWER MULTI-PURPOSE	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	43

### **C. WYSONG PARK**

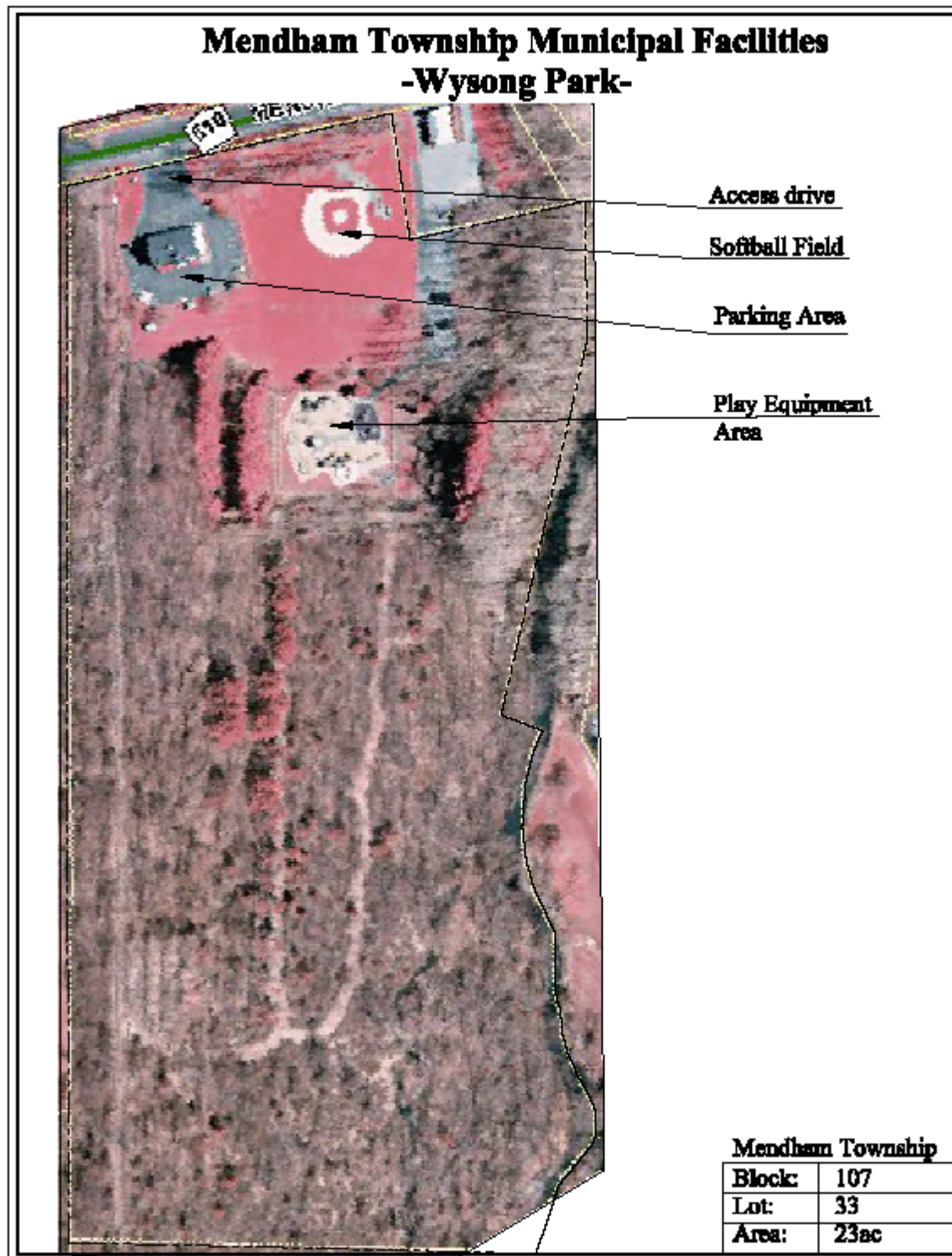
Wysong Park is a nicely conceived small community park with the potential to become a versatile and diverse medium size community park if it is linked with its adjacent athletic neighbor, Ralston Field. It consists of a youth baseball field and an elaborate large play equipment area immediately supported by parking. The nice field area is large enough to support soccer or lacrosse practice or a small field arrangement for short sided 4 x 4 or 8 x 8 soccer games. The playground is well constructed with a variety of equipment options and is ideally located to support the ball field use. The remainder of Wysong Park is a large lowland expanse of over grown fields. These are variously brushy or forested in early succession vegetation and may be accessed to a limited extent by vestiges of access driveway and by trails. Lands of Wysong Park are bordered by India Brook and present an opportunity for creation of a varied walking experience or an excellent nature interpretive development based on an entire cross section of forest succession and wetland ecology. This portion of the site is very influenced by wetlands and will reasonably sustain only passive improvement.

Wysong Park is bounded along the majority of its western edge by developed athletic fields of Ralston Field. Oddly, a fully developed barrier free lane purposefully linking the two sites has not been developed, despite chronic parking issues at Ralston.

Wysong cannot be expected to accommodate a great deal of active use opportunity beyond its current development however incorporation of courts (basketball, racquetball, tennis), a large group activity shelter, a multi-purpose perimeter lane and most particularly a restroom should be considered. Such increase will require expansion into the forested spaces behind the firehouse (beyond the limits of wetlands transitions) but should be examined, to enable the potential of this site to be exploited.



## WYSONG PARK MAP



EVALUATION SHEET - WYSONG PARK - MENDHAM TOWNSHIP

DESCRIPTION																
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	TOTAL
WYSONG PARK																
BASEBALL FIELD	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	46
PLAYGROUND	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	48

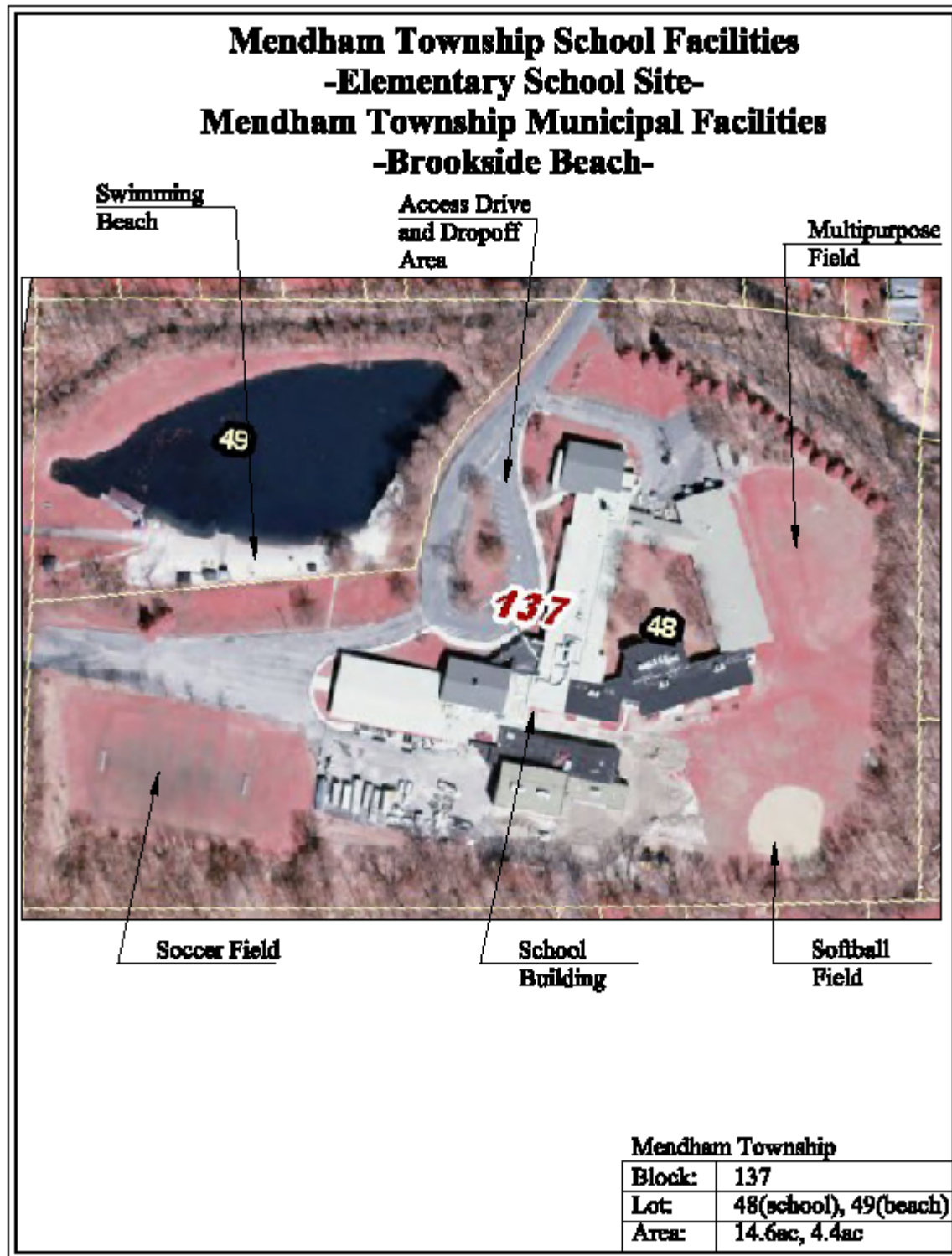
#### **D. BROOKSIDE BEACH**

Brookside Beach is a quaint reminder of the character of community commitment to local recreation as expressed decades ago. Today it remains pleasant, familiar and perhaps the best value in natural water body swimming to be found anywhere. Here an entire resident family can enjoy the water, beach, water slide or relax in the shade through the afternoon and early evening for \$210.00. For a few bucks more per season join the swim team and register your 3-5 year old children to two afternoons of day care. Despite clean water and the ambiance of a family vacation, Brookside Beach is rapidly declining in registration and is below the level needed to sustain its operation. Curiously, a recent Township sponsored preference survey cites a desire for swimming lessons for several age subdivisions of primary school aged children and a top preference for outdoor swimming as most desired new facilities.

This paradox may be explained as a normal fluctuation in popularity or a function of limited advertising but is likely symptomatic of commonly observed preference trends for “blue water”, interactive play equipment, fully developed day care and swim instruction programs and hard surfaced substrate conditions. Variable water quality conditions (color and clarity) and non-uniform bottom conditions produce negative perceptions and anxiety about the cleanliness or safety of natural water bodies in many. For the majority of young exurbanites, public swimming conjures expectations of broad concrete decks and clean, chlorine smelling water in rectangular tanks. Few remain with rural experience of the local swimming hole.

Brookside Beach is an anachronism in most important respects and its reliable water quality, clean beach, well constructed swimming lanes and supporting accommodations will not reverse this character.

## BROOKSIDE BEACH MAP



## **E. BROOKSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER**

The Brookside Community Center is among the oldest recreation and community service location in the Four Towns area. It was originally established by area residents as a social service with a grove, picnicking and small ballfield area and a community club building. Today, the club building hosts regular meetings of the Garden and Women's Clubs and is available by reservation for events. The surrounding site remains in service as ballfields, which are favorites of the youth and women's programs.

These fields are maintained by the Township though they remain privately held by the Community Club. An upper field here provides adequate space for all levels of youth baseball and women's softball but has a poor orientation as it opens towards the west. The other (lower field) is very complete and situated very comfortably into a pretty corner of the site. Both field's present technical issues of compliance and access but these do not diminish the utilization of the fields.

The Brookside Fields are distinctive comparative to all other system ballfields, except Mt. Pleasant as they are comfortably integrated into a quiet, shaded, secure space in the middle of the hamlet of Brookside. Games here can be followed from lawn or shady bank slopes surrounding the fields, creating a pleasant surround not characteristic of typical system fields.

Parking at the site varies from sensibly arrayed at the Community Center building to random along the narrow East Main Street shoulders. Adequate space is likely problematic when all facilities here are occupied but additional space occurs at the adjacent municipal office site (across the street).

A small shelter and play equipment area would be useful additions to support of these fields, as would establishment of a foot trail into adjacent natural lands.

Though not apparent, the lands of the Community Center extend eastward forming a long corridor, which connects finally to lands of Lewis Morris Park. These are primarily low, water influenced woodlands with wetlands restrictions. As natural areas they are diverse in habitat type, age and topography, creating an excellent opportunity for boardwalks, foot trails, and neighborhood linkages to the park and Patriots Path (Which passes to the south).

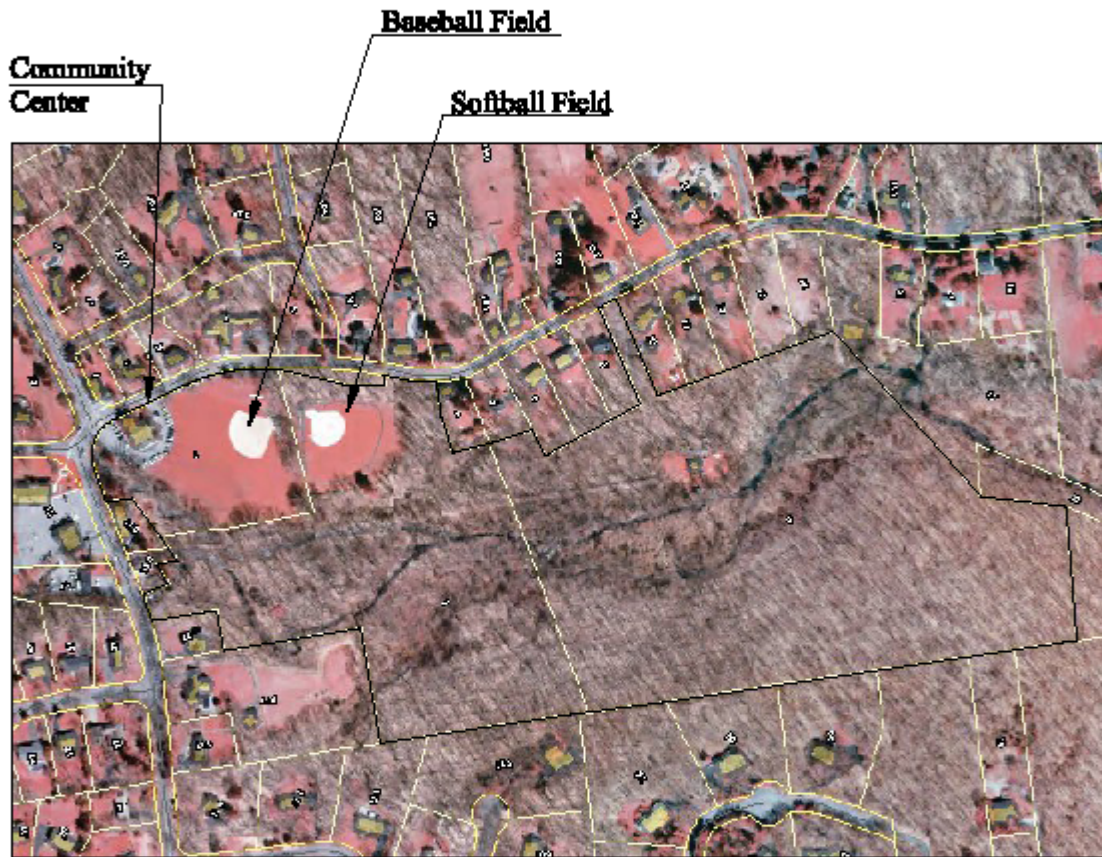
The Brookside Community center site has little unexploited potential beyond explorations of its natural lands.

During the fall season the upper field outfield space is utilized by West Morris Soccer Club for games in its lower divisions. This use though currently necessary to supplement soccer's main fields in accommodation of its huge program, is one that should be eliminated in the event that alternative space can be established (St. Johns, Black River, Highlands Ridge). The space used here can be comfortably used and managed as a baseball oriented Neighborhood Park but will not tolerate excessive loading well. It is very low in the landform in its outfield extremities and cannot be regraded to avoid soft wet soils.



## BROOKSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER MAP

### **Mendham Township Municipal Facilities -Brookside Community Club-**



#### **Mendham Township**

<b>Block:</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Lot:</b>	<b>1, 3, 9</b>
<b>Area:</b>	<b>4.1ac, 13.7ac, 22.8ac</b>

EVALUATION SHEET - BROOKSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER - MENDHAM TOWNSHIP

DESCRIPTION																
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	TOTAL
BROOKSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER																
UPPER FIELD	3	3	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	38
LOWER FIELD	3	2	3	2	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	43

#### **F. MT. PLEASANT ROAD – ACTIVITY CENTER**

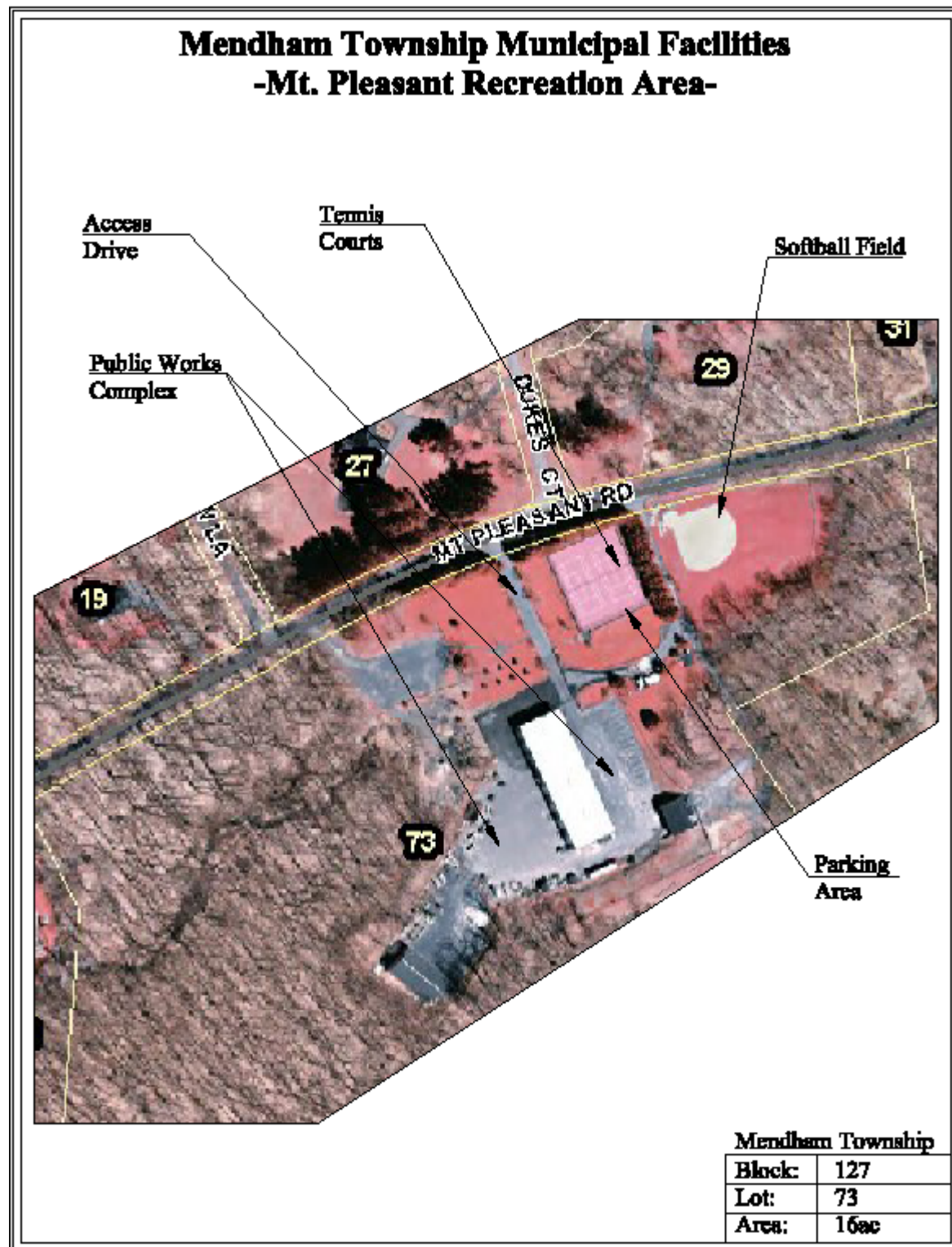
The facilities at Mt. Pleasant Road - tennis courts and a small baseball field present the skeletal structure of a neighborhood park. Apparently, this facility was created to introduce some facility balance to the northern side of the Township. The work completed to date has surely been responsive to that ambition but should be elaborated by addition of a shelter, sitting area, play ground and restroom to transform a special purpose active recreation stop over into a genuinely useful community park. This site extends as forested, pleasantly sloping hillsides and valleys that link with lands of the Dismal Harmony Reservation and Clyde Potts Reservoir. Creation of a lane (vehicle capable) between the park site and linkage points to Barbara Hill, Shores and Reservoir Ridge Road would produce an attractive and useful way to link local residential areas to the park and to support bicycle access.

Mt. Pleasant can be viewed as a very useful gateway location for all area residents to enter the generous and largely hidden natural areas of these secluded public lands and to enable linkage to Patriots Path.

The ballfield here remains important to girl's softball, T-ball, and for occasional use by Chester Little League programming. Its remoteness relative to other system fields is reported to be inconvenient but comparatively low levels of utilization and competent original construction preserve good conditions here.



## MT. PLEASANT ROAD – ACTIVITY CENTER MAP



**EVALUATION SHEET - MT. PLEASANT ROAD - MENDHAM TOWNSHIP**

DESCRIPTION																
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	TOTAL
MT. PLEASANT ROAD																
BALLFIELD	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	1	2	35
TENNIS COURTS	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	42

## **G. MENDHAM TOWNSHIP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

This school was initially constructed on an unreasonably difficult site and has been expanded wherever expansion was possible to produce a uniquely haphazard situation. There are two field spaces here, which children here are obliged to use but neither is spacious, flexible, well constructed or maintained. The small rectangular field vestige on the west of the site is dwarfed by encroaching asphalt, which appears to be consuming the site, and is so impacted by ground and surface water influences that a very inadequate interceptor at the toe of the rail bed is becoming hydric (wetland)

A baseball infield occupies a corner of the more southerly play area. This should be entirely reconstructed or more appropriately, eliminated. Its two steep slope and steep adjacent banks present a very costly renovation prospect with little to gain.

The School Board should closely evaluate this site with an eye toward overall renovation, elimination of slope hazards, and resolution of drainage impacts and creation of much more attractive play spaces.

The fields here should have little utility to recreation futures in the Township as they are uniformly poor and too small to provide adequately safe perimeters. West Morris Soccer continues to program this field as game space in the fall season but that use should be re-evaluated as surficial conditions are not adequate to be safely utilized.

## **H. MENDHAM TOWNSHIP MIDDLE SCHOOL**

The Mendham Township Middle School offers the best prospect for significant future expansion of active recreation of the Four Town's system schools. The plateau space occurring at the rear of the school is large, compact, barren, inhospitable and rectangular in shape. It is configured in three parts, two are comparatively flat terraces, and the third is a sloping extension of the upper terrace. A baseball field, softball field and two lawn areas are utilized as venues supporting school baseball, soccer and field hockey programming. These facilities are so minimally supported by grading or constructed equipment that additional, better equipped and more flexible substrates could replace existing development at comparatively low cost.

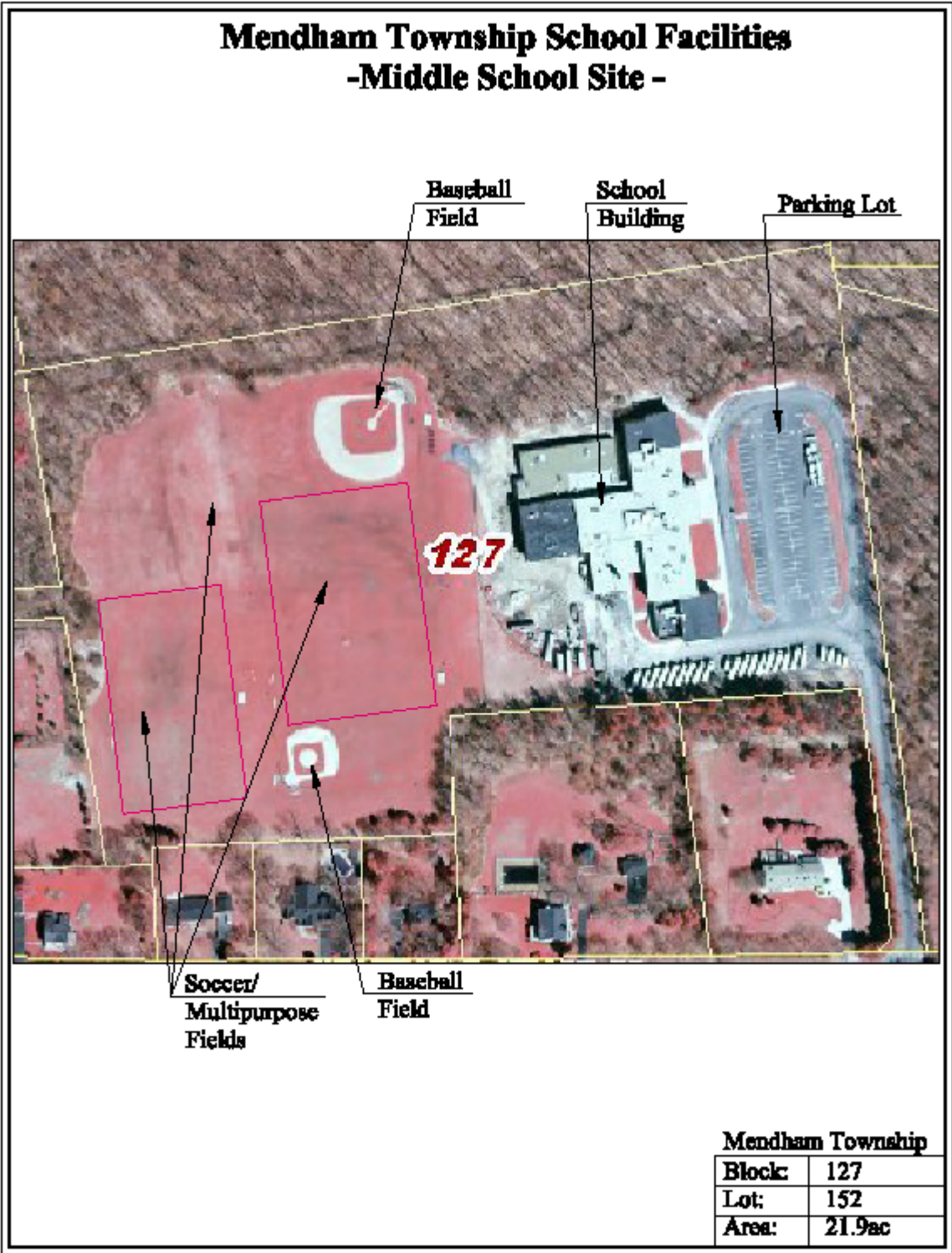
Current development leaves enormous unutilized margins and apparently unutilized turf spaces that with nominal regrading, could increase the program potential of the site significantly. Other support opportunities and infrastructure (parking, electric and water service and restrooms are immediately adjacent to the fields, potentially enabling a variety of site amenities to be considered.

A huge compliance deficiency diminishes use potential of fields here. Grade change between the school and the terraces supporting the fields is resolved, by a steep slope with no pretense of a barrier free access. A paved drive traversing the slope to the fields is rough, irregular and incomplete. Its surface characteristics are not safe for physically capable users and flatly impossible for wheel chair or ambulatory handicaps. Diversions are utilized on these slopes to redirect powerful stormwater flow. Unfortunately, they constitute a genuine injury risk and are a grossly inappropriate design choice. Regardless of the sites relationship to recreation, appropriate resolution of these issues should be a shared priority of the Township and School Board.

As this site has so much unexploited potential and is also in acute need of fundamental access modifications, it is an opportunity for the Township and School Board to consider the utility of preparing a comprehensive site plan. Such a plan would improve the likelihood of creating a number of new spaces, responsive to the needs of both agencies and at the very least guide, future sitework projects to avoid irreversible piecemeal "improvements".

It is reported that the upper field plateau space of the Middle School will be reconfigured by grading in a plan sponsored by West Morris Soccer. This sequence may significantly expand the utility of the upper field area by simple modification of excessive slope and by refinishing. Presuming that no additional surface obstructions (berms, drainage ditches, embankments) are produced this sequence will be a sensible recovery of the sites potential.

MENDHAM TOWNSHIP MIDDLE SCHOOL MAP



EVALUATION SHEET - MENDHAM TOWNSHIP MIDDLE SCHOOL - MENDHAM TOWNSHIP

DESCRIPTION	SIZE		SPACE		PERIMETER		ACCESS		SAFETY		COMPLIANCE		SURFACES		ACCESSORIES		EQUIPMENT		SUPPORT		CONTEXT		AESTHETIC		MAINTENANCE		UTILITIES		SITE SELECTION		SITE DEVELOPMENT		TOTAL
MENDHAM TOWNSHIP MIDDLE SCHOOL																																	
BASEBALL FIELD	3	2	2	0	1	0	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	28	
SOFTBALL FIELD	3	3	3	0	3	0	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	30	
LOWER MULTI-PURPOSE	3	3	2	0	1	0	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	28	
UPPER MULTI-PURPOSE	2	2	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	21	

## **I. INDIA BROOK PARK – SEEING EYE PARCEL**

This recent acquisition is a unique and dramatic parcel with an enormous potential for creation of many of the recreation forms not well represented in the Township or in the Four Towns service area. Its structures are competent and in good condition, its vehicle entry is intriguing and it presents a sequence of spaces each of a distinctive character and each in its own forested enclosure.

The only use the site is not well suited for is creation of active recreation spaces dependent on large, nearly level areas.

This site presents a quandary as a great deal of structure has been placed here that is in good condition and is useful enough to require continuing maintenance, but is not yet adapted to a particular service function.

The Township should undertake every practical expedient to secure the structures here by selecting occupants capable of diligent stewardship of them. In the absence of a well defined plan for the future of these spaces, search for service or conservation agencies interested in establishing a home or satellite base might be considered. Relocation of the Municipal offices might be considered. Leasing to a local or commercial day care concession is also a reasonable prospect.

The number of potentials for future utilization of this site is practically unlimited and while many may be prohibitive to contemplate without partnering with exterior agencies or private interests, in the context of unmet recreation opportunities within the Four Towns, these potentials may yield important achievements.

A cultural arts center offering fine arts, dance, music, theater and other traditional forms of creative expression supported by indoor classrooms and outdoor performance and exhibit spaces could comfortably be adapted to the building and site. Health and wellness pursuits such as yoga, pilates, jazzercise, martial arts and numerous others of the current individual training practices that require only modest studio space could easily be offered here.

The kennel structures are adaptable to support an enormous diversity of arts, crafts, industrial arts, group project spaces, weight rooms and fitness equipment or converted to somewhat exotic uses like archery or small bore rifle ranges.

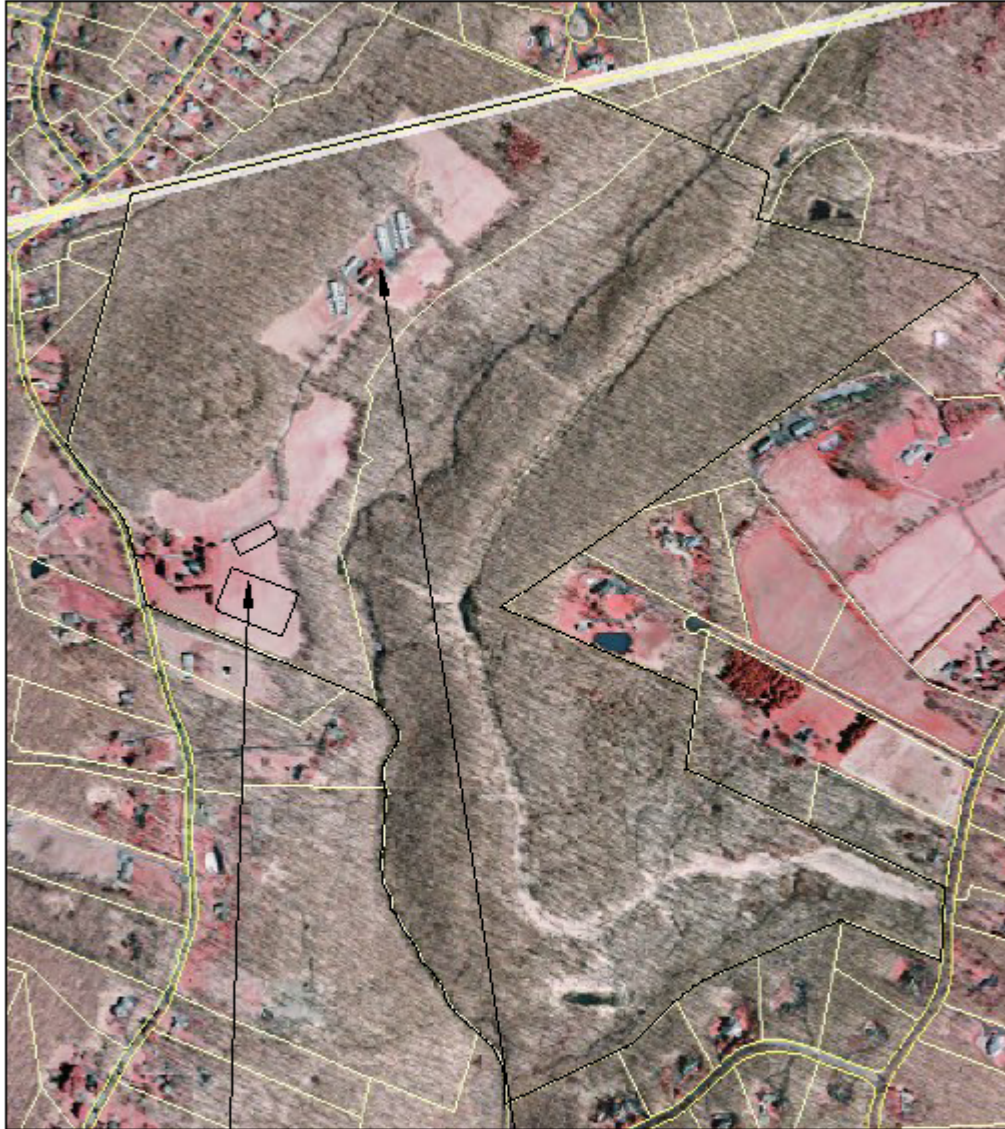
Residential structures could remain as constructed and be utilized to support educational, cultural or foreign exchange camps.

The entire site could be evolved as an event center themed as gardens and available by reservation for parties, celebrations, weddings or similar formalized group events. Generally, potentials for the developed portions of India Brook Park should seek first to respond to cultural, educational or personal improvement themes that can reasonably utilize site structures. Regardless of alternative purposes this site must provide access to and support of the trail ways, natural study and exploration opportunities and linkages through the extraordinary sequence of natural lands connected to this site at Buttermilk Falls and the continuation of India Brook.



## INDIA BROOK PARK MAP

### **Mendham Township Municipal Facilities -India Brook Park-**



**Soccer Field and  
new parking area**

**Kennels and  
Residences**

**Mendham Township**

<b>Block:</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Lot:</b>	<b>6, 7</b>
<b>Area:</b>	<b>85ac, 163ac</b>



## **J. ST. JOHN'S ACADEMY**

This site is the most recent acquisition completed by Mendham Township and one unusually prepared to readily accept programming consistent with the requirements of soccer, lacrosse, football or other of the rectangular field sports. It will present some access challenges as the current primary site entry occurs at the end of a circuitous drive through residential areas of the neighboring Town of Peapack. An alternative driveway prospect from Carriage Hill road exists as a traversable eastern vehicle way, which emerges at an existing garage at the periphery of the lawn playfields. It is an entry route, which can be very efficiently converted to an aggregate or paved driveway.

The tract presents an unexpected contrast of landforms and development characteristics varying from the steep irregular wooded knoll supporting the several large school structures, to a very gently sloping six acre athletic field development. Remaining lands extending north from the athletic field location are second growth meadows with an unusual series of pathways and a cemetery plot.

Presumably, the enormous structures will not be preserved for municipal purposes and the land tract will be subdivided at some location north of the loop drive encircling the campus area. The remaining field spaces of the site will require demolition of two frame dormitories and some small retaining structures to yield a very adaptable, clear open space which can easily be restructured into two or three fully supported (parking, utilities) full sized multi-purpose fields or a combination of baseball and multi-purpose fields.

Two existing soccer fields occur on the site now. These can be programmed immediately and as both are larger fields with better perimeters than many of the existing system fields, their addition to the Township's inventory will enable much greater flexibility than currently exists.

Availability of these field areas enables consideration of a number of reassignments of field space and significant departure from the accustomed allocations within the recreation system. This space alone could conceivably accommodate the entire recreation football training programs in the fall and the entire girl's lacrosse program in the spring, relieving pressure on the High School, West Field, Black River and Ralston facilities. Alternatively, by addition of two youth/softball fields here, Mendham's stressed baseball system could meet all its needs while preserving two full sized fields for spring lacrosse and fall use.

Hopefully, an expedient method of providing access to the fields here can be established as they are immediately useful and require minimal expenditure to prepare.

## ST. JOHN'S ACADEMY MAP

### Mendham Township Municipal Facilities -Saint Johns Tract-



Mendham Twp.

Block:	100
Lot:	17
Area:	91.7ac

EVALUATION SHEET - ST. JOHN'S ACADEMY - MENDHAM TOWNSHIP

DESCRIPTION	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
ST. JOHN'S ACADEMY																	
UPPER SOCCER	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	1	3	3	40
LOWER SOCCER	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	2	33
BASEBALL REMANANT	INCOMPLETE - NOT USEFUL AS IS																0

## **EVALUATIONS: CHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**

### **A. BRAGG/DICKERSON SCHOOL COMPLEX**

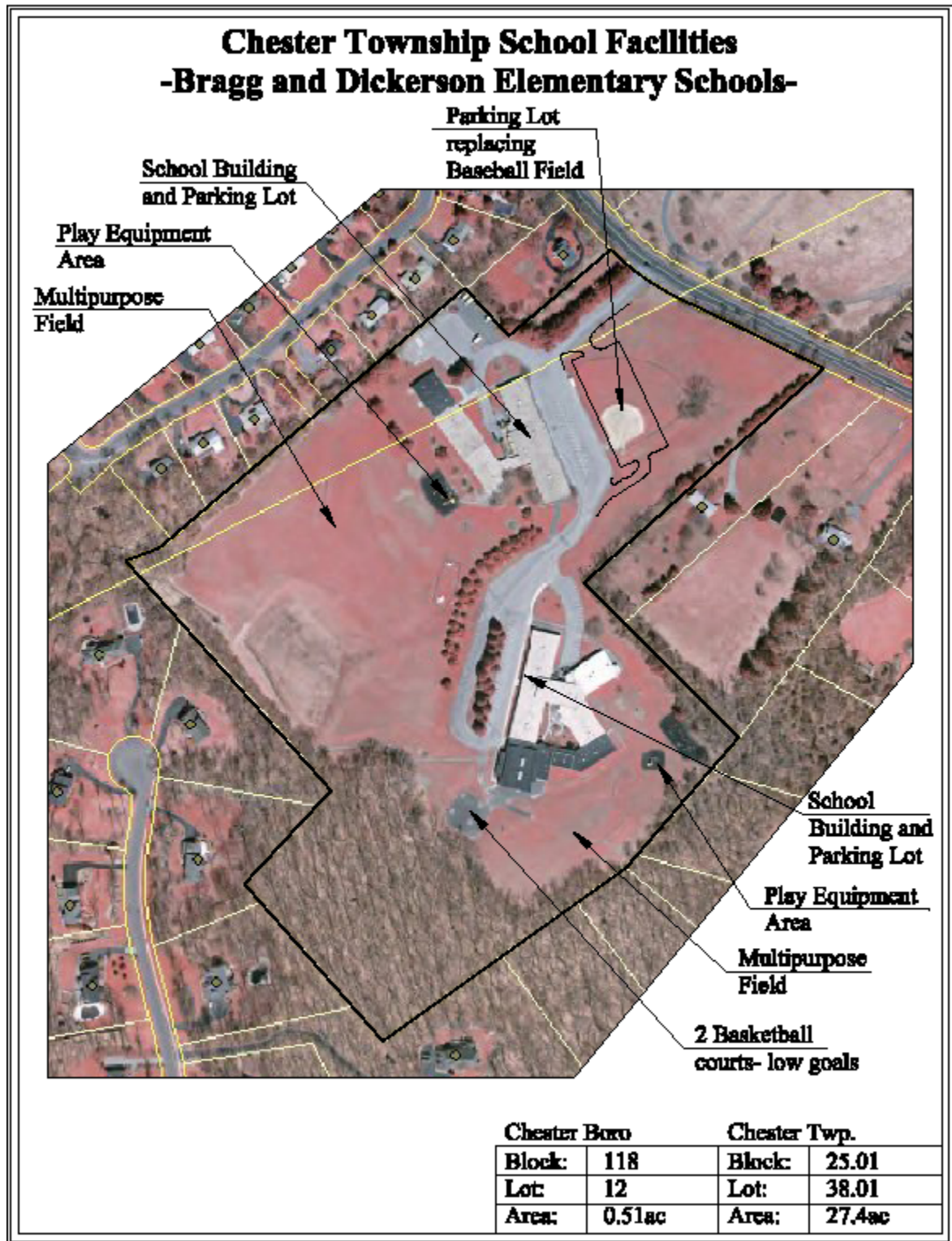
The Bragg/Dickerson School Complex is a site developed to an extent beyond its reasonable carrying capability. Initial site selection was adequate to accommodate a single school building but the choice to expand the complex to construct a second school building was short-sighted. The campus as it exists is a series of terraces occupied by structures and pavements connected by sloping serpentine driveways. In addition to a great deal of pavement, the site features two extensive and fairly modern resilient surfaced play equipment areas, two small basketball courts, one tiny turf playfield, and a usefully large lawn space. This area, behind the Dickerson School, has been utilized for practice by training divisions of little league despite its inutility for that purpose.

Recent parking expansion at this site eliminated a useful baseball/multi-purpose lawn space in front of the school. Consequently the recreation system lost one programmable field here as well as any significant purpose to utilize the site.

Development capability remains at the rear of Dickerson, as space to create a small multi-purpose field exists. Existing stormwater features and sanitary sewer elements complicate this potential at least as much as do earthwork costs. Consideration of development here, of features other than those to support school or neighborhood park activities, would reasonably be a very low priority.



## BRAGG/DICKERSON SCHOOL COMPLEX MAP



## **B. BLACK RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL**

The Black River Middle School site is a very challenging site for its selected purpose and one that will remain difficult to expand to alternative purposes of any large scale nature. The school building perches on top of a knoll while the landform slopes quickly away to the south and west nearly thirty feet. Most of the readily useful site space is occupied by the school driveways and parking areas. Remaining open site space falls away in lawn space most useful for mowing practice. The school sites best constructed features for recreation service are two basketball courts developed on the large pavement behind the school and a baseball field, which has become squashed into an inaccessible spot behind the embankment of the Chester Pool. This field is relatively good substrate of graded land but the developed infield is cramped into a too small space and is only modestly equipped.

The School Board is collaborating with the Township to create new, more appropriate fields on the opposite side of Dover/Chester Road to satisfy its program needs.

Despite the inherent difficulty of creating new opportunities on this site, it has some appropriate potential that should be considered in detail, by both school and area recreation planners. The Middle School provides a large parking area, a modern gymnasium, restrooms, outdoor courts and full utility support. It has the capability of supporting after school and summer season activities programmed on its site and on the adjacent Black River Fields, Highlands Ridge Park and Chester Pool sites. The complex of public facilities here is already an important hub location for area recreation and future improvements at Highlands Ridge may reasonably be expected to dramatically expand that role.

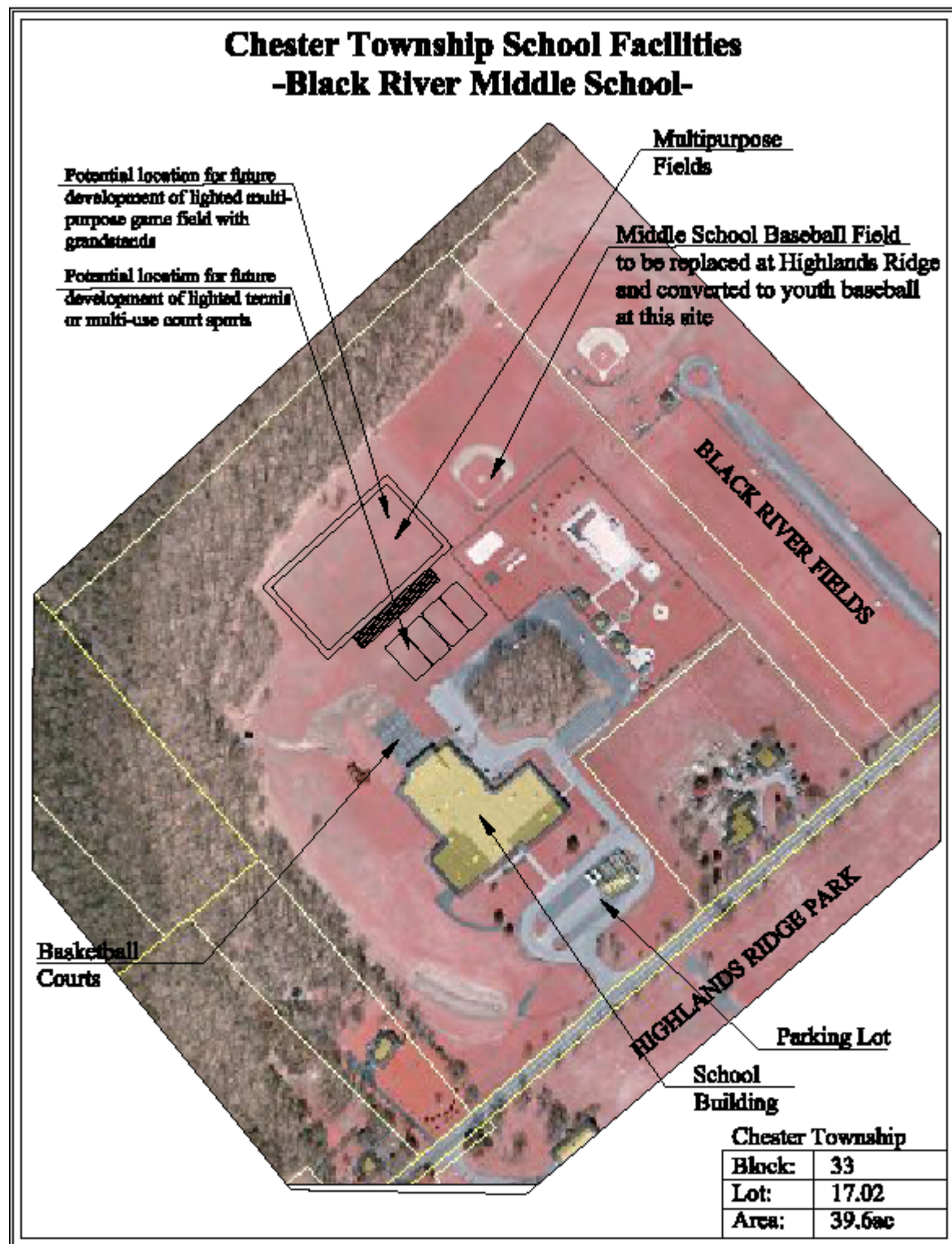
Athletic field and sports facility lighting is a significant interest and a matter of regular contention between sports supporters and public policy makers. An assertion that lighting is not wanted in anyone's neighborhood is typically represented as an insurmountable obstacle to achievement of this goal, despite the fact that lighting could simply be approved and funded by any of the Four Towns.

Mature programs, particularly, those supporting fall sports have experienced the potentials created by field lighting in other communities and reasonably observe that their program could be similarly supported. No important reason exists that is sufficiently valid to eliminate consideration of appropriate sites in the Four Towns.

The Middle School presents a circumstance at its rear field where unutilized public site space, adequately supported by infrastructure, not in anyone's back yard, actually exists. This is one of the proposed target sites in the Four Towns where creation of a lighted multi-purpose field is possible practical and with negligible chances of impacting anyone.

In the event that producing a lighted multi-purpose field is actually a politically insurmountable hurdle, the same space could comfortably a modern court complex consisting of tennis courts, basketball courts, hardball, volley ball or other conventional court. Incorporation of these forms of activity here would be exactly consistent with adjacent uses and would lend to the creation of a genuinely broad based community park.

## BLACK RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL MAP



### **C. WEST MORRIS MENDHAM HIGH SCHOOL**

The West Morris Mendham High School and its site represent one half of the physical plant of the West Morris Regional Board of Education. It services the purposes of High School intramural, gym and interscholastic sports training and game functions primarily, but is also utilized by the Twin Boro Bears football program and by Mendham Baseball (girl's softball fields).

The High School fields are so frequently and heavily utilized and so readily impacted by rainfall that they are chronically in need of repair and periodically not playable (rain). Common access to the athletic fields is from parking areas located on the north side of the school building at an average distance of one quarter mile from the primary access point to the football stadium. Grade transitions between parking and the field areas provide a cardio vascular experience for players and spectators alike and present real challenges for any with ambulatory problems.

Recent building expansion and tennis court construction have filled some of the few remaining undeveloped spaces on the site and have created some dramatic obstacles to movement, as fences and retaining walls now constrain the entire narrow center of the site.

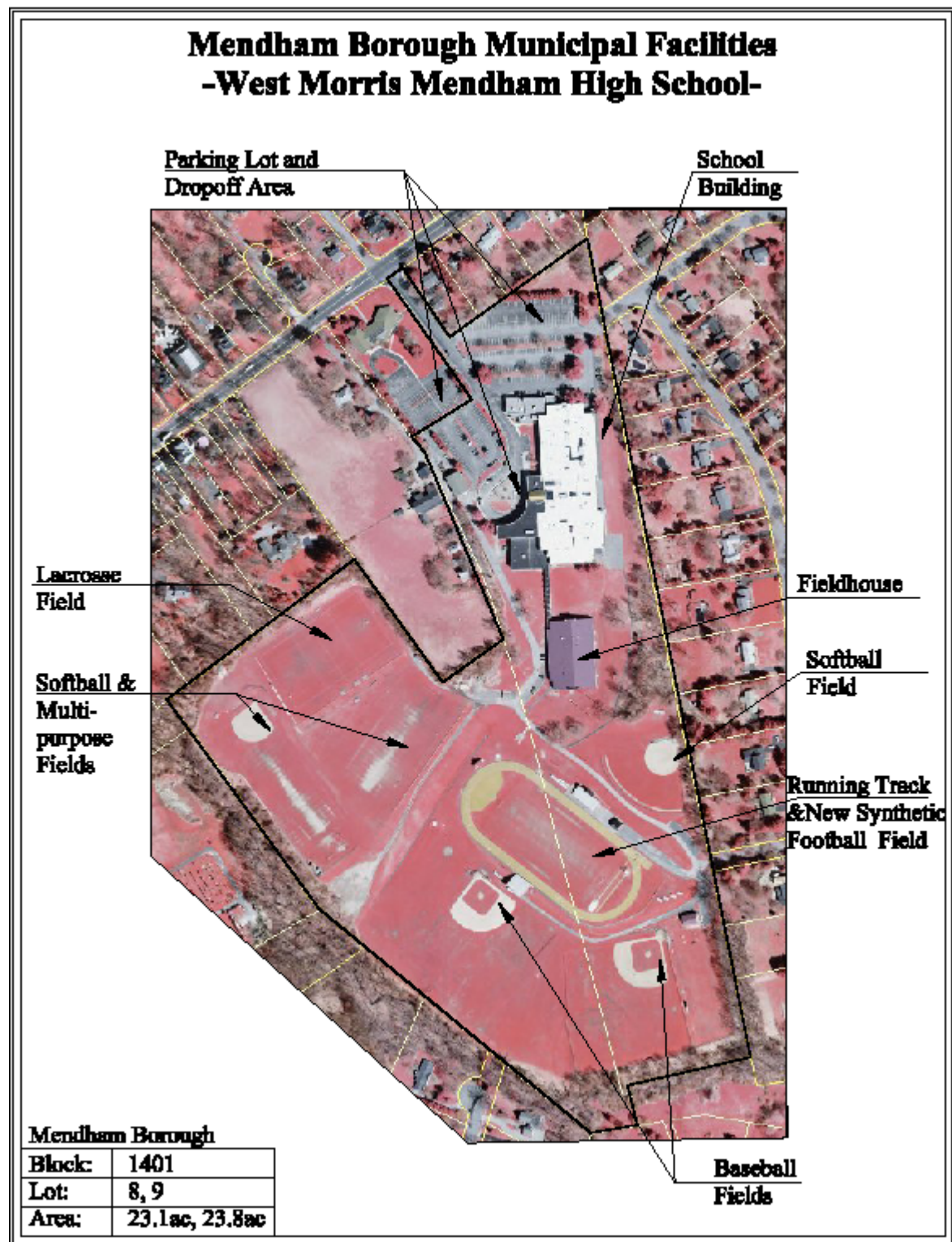
Athletic fields here occur along a series of constructed terraces that descend from north to south across a vertical fall of sixty feet. Consequently, all forms of access occur along a steeply sloping pavement drive and transversing lanes terminating near sport venues. Fields here include: one soccer field, one lacrosse field, two football/multipurpose fields, four practice field spaces (overlaid on baseball outfields), two softball fields, two baseball fields, a synthetic running track and a newly constructed synthetic turf field enclosed by the track. The athletic field margins fall away to adjacent wetlands areas on the south and west of the site and variously steep slopes separate fields. The athletic field site is not blemished by a single tree or landscape feature and is wholly exposed to wind and weather.

The new synthetic field here will significantly reduce utilization of other fields as it will be programmed for football, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey and when available, their practice sessions. A consequence of this new capability is that the field will be available for use by recreation groups primarily on weekends when no High School game are scheduled or evenings after High School practice ends. This excludes virtually all but late spring weekday practice opportunity for area recreation programs. The chief resident recreation program (Twin Boro Bears) will be able to occupy the field for Sunday games if High School programs do not require field time, but report a strong sense of disappointment at anticipate field lighting has been eliminated, as this would have secure their damaged practicing opportunities.

Future prospects for significant increase in opportunity for field access by recreation program here are slim. Despite the new field addition, remaining turf areas will not be notably different in quality unless other system fields can be utilized to further reduce the load on these too fragile surfaces.



## WEST MORRIS MENDHAM HIGH SCHOOL MAP



EVALUATION SHEET - MENDHAM HIGH SCHOOL - MENDHAM TOWNSHIP

DESCRIPTION	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
MENDHAM HIGH SCHOOL																	
VARSITY BASEBALL	3	2	3	2	1	1	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	36
JV BASEBALL	3	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	36
VARSITY SOFTBALL	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	38
JV SOFTBALL	2	3	3	1	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	36
LACROSSE	2	2	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	37
SOCCER	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	34
FOOTBALL PRACTICE	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	34
PRACTICE AREAS	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	35
TRACK	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	43
STADIUM FIELD	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	52

## **OPEN SPACE RESOURCES IN THE FOUR TOWNS**

Among all the resource potentials available to residents of the Four Towns, open spaces, undeveloped park lands and preserved lands are the greatest physical asset by any measure. Each of the municipalities have established open space tax structures and have applied these resources in combination with County, State and agency resources to purchase lands in an impressive array of sizes and types.

The Boroughs by their extensively developed character have secured fewer, smaller parcels than the Townships but each has significantly added to its inventory over the most recent two decades. Chester and Mendham Township have acquired public open space, preserved farmlands and established reservations adjoining previously owned public lands. Among the most significant of readily accessible land tracts are Tiger Brook Park, the Evans Preserved, the MacGregor Preserve, the Luce Tract and the Allen and Knight tracts in Chester Township and the Dismal Harmony Reservation, Clyde Potts reservoir, Buck Hill Preserve, India Brook and Buttermilk Falls natural area in Mendham.

These municipal sites considered in combination with Federal lands; (Jockey Hollow Park), State lands; (Hackelbarney Park, Black River Wildlife Management Area, and County Lands); (Lewis Morris Park, Cooper Mill and Black River Park, Willow wood Arboretum, Bamboo Brook Park, Mt. Paul reservation); and privately administrator parcels at Schiff reservation, Burnet Brook Natural Area and the Upper Raritan Watershed represent a vast and varied palette of natural system explorations.

Utility of these lands vary extremely as a function of the quality of visible entries, trailheads, trails and developed support features that facilitate their use. Almost all of these have some point of public entry from adjacent roadways but next are large enough that orienting within the sites is unsure for visitors other than those familiar with the lands limits. These sites supported by the State, County, Chester Township and Private interests (Schiff) have prepared mapping resources available in print form or reproducible from the internet. Some of these are well done and useful to first time visitors, others are insufficiently detailed or not usefully keyed to enable new visitors to conveniently locate the site.

Potential experienced of the reservation type sites may vary from comfortable strolling groups along avenues through the forest as found at Hacklebarney, Jockey hollow and Lewis Morris to carefully hiking along narrow , irregular sometimes treacherous rocky, wet or slippery trails at Cooper Mill, Black River Park, India Brook, Dismal Harmony, Clyde Potts and others. Less satisfying experience can also be found along these trails. As they are so various in character, even, along the same trail than a novice visitor, poorly equipped, limited in physical capability or simply too venturesome can easily fall, become exhausted, disoriented, thirsty or in need of a restroom. Except where there are reliably large quantities of visitors to lend assistance, such mishaps can easily occur. Pathways and trails are the most commonly represented features of the many undeveloped parklands and open space sites. Extension of existing systems to linkage with other trails, recreation lands and significant natural features of interests have been important recent themes of the County Park System through its Park Commission, Trails Partnership, and a variety of local community partnerships. These projects supported by NJDOT grants, local open space resources and municipal funding have improved networks throughout western Morris County frequently in combination with the Patriots Path system. Mendham Township and Chester Township have been enthusiastic participants in support of trail ways and

have plans to create closed loop systems throughout their communities. Despite more complicated ownership issues, Mendham Borough has created a “loop trail” largely through the efforts of private citizens. While not technically complete as open ownership issues remain to be resolved, this is a remarkable achievement. The loop trail shares elements of Patriots path, passes through Borough parklands, follows pathway easements and short roadway sections to produce a dedicated course that can be followed to experience a fairly comprehensive sequence of the lands and neighborhoods of the Borough.

In consideration of the extent and variety of available trail ways within or adjacent to the Four Towns service area this aspect of public recreation opportunity is as well or better served than the organized sports interests. Interestingly, strong similarities between the two recreation types occur. Both have substantial essential substrates, both are, useful and available for their conventional purposes and both systems are notably deficient in the quantity and character of support features that enhance their utilization for proactive purposes or for users limited in any physical, characteristic including the very young or very aged. Similarly, trail ways are largely created as their own purpose, rarely leading to an activity or accommodation other than some scenic or historic view. The majority have been created for passage through otherwise unknowable parcels of public open space. While along those passages, too few opportunities have been created to stop, rest, explore, picnic, site, sunbathe, read, sleep, use a restroom or gain access to a place where those opportunities are possible. Visible, comprehensible, inviting, secure, seeming trailheads are too few and constructed linkages to adjacent neighborhood streets are rare.

Generally, the Four Towns trail system has developed recently and rapidly as the concept of alternative transportation means and improve linkage between developed and natural areas has been popularized. Benefits of the system are numerous for nature walkers and skilled hikers and significant bicycle routes along rail beds enable a few long off road excursions. Dirt and more advanced trail bikers are much more liberally provided for as many foot rails double as challenging trail rides.

Almost all of the trail systems excepting these sections occurring within older County Parklands or along rail beds are located along long abandoned woods roads or other remnants of forgotten land utilization. Few have been cleared to produce uniform conditions underfoot and few are wide enough to allow side by side walking.

These rustic trails are a result of a traditional view of the character appropriate for hiking trails. If they impart a sense of adventure and promote an experience of intimacy with the natural world, they also discourage a great detail of potential utilization. Natural trails within the Four Townships system particularly those on more topographically varied sites, are typically not reliably accessible to small children, the elderly, those with strollers or anyone with ambulatory impairment. As there are few useful posted or printed character descriptions available for most trails, occasion to enter a given trail may be cautioned by some anxiety about potential risks ahead.

Many residents of the Four Towns have arrived from other, more urbanized settings with a wholly different experience of public park lands. Of these, many are not comfortable with bugs, snakes, wetlands and physically challenging passages. Opportunities for those disinclined to enter the woods on trail ways are poorly supported in the system. The best suburban park type trail developed to date within the Four Towns occurs at Chubb Park. This is a paved, flat, color

coated lane constructed around the ice skating pond. Though short and narrow, this pathway is constructed in a fashion and for an environment much more attractive to an important group of area interests than are the miles of trails, winding over hill and dale.

Joggers interested in easy, regular running surfaces, exercise walkers, visitors with small children or children in strollers and small social groups or pairs interested in talking while lightly exercising, frequent this facility. Their very presence and visibility lend to the social attractiveness of this small feature, producing a recreation that over the course of a year, will service a greater quantity of more diverse users, than any field on the site.

This is a viable type of pathway which should be added to all of the larger Four Towns parks as it is an inexpensive means to add many dimensions of use to athletic field sites and is a magnet for exercise related activities as well as a reliable, safe situation for children on their bicycles, razors, skateboards, or other of the many forms of wheeled amusements.

Creation of a recreation system that sustains popular interests, delivers diverse and appropriate features and is accessible for spontaneous, individual purposes is dependent upon development of these types of features. Selecting priorities for development of future path system elements will best serve local populations by first establishing which activity types are most useful and most sought.

## **RESOURCE CHARACTERISTICS**

Recreation sites and facilities can be classified by size and purpose into several categories. Though no specific parameter defines these absolutely, a sites service scope is a conventional determinant of its category.

The following classifications are applied to describe the several types of sites dedicated to recreation within the Four Towns service area. Discussion of each, in the context of overall system significance is presented in following text. In the majority of these discussions, observations relative to the character of each according to their sufficiency, appropriateness or prospective application to future address by the Four Towns process are also presented.

### **1. Mini-Parks/Pocket Parks**

These typically small sites are ones that furnish a locally useful function or capitalize a unique aesthetic. They may include passive features (path, garden, unique natural or historic feature) a small play area or a quiet sitting area.

The purpose of such sites is to provide adjacent residents with a “safe” playground, a pleasant stroll, a familiar, convenient social space or an accessible place to walk the dog. Though potentially variable, such a space would incorporate play activity areas for pre-school and grade school children, competent seating, shelter and visibility.

A mini-park may be incorporated as an element of a larger community service site, be it school, athletic field, church, historic site or park, as a wholly integrated element. Its character and function target spontaneous purposes of immediate neighbors.

While no such site has been specifically created within the Four Towns recreation system, elements of mini park character occur in association with existing school sites at Bragg Dickerson schools and at the Mendham Township elementary school.

## **2. Neighborhood Parks**

This somewhat inappropriate name describes the keystone element of a well-balanced municipal recreation system. Though not usefully quantifiable in size, these sites typically embrace a “few” acres. In function, neighborhood parks represent diverse opportunities and facilities capable of addressing the commonplace pursuits of area residents. As neighborhood parks are typified in contemporary suburban terms, they contain first, play equipment areas, small or few athletic fields, tennis courts, basketball courts and other of those most recognizable popular games or sports. A more successful assembly incorporates, pedestrian or bike links, unutilized natural space or passive use areas, sitting areas, viewpoints, utility support and some isolation, while minimizing focus upon open, organized sport spaces.

The opportunity to be capitalized for neighborhood parks may be best visualized as a very attractive, aesthetically prominent space where one or one’s family can conveniently visit on foot or by a short journey from their home, and where upon arrival, each member can participate in a separate appropriate activity.

An “ideal” neighborhood park functions optimally within fairly densely populated suburban or urban contexts and begins to diminish in practical utility as its distance from a given residence increases. This separation is conventionally expressed as within one half mile. Clearly the concept of neighborhood parks within rural circumstances begins to fail as a practical prospect.

Regardless of the type or quality of other features within a neighborhood park, two elements are necessary and should be required. These are a good potable water feature and on site restroom facilities of some description. Failure to provide these relegates any public recreation site to a substandard status.

Two neighborhood parks occur within the Four Towns study area, these are: Grove Street Park in Chester Borough and Borough Park in Mendham Borough. As the Four Towns system elaborates in finish and detail over time, continuing enhancement of some of the smaller, less sports oriented park sites should be pursued. The purpose of this is to achieve a much better balance of family day use opportunities within dispersed locations of the service area where adjacent residential density is comparatively high and where pedestrian or bicycle access to the park sites is a meaningful potential. In some cases, as system athletic field demands are resolved, some of the smaller or less capable of the older field spaces should probably be retired from service of organized sports or reorganized as space for neighborhood parks. Among the best candidate sites for gradual conversion are: the upper field at West Field; Brookside Community Park; Mt. Pleasant Park and Wysong Park.

### **3. Community Parks**

A Community Park has been described according to a variety of criteria but at its essence is a large space (50 acres or greater) developed in a fashion that seeks to provide a large quantity and diverse selection of active and passive facility types. The operative objective of such parks is to satisfy mainstream demands of the entire community.

In a mature state of development, a community park might offer, athletic fields, grandstands, a swimming pool, group picnic areas, play areas, gardens, bike and hiking trails, courts, game areas, special event spaces, historic features, day camping facilities, nature/interpretive systems and a host of support features.

In the ideal, such a park occupies capable, beautiful land that facilitates intensive development and conserves high quality natural areas. Creation of a community park is a project type that evolves incrementally, perhaps over decades. It typically emerges in a time frame subsequent to a community's reflexive placement of athletic fields.

Chubb Park is the single example of a Community Park in the Four Towns and while it is deficient in a number of service and utility support characteristics, it is a site with great untapped potential and could with time be elaborated into an ideal character. Other system sites have a similar potential and in each case the potential is of a significance that should be thoroughly examined in planning as a priority consideration before additional permanent features are incorporated at those locations. System sites, which should be projected forward as community parks, are these. The combined Wysong and Ralston sites in Mendham Township present the basis of a fairly complete community park site if joined. Pathways and vehicle access ways which enable continuous circulation between the two athletic field developments on the sites and a central control feature and restroom between the two will create a unified function and necessary support facilities to sustain the high utilization levels at the fields. Future inclusion of courts and sitting areas under shelter can create a much more significant day use capability than now possible. Completion of a perimeter lane and extension of pathways along the India Brook border will establish a balance of constructed and natural area activities. So diversified, this site could sustain far more of the lesser served recreation interests in the immediate vicinity as well as completing service and support features needed to allow athletic field activities to function more comfortably. A second opportunity occurs at the recreation lands complex consisting of the adjacent parcels of the Black River Middle School, Black River Fields, Black River Practice fields and Highlands Ridge Park. These sites, if considered in combination, present an opportunity for creation of a complete regional park with active, passive and cultural use potentials in quantity and scale appropriate to balance system athletic field deficiencies as well as supplementing a host of court sports, family day use activities, large scale special events and potentially indoor activities as well. This is a unique potential comparative to all other system sites as a great deal of constructed infrastructure exists here in the form of parking lots, access drives, utility system support and enormous unexploited open space. The complex occurs near the intersection of primary roadway routes linking the Four Towns and is centrally located with respect to residential districts of each. In the event that the planning purposes of the Four Towns can be unified into a shared vision for resolving future development proposals, this site is the logical first choice location for expansion of joint programming.

In a future that can be directed to join lands of the former Lucent site (recently acquired by Chester Borough) to the Highlands Ridge Park, even greater potentials for recreation system expansion along new, more ambitious avenues may be possible. Creation of large scale indoor facilities (YMCA) or enclosed athletic fields supported by public/ private partnerships become obvious potentials with realistic prospects for securing exterior support.

#### **4. Athletic Fields**

Athletic Fields constitute the bulk of system sites within the Four Towns service area. These are purpose built facilities created to accommodate one or more venues of any organized sports function. Typically they consist of the few features needed to conduct the intended competition and little else. Athletic Fields may be very rudimentary or elaborated by lighting, grandstands, food service features or field houses.

Sites within the Four Towns service area that are best described as athletic fields are: Black River Fields, Memorial Park, Collis Ave. Park, West Field, Ralston Field, Franklin Field, Brookside Community Center, MT Middle School, and WMM High School.

Future creation of Athletic Field sites within the Four Towns should be considered as a very low priority in contrast to other system needs.

#### **5. Natural Resource Areas**

These are lands preserved from conventional forms of residential and commercial development purposefully to protect fragile, distinctive, historic or scenic landscapes. Unlike sanctuaries, their purpose is to retain purely natural systems for the refreshment or education of area residents.

Currently, both Townships abound in such spaces and contain a remarkable quantity of privately owned lands that lend their undeveloped character and environmental continuity to the typically rural aesthetic of much of the southern and western regions of the Four Towns.

Existing public lands with Natural Resource Area characteristics are: Cooper Mill Park, Lewis Morris Park, Tiger Brook Park, The Evans and MacGregor Preserves, India Brook Park, Cold Hill Reservation, Clyde Potts Reservoir and the enormous combination of parcels assembled as the Black River WMA.

As open space acquisition targets have been largely met for the Townships, future additions will likely accrue through significant opportunities bargained as part of land development proposals. Consequently, the Four Towns service area will remain unusually well provided for in terms of Natural Resource areas. Excepting unique geologic or historic site acquisition opportunities that may arise, pursuit of additional land for these purposes should be considered a low priority.

As may be seen by review of the developed park types available within the Four Towns service area, only athletic fields and natural resource area categories of conventional recreation site subdivision are well represented. In addition, natural resource areas are



available to residents of the two Boroughs only as a consequence of their abundance in adjacent Township lands. Conversely, neighborhood parks or minor recreation features capable of utilitarian pedestrian based day use activities are more appropriately provided for residents of the two Boroughs and far less so, for Township residents. Practical aspects of improving availability of varied, sustaining day use, and individual and family oriented public recreation activities constitute some of the most important planning considerations for successful implementation of an equitable Four Towns Plan. Incorporation of facilities that enable or sustain significantly greater opportunity for adjacent residents should be a fundamental condition to be met by all future improvement projects within the system parks and athletic field sites. Typically, design to accommodate more diverse opportunities can be somewhat simply accomplished by resisting the inclination to respond to single purpose needs regardless of their popular support or seemingly imperative nature. If the municipalities continue to respond to substantial deficiencies of sports organizations (as for fields), without consideration of: context, overall service needs or potential utility for multiple purposes, few of the current imbalances will be corrected. If instead, commonly established criteria for each facility type including provisions for simultaneous development of features that meaningfully improve general recreation were required, the prospect of creating much more serviceable, more attractive features would be advanced, even for piecemeal projects. This criterion will likely seem confounding to purposes of the several sports associations, as they have been accustomed to a system of somewhat exclusive partitioning of public land for their unique objectives. Despite the enormous quantity of effort and commitment they have dedicated to upholding their share of responsibility within the Four Towns recreation system, the associations represent special interests. Their operations fall within the context of land sites owned by the general public and should, as a matter of strategic advantage, advocate as forcefully for inclusion of greater themes.

## **FACILITY AND ACTIVITY RESOURCE CHARACTERISTICS**

Outdoor recreation sites in the Four Towns service area incorporate a variety of types of conventional recreation facilities created to accommodate segments of the population in a variety of activities.

These are discussed according to generic facility activity or characteristic type in following text.

### **COURT SPORTS**

#### **1. Tennis**

The Four Towns service area offers a sum total of ten tennis courts to the public. These are widely dispersed across the recreation system, occurring in well supported locations only at Grove Street Park, Chubb Park and at Borough Park. Courts at the High School are recently reconstructed but have little utility to area residents while school is in session or when practice is occurring. Those at Mt. Pleasant are well situated for the neighborhood but too remote and unsupported to be an important alternative destination for the bulk of Township or Four Towns residents. The best in all respects are those at Borough Park as they are lighted, supported by a restroom and immediately adjacent to parking and play areas. These enable utilization by area adults after working hours as well as creating a situation where groups of adults or families with young children in tow

are able to play tennis while supervising the activities of their children on nearby equipment.

Tennis has not been reported to be a particularly underserved activity within the Four Towns service area as a likely consequence of the sports distinctly cyclic popularity. It flourishes according to the prominence of media reporting of national celebrities in the sport and as a response to well developed, well directed programs at the level of local recreation. Many area adults belong to area fitness and tennis clubs that provide reliable year round access to quality courts in a preferred social environment. These are frequently “life sport” tennis players and not those particularly dependent upon available public resources.

Tennis courts are in supply approximately balanced with need within the Four Towns service area but could more usefully distributed to enable more equitable access to those residents located in the southern and western areas of the service area. More importantly, those currently available could be made more utilitarian by addition of lighting systems to increase their availability in spring and fall. Similarly, where courts occur in remote locations (Chubb and Mt. Pleasant) addition of complimentary supporting features will promote higher levels of utilization and improve the sense of security during weekdays.

As Plans for improvement of the largest community park sites begin to emerge, design programs for those sites (Black River/Highlands Ridge and Ralston/Wysong ) should include space reservation and utility infrastructure to enable future placement of lighted tennis court groups in immediate proximity of play equipment areas, picnic sites, sitting areas and other complimentary day use facilities that build upon a concept of higher density of use with opportunities for multiples of tennis enthusiasts to share a comfortable social experience as well as participating in the game.

## **2. Basketball**

Outdoor Basketball is represented by a total of five public courts within the Four Towns service area. Three of these occur in the Boroughs and only two courts occur in developed Township recreation sites. As basketball is one of the most useful and popular small group sports and as it can be reliably played almost year round, this sum is far too small. Basketball courts, particularly lighted courts, provide one of the very most familiar and accessible of individual spontaneous outdoor recreations. It is an activity that has maintained enormous popularity in the sports media and its influence is pervasive in popular culture as evidenced by foot ware and apparel commonly worn by young and not so young, alike. It is uniformly popular in urban culture and for those transplanted to more rural communities, remains a familiar mode of competition, easily arranged, in a variety of impromptu formats.

Among the most significant utilities of outdoor basketball courts is their capability to attract and sustain the interest of teens and adults in a demanding form of competitive exercise. The game by its character and traditions allows rough play and very intimate exchange of remarks between competitors that are otherwise discouraged. Many find this sort of challenge engaging and will routinely meet for a little one-on-one where a few spare minutes are available, or form pick up teams including any available body.

Unlike many other types of court activity, basketball is very effective as a stand-alone facility. It requires only access, parking, a drinking fountain and some sheltered seating.

Duration of play may be satisfactory even if brief, for most adult players. The social character of pick-up basketball derives from close proximity, physical contact and individual skills display. It is a magnet for teens and boys establishing their position in the social structure of their peers and trains a durable, commonly understood form of engagement regardless of age.

Basketball courts throughout the system present the most common of appearances. They are conventional black asphalt surfaces with minimal line striping and occur without accompanying benches shelters perimeter enclosures or other features that accommodate other players resting or waiting their turn to play. Alternatively, basketball courts can be color coated, furnished with benches, complimented with a drinking fountain and enclosed with fences at both ends to prevent balls from rolling away. The unmet objective of area courts is preparation of venues that are attractive and comfortable rather than simply being functional. In the circumstance of the Chester's Summer Basketball League portable lights and makeshift accommodations are utilized to adapt common courts for use by dozens of teams. In this instance, an exciting basketball forum with permanent lights, spectator seating and restroom support would serve to transform the experience of the players into a memorable event. An additional consideration relative to safety of the few area courts that should be addressed as a matter of good practice is the addition of padded goal post supports. This protection is a simple concession to safety that should be employed except where goal offsets are greater than 8'.

Ultimately, lighted basketball courts should be considered for placement in all of the developed neighborhood and community park sites within the Four Towns system. The objective of this is to extend use availability to accommodate working adults and generally to support evening play. Future court development initiatives should be directed at construction of court pairs to produce multi-purpose pavements that can be adapted to a variety of alternative uses such as support of day camping, street hockey, skateboarding or line games.

### **3. Handball, Squash, Racquetball**

These court games do not exist in the public system currently. The latter two may well never be constructed as they require specialized facilities; these are most successfully placed following the request of an organized group of enthusiasts. Both squash and racquetball have had brief popular periods but neither of these sports is currently played as much as they once were. Handball contrarily is a sport that can be offered coincident with construction of a tennis practice wall and if interest waxes and wanes, the facility remains functional and available to tennis players as a practicing feature. Ideally, such a feature would be incorporated into court campus with tennis in a community park setting.

### **4. Minor Court Facilities**

These frequently include volleyball, bocce, horseshoes, croquet, shuffleboard, badminton and rarely lawn bowling.

None of these, except volleyball, now exist in the system as groups of complimentary activities have not been recognized as a theme of previous planning. All except horseshoes and badminton require an organized group of followers to make creation of such facilities a viable prospect. Horseshoe pitches, sand volleyball and badminton courts can be a useful addendum to a well-appointed picnic grove and should supplement existing development at Chubb, Black River, Wysong and West Field to expand the alternative opportunities at these sites.

Constructions of minor court spaces require little in terms of capital outlay and are likewise, uncomplicated to construct. The technical requirements for construction of any of these are fully within the capabilities of system public works departments and may be undertaken as a minor annual component of budgeting to elaborate existing facility diversity.

Volleyball has exhibited a persistent but limited popularity particularly in association with waterfront activities. It has shown similar popularity in general recreation facilities where a fairly diverse offering of activities exists. It is not typically a stand-alone feature and like basketball, is most attractive when prepared in a unique setting supported by seating, shade and furnishings, not plunked in the middle of an open lawn space.

### **OTHER MAINSTREAM RECREATIONS:**

#### **SWIMMING**

Swimming and swim related activities are among the most popular activities offered within the context of public recreation systems. These are invariably cited as desirable life sports and fitness activities as they are typically in short supply and sparsely distributed within the region and within the Four Towns service area. (*A recently conducted survey of Mendham Township residents identifies swimming, swim training and water safety as the most desired activity group among conventional recreation forms.*) Swimming activities are available regionally indoors at Somerset Hills Swim Club, Flanders Swim Club and at two YMCA pools in Randolph and Morris Plains. Outdoor facilities occur at two locations within the service area at the Chester Community Pool and at the Brookside Beach and in nearby locations in Morris Township (Streeter and Ginty) and at Bernardsville Pool.

The local pools are significantly different in character as The Brookside Beach is a natural water body facility and the Chester pool, a conventional 50 x 25 meter L shaped tank. Recent registration of the Brookside Beach has fallen perilously in recent years despite its remarkably high value to cost characteristic. This is almost certainly symptomatic of evolving popular expectations for the character of public swimming facilities and is complicated by concern about water quality and swimming in water that is not "blue".

Pools conventionally achieve their popularity as the summer season typically offers fewer supervised activities for area children than when school is in session. The importance of reliable day camping, camping and other managed situations for the children of working parents becomes a prominent concern as well as a logistical complication. Traditionally, area swimming facilities have provided a viable activity option that presents broad interest among youth of every age as well as a closely supervised, highly social context.

Recent elaborations of conventional outdoor swimming pool formats have followed the very successful themes introduced at commercial water parks. Prominent among these are zero entry features, large areas of shallow water, water slides and interactive spray/ play features. Existing area pools offer little such diversity, reflecting traditional perspectives for public swimming as opposed to water play. Where the common experience of area youth includes visits to exciting, dynamic, sometimes scary water park activities, wallowing in static water, segmented by ropes into various skill related use zones, likely seems less than memorable. Similarly, the quality of experience sought by parents, babysitters and adults is rarely characterized by swimming endless laps or fretting over children shorter than the shallowest water.

Contemporary public swimming pools are increasingly based on the recognition that opportunities for social interaction and personal comfort are far more important to long term success of a pool facility than are competition or swim training lanes. Emphasis on stratified use areas from spray toys on resilient surfaces for non swimmers to traditional deep water lanes for swim exercise as well as towering slides, underwater seat ledges, spa tanks and spray curtains now characterize the community pool. Food service features, coupled with clean, sheltered sitting spaces and ample shade are essential components that protract the length of family visits and reinforce situations for pleasant social interaction. Distinct and separate spaces created to enable adolescents and teens to achieve maximum separation from authority as well as those to achieve maximum exposure to the sun sustain interest and enhance a sense of individual choice within a close, personally revealed context.

Interest in creation of new swimming opportunities within the Four Towns has persisted and increased to a point that the Pool facility will be subject to its first major expansion since its original development. It is reported that this expansion will incorporate interactive water features and increased provision of deck equipment to better segregate users by age and to provide an increase in appropriate activities for the non-swimmers and teens. These improvements are anticipated to be completed and available for the 2009 season.

These compliments will certainly improve some of the shortcomings of the previous facility and will attract a more diverse membership based upon a more diverse capability. In the long term, for planning purposes, this type of facility expansion will not be able to satisfy whole area demand for summer swimming and water based recreation programming. The fundamental area constraints and uses of adjacent space available for expansion of pool and deck features and for additional parking is not adequate for significant additional increase, except by conversion of some adjacent school or park features.

Planning for future inclusion of a new pool facility within the Four Towns service area is observed to be a prudent anticipation of a probable circumstance. The absolute necessity for wastewater management systems of a scale likely beyond the useful capability of conventional subsurface disposal systems suggests that a pragmatic pre-plan for this type of large scale improvement be predicated on prior evaluation of accessible sewage plant options. As has been often seen in public initiatives directed at pool development, detailed planning and critical analysis of ways and means, as a precursor to solicitation of official support, is essential to negotiating the mine fields of public anxiety and consequent political conservatism.

In this regard, a Four Towns Planning approach is the most likely to have previously identified the many potentially contentious aspects of such a proposal and will have the capability to marshal support across a broader base than a single community might. Without a reach greater than that available to any single Four Towns partner, a major pool facility will not happen soon.

## **BICYCLING**

Bicycling, whether on road bikes or mountain bikes, is a premium recreation form. Its significance as an unsatisfied recreation demand is expressed in the Mendham survey, where bicycling was cited as a priority for increased opportunities. Considering the quantity of available pathways and roadways within the Township and generally within the region, this response certainly derives from a popular sense that existing opportunities are inappropriate to the character of bikeway experience preferred by area bicyclists or that existing trail ways are not widely known.

Road biking is based on what the world offers and within the Four Towns service area a bicyclist can travel throughout the region on scenic, low volume roads with very few intersections of major arterial routes. Despite this potential, road biking remains a recreation primarily for those inclined to rigorous exercise and management of comparatively fragile equipment. It is not a pursuit of enormous popularity as in Europe and enthusiasts typically align into clubs engaged in touring events rather than local sightseeing.

Off road bicycling including trail, mountain, bicycle moto cross and cross country biking has far more applicability to residents of the Four Towns and for those sufficiently knowledgeable of area trails, is an opportunity with remarkable variety. Area improvements particularly at Tiger Brook Park, the Macgregor Preserve and Highlands Ridge Park have expanded local opportunities for mountain biking within the Chester Township system. These are part of a long term trail system plan intended to one day complete linkage of bikeways throughout the Mendham open space and park system.

The potential of most of the area trail system will remain only partially met until a far greater connectivity of uncompleted trail linkages is accomplished and until a unified, comprehensible system of trailheads, route mapping and clear signage are posted and visible from the street. In addition, useful mapping resources should be more available by internet, to assure riders that their way is known prior to arriving at an unknown trail. A second factor impacts potential for area bikeways to become more widely used. This relates to discontinuity as well, but in area specific particulars. The bulk of area trails dead end at some point, obliging bicyclists to turn around and retrace their route. After a visit or two to this sort of trail, the experience becomes boring. Creation of loops that return cyclists to a point of beginning is the solution to this affect but one difficult to establish.

An ideal long term objective of Four Towns activity should include planning to resolve these very difficult circuit closure issues. The amount of time necessary to explore alternatives, solicit private cooperation, secure easements and assemble financing is quite beyond the scope and focus of small, local administrations and will be set aside long before completion. Bartering resources across four municipalities to perfect complex closures is far more likely to advance this process than independent local efforts.

To usefully appreciate which types of bicycling recreation will be most utilized by area residents; critical evaluation of the nature of typical desire is required. It is probable that every garage in the Four Towns service area has several bicycles of various sizes and types lining its walls. This does not translate, as might be expected, into most of those bicycles being seen on streets and trails during the evenings and week- ends. Factors that limit such routine use are these: Road

biking is not safe without specific adaptation of shoulders and intersections. Thus, few parents will allow their children to ride outside their immediate subdivision; Except for a few nearby residents, trailheads are not accessible except by roadway or by car transport of bikes; Woodland trails are perceived to be dangerous and frequently present real risks. Thus, few parents will allow their young children to ride on such trails except in groups or with adult supervision; The vast majority of adults are neither fit or accomplished enough to participate in long road trips or even moderate off road excursions and few enjoy the prospect of loading bikes, kids and equipment onto the car to access local destinations; Finally, for those who would regularly bicycle as an alternative means of transportation, the constructed world around them is not particularly bicycle friendly. We are an automobile oriented society and have designed our infrastructure to requirements of that transportation form.

Recent interest and funding support from the public sector has increased somewhat dramatically over recent years, but many more years will pass before unified, connected bikeways and a culture attentive to the opportunities bicycling presents is operative. For dedicated bicyclists, the objectives are real and the timetable is current. For the bulk of other citizens, bikeways are a far more interesting concept than a significant need. Nonetheless, planners and bureaucrats have seized upon this notion as a worthy goal and happily, have generated funding to support its increase.

The Four Towns process is an ideal vehicle to facilitate meaningful expansion of bicycling activities. Combined planning and municipal support presents a more favorable basis in applications for funding assistance than do individual community proposals.

Two significant objectives of Four Towns planning occur coincident with bikeway system expansion. The first of these is preparation of an overall plan for linkage of existing bikeway components to significant destinations within the service area, from areas of concentrated residential development within any of the partner towns. Significant destinations are those that will be accessed daily, year-round by numerous residents (schools, village centers, libraries). Perfection of such linkages presumes that challenges of safety, compliance, support and public acceptance have been met and has begun to familiarize the public awareness with bicycling as a viable transportation resource.

A second objective is easier and more related to outdoor recreation experience. In particular, it is recommended that perimeter lanes (bikeways) be constructed around the perimeter of several of the larger system parks. The objective of this in part, is to create a fundable proposal, which is sufficiently wide and long to provide bicycling opportunities for family groups and young children, simultaneously with introducing a pathway system capable of accommodating strolling and strollers, joggers, exercise walkers, dog walkers, and roller bladers as well as service and emergency vehicles. Similarly to the multi-purpose lane recently placed at Chubb Park, this type of feature invites individual and small group uses for a variety of common purposes, in a secure setting. It enables spontaneous, short visits, allows many paces and preferences and increases the presence of visitors within the parks during work and school hours, lending a sense of security to those anxious about entering a nearly vacant park alone or with small children. Conceptually, these lanes would be: paved in sheet or compacted aggregate materials (sufficient to sustain vehicle passage); very flat and smooth in surface character, to enable obstacle free, barrier free movement; sufficiently wide (eight feet) to allow passage of bicycles and pedestrians and supported periodically by benches game tables, bike racks and drinking fountains. Each such



closed loop lane constitutes a destination but in addition each would link to nature trails, neighborhood access pathways, bikeways or to adjacent public use spaces.

The primary initial target sites for this type of feature are: The Highlands Ridge/Black River Fields site where a lane in excess of two miles long could be created (largely on existing roadbeds) ; Wysong/Ralston where interconnection is needed and linkage to the India Brook pathway and Schiff Reservation as well as residential subdivisions north and south of the park site can be directly accessed; Chubb Park where a very long circuit around open field areas and linkage to the Cooper Mill site, library and the Patriots Path along the rail bed can be directly joined.

Dedication of local funds to bikeway development is an attractive notion but should not eclipse more pressing short term Four Towns goals. Unless separate funding can be secured solely for bikeway improvements, such networked regional systems should not displace local recreation objectives excepting where linkages to existing recreation or public features are involved.

### **ROLLER SKATING/BLADING AND SKATE BOARDING**

This group of wheeled activities has grown persistently over the past decades to a point where a very significant percentage of both youth and young adults routinely practice one of the several related forms. The related forms have increased in variety to include many types of wheeled devices from the very popular Razors (scooters) to articulated boards and the now conventional skateboards and roller blades. Generally, in line skaters (outside city contexts) have adapted ice hockey to a similar pavement based form but many also seek the more acrobatic freestyle skating popularized by skateboarders and snowboarders. Media attention directed toward the youth audience for these pursuits has increased, further popularizing both forms, but particularly, extreme and freestyle versions of this genre. Even though both skateboarding and rollerblading have arisen from roots in roller skating, a formidable generation gap has emerged to frustrate many public initiatives to accommodate unfamiliar motives of this group of distinctive seeming enthusiasts. Common adult perceptions of skateboarders are skeptical at best, citing certainty of injury and immodest social proclivities as prominent disincentives. Most of those critics, already past the flexibility needed to perform these activities, have demonstrated a similar intellectual inflexibility by failing to recognize that these are legitimate interests of a small social segment, intent to achieve their own preferences.

The Four Towns offer no purposefully developed opportunity for this group of enthusiasts. Other than those portions of hardscape existing at commercial and institutional developments where curbs and pavements can be commandeered briefly by the skaters, no rink, course or bowl has been created. Substantial impromptu utilization of roadway curbs has been reported to be sufficiently attractive that the activity is a nuisance and had damaged curbs at the High School and Kings shopping center.

Roller hockey has become an increasingly popular substitute activity for ice hockey and like basketball has a nearly endless season. A space as large as two tennis courts can occupy dozens of kids simultaneously for long periods of time and doubles conveniently for street hockey (wheelless version of roller hockey).

Skateboarding and the several freestyle skate activities require ramps, rails, inclined surfaces, half pipes and a variety of sloped, pavements to generate speed for launching various maneuvers.

These facilities in a permanent form, are costly to build but have become commercially available as pre-fabricated, portable units that can be placed on any paved surface.

Roller-skating and roller blading as exercise remains most easily done on linear, paved surfaces despite remarkable technological improvements in the wheels and carriages. The very best substrates for this activity type are paved trails without conflict with automobiles.

Skateboarding and skating sports are unrepresented by accommodation in the Four Towns. This is a significant defect as an interest in creation of such facilities is reported as a repeated request from area residents. In subsequent Four Towns planning, specifics of this interest should be identified and the options for adaptation of existing space at Highlands Ridge Park or Black River Middle School to this purpose be examined.

### **ICE SKATING**

Outdoor ice skating is an important winter recreation that may be enjoyed when few other outdoor family activities are possible. Many older residents remember occasions where splendid recreation was enjoyed somewhere on a frozen pond. Unfortunately, this opportunity has diminished regionally as ever greater precautions against liability have limited access to natural water bodies that cannot be accurately evaluated for uniform thickness. Practically, ice-skating outdoors is perhaps the least reliable of public recreations as long periods of very cold, clear weather that produce strong, smooth ice are rare. So many factors and risks combine to confound good skating conditions that it cannot be planned for. Ice skating remains a popular and somewhat special, in part because of its rarity.

Within the Four Towns service area, sanctioned public ice skating outdoors exists only at Chubb Park, at Brookside Beach, the Mud Hole in Mendham Borough and at a detention basin near Coventry Road in Mendham Township. The Chubb skating pond is the best of these and likely the best regularly available skating area in the County. Other existing potentials chronically await the rare protracted cold weather needed to produce reliable skating ice.

As a planning consideration, increase of outdoor ice skating facilities should be a very low priority except in the instance where a floodable lawn panel is considered in support of some other warm season recreation. Floodable pavements have been attempted on many occasions as potential skating areas, but typically are so difficult to freeze and manage that they have been soon abandoned.

Creation of a reliable temporary pond for skating can be well done at reasonable cost by installation of impervious liners and water level controls in a lawn finished space, provided that a substantial purpose for utilization of such a flat lawn exists for use in other seasons. Otherwise, skating ice should be left as a possibility contingent on emergence of a very determined supporting group of residents or a committed donor.

### **PLAYGROUNDS**

Playgrounds occur in a variety of locations within the Four Towns. Particularly well-equipped facilities occur on elementary school sites, and at; Borough Park, Wysong Park, Grove Street Park, Collis Park and Chubb Park. Of these, the Borough Park and Wysong and Grove Street playgrounds are fully supported in a fashion that can reasonably be expected to sustain

comfortable occupation for long time periods. Playgrounds for the spontaneous use of the general public benefit greatly by the incorporation of additional features that facilitate access, comfortable seating, shade, shelter and the hope of some social interaction for parents, grandparents or other caretakers that may accompany children to these sites.

They should be placed where the opportunity to serve adjacent neighbors by pedestrian access is greatest and they should be highly visible from some regularly occupied place.

Ideally, playgrounds and play equipment areas are integrated into the context of as many other surrounding, complimentary features as possible. Children habitually hope to visit a playground, drawn by the prospect of social interaction as much as for the equipment. It is productive to recognize that those older siblings, babysitters or others in a supervisory role hope for a tolerable experience as well. Anticipating the common need for comfort and engagement in some greater experience and supplementing features at play areas to facilitate everyone's enjoyment is essential to creation of attractive playgrounds.

Two objectives for future playground development should be advocated in Four Towns planning. These are: Introduce play areas into every site that is programmed for organized sports and support play areas in every location by providing shelter, shade, seating and potable water as minimum criteria for new development.

Even the smallest play area, offering a swing or a single climbing form, if supported by a bench or picnic table and a couple of trees, creates a magnet for small children and relief for the parent hoping to watch one kid play soccer while trying to restrain a sibling.

## **CULTURAL FACILITIES**

These are rare but unfailingly useful facilities constructed in support of outdoor recreation. Their potential to support group activities, special events and generally, to forge community links and promote social interaction is typically unappreciated relative to other recreation utilities. Traditionally they might include a band shell, amphitheatre, large pavilion or other structured assembly space where performances, celebrations, demonstrations or ceremonies might occur.

In a practical way, a large pavilion is probably the most convenient of these to consider. A large pavilion with paved base, utility service and a generous lawn surround can be adapted to a variety of occasional purposes as well as used routinely for programmed activities such as day camp, arts and crafts, or simply, a rain shelter. This purpose requires appropriate access, service support and parking provisions and is thus, best suited to an existing site with such infrastructure.

Two Gazebos represent the entire area commitment to outdoor assembly structures in the Four Towns service area. Addition of shelter structures of sizes appropriate to the quantity of spectators routinely attending sports events at the major athletic fields in the service area would enable a variety of routine service and special event opportunities that could begin to develop the broader utility these mainstay recreation sites warrant.

## **LANDSCAPING, ENTRIES, AMENITIES, GARDENS**

### **(AESTHETIC CONDITIONS)**

Public recreation spaces and parks in particular, have historically been prepared with some deference to a notion that they are special places presented to the citizenry for their refreshment and enjoyment. In past times, parks were frequently planned and developed with a preference for charm, grace, comfort and beauty and intended to be enjoyed for their appearance and accommodation alone. This characteristic is little evident in public recreation spaces within the Four Towns.

While the potential forms of elaboration that may be considered to enhance the sense of a recreation site as an important public resource are limitless, a few are uniformly important and should be attended as a matter of course, regardless of other imperatives. Some such features are these:

1. Entry features created to identify the site and welcome visitors. Like the front door to one's home, a recreation site deserves an entry, which, even if modest, signifies entry to a valued public space where the visitor's enjoyment and accommodation are intended. Warning signs and imprecations relative to acceptable forms of conduct do not quite convey that message and should be eliminated from the entrance to a more appropriate internal location.
2. Walkways and pathways are the common and expected connectors typically continuing throughout a recreation site for conduct of visitors to each of the feature areas from some place of entry. More importantly, negotiable, barrier free travel ways linking facilities are required by Federal, State, and local statutes and where not developed or not compliant, should be made so.

Pathways, like plantings, have an intrinsic functional virtue far more rewarding than simple access to some ball field. Pathways invite and enable the most important of recreations – walking. Walking, strolling, jogging, running – singly, in pairs or groups, is a universal recreation and circumstance for individual recreation or social interaction. Its importance, in terms of year round utility, cannot be overstated.

Each of the sites within the Township, if surrounded by a continuous loop of firm surfaced pathways, would demonstrate a remarkable phenomenon. Residents would show up to walk there. While a few require long strolls in pristine environments or relentlessly pound along for exercise, people in the main appreciate and seek out well developed pathways where they can escape for an hour, exercise moderately, or just converse with a friend.

Necessary conditions of such a feature are few. They include: a loop that begins and ends in the same place, a surface regular in grade, firm and dry under foot, and an occasional place to rest, preferably with an interesting view and some shade.

3. Furnishings may be a coordinated selection of benches, tables, trash receptacles, railings, signage, light standards fences, gates, flagpoles and similar accessory elements that enable comfortable occupation and convey a sense that accommodation of visitors about any purpose is anticipated and welcomed.

4. Gardens may be extraordinarily various landscape compositions featuring lawn, flowers, shrubs, trees, edgings, hedges, structures, statuary, landforms, water features, and limitless other elements. Such facilities are intended to present beautiful, historic, educational or symbolic themes and frame spaces to be used for active or passive interaction.

Most Four Towns recreation sites offer no such characteristics or even their pretense. The failure to observe or promote aesthetic improvements at the Township's parks may attest to the historical pragmatism of traditional municipal planners, but it highlights what may be the greatest challenge for all Four Towns future considerations. That challenge is recognizing the potential of public recreation spaces to represent a public purpose beyond the minimum necessities coincident with provisioning sports interests.

5. Plantings. The most important contribution to creating an attractive site, whether for active, passive, or cultural purposes, is creating a series of spaces that are connected such that an experience of movement from one place to another is achieved. All of Four Towns school sites and developed portions of park sites except Borough Park are similar in that everything constructed there can be seen from any other place. Very little mystery or anticipation of discovery confronts visitors and little contrast between sunny and shady or sheltered and exposed spaces exists. Trees, shrubs, and plant masses are the three dimensional structures used to create such spaces. They provide shade, cool the summer air, add movement and sound, present flowers and fall color, and provide shelter for birds and animals. People are and will remain attracted to plantings and the forms and effects they produce. Plantings are so few and so tediously used in the Four Towns recreation and school sites, that none of a host of possible benefits is realized. Plantings frame spaces, walkways, paths and trails, link them within sites to adjacent places and with great planning, to other places of interest.

## **RESOURCE IMPROVEMENT POTENTIALS**

### **FACILITY LIGHTING**

The Four Towns recreation system has been developed primarily for daylight hour utilization; apparently as a policy preference within three of four communities (Mendham Borough has lighted tennis and basketball courts). Lighting is not specifically excluded by policy in any of the Four but seems to have been ignored as a useful compliment to the constructed recreation facilities. Athletic field and court lighting has been applied to municipal recreation facilities regionally, as new construction and as retrofit systems placed at existing facilities, since the potential to significantly improve recreation opportunities was recognized as a practical response to use stress and scheduling issues.

Service benefits coincident with facility lighting are numerous but rarely accounted convincingly by advocates for installation of new systems. Clearly, the opportunity to extend conventional youth programming time in the short spring and fall evenings is the chief impetus for lighting systems, but additional gains benefiting adult interests are as important.

The Four Towns recreation system is run by resident volunteers. The bulk of these volunteers are parents and are working adults. The majority of those working adults commute to their

businesses. Each of these has elected to support area youth by dedicating their time to coaching, training or managing and at the least, to transporting them from place to place. In the spring and fall; when days are short, competition for practice space, intense; and everyone is hungry and tired; the volunteers have the additional burden of attenuating their work day, racing home, skipping meals and ruining their shoes just to be available to their kids for too short practice sessions. If these behaviors are selfless, they are also stressful.

Recreation as a concept is based on the premise that people benefit by occasional suspension of life's stress. Yet this large segment of citizenry endures even more to support the notion.

Lighting important facilities enables utilization of them equivalently to the more convenient schedule that naturally occurs as days lengthen in the late spring and early fall. It helps the people who run the system.

Other benefits accrue to the older teen and adult population segments as available, lighted facilities produce opportunities to practice or compete in their preferred activity during the week, rather than compressing every personal recreation ambition into weekend hours.

The most important potential benefit and a fundamental purpose of recreation planning is this. Where games can be scheduled later than typically on week days, the chance for parents to return home, change clothing, eat something and still attend their child's game is more regularly possible. Potential to improve recreation qualitatively as well as quantitatively is the chief virtue of lighting systems and a purpose that deserves much more emphasis within the Four Towns.

A recent example of commitment to very special new facility development has occurred at West Morris Mendham High School. Here, local supporters of high school interscholastic sports joined forces with alumni, recreation associations, and service organizations and by focused outreach, to the community at large to raise funds for construction of synthetic fields at the High School. The published information soliciting support of this project includes some extraordinarily optimistic prognostications relative to the capability of these fields. To date, this ongoing campaign has raised nearly sufficient funding to construct the first of two anticipated fields. Unfortunately, the coincident original purpose to light the new fields failed to be approved by the Borough.

The resulting circumstance is that every recreation group with a legitimate interest, now competes for any available scheduling opportunity not already filled by High School programming. Failure to recognize that realizing the full potential of this costly new field is largely dependent on the inclusion of a lighting system enabling a subsequent evening use of the field daily, will frustrate the expectations of many who supported the project. Without this capability, many of the supporting interests will find that their hoped for access will be factored by the priorities of high school programs and that even if a second field is constructed here, that additional space may never be accessible.

In future Four Towns planning the request for facility lighting will be a repetitive topic. As it is capable of enabling opportunities for recreation more consistent with the realities of contemporary suburban life than those fond remembrances of more bucolic times when everyone gathered on Saturday at homey park to watch the boys play ball, lighting should be a prominent objective. Ignorance of the technical capabilities of modern lighting contributes to the seeming validity of anecdotal protestations of "concerned" neighbors and administrative unwillingness to

assert the priority of well conceived public improvements over minority objections will assuredly continue to confound lighting initiatives. As the majority of area communities have long since demonstrated, these obstacles can be overmatched by deliberate pre-planning and development of broad based support.

## **SYNTHETIC SURFACES VS NATURAL TURF**

Synthetic turf surfaces have increased dramatically in recognition and application to former natural turf substrates in both urban and suburban settings over the past three decades. Propelled by expansive hype as a panacea capable of resolving the bulk of recreation system problems, these surfaces have been applied in both appropriate and in not so appropriate locales and applications. They are commonly reputed to be low maintenance, trouble free, long lived systems, capable of endless utilization, reduction of injuries and complete elimination of the need for those nasty mowers. In fact, only the last of those virtues is actually true.

There is no reasonable argument that synthetic turf will not support practically unlimited utilization or that natural turf will. This contrast is accurate but predicated on the condition that synthetic turf is properly designed, installed, supported and managed.

Though it is practically indestructible from intended use, synthetic turf requires regular maintenance by trained personnel operating specialized equipment. Mowers are exchanged for blowers, power rakes, vacuums, granulate spreaders and spray applicators. Though synthetic surfaces don't need mowing, they do, on a regular basis require: debris removal, granulate recovery and resspreading, pile raking, disinfection, static control (when new), supplemental granulate application and cooling in hot, sunny weather. Though represented to reduce injury potential, synthetic surfaces have been shown to substitute injury types rather than reducing injury. Heat accumulation is the most prominent health risk associated with synthetic turf surfaces as they are very efficient heat sinks and insulators. Surface temperatures can exceed one hundred thirty degrees on sunny summer days, well beyond the ambient maximum of approximately eighty degrees for natural turf. Consequently, irrigation may be required prior to summer use. Synthetic fields are designed to be sufficiently resilient to pass head form drop tests of a maximum of 200 "Gmax. impact", consequently, they are uniformly softer (more resilient) than natural turf substrates would ever be. This results in leg fatigue from much greater effort to achieve the same running speed. Affects of this have not been studied objectively.

Synthetic turf surfaces are designed or field "tuned" to a designated sport purpose by allowing more or less of the synthetic pile to protrude beyond the granulate fill. Consequently, a turf designed for football or soccer would be too slow for lacrosse or field hockey and vice versa.

In multi-purpose applications, the pile height is averaged making it equally good/bad for whichever user and like the long pile carpets that they are, periodic pile raking to stand up filaments.

Synthetic fields are commonly represented to be capable of a 10 -12 year service life or longer for the newest synthetic products. Unfortunately, each new generation of synthetic turf has been introduced well before older systems have achieved this age range and typically, both the original manufacturer and installer are long gone in ten years. Few actual circumstances of



resilient fields reaching their full service life occur to enable evaluation of the utility of those claims.

Synthetic fields may present other unanticipated influences due to their unusual composition. Some concerns, (lead contamination and out-gassing) have emerged recently as potential risks of synthetic systems. The prospect of granulate substrates becoming contaminated by bacterial or fungal infestations as they load with dust debris and human waste is a speculative potential not yet studied or understood.

Presuming that synthetic systems can be managed successfully for a full twelve years, their replacement cycle can be considered on an annualized cost as a basis for comparison with natural turf systems. As a typical new soccer sized field costs approximately \$800,000.00, its' simple cost per year exclusive of maintenance and repair is approximately \$67,000. By contrast, a similar sized natural turf field can be resodded completely every year for approximately \$60,000.00. This very simple example illustrates that synthetic turf is not less costly than natural turf and so, cost saving is not a reason to consider its installation. The reason, distilled to its simplest expression, remains that synthetic turf can be abused, neglected and improperly managed even repeatedly, without ruining it. Natural turf cannot.

An important qualifier that must be considered when synthetic field surfaces are evaluated is lighting. Lighting increases the opportunity to utilize a field by one game/practice per day (doubling the weekday field use in spring and fall). Coupling the potential for such increase with a field that can sustain the additional load, is the only sensible method to maximize the return for investment in the much more costly synthetic systems.

This has significance to the Four Towns planning process as it illustrates an option that can be used to measure long term efficiencies and impacts applicable to future natural/synthetic turf considerations.

Synthetic turf almost certainly has utilitarian application to support of organized sports within the Four Towns service area. Its popularity and reputation as a failsafe surface will continue to promote its support as a final solution to longstanding problems of natural turf management. As further installations are considered, it will be an essential pre-condition to assure that access is distributed across the entire spectrum of appropriate users. Likewise, it will be essential to maximize the number of applications that may be programmed by coincident inclusion of lighting. Unfortunately, the best existing potential for this application (Mendham High School) has been removed from immediate consideration.

## **INDOOR RECREATION FEATURES**

Indoor recreation opportunities are offered in a variety of forms and at numerous locations within the Four Towns. Excepting recreation basketball, which is well supported in area schools in the winter season, the bulk of indoor activities are social, cultural or service association related activities occurring at area churches, community centers and social clubs. Of these, the Garabrandt Center in Chester Borough is the sole public facility in the service area available for general public indoor programming. Presumably, the new park center in Chester Borough will be similarly available.

Indoor recreation available to the general public has increased importantly in recent years for a variety of activity types. Generally, these are characterized as child care related programs, personal health and fitness training, martial arts and bodybuilding, swimming and swim training and court sports. Full field sports venues, gymnasias and indoor tracks; facilities that support off season training and competition are grossly deficient in the region and are increasingly sought by various types of competitive sports.

These recreation centers are costly to produce in a comprehensive, well conceived and durable fashion and absolutely require high quality, business oriented management to remain current, attractive and to cover operational expense. Consequently, they persist at colleges, as exclusive clubs, as commercial facilities or in most populated regions, as YMCA/YWCA facilities.

Each of the Four Towns communities are too small to reasonably consider development of a significant indoor recreation facility and even in combination do not constitute a support base adequate to undertake such an enormous project. The region of western Morris County, and southern Warren County however represents a very large, underserved and sufficiently affluent population to constitute adequate incentive to interest the YMCA. During the process of preparation for this report, representatives of the West Morris (Randolph) and Morris Center (Hanover) YMCA were interviewed to examine the prospect of future creation of a facility in western Morris County. Although the designated service area of the Mendham's and Chester's falls within the service area of the Morris Central YMCA and the Washington Twp. and Roxbury within the West Morris YMCA service area, both agencies have an influence in the region and have represented an intention to collaborate with prospective partners to extend their services to support those communities. The YMCA interest is purely mission driven, according to the charter of the national organization. Their purpose to provide cultural, community service and recreational opportunities exists irrespective of the motives of local communities but can be enabled by opportunities created by those interests. Both YMCA organizations have conducted inquiries and site specific evaluation of potential locations for development within or adjacent to the Four Towns service area without yet finding adequate opportunity to commit further planning resources. The Morris Center research specifically identified the Lucent site in Chester Borough as one well located and appropriate to their preliminary requirements and maintain an interest in that site should future opportunity be presented.

It is strongly recommended that thorough examination of the purposes of the YMCA and their preferences for project sites be undertaken as a specific single purpose of The Four Towns planning process. The YMCA presents a positively inclined vehicle to access the most modern, well organized and administered indoor services. Engaging the most experienced public service enterprise as a partner capable of providing services beyond the current management capabilities or realistic financial prospects of the combined Towns is very sound planning.

It will be necessary to provide appropriate space, enabling zoning, utility infrastructure access and a taxation structure satisfactory to optimize the prospect of long term viability of a substantial commitment to new development by the YMCA. Potential to conveniently access high quality, reliable, independently administered indoor recreation for the entire service area is an opportunity in the balance for those concessions. In contrast to the small likelihood of achieving such objectives in any foreseeable future without exterior partnership, this exploration has a tangible chance for important contribution to recreation system diversity and has a realistic chance of success.

Private partnership or direct consumer relationships with area commercial recreation enterprises may be an additional option to expand general service for indoor activities. These are available in conventional membership formats for a variety of indoor court and exercise activities but are not available cheaply or in large supply. As these facilities evolve or as new start-up facilities are considered, it may be a practical opportunity to negotiate with those interests to examine the prospect of incorporating membership or time “blocks” at group rates to be set aside for residents interested in securing fee for service accommodations.

### **INDOOR FACILITIES - RESTROOMS**

Among real deficiencies in the Four Towns recreation system, restrooms or the lack thereof stand alone as the most pointed and disagreeable. Chester Borough is the only municipality that has managed to incorporate restrooms in both of its outdoor recreation facilities and has accomplished that important distinction only recently. The rest of the developed system offers only two additional restrooms, one at Borough Park and another at Black River Fields. The apparent determination to restrict access to competent restrooms seems to be shared by area school systems as well, as even those actively sharing their playfield resources with local recreation groups have not assured that restrooms within their walls were available to area residents.

Clearly, municipal agencies from all four towns recognize the likelihood that at least someone will attend a recreation activity long enough to require access to a restroom and three in response, have placed a porta-john or two at each such site regardless of its size or the disposition of facilities on that site. The ubiquitous porta-john has been pressed into service ostensibly because the initial expense, continuing maintenance cost and prospect of vandalism associated with construction of real restrooms cannot be managed. This disposition presents some substance for further consideration. As the use of these is: not consistent with any building or site development code; would not be approved for any other place of public accommodation or office or agency; does not occur in our homes and are not utilized except in desperation, their appropriateness to recreation sites should be reevaluated. . Factors that relate to their likely inappropriateness are these: they smell bad, are frequently soiled by human waste, are extremely subject to vandalism, are not barrier free, are not kid friendly and are profoundly unhygienic, particularly in any circumstance where a visit is at any time followed by food contact.

If in the Four Towns process, an irresistible impetus to build restrooms in all of the system recreation sites can be determined, the entire exercise will be an unequivocal success.

A plain philosophical observation applies to the restroom quandary. It is that when a public facility is created with the deliberate purpose of inviting citizens to play there, that the duration or quality of that experience should not be limited or degraded by the failure to incorporate the commonest personal conveniences. No such circumstances would be tolerated in a school, office, store, or other public space and should not be in a park site.

### **THE FOUR TOWNS SPORT ASSOCIATIONS**

By any reckoning, the associations of citizens of the Four Towns that have undertaken the organization of the various sports are the most valuable resources representing recreation

interests and promoting service to area youth. These groups deliver programs in football, soccer, track, cross country, lacrosse, baseball, basketball and cheerleading for all age interests across the entire service area. They have contributed their time and energy for management of all aspects of area sports programming from registration to scheduling to field maintenance in addition to the coaching, training and equipment management tasks typically expected to volunteers. Lesser known aspects of the commitment shown by these parents include coaching certification and clinics, umpire and referee training, fundraising, purchase of equipment, insurances and uniforms, event planning and endless hours of phone calling, transporting players, shuffling schedules and responding to emergency field conditions resulting from adverse weather. Members of the soccer, lacrosse and baseball associations routinely contribute labor and funding to routine tasks of mowing, field grooming and emergency repair.

Ostensibly, each of the Four Towns have committed to provision of field space and maintenance support in exchange for comprehensive management of the several programs. Integration of municipal maintenance, renovation, capital planning and system expansion initiatives with program operations growth and diversification varies from sporadic to non-existent. Currently, capital improvements projects have been authorized by Chester Township and Mendham Township that directly influence the prospects of area soccer and baseball programming, but system infrastructure, utility support and response to compliance issues lags far behind current need for upgrades.

As all four of the subject towns are maturing a characteristic where land resources for residential development have diminished, rapid population increase as experienced during the past several decades will slow. As typical for such communities, the imperative for expansion of school systems and related infrastructure will slow as well. Subsequently, general utility services and circulation system improvement will advance in priority, until acute issues are resolved, at which time the comparative significance of recreation facilities may become a more prominent interest of local governments and more likely to receive capital support based on prior planning. Presumably, as that condition is reached, the Four Towns will begin to replace the tradition of reactive planning and crisis management relative to recreation services with a more centrally directed, objective oriented system. Until such a capability is established, the prospect of delivery of high quality programs, despite the fact that they are special interest programs, should remain vested in these organizations.

In recognition of the fact that none of the Four Towns have established the resources, manpower or experience base necessary to deliver the services that private citizens are annually producing, a much more supportive disposition of municipal policy seems warranted. If for example the municipal responsibility in exchange for program management is provision of the necessary field substrates, those substrates should, as a minimum expectation be appropriately large, spacious, supported and particularly, in conformance with codes for access and safety. In contrast to that proposition, the current circumstance may be described as modern, well organized programs coping by endless adaptation to a system modeled on home grown facilities, designed according to traditional parameters, which should have been upgraded decades ago.

Each of the Four Towns has established a recreation or Parks Commission or committee. Presumably each such organization has a mission, which includes some measure of influence over the quality of facilities; their compliance with technical characteristics consistent with best practice standards; the requirements of each type for maintenance and repair and the current conditions of facilities comparative to some baseline requirement. In addition, each would

maintain and update some form of status inventory for each facility, which characterizes the condition of surfaces and equipment to forecast annual replacement or renovation needs.

Examination of the subject fields, playgrounds, courts and component structures of the Four Towns developed recreation sites suggests that regular, well informed assessments of physical circumstances is not occurring or is not usefully translated into improvement sequences. Evidence of this may be seen and most easily recognized at the system baseball fields. Though newer fields tend to be much better than older ones, all exhibit design choices, surface conditions or structures that are non-compliant or unnecessarily dangerous. Some of these characteristics occur across the system, including: backstops and fence structures constructed too close to base paths, deteriorated fence fabric and connections, inadequate field separation, grade change at infield edges and uniformly poor barrier free access accommodations. Local sports associations are so accustomed to this sort of minor defect that they little hinder typical operations. Notwithstanding the accustomed circumstances of system condition and utilization, standards of practice in public facilities exist as well as codified requirements for safety and access. Beyond the simple ambition of eliminating unsafe conditions to protect residents against injury, the liability exposure undertaken by the coaches, trainers and other volunteers while dedicating their services is unreasonable and unnecessary. Each of the Four Towns is remiss in resolving fundamental adequacy issues respective to many of its facilities and should identify and correct them as a priority matter.

Respondents to written questions and those posed in interviews have cited instances of seasonal (particularly spring) weather related impacts upon existing fields. Most prominent are complaints relative to drainage and protracted wetness of fields. The bulk of these represent chronic conditions that indicate inappropriate initial siting or construction as well as inability to correct deficient conditions. Where such circumstances occur, season starts, practices on games may be eliminated or require rescheduling, potentially creating conditions where meeting full schedules may become difficult. Very simple alterations in system capabilities (loss of Bragg Dickerson Field, closure of West Field for repair) can ripple through the entire sports season, displacing, eliminating and complicating the conventional tasks of programming. These examples typify systems, which are operating at participation levels greater than available capacity and at maintenance levels less than appropriate.

Each of the respondent sports associations has the responsibility to register, distribute, schedule, equip, insure and find coaches for the many levels of participation assigned to area children. Consequently, each has a very useful accounting of their currently facility requirements and a reliable forecasting basis for at least the subsequent seasons needs. These statistics actually define the demand for facilities in a clear form. Regularly assembling this information and comparing it to availability of space/time to accomplish the stipulated number of practices and games per sport reliably yields a useful quantity of needed resources. This simple reporting and accounting procedure is not performed in any of the Four Towns.

In a situation where all venues are of an equivalent quality, character, durability, availability and are at least adequate to sustain the needed level of play, the correlation between participants and venues can be established with accuracy. Conversely, where venues are dissimilar in quality, performance and durability or available only under optimal circumstances, capability to balance need and opportunity becomes less direct and likely, dependent upon the ability to quickly shuffle schedules and field assignments and to adapt available resources as necessary. Clearly

the first circumstance is the one most appropriate to the sports associations but the second is the situation that exists.

In overview, it must be accepted that the several citizen's sports associations are conducting the delivery of sports programs at a level of competence far greater than the typical venue delivered by the municipalities for their use. Creation of a more equitable balance of commitment should be a primary goal of the Four Towns Plan.

## **BASEBALL ASSOCIATIONS – CHESTER LITTLE LEAGUE**

Chester Little League began serving youth of the Chester's and Mendham's in 1953 and though the participants in the League have changed over the years, Chester Little League remains in service. It is an affiliated league conducting its operations according to the rules of Little League Baseball.

This program offers training and competition at inter-town levels through the regular season and continues into tournament play post season with all star squads. Operating within the constraints of Little League rules it is necessary for each team to have completed twelve games within the regular season to qualify for tournament play. This condition places special emphasis on the ability to occupy fields as early as possible in April to assure adequate time for rescheduling of rained out games.

### **STATISTICS**

	2008 Baseball Program	2008 Softball Program
Registered	425	225
Number Teams	39	17
Number Divisions	6	5

### **Fields**

Black River Little League  
Black River school baseball  
Chubb Upper  
Chubb Fireman  
Chubb senior baseball (Babe Ruth)  
Chubb #1  
Chubb #2  
Chubb #3  
Municipal Little League  
Municipal Babe Ruth

### **Spaces**

Chubb T-ball  
Bragg (grass)

Interview and response sequences with Chester Little League produced a number of significant issues relative to their operation as well as insights regarding their relationship to the municipalities.

Generally, Chester Little League is an active and still growing program with interest in expanding softball to include high school girls and co-ed programs. Of the ten fields in service, those at Municipal Park and Collis Park are regarded as the best in their inventory and the Little League fields at Chubb as the least good. Field drainage and infield condition are cited as the most important deficiencies, although the addition of a new grooming machine in 2008 seems to have resolved the “condition” problem.

Chester Little League has committed \$19,000.00 annually to hire contract landscape services for grooming and occasional mowing, but will be able to dedicate part of that sum to their own operations budget as a result of the Township undertaking maintenance in 2008.

Chester Little League stipulates that additional field space is needed to accommodate practice, particularly for baseball as well as access to one large field for Babe Ruth. They are currently raising funds to contribute to this effort and hope to reach an accord with the Township for construction in 2009 (at Parker Road).

In addition to two fields Chester Little League represents a need for a dedicated storage shed and the ability to install batting cages at Chubb, which are expected to enable increasing simultaneous practicing. Only permanent sleeves and authorization are requested to place these cages as Chester Little League is prepared to purchase them. Reportedly, the Township has not been cooperative in this effort, requiring permanent 8’ fences to enable its approval.

Chester Little League is well organized at every level, very flexible with respect to adapting to existing conditions and forward looking with respect to program expansion and facility improvement. Recent increase in maintenance operations by Chester Township have materially improved the options of Chester Little League, which opportunity will be expressed in new support features. The relationship of Chester Little League to the municipalities is represented to be historically autonomous but recently improving. Some citations illustrate inappropriate response to specific requests and a sense of disassociation particularly with Chester Borough was reported. A working dialogue between Chester Little League and the Towns has improved in recent years. Whether deliberate or happenstance, previous failure to communicate issues with a reasonable expectation of timely response seems to have produced a frustration of objectives for Chester Little League. Accordingly, they have and plan to continue to advance their purposes regardless of exterior support. Given the scope and history of this program within the Chester’s in the context of public service and youth programming, it is difficult to understand why the few and simple needs of Chester Little League not more enthusiastically met or at least shared at the municipal level.

Some of the responses to questions posed to Chester Little League are illustrative of the issues considered significant in context of their relationship to the municipalities. They are included in Appendix 1 of this report.

## **COMPARISON OF FACILITIES TO PROGRAMS**

### **CHESTER LITTLE LEAGUE**

Chester Little League is programming practices and games for 56 teams in 11 divisions on ten fields and two spaces. For purposes of credibility the spaces (1 at Chubb and 1 at Bragg) are not counted in this comparison as doing so is not reasonable.

Five of the six baseball divisions schedule two games and one practice per week after season start up. In the available time prior to season start, two practices are attempted per week. All of the softball divisions schedule two games and one practice per week. In addition to the teams participating in conventional divisions of the Chester L.L. program, a select team program known as the Cerbo League has recently been introduced to Chester players. This program is available to those players in each division interested to compete against similar select teams from other communities. Ultimately targeting formation of one team in each division, these teams scheduling is superimposed over the requirements of conventional programming. Cerbo League teams conventionally practice and play one game per week on system fields wherever they are available. Half of games scheduled within this league are played “away”.

### **USES PER DIVISION/WEEK**

	Baseball-Practice/Games	Softball-Practice/Games
T-Ball	1/1	----
Instructional	1/2	1/2
Juniors	1/2	1/2
Minors	1/2	1/2
Majors	1/2	1/2
Seniors	1/2	1/2
Cerbo League	1/2	

The balance in Chester Little League Baseball

The baseball program fields 44 teams, four of which are T-ball teams. Total uses per week is equivalent to (4 t-ball teams at 2 uses/week) = 8 uses and (40 other teams at 3 uses per week) = 120 or total need to 128 uses per week. Three of the divisions play “away” games. Assuming one half of their 12 game season is away and 6 teams represent this group 6 uses per week must be subtracted ( $128 - 6 = 122$ ) resulting in a total of 122 uses per week.

This quantity is described as need.

Field supply supporting the baseball program consists of 7 fields, which at a maximum may be utilized twice per weekday and typically four sessions on Saturday. This yields a total of 70 weekday and 28 weekend uses or 98 weekly uses. This quantity is described as supply.

Comparison of the two totals illustrates that demand currently outstrips supply by nearly two fields per week (24 uses). This comparison represents optimal circumstances occurring uniformly throughout the season. In every instance where a field is not playable or when a weekend rainout occurs, near balance quickly becomes unbalanced. If a weekend rainout occurs late in the season following typically minor spring closures, all teams contending for playoffs are obliged to scramble to complete the requisite 12 games threshold for qualification.

Real need, justified by the findings of this study exists for the Chester Little League. It is characterized as follows. Two additional youth baseball fields are needed to balance current



program demand. (Specifically, one additional Little League field (Highlands Ridge) and one additional well prepared 60' x 90' field is needed to enable response to repair closures or renovations.) Additional or improved substrates for T-ball are needed to eliminate use of the impromptu conditions now pressed into service and to more reasonably integrate young players into the program. One such field should be prepared in a fashion (complete, fully supported infield) that enables its periodic availability as a "backup" field to improve response to major scheduling disruptions.

Some additional qualifying conditions influence this comparison. One significant factor is the change in daylight savings time, which in 2009 will occur one month earlier than previously. This will yield sufficient daylight in the evening to schedule a second practice. To date approximately 35 fewer time spaces have been available between March and April.

### **BALANCE IN CHESTER LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL**

Chester Little League programs practices and games for 22 softball teams in 5 divisions. The total maximum for field space to support these teams at 3 uses per week per team is 66 total uses. The Chester Little League system utilizes three fields at Chubb Park to accommodate the softball program. At a capability of 14 games per week per field the total of 42 uses opportunities per week results.

Comparison of these totals suggests a net deficit of approximately two fields (each with a maximum of 14 games/week) but reporting from Chester Little League indicates that the number of practices held is optional to the team manager and the fields are able to accommodate their scheduling. Even though this system element is represented as being in balance, and can be shown to be approximately that, characterizing all three of these as "fields" is a less than equitable proposition. Current conditions occurring here inadvertently discriminate between the level of opportunity prepared for the softball programs comparative to those available for the more traditional little league baseball interests.

Other factors influence the availability of these fields and may be disruptive in the early season. These fields occur at the lowest position in the land form at Chubb and are subject to runoff influences from adjacent fields and roadway as well as seasonal saturation from high groundwater tables. In particularly wet springs this combination can produce soggy conditions that resolve slowly. The three Chubb softball fields are the poorest of the ten system ballfields. They are minimal in respects, spatially inadequate, too close to adjacent fields and roadways, deficient in perimeter space, backstop and fence condition and too steeply sloping, particularly at the lower field. Overall, a great deal of work is warranted here including elimination of the low field. This factor is more important immediately than the total quantity of available spaces for play and should be approached as a priority to the extent that one new, properly oriented and properly equipped field is added to the system.

### **MENDHAM LITTLE LEAGUE**

The Mendham Little League provides baseball programming for the youth of the Borough and Township. Like its counterpart in Chester, Mendham Little League is well established, competent and comprehensively organized association of residents responsible for all aspects of registration, coaching, training, scheduling, and umpiring for 600 players distributed over eight

divisions and for an additional seven “Cerbo League” teams (select traveling teams). Unlike the Chester program, Mendham Little League offers boys and girls divisions separately (Chester uses open registration) and administers its coaching and scheduling with two internal organizations. The Mendham Little League system is solely involved with program delivery and not typically involved with infield management, repair, maintenance or supplementation. These tasks are shared by public works departments of the Borough and Township.

Conduct of training, coaching and play follows the regulation of Little League Baseball and includes training and instruction levels of play as well as competition with adjacent towns and tournament play post season for qualifying teams. The requirement for completion of 12 regular season games is the threshold for tournament play which places special emphasis upon the ability to start game scheduling as early as possible.

### STATISTICS

	2008 Boys	2008 Girls
Registered	282	318
Number of Teams	45	27
Number of Divisions	4	4
Number of Volunteers	350	

### FIELDS

Borough Park	3
Hilltop School	1
Wysong Park	1
Ralston Field	1
Mt. Pleasant	1
Brookside	2
*High School	2
*Middle School	2

\*Limited according to availability after school use.

Fields at Wysong and Ralston are reported to be the best in the system although those at Borough Park are the most heavily utilized for boys programming. Drainage and saturation issues are cited as significant impediments at Borough upper and lower and fencing/safety concerns at Borough lower are long standing and legitimate problems.

School system fields are available to Mendham Little League after occupation by school softball and lacrosse use is completed. This situation will likely improve as daylight savings time is advanced.

Fields at Hilltop and Mt. Pleasant are important and useful for the girl’s program where quality expectations are lower, but neither is particularly useful to the boys program due to location and condition limitations.

The Mendham Little League clearly represents separate and contrasting agendas for its boys and girls subdivisions. The boys program is comparatively more competitively oriented and directed

toward training their children to performance yielding tournament qualifications and continuation into higher levels of play. In addition to typical Little League formats Mendham Little League has introduced a “Cerbo League” consisting of registrants inclined to travel and play at higher levels. To date seven teams have been added to Mendham Little League rosters to accommodate these teams. Their responses relative to this study directly assert dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of available resources and a growing frustration with their repeated efforts to improve both conditions.

The girl’s element of Mendham Little League represents a different inclination toward delivery of their softball training and competition. The training, exercise and experiential characteristics of playing the game are stressed and “fun” is cited as the overall goal of this system. Few complaints of any description were cited even in response to conditions that are irrefutably substandard (Hilltop). Though the number of participants here is large, a relaxed attitude relative to scheduling issues prevails and a make-do relationship to field conditions was expressed.

### **COMPARISON OF FACILITIES TO PROGRAMS – MENDHAM LITTLE LEAGUE**

Mendham Little League is responsible for scheduling practices and games for a total of 72 teams, six of which are T-ball teams. In addition 7 Cerbo league teams are superimposed over the 8 conventional levels of Little League. Ideally each team requires 2 uses per week per team, yielding a total of 153 weekly uses needed.

Additional demand is placed on the field resources as the Women’s Softball program fields three teams and utilizes two of the system fields (Hilltop and Brookside) for their games and practices which require an additional 30 use opportunities during the season or three uses per week.

Three Babe Ruth teams require field space on the systems full sized fields (Borough, Pastime) for practice and approximately half of their game schedule, requiring an additional 3 uses per week.

The total system demand for space/time is approximately 164 uses per week aggregating all team needs.

The system considered in these idealized circumstances yield a deficit of 15 uses opportunities per week or approximately one full field’s service capability. A realistic assessment of the system potential, factoring actual use characteristics into consideration produces a greater discrepancy than a simple mathematical model.

Mendham Little League reporting indicates that: Mt. Pleasant and Hilltop fields are rarely used; size and location limit Mt. Pleasant’s utility and Hilltop (should not be in service) but is dry and well liked; High School fields are available to a limited extent based on the program needs of the school intramural and interscholastic requirements; Mendham Middle School fields are similarly available but are influenced by school lacrosse program use as well as baseball; Borough Park fields are operating at completely filled use levels and are subject to damage when utilized in water influenced conditions. This factor may be a significant impediment to maintenance of April and May scheduling.

Considering these factors in the context of the observed condition of system surfaces and equipment, sustains Mendham Little Leagues contentions that baseball field capacity is beyond saturation under current programming. A conservative assessment of the circumstances here

indicates a minimum of two well developed fields (equivalent to Ralston) are required to balance service demand with system capability.

Review of the field scheduling for system fields confirm that there are continuously compacted by use from mid-April to mid-June (the entire cool weather seasons). Although the same fields remain in service in summer and fall season for traveling programs and football, utilization is at much lower levels. As is evidenced by observed surface conditions, this quantity of stress during the first of two annual growing seasons for cool season turf grasses results in physical conditions that impair field surface condition and that will worsen over time. Persistent use of system fields at these levels will continue to degrade soil conditions and gradually increase the severity of damage from storm runoff and will result in protract periods of field closure.

In overview, the future of spring baseball programming in the Mendham's system will probably be little influenced in terms of overall player accommodation. Mendham Little League, Babe Ruth and adult women's softball associations have a demonstrated capability to adapt to physical circumstances and provide very high service levels. The same cannot be said for the system fields. These will continue to experience stress damage on the play surfaces and deterioration of equipment. This affect will be most pronounced at the Borough Fields as comparatively, they exhibit more fundamental issues than the new Township Fields. Nonetheless, the need for renovations in existing venues is likely as important as expansion, simply to sustain current program levels.

The relationship between Mendham Little League and the municipalities is also in need of some correction. The needs expressed by the league represent the status of the recreation program in baseball whether they are subjective or observable. Likely, a much more in depth communication of impediments facing the ball players and administrations, reinforced by a mutually practical plan to address them would create a more appreciative relationship.

In order to achieve a productive level of understanding of system issues impacting baseball, an annual inventory and accounting of the whole system characteristics is needed. Such an inventory would include a total of all teams and their spatial and time requirements and a description of all fields with their spatial characteristics and chronic physical issues. Physical /spatial issues need to be described point by point in terms of specific non-conformities and specific impacts upon programming. For instance citing fence improvements as an issue is informative only in a general sense, which will not influence decision making. Citing particulars, (fencing is too short (4') to protect players and spectators; selvages are frayed posing an injury risk; fences are 10' from baselines, this is not compliant with Little League Regulations and produces a physical injury risk to players and on an indefensible liability to our coaches and association should injury occur) is informative and where the consequences of each is also related to the physical condition, the association is able to request specific improvements and the municipality is able to evaluate the need and make specific determinations relative to cost.

### **MENDHAM WOMEN'S SOFTBALL**

This is an overlay program sharing space with Mendham Little League on Borough and Township Fields (Hilltop and Brookside). It is a comparatively informally organized league of five area teams (3 Mendham Teams) each consisting of 15-20 players (not strictly limited by residency).

This is a league intent on fun and social interaction reportedly well satisfied with the character and availability of fields at their disposal. Their season is the same approximate duration of sprig recreation baseball. This is a very flexible group of participants, practicing as convenient and targeting a ten game schedule.

Their relationship to the municipalities currently requires little other than playing opportunity. No specific issues were cited other than a minor scheduling skirmish with Mendham Little League which was resolved by Borough recreation.

In response to questioning about their needs, only two possible considerations were reported. The first was better advertising of their league to increase participation. The second was direct assistance in securing umpiring services.

Unless some unanticipated factor causes their program to increase rapidly, only one significant issue is identified that influences its continuation. That issue is Hilltop Field. Play at any level for any group on Hilltop field assumes the risk potential of an inadequately supported field (backstop, team bench enclosures, perimeter fences, access). Adult play should not occur here. This group despite their willing acceptance should be scheduled elsewhere.

## **WEST MORRIS SOCCER CLUB**

The West Morris Soccer Club was formed by combination of the programs formerly serving the Chester's and Mendham separately. Currently, it is the largest recreation program in the four towns, delivering programming for 1350 registrants in 2008. It various levels of training include resident children from 5 to 18 years old. West Morris Soccer Club organizes a full fall intramural soccer program as well as a spring and fall traveling team programs and extends it support of select teams through the summer. It is in all respects highly organized and proficient in structuring operations in every significant aspect of player training, safety and support. West Morris Soccer Club manages registration, scheduling, referees, trainers, coaches, field management, insurance, equipment and field maintenance, mowing, repair and coordination with the public works departments. Its practices and games are accompanied by trainers, equipped and competent to evaluate player's injuries and physical conditions as they occur during play. The club reports being supported by 750 volunteer sharing tasks of coaching, transportation, field preparation, event planning and conduct of tournaments. The West Morris Soccer Club website is modern, comprehensive, and regularly updated to reflect current status of schedules, game results, registration and clinic programs, coach and referee training and events schedules.

### **STATISTICS**

#### **Registrants 2008**

Fall	1350
Spring	500

#### **Teams**

Spring	35
Fall	86

System Fields include:

West	2
Chubb	3
Ralston	1
Black River	3
Wysong	1
MT Middle	2
Brookside	1
MT Elementary	1
Franklin	1
BR Meadow	2

As can be observed from the quantity of players, teams and facilities being organized and programmed, West Morris Soccer Club is conducting a massive logistical operation in the fall and a very large one in the spring. Its success at this operation is directly reflected in the prowess of the High school soccer program, particularly as seen in the girl's perennial strength.

This reflects its level of competence and purpose to maximize the quality of its training through consistent skill improvement in its coaches and diligent management of facilities at its disposal.

West Morris Soccer Club is similarly competent and persistent regarding their community outreach and solicitation for sponsorship by area businesses. They have developed enduring relationships with many of their sponsors and constantly solicit additional support of all membership families by requesting optional contribution of cash in lieu of man hour contribution to support the overall efforts of hundreds of involved volunteers. Resources are applied to equipment supply and replacement, field maintenance; including contract mowing services and contributions to field improvements and new construction in all three supporting towns.

West Morris Soccer Club has adopted a pragmatic approach to field access described as "using anything we can get". Following this approach, their practice is to secure access to a field space and dedicate as much available manpower and resources to improvements as they can afford and to reinforce their cooperation with the municipal public works departments by maintenance sharing to achieve a most favorable status with their directors. They report being able to respond to emergencies and accommodate additional scheduling needs (lacrosse, men's, women's soccer) by understanding their resources and maintaining a cooperative, flexible relationship to the towns and other field users. This stance is best demonstrated by the large meadow area adjacent to the Black River Fields. This space has been available to West Morris Soccer Club for use under leasing agreements with the West Morris Regional High School Board of Education but has never been regraded or refinished to produce regular field spaces. Over years of use as a practice space and through persistent management, mowing, fertilizing and surficial repair, West Morris Soccer Club has converted this space to the best general purpose practice substrate in the system. It is now shared by the soccer and lacrosse recreation program and by the West Morris Mendham High School lacrosse program.

### **BALANCE OF FACILITIES TO PROGRAM – WEST MORRIS SOCCER**

The fall season for soccer predicates evaluation of system capability as it is so much larger than the spring program that field access is restricted only in the fall season. West Morris Soccer Club schedules one practice and one game per week for intramural teams during the fall season.

The 86 system teams require space as follows: 56 intramural teams conduct one practice and one game per week = 112 uses total. 30 traveling teams conduct two practices and one or two games per week – 90 min. uses total. The total minimum use need for the system is 202 uses per week.

The entire system consists of 18 total fields available for soccer play. Two of these (MT elementary and MB Middle) are grossly deficient but counted. Two other fields (one at Black River and one at Ralston) are reserved for lacrosse use for boys and girls programming and men's and women's soccer is superimposed over those programs during the fall season.

Approximate field capability based on the sixteen available spaces, computed at one use maximum per weekday and five uses maximum on Saturday yields a total potential of 160 uses per week. Unmet deficits are balanced by combining practices and by utilizing half field practice formats for larger fields (Ralston, West, BR, MTM).

The spatial deficit for this program is approximately equal to two additional full size fields if the fields at MB Middle School and MT elementary remain in service. As neither of these is adequate or supported well enough to sustain this utilization, they should be eliminated, effectively setting the balance target at three fields.

Recent developments in the Township's have the potential to resolve current spatial deficits relative to West Morris Soccer Club program needs. These include a new soccer/multi-purpose field recently completed at Highlands Ridge Park, a new soccer/multi-purpose field completed at India Brook Park and two developed soccer fields at the recently acquired ST. John's property.

The Highlands Ridge field and the two at St. Johns, if available for West Morris Soccer Club programming will provide the preferred conditions for West Morris Soccer Club as they will best enable the trainer/referee support needed for their operations. As all three of these are full format fields, their utility as half field practice spaces will significantly improve practicing prospects for the younger level of play.

An objective for future facility planning to support West Morris Soccer Club should include elimination of marginal and ultimately single field locations (MB middle, MT elementary, Wysong and Brookside), concentrating their operations at Chubb, Black River/Highlands, Ralston and West all of which can operate uninfluenced by school programming and can benefit by supplemental care and resources West Morris Soccer Club is able to deliver.

West Morris Soccer Club regards itself as capable, to continue expanding its programs and improving its services related to soccer. The organization expresses a specific interest in growth within the service area and in planning to influence municipal level support to achieve a variety of goals. Among their targets are synthetic fields and field lighting systems to extend practice opportunities in the short fall day and to produce a versatile damage proof game field. Other practical planning objectives reported are field complexes supported by restrooms, play areas and large shelters. They hope to better support the many parents and siblings of their players and create much more capable facilities for hosting tournaments, team events and to provide shelter for spectators in inclement weather. Other initiatives they are prepared to support are field improvements like those at Mendham Middle School and utility service improvements as at Chubb to facilitate their maintenance and repair sequences.

The West Morris Soccer Club is performing every reasonable and many optional tasks on behalf of the Four Towns. In addition, they are building bridges to and making every possible effort to coexist peacefully with other fall and spring sports. As opportunity occurs to improve their field stock, it should be considered as a priority, to deliver as much raw material as this organization can use.

### **CHESTER/MENDHAM LACROSSE**

Mendham/Chester Lacrosse is the most recent of the major sports clubs established to service the Four Towns youth. Boys and girls divisions are providing programs for area youth between 6 and 14 for boys and 8 to 14 for girls. These teams function separately and conduct different quantities of practices and games. Both clubs focus on skills training, rules of game and nurturing an understanding and love for the game.

Both programs utilize field spaces also shared by the spring traveling program in soccer and the boy's division shares space with High School teams at the Black River site.

Mendham/Chester Lacrosse has established an equitable arrangement with West Morris Soccer Club to enable each needed access to field time and commonly adjust scheduling in season to respond to unusual circumstances. They have collaborated with an area contractor for mowing at the Black River practice fields each paying for this service in their respective primary season. The relationship between the two organizations is reported to be mutually supportive and cooperative.

The boys program trains and practices at the Black River practice fields and utilizes one of the park fields for play. The girls program is based at Ralston for practice and games.

Both programs undertake comprehensive organization of all aspects of management including: registration, scheduling, equipment, insurance, coaching, referees and certification of coaching. The boys program is directly linked to West Morris Mendham High School through an advisor to unify training. The boys program represents a larger organization structure and is directed by a board of officers, trustees and committee chairs. The girls program is directed by a president and committee chairs that coordinate registration, referees, field management and scheduling.

### **STATISTICS**

	Boys	Girls
Number Registered	240	140
Number of Teams	13	5

#### **Fields - Boys**

Black River Practice  
Black River Game

#### **Fields - Girls**

Ralston lower  
Ralston upper (shared)



The girls program purchases indoor practice time and a Randolph facility to establish training and orient new players prior to opening on the fields in mid-April. They report that the “late” availability of fields restricts the ability to train basic skills and game conduct adequately prior to competing. As the boys are responsible for management of their own practice fields, they occupy them for practice as soon as they are capable to sustain use.

The boys system schedules 2 or 3 practices and one game per week according to level and the girls schedule 2 practices and one game per week.

## **SYSTEM NEED AND CAPABILITY**

The combined lacrosse programs schedule practices and games as follows:

Boys – 15 teams at 3 uses per week and 8 teams at 4 uses per week = total 47 uses per week.

Girls – 2 teams at 2 uses per week and 6 teams at 3 uses per week = total 22 uses per week.

The boys system utilizes two practice fields at Black River and two game fields at Balk River primarily on Sunday and as available on Saturday. Additional practices are accomplished by utilizing available practice field space at Black River.

The girls practice on whole fields (Ralston lower) and practice fields at Ralston and share space with soccer on Ralston upper. Games are played on Ralston Lower.

The practice area at Black River can be set up in a variety of configurations and has large quantities of marginal practicing space, which facilitates the boys practice. As they are obliged to wait for the completion of High School practice, they are typically only able to access the second practice time slot. This is not manageable in early spring due to short day length.

The girls program has access only to lower Ralston for their games and practices and must use marginal spaces to accommodate practices and younger levels of play.

Whole field spaces for games constitute the greatest challenges to both divisions as girls have one field and need to schedule as many as six games there per week. This is balanced by away game scheduling reducing their need to four or by addition games at Upper Ralston when it is not in use by soccer.

The boys program with thirteen teams and only one designated game field has difficulty scheduling their six to ten weekend games and balances away games against available Saturday openings at Black River to play games that cannot be scheduled Sundays (game day).

The boys program reports being generally well satisfied with their circumstances owing to the great flexibility of the practice fields at Black River and a real restroom but would benefit by access to additional game field space. They have developed a sense of home at the Black River site as so much of their volunteer time and money has been dedicated to improving field surfaces there and would commit to more substantial projects (rock removal, clearing of north end, minor grading) if some assurance of control of their site could be established. This ambition is shared

with West Morris Soccer Club and is the only impediment to commitment of greater quantities of physical improvement.

The Mendham/Chester Lacrosse program has cited concern relative to their future facility access. They report anticipating an increase in membership in the boys program to 200 registrants over the next 2-3 years, as children grow through the levels of play and incoming groups increase in size. Their field resources and scheduling capabilities are currently as large as reasonable possible and expansion potentials have not been identified.

Mendham/Chester Lacrosse is planning for future permanence and believes they will be as significant as baseball or soccer in the future. Ambitions discussed with their representatives include several specific features. They are these: regrading field surfaces at Black River and removing rocks to produce more complete fields; increasing parking at Black River to facilitate the quantity of players, coaches and spectators when soccer and lacrosse play and practice at the same time; development of a structure and utility support to provide some shelter, storage and to enable hosting of tournaments and extension of water services to support field maintenance.

The girls program has fewer immediate plans but more immediate need. A single field is not sufficient to carry their program. One additional full field is reported to be necessary to achieve current balance. Other matters reported to be important are availability of field space earlier in the season to avoid the cost of renting indoor space and desire for a small storage shed at lower Ralston.

Like the boys, the girls program anticipates growth as their organization becomes better known and their volunteer base grows but their immediate focus is on high quality training of the game and playing skills and maintaining a rewarding, fun experience for the children.

In order for this program pair to continue to deliver their services it will be necessary to establish one new field for each in the near future. If these organizations continue to increase as intended, improvements at the Black River practice facility or an alternative venue that can sustain large numbers of practicing teams will also be needed. As paired fields are much more useful for coaching both programs and for consolidating referees, availability of complexes rather than single venues will be more efficient solutions to lacrosse futures. Like soccer, lacrosse is willing and increasingly capable of providing significant field and equipment management, larger sites that conserving their efforts will be preferable.

In the long term Mendham/Chester Lacrosse is eager to obtain access to lighted field spaces which will allow the older divisions to function later during the short spring days and to enable evening games where greater parent attendance can be facilitated. Depending on the experience of the new synthetic field at West Morris Mendham High School, a lighted, synthetic system game field may also be a planning target.

## **TWIN BORO BEARS**

The Twin Boro Bears football has been providing recreation football programs for area youth for twenty three years. This program is the continuation of programs previously sponsored and run in the Mendham's by the Pastime Club and in the Chester's by PAA. It has grown significantly in that time registering approximately 340 area youth in its eight divisions. Twin Boro Bears has

two flag programs for the 5-8 year old players and tackle programs for 8-14 year old players. The program is administered by area volunteers and supported by fundraising and support of area service organizations. While the club has grown over the years its fortunes respective of available facilities has not fared similarly. Today the somewhat uncomfortable home of the club is at West Morris Mendham High School. Circumstances of their accommodation there are reported to be difficult and deteriorating. The following situations reported in interviews with Twin Boro Bears illustrate this representation. For example, "Our football program plays on the worst facility in the Morris County League", "Lower level kids prefer to play away because, at least they play on grass", "We are the only program in the Four Towns that doesn't have a facility to call our home."

Observation of the practicing facilities available for their purposes confirms at least part of these assertions. The fields at the High School excepting those areas reserved for field hockey are among the most damaged in the system. Those used for football practicing are particularly damaged exhibiting fragile, bare earth surfaces. The best of fields used here is the varsity practice field, which is available after High School practice has ended. The least good is the small, narrow practice turf located near the Franklin site entrance. This site is most frequently available because no other program wants it.

In the recently completed 2008 season the clubs fortunes took a turn for the worse as construction of the new synthetic field first occupied and consequently damaged the High School football practice field. The bears were then obliged to find another space or use the small auxiliary field for all programming. In response, the team was able to beg an accommodation at the barn a church owned small field in the borough, and the flag program played its games on a ballfield at the rear of the Mendham shopping center. Though the Bears organization strongly supported the recent campaign to build synthetic fields at their High School, hoping to share in their utilization, their prospects were effectively eliminated as the lighting system initially proposed to support this facility was disallowed, leaving the Bears time only after High School use. This field is now so competitively sought for scheduling for all recreation programs after High School programs are concluded, that future opportunities to access the new turf will be few and sporadic. Facing the 2009 season in nine months, the Twin Boro Bears have no prospect of suitable field resources to support their program.

#### STATISTICS

Number Registered	320
Number of Teams	8

#### FIELDS

High school football practice  
High School auxiliary (Franklin Entrance)  
Borough Park football overlay

The Bears two programs have different requirements for practice. The two youngest divisions (flag football) are scheduled for two or three practices and one game per week, while the six older divisions practice four times and play one per week, half of those games being played away. Totally 38 uses slots are need each week to conduct play and training for more than 300 children.

Currently, available local practicing resources include one substandard practice field at the High School and two adopted spaces in the Borough. The best facilities found for home play have been furnished at Black River practice field by arrangement with West Morris Soccer for a share in maintenance cost.

In consideration of the Twin Boro Bears program and conditions of their facilities it is observed that this program is the least well served and supported of all the field sports programs operating in service of Four Town's youth. If the Bears program was once well provided for at the High School, it is not now. The program entire should be extracted from the High School site and relocated. Prospects of improvement of their circumstances at the most overused and impacted complex in the system are deteriorating and will not soon improve.

The circumstances yielding current conditions at the high School have been examined during interviews with the Twin Boro Bears. It is reported that the opportunities needed to support their recreation program here are the least of the Board of Education concerns, in the context of too few overused and damaged fields available to schedule the activities of the High School intramural and interscholastic programs. The High School fields are inconveniently sited, difficult to access, deficient in utility support and beyond the capability of available maintenance resources to renovate and repair. As significantly, the policy conditions imposed the Board render the prospect of satisfactory support for Twin Boro Bears as remote at best. This assertion is based in part upon these citations. The Bears have requested access to use of restrooms at the palatial MHS field house and have been denied, even after proposing to pay for janitorial services. Subsequently, the Bears requested approval to bring a rented portable toilet to the site. This was also denied. The prospect of three hundred children practicing without access to a restroom at the system High School is incomprehensible and demonstrates an attitude, unwarranted by any standard. In consideration of the dismal prospects offered at the High School, in terms of field space and the uniquely uncooperative attitude of the Regional Board, the Twin Bears program should receive all possible assistance in finding a new base for operations.

Football is significantly different from all other conventional forms of recreation play offered to primary school aged participants. It is a contact sport, fundamentally violent, and is culturally celebrated for those virtues by nearly year round media attention. In an attempt to mitigate the potential for injury to participants, equipment of increasing sophistication and cost, in the form of helmets, pads, uniforms and foot wear is required at every level. Similarly rules of conduct and engagement are classified and regulated in practice and competition and each sanctioned event must be closely controlled by referees, umpires, judges and coaches. Risk of injury attendant to the game of football is a universal caveat for all public programs and consistent with those exposures, the venues prepared and programmed for the use of young players should reasonably be uniform, intrinsically hazard free and adaptable to conventions of the game. These conditions are not even approximated in the venues available to the Twin Boro Bears and alternatives will likely remain few.

Football play is typically more damaging to turf surfaces than all other forms of youth play and consequently, other area sports programs are not eager to share their fields with football. Rather than establishing separate durably constructed venues with opportunity in spring for turf repair and regeneration, recreation football has been superimposed over high school football. The result is exactly as may be anticipated.

As the Four Towns consider recreation football in the future of their service area, criteria unlike those applicable to other sports are necessary to establish facility characteristics.

Multipurpose fields are less likely to function well over long time periods for football. Frequent repair and renovation is required annually and is most successful with water for turf establishment available as irrigations system. Electric service extension or lighting systems enable extension of short fall evening practice corridors. Restrooms, potable water supply and on site equipment storage are fundamental to support of players and costly field gear. If replacement venues are proposed for the Bears program, a much more rigorous attention to appropriate design should be considered. The alternative is being experienced by the systems young footballers today.

### **CHEERLEADING**

Cheerleading accompanies The Twin Boro Bears program in support of the teams playing in the several divisions of flag and tackle football. The cheerleaders are represented by eight squads of approximately twenty members each, currently finding space wherever possible within available indoor and outdoor facilities of the system. Though the spatial requirements for cheerleading are less than for conventional sports venues, good quality turf surfaces are certainly needed. Cheerleading occurs at the same time and location as the Bears football games and consequently is as impacted by damaged, muddy field conditions as are the football players themselves. The experience for young cheerleaders attempting to perform their skills on slippery, wet surfaces is likely memorable, but not positively so.

These squads of young athletes deserve recognition of their difficult circumstances as well as appropriate conditions to demonstrate the skills they have trained in as rigorously and competitively as any other of the youth teams. It appears that their opportunities are identical to those of the Bears teams as they are constrained by the same venues. Unlike the football players however, their issues are not as well known or as apparent to the majority of football supporters whose focus rests primarily upon the game.

Resolution of the cheerleader's challenges is coincident with those of the football players. It will remain so until competent youth football fields can be found or until existing fields are renovated.

### **CHESTER TRACK AND CROSS COUNTRY**

This organization offers spring and fall programs for area youth of primary school age. Track is organized within the Lakeland League and conducts home meets on the West Morris Center facility typically and practices at the same location twice per week. The season includes six individual meets and four group meets for qualifying athletes or relay teams. This program has been steadily increasing in registration, reaching 140 boys and girls in the 2008 season.

A variety of deliberating issues confront the track program, which in 2008 severely restricts their ability to train. This resulted from construction related closure of the West Morris Central track eliminating the opportunity to practice or host home meets. No scheduling space was available at West Morris Mendham track and consequently, the entire track training program was conducted on the roadways and parking areas of Bragg Dickerson School.

Track is absolutely dependent on availability of a 400 meter lined running surface and appropriate event venues for shot put and long jump. It involves timed events based on prescribed distances within the confines of regulated lanes and requires carefully prepared and constructed field event venues. Track meets are typically much longer than baseball, football or soccer and require more support (restrooms, team areas, water) than other sports. They require a large quantity of timers, or timing equipment and numerous supporting coaches and assistants to stage subsequent events and record sometimes numerous heats in running events.

None of the conventional facility requirements needed to provides regular practice where available in 2008 but is anticipated to be available again in 2009.

Under the best conditions, recreation level practice must await completion of high school practices or meets frequently resulting in start times after 5:00 p.m. In the early spring, this is not adequate daylight to complete practice.

Spring track is run by volunteers responsible for all aspects of program delivery. Registration, equipment, uniforms, scheduling, trainers, times, judges, record keepers and separate coaches for field and track events are all provided by club members. The logistic demands of assembling all team members, coaches, and gear at West Morris Center or at disparate county communities is a major element of the time requirement obliged of these residents.

Conduct of relay and tournament meets can easily require seven or eight hours from start to finish effectively consuming an entire weekend day for volunteers.

Future operation of the Chester Track program is entirely dependent on continuing access to the West Morris Center facility at least three times per week. This availability will continue to be influenced by timely vacation of the track after high school use and at time when the Long Valley recreation program is not already scheduled there. Otherwise there appears to be few convenient options to assure support of this program.

In discussions of this dilemma with Chester Track, the possibility of alternative accommodations to avoid repetition of the 2008 season was discussed. A potential for creation of backup capability is reported to be a regular, level lane section sufficiently wide (12') and approximately 120 meters long to enable stripping of 3 or 4 lanes for spring training and timed trails. Such a feature could readily be created as part of a larger multipurpose exercise loop as exists at Chubb Park.

The prospect of merging programs with Mendham' Cross Country and Track was also discussed. League rules specifically restrict the joining of towns in a single team but in no sense limit the possibility of simultaneous training of separate teams. If the Chester and Mendham programs could be joined at West Morris Central or West Morris Mendham High Schools both interests could be supported. Unfortunately, the obstacles facing Chester at West Morris Central are identically shared by the Mendham recreation track program. In the long term, the four towns should look to creation of a practice facility that includes running lanes, a shot put venue and long jump runway and pit. This accommodation would eliminate the most difficult weekday practice restrictions and as meets on weekends are much easier to secure, those could continue on area tracks.

Chester Cross County is offered in the fall under the same organizational structure as spring track. It is wholly volunteer supported and has access to satisfactory training space at Chubb Park. The cross country athletes practice locally twice per week and meet on weekends at Brandage Park in Randolph.

The cross country program is reported to function reasonably well on the open turf spaces and trails associated with Chubb Park.

Chester cross country program registered 45 athletics in 2008. These children complete in four age subdivision at distances increasing with age from 1700 to 4000 meters.

Cross country is relatively free of issues owing to the nature of the sport and can meet its needs within its current conditions for the foreseeable future.

### **MENDHAM TRACK AND CROSS COUNTRY**

The track and cross country program operating in Mendham is fundamentally, a duplicate program as the Chester organization. Mendham Magic as the organization is named is sponsored and supported by member parents for all aspects of training and competition. Current registration includes 250 children from the Mendham's in track and approximately 70 registered in the fall cross country program.

The track program has encountered very significant impediments relative to accessing the WMM track facility where their program has traditionally trained subsequent to the end of High School utilization. The recent construction of the synthetic field surface at the stadium field has resulted in an unprecedented utilization of that field, creating a circumstance that displaces the recreation track athletes. The infield area use is now dedicated to whichever high school sport can extend their spring practicing there, eliminating the space needed to stage and train 250 athletes simultaneously.

This problem is an extreme disability as no alternative facility exists that is convenient and available to the track program. Coaches are exploring opportunities in neighboring communities including rental prospects to respond to the sudden loss of their "home" facility. The specialized nature of track events requires training in lane running, starts from blocks, baton passing, long and high jumping and shot putting all of which are facility dependent and in competition, will be scrupulously regulated according to technique and technical infractions. This yields a circumstance where track athletes will be unreasonably handicapped by failure of opportunity to practice the essential elements of these events.

The cross country program is able to function without elaborate facilities, requiring a reasonably well maintained training course of approximately three miles. This has been found at Brundage Park, which location is utilized as a training facility although it is reported that Randolph will soon modify their traditional relationship to accommodation of adjacent programs that have significantly grown. Competition occurs in regular league events held at Brundage Park in Randolph throughout the season. Utilization of the Brundage facility is seen as a tolerable circumstance despite the regular commute necessary to reach the site, but is apparently continued primarily because no similarly useful venue is available locally. The Four Towns process has the

potential to quickly and easily resolve the cross country training course defect by the identical expedient described for the Chester program in the preceding section.

Response to the spring track issue is far more difficult and potentially, costly. It is reported that Mendham Township is currently planning creation of a track practicing facility at Ralston Fields. If completed, this will rescue a well established recreation program from the very specious planning evolved with respect to the new synthetic field.

In the long term, maintaining the two strong track programs (Chester and Mendham) will certainly be facilitated by access to a track practicing facility. Such a feature can be constructed at reasonable cost if not finished in a synthetic resilient surface. Previously, tracks were constructed of cinder and aggregate materials and if maintenance intensive, these are very good running surfaces. Creation of this type of facility at Chubb, Black River or Ralston will produce a very attractive general purpose recreation feature popular among previously trained track and exercise runners. Its management could be more than capably be performed by the two clubs and the existence of a uniquely programmable local track would enable a variety of activities not now possible. In view of this potential, it is recommended that if Black River practice fields can be secured and planned for redevelopment, that one field space be graded in anticipation of future running track construction and left to the initiative of the two clubs to raise resources for future paving.

### **CHESTER OUTDOOR BASKETBALL LEAGUE**

This uniquely conceived outdoor recreation program was originated by a group of Chester area parents who, following a format adopted in other communities, established a league of resident youth interested in playing basketball in a comparatively unstructured format. The program functions similarly to other sports except that games are conducted without coaches or referees in an organized street ball fashion. The program has been very well received and attended. It now registers approximately 263 participants representing fifth and sixth grade and seventh and eighth grade teams in boys and girls divisions. The program is entirely conducted, organized and supervised (observed by) volunteer parents. Games are played primarily at the two courts located at the Black River Middle School and as necessary at the Grove Street court.

The league has rented portable lighting to enable play beyond dusk but is otherwise unsupported at either site except by available porta-johns. In response to interview questions representatives of the league cited a need for additional courts, seating, drinking fountains and access to the restrooms within the school. They believe that this format offers a rare amateur type of activity relatively free of adult administered rules and forms. Their experience has shown that the players are able to conduct themselves properly and have formed a spirit of friendly, unstressed competition between teams.

This program shows real innovation and an interest in producing recreation and competition for fun primarily in a format that relies on the conduct of the players themselves to regulate their behavior and establish their own dimensions of experience.

This is an activity type that deserves much more focused attention by municipal administrations as it presents an example of how innovative approaches to perceived deficiencies in the typically



available activities offered within the Four Towns can be delivered cheaply and well by resident initiative.

This particular activity may serve as a reasonable stimulus needed to direct attention to the underserved, minimally provisioned inventory of existing service area courts and may suggest as well, additional supporting features that serve to maximize the potential for wholly rewarding experiences for area youth and the parents supporting them.

The persistent and unreasonable policy of closing school restrooms even in circumstances where their extended availability would be easy and sensible is also highlighted by the league experience at the Middle School. Where restrooms exist in the building, only feet distant from the courts, the failure to figure out a way to make them available demonstrates a significant failure of commitment to community support.

### **EVALUATION OF THE ENTIRE FOUR TOWNS SYSTEM**

The Four Towns recreation system considered in terms of its sum of facilities and services is much more competent than it would likely be if viewed as individual municipal components. In fact, shared use of facilities and their programming is so integrated within the historic pairs of Boroughs and Townships, that they could not be conveniently separated for assessment.

Each pair shares identical historic precedents up to the point of their partitioning and subsequent traditions of public recreation service and particularly, facility utilization has changed little until late in the twentieth century. Salient history of Chester and Mendham with respect to origins of their local recreation is that it was at first supported by service organizations (Chester PAA and The Pastime Club) and has been delivered by derivative citizens organizations ever since. This foundation is shared by many other small communities as they evolved in post war years, but unlike larger municipalities or those arisen from areas without viable town centers (Randolph, Washington, and Roxbury) where recreation program support emerged from within diverse neighborhoods or sections of the township and was later merged into municipal recreation departments, primary responsibility for management of local recreation remained the province of its founding organizations in the Four Towns. This tradition is the predominant factor that has shaped the current physical characteristics of developed facilities and that underlie the bulk of system programming in all four municipalities.

Such a model, by its very nature, promotes a biased priority preference for development of increased or improved facilities supporting majority interests, as contrasted to balanced increase in a broad spectrum of possible recreations. As success and competence is demonstrated, organized sports associations grow in popular regard as well as political influence and typically, are rewarded with greater vestments of public support for their initiatives. Such a dynamic sustains itself well and can be a powerful vehicle to assure continuity, as has occurred in the Four Towns.

Today, athletic facilities provided by the Municipalities and managed for sports by citizens associations are the predominate characteristic of the Four Towns' developed recreation sites. Predictably, this circumstance is and will likely remain the primary future focus of local administrations' priority, unless a significant alteration of the traditional paradigm occurs.

The Four Towns administer their respective outdoor recreation programs by delegation of the bulk of operational responsibility to citizens associations. Little direct influence of the manner in which recreation programs function derives from municipal organizational policies or according to plan sequences established by municipal agencies. A preference for accommodation of evolving interests of citizens associations as they grow to represent a politically influential community voice is the accustomed technique motivating creation of new outdoor features. As commitment to increase or improve features is approved, construction of those features follows. The net result of this sequence is today seen as a group of recreation sites developed to satisfy a current demand where most convenient, irrespective of future context. Systematic planning directing where facilities should be located to achieve maximum utility and how facilities should be developed to assure economy of future management and compliance with appropriate standards for safety and access have not been created to precondition these development sequences adequately. Many defects in spatial and marginal characteristics of fields exist throughout the system. Fundamental design choices derived from similar previous facilities, rather than from the most current industry standards have produced significant non-compliant safety and accessibility conditions, which seem to be ignored rather than corrected. Reversal of these circumstances, as well establishment of more competent future development will require an informed relationship to the minimum requirements for facility development and an administrative requirement for technical review of proposals prior to their authorization for construction. A mechanism responsible to regularly assess the condition of existing features with the single purpose of identifying defects is necessary in all public facilities where codified conditions for safety and compliance apply. Failure to correct these exposes the associations and municipalities to liability, regardless of responsibility for the physical condition. This failure of appropriate oversight is a very important deficiency of all four existing management systems.

Available sites and developed features are quite imbalanced within the Four Towns outdoor system excepting Mendham Borough, where a comparative diversity of feature types and reasonable balance of facilities to population exists. Both Townships are now generously provisioned with available, developable recreation lands, adequate to meet all futures, but are deficient in system diversity and in completion of existing mainstream park sites. Chester Borough has one recreation site (Grove Street) approaching a perfect completion but is currently capable of contributing only to baseball with its recreation partners as existing facilities do not include fields adequate in size for football, soccer or other similar sports. (Ultimate disposition of the recently acquired lands from Lucent may improve this capability dramatically.)

Utility support of developed outdoor recreation sites in the Four Towns is an important limitation to current maintenance operations, to energizing lighting systems and accessory equipment and to provision of drinking fountains. Older parks in the two Boroughs are those most well serviced but complete irrigation systems are available only in Borough Park, Black River Fields and Ralston field. This circumstance contributes importantly to difficulty performing turf management tasks satisfactorily and is frequently cited as an impediment to the association efforts to renovate field turf or to perform timely repair of damaged surfaces. The lack of wells, hydro pneumatic distribution systems, electric main supply systems and particularly sanitary waste disposal capabilities at the majority of system sites, presents a significant prerequisite cost factor attendant to future consideration of upgrading facilities by incorporating restrooms, indoor facilities and food service capabilities. This situation presents a continuing challenge to any impetus that may exist for improvement of convenience and management characteristics of recreation sites. It is a significant obstacle and one actually complicated by addition of new unsupported facilities.

Support of youth recreation is an enormously important theme among Four Town's residents generally, as evidenced by numerous indoor and outdoor programs available in all seasons. These customarily operate with minimal influence from the municipalities, relying upon volunteers for most aspects of registration, organization, scheduling transportation and refereeing. The municipal agencies are most closely linked to these activities (outdoor) by the various Public Works Departments whose operations are coordinated with seasonal requirements for mowing primarily and for grooming, repair and general maintenance, though the level of municipal service varies from town to town and is typically supplemented by volunteer work.

Area volunteers interviewed during this study had relatively few complaints directed at the character or quality of support provided by the municipalities. Typically, they reported that their interaction with the municipalities was minimal excepting matters concerning field condition and availability and that their operations were and should remain their province. Frustration with response time to requests for service, and irritation that field access (spring) was unreasonably delegated by the municipalities was expressed.

A sense of resentment, that they were obliged to justify representations of need for additional facilities, was the most emphatically stated response to relationship questions posed in this study.

The sports associations have a very important sense that each has worked long and diligently to create and sustain high quality recreation by dedication of their time, labor and commitment to area youth. In response, their expectation is clearly that requests for support are not frivolous and that their municipal representatives should have a more informed appreciation of their challenges.

Respondents had few very detailed observations relative to matters of technical aspects of system fields. Criticism was typically directed at surficial characteristics of play fields, particularly concerning chronic wetness, slow drainage and management of turf and at the inadequacy of water utility support and equipment storage facilities. Issues related to spatial characteristics, proximity issues and condition of accessory equipment were rare. Where associations are heavily involved in the processes of field management, (soccer, Mendham Baseball and lacrosse) several practical observations relative to the difficulty involved in efforts to restore and renovate turf without adequate irrigation water sources were reported.

The most frequently cited needs relative to all sports included: Equipment containers for storage of sports related gear and maintenance equipment; restroom facilities; additional parking (for weekend and event related occasions; field lighting (for at least one game field); some form of shelter to offer protection from rainy weather and to support events and repair of older or damaged fence system components. Specific needs related to baseball included batting cages and utility support to power pitching machines.

Responses to context questions of existing conditions were few. Other features of recreation sites and the interrelationship of those to any particular sports activity were not significant. Observations relative to the "appearance" or "quality" of system fields were frequently cited as a deficient characteristic. The Twin Boro Bears represented the most negative view of system fields (WMMHS) as the "worst in the league" No respondent cited their facilities as the best in any comparison, although soccer and lacrosse are very well satisfied with the Black River Fields.

Courts (paved) in the system are represented by basketball and tennis alone. These are concentrated within or adjacent to the Boroughs and are well related to other facilities only at Grove St. Park and Borough Park. One set of these is lighted (Borough Park).

Other day use facilities consist of play equipment areas which, like the courts, occur within or adjacent to the Boroughs. In combination, these few facilities are the significant sum of developed features available to residents of the service area for spontaneous use, without an automobile ride. Consequently, excepting those few neighborhoods near enough to walk to neighborhood sites, short visits or the prospect of children independently using public facilities is available to a small percentage of the population.

Generally, the developed recreation sites in the Four Towns are designed as utilitarian spaces, particularly in the Townships. Each Borough includes a “legacy” park (Borough and Memorial) created initially, as the towns evolved but neither, in its current state, includes a memorial, historical references, a garden or other identity feature with sitting areas, landscaped walkways, decorative fences, lighting, gateways or a purposefully created space intended to celebrate cultural continuity, historic remembrance or civic recognition. Gazebo structures in both parks are the token visual reference suggesting that the sites are important community elements.

Minimal elaboration by furnishing, landscaping and decorative features within system recreation areas reflects a tradition of municipal philosophy oriented to the pragmatic utility of public spaces rather than to purposes of their experiential quality. That expectation, if representative of the administrative preference for future development within Four Towns parks and playfields will, simplify planning priorities by eliminating the bulk of the most subjective aspects of development proposals. Distilling facility provision to consideration of the necessary defining characteristics of any particular feature is a direct process, uncomplicated by context. By thorough inventory of existing physical characteristics of any site and similarly thorough evaluation of the appropriate spatial and technical elements of a given facility, future additions to the system can be developed most economically and with the fewest complications relative to ancillary uses or refinement.

Continuation of this practice will however, reinforce a popular perception that organized recreation forms are the administrative “favorites”, when in fact, the administrative intent is to provision the needs of any legitimate, popular interest, without directive influence over characteristics other than those essential to that purpose.

Some adaptation of that fundamental relationship will likely be necessary to facilitate creation of facilities desired by minority interests. Unlike conventional team sports, where participants assemble and organize to represent identical needs, those residents who prefer spontaneous individual or social opportunities within attractive public recreation facilities rarely organize to request such accommodation. Similarly, those residents who do not participate in sports will likely not organize to request more convenience or nicer furnishings in sites they never visit. Neither will their inclination to support general recreation improvements be likely.

The Four Towns are so similar in practically all observable physical aspects of the recreation infrastructure existing today, that they may be considered a unity for planning purposes. This uniformity suggests that a systematized approach to resolution of identifiable issues can be reliably applied to Four Towns initiatives without risk of inappropriate application. Similarly, none of the prospective municipal partners has formalized definitive criteria for context,

technical attributes, form, aesthetic or balance for features within the outdoor recreation system. Such a vacuum possibly enables creation of a unified philosophical framework as underpinning for joint planning objectives.

The goal of creating a master vision for the Four Towns as well as practical proposals for shared enterprise to achieve those ambitions appears to be a reasonable potential. A model describing opportunities for accommodation, engagement of the senses, refreshment, cultural pursuits, social interaction, family activities and individual preferences in specific terms and contexts, is an unexplored concept in current Four Towns planning. It may be one that inspires the interest of those selected as community representatives, to examine opportunities not yet exploited.

Chester Borough, Chester Township, Mendham Borough and Mendham Township acting as single entities will be confronted by identical influences as they administratively approach the future of recreation in their communities. Factors that have shaped recent improvements in those towns will continue in force, as a matter of expedient political reaction to organized sports demands. As constraints on existing space now require expansion into newly acquired sites, cost for creation of infrastructure improvements appropriate to support new facilities will further impact development initiatives.

Both Boroughs will have difficulty finding adequate space to create new facilities and will have even greater difficulty marshalling adequate popular support for new projects in the context of growing necessity for renovation and repair of ageing infrastructure in the existing system. The prospect of meeting needs by sharing the use of existing facilities and avoiding duplication of efforts to satisfy identical local demands by transferring programming to available space in neighboring towns, can materially improve each towns response options.

Both Townships face significant challenges posed by limited diversity of activity types, minimal utility support of existing sites, and additional burdens presented by recent large acquisitions of recreation lands which require management and maintenance whether or not they are developed to meet new facility goals. Any new improvement will require additional manpower and material budget support, in addition to initial capital cost for development. If these costs must be provided locally, political support for any new proposal will be more difficult and much slower to achieve. If initial cost and management expense can be shared over the Four Towns in exchange for access and programming, the impact to any single community can be buffered.

All of the Four Towns will be confronted with periodic renovation projects that require closure of their recreation sites during the process of construction. The prospect of being able to transfer service load to other system facilities will enable programming to continue and will reduce time pressure to complete projects, reducing cost.

The most significant prospect enabled by a combined approach to recreation in the Four Towns is capability to reasonably undertake projects of larger scale than could be sustained by local effort. Chester Township is the most populous of the Four Towns, but with a population of 7,000 is still a small town. If joined, the Four Towns represent 20,000 residents constituting a planning basis where consideration of more costly indoor facilities and development of regional recreation complexes are a realistic prospect. So aligned, potentials for funding support from exterior agencies is significantly increased as is the capability to influence County agencies to undertake development projects supportive of local recreation in the several land tracts occurring within the Four Towns.

A variety of subjects were discussed during the process of interviewing in preparation for this report. Among those, characterization of the subject group's sense of relationship to the municipal administration was uniformly posed as a topic. Very few substantive responses, positive or negative, were offered. Generally, the linkage between the citizen volunteers and the municipalities was of little consequence as an enabling resource with respect to the sports association's objectives. No respondent discussed or described a well developed routine correspondence with the recreation committees or commissions and few were aware of the existence of the initiation of a Four Towns process prior to being contacted. Though never directly stated as a complaint, many respondents shared the sentiment that their efforts were too little appreciated and too seldom recognized by municipal representatives. Each asserted a primary purpose; to prepare the best possible experience for area youth and each was justifiably proud of past accomplishments and intent on future improvements. Each was aware of limitations within the system and concerned with contingency planning in anticipation of unpredictable challenges to normal operations. Each was appreciative of support that had been given by the municipalities. None reflected on the sense of gratitude experienced as their efforts were applauded by the Towns they represent. It appears that where "attaboys" are the single best recognition that the body politic can bestow, too few have been bestowed.

Communication between the municipal recreation agencies, public works departments and resident organizations is discontinuous at best. The purposes, plans and capabilities of any group respective of the others are little known or influential in current decision making. This circumstance is undoubtedly the greatest impediment to advancing any interest's agenda. Establishing, much more reliable mechanisms of information sharing will be required before any joining of purposes proceeds very far. The Four Towns face a variety of decisions relative to their separate and potentially, merged interests. None will be well made without much more informed, mutual understanding of municipal potential and popular purpose. Success at this process is contingent upon engagement of support of the numerous volunteer enterprises that for all practical purposes are the recreation system.

### **ELEMENTS OF A FOUR TOWNS PROCESS**

Presuming that agreement to enable a Four Towns planning process to proceed can be reached by approval of the four separate municipalities, a variety of tasks must first be completed before substantive proposals can be placed before the several councils for consideration.

These are characterized as tasks of prioritization and are necessary to identify those actions that will be responsive to the most uniformly influential needs of the communities considered together.

***First among these elements, is identifying in specific terms, which characteristics of future recreation satisfy the purposes of the current administrations.*** Generalities, as expressed in current master planning documents, speak to intention but offer little directive guidance in terms of: specific problems that require remedy; specific facility goals to be achieved; and specific plans to serve as patterns for partitioning future improvements into achievable sequences culminating in completion of previously defined functional features. As the Four Towns concept is based on combining disparate resource capabilities of four communities to achieve common purposes, it is first necessary to understand what ambitions, if any, are endorsed by each partner to establish where cooperation is likely to be supported. Each partner must first assert that issues

of some particular character exist in the opinion of elected representatives. These must then be defined according the essential nature of each and agreement confirmed that if a response by joint enterprise can be identified, that each is prepared to support a shared initiative to resolve that issue. Agreement to enable a Four Towns alternative solution to system deficiencies stands as the essential prerequisite to enable this process to advance.

***The second element is organizing specific objectives into priorities for resolution based on the probability of completing them sequentially.*** Demonstration of the Four Towns process as a viable alternative to traditional planning methods is essential to further acceptance of its application by the residents and administrative bodies. This portends that initial proposals will address matters of delivery of organized sports interests, as these are reliably supported by sufficient popular involvement that bolsters political confidence sufficiently to safely warrant endorsement.

If mainstream interests can be satisfied by a Four Towns process, the likelihood of subsequent success, in response to issues of balance and diversity may increase as well. Organization of priorities is similarly important to overall comprehension of system detail, as the process will require comparison of a variety of contextual topics and necessitate discussion of the systemic objectives influencing ordering of them. This process will begin to inform elected representatives of challenges and potentials, as well as beginning to stimulate public awareness of an opportunity to contribute to the discussion, by representing their preferences or contentions.

***The third element is assembling citizen support for priority proposals.*** Four Towns residents are the significant beneficiary of the recreation system and have not been enabled to represent their interests except within the context of joining together to move various special interest agendas. Unlike individual municipal government structures, a Four Towns process has the potential to endorse particular actions, irrespective of personal or political motives, based upon a balanced overview of the entire system. It also has the capability to assemble the thousands of residents involved directly or indirectly in the support of various sports and to exhort support for a particular agenda by demonstrating a plan and sequence under which some character of each separate special interest can be met. Circumstances of utility support, surface conditions, overuse and management are concerns of each of these groups. Bargaining that support for each other has tangible benefits for all, is objectively understood and speaks to issue areas that are historical concerns of every group. This task is the keystone to enabling a Four Towns process to work. Marshalling public support and active engagement to achieve a purpose will require planning, meeting, and discussion and will build only as fast as thorough, credible representation of underlying need, technical requirements and cost parameters of a given project are broadly accepted. This demands an opportunity to present proposals in a contextual manner directed at support building, as well as providing an absolute test of viability prior to submission of a proposal for municipal approval, based on successfully gaining broad, popular agreement. If it is possible to achieve active outreach, endorsement and cooperation between the several large associations as a prerequisite for forwarding a proposal as a product of Four Towns planning, the most difficult tests of viability will have been passed prior to request for approval.

***Public empowerment and building an informed sense of connectedness are vital elements necessary to motivate proactive support for services that are discretionary among the fiscal realities of municipal representatives.*** These elements can be reinforced and coalesced by careful planning and by detailed exploration of proposals with the vested interests. The novelty

of inclusion within such collaboration may succeed beyond expectation as it has not been requested in conventional planning strategies, despite the historic reality that sports associations actually are the system.

**The first element, identifying common purposes of the four standing administrative bodies,** is likely the most challenging of the three elements. It requires a considered response by four elected agencies, which response may be seen as a form of commitment to subsequent actions or an intention to advance recreation initiatives more beneficial or impactful to one community than another. As the Four Towns plan is presented it must be made clear that authorization to proceed is given without obligation to ultimately support any particular proposal and without limitation to review, revise or condition proposals as seen necessary to protect local options. Proposals must be tailored to cleanly partition shared objectives from local prerogatives and to be specific in terms of purpose, strategy and indirect impacts anticipated to result coincident with primary purposes.

Composition of a commonly supported philosophical reference defining the relationship of local administrative policy to regional recreation system development is a founding basis necessary to selection of appropriate joint planning tasks. It is a characteristic new to the planning policies of all Four Towns and may present concerns relative to the proprietary inclinations of the several administrations. Seeking a general accord among the four administrations to evaluate recommendations for shared support as introduced by the Four Towns Steering Committee may present an acceptable initiation of this novel process.

The Four Towns Committee will be obliged to identify proposals that may be advanced along separate, parallel courses to a status where they are fully formed and may be considered as an adoptable entity. Where these proposals are intended to influence local administrative policy, conventional municipal review sequences must follow in their normal course, prerequisite to adoption.

**The second element, prioritizing specific objectives,** is comparatively much more straightforward initially, than any other preparatory task. Selection, guided by evaluation of current system circumstances as identified in this report must prioritize activities that are: important in current time; can be accomplished with reasonable assurance; are not contingent upon substantial design sequences; can occur without additional funding support; and that demonstrate the potential for shared commitment. Generally, these are: planning and data assembly tasks; coordinating meetings between the four recreation agencies and public works departments; and preparation of descriptions of future proposals, based on those meetings.

Subsequent Four Towns proposals will likely be predicated on demonstration that the process is viable and that genuinely practical methods for sharing responsibility to mutual benefit can be created. Success in subsequent proposals will be more demanding as those will ultimately represent activities including physical construction, whether in the form of renovation, repair or new development. Generation of capital resources to enable Four Towns projects will likely be difficult to accomplish in stressed economic conditions, which appear to be emerging. Consequently, a funding element accompanying each proposal, carefully balanced between projected cost factors for initial construction as well as subsequent management, will be an absolute requirement to secure approval. This will almost certainly require direct support of the subject beneficiaries of each proposal and may be contingent upon securing specific



commitments of support to accelerate a particular initiative more quickly than municipal funding capabilities may enable.

An operative presumption of this process is that citizens of the Four Towns will be asked to actively participate in generation of new initiatives, both as associations and individually. The measure of that cooperation, in all aspects of planning and fundraising is the most reliable indicator of the probability of endorsement by the four governing bodies. Where an initiative arises as a consequence of public purpose and is carefully fashioned to be responsive to the broader objectives of regional planning and is represented by active involvement, the probability of a supportive reception by representative bodies increases dramatically.

**The third element is the process of assembling popular support.** The majority of constructed features and programs available to residents of the Four Towns today are the direct consequence of the capability and willingness of citizens to organize into politically influential associations to promote their interests. This sequence has been a traditional necessity, prerequisite to securing municipal commitment of resources and, is a system well understood by representatives of the sports associations, as they regularly leverage their influence to accomplish new objectives.

The best prospect for Four Towns process to advance will be based upon broad popular support. Combining capabilities of the numerous recreation associations into a unified “Organization” dedicated to service of recreation generally, is the objective of this concept and actively supporting each other in exchange for like promotion of their particular interests is the motive. Agreement to mutual endorsement offers a promise of influence many times greater than can be mobilized by any single interest. Each of these groups has demonstrated capable management of large programs as well as creative adaptation to challenging facility conditions. Their leadership appears to be well organized and structured by delegation of tasks within their organizations. All have conducted fund raising campaigns and are aware of their capabilities to network successfully within the social context of their constituent communities. Interestingly, they have not joined their purposes, even when complimentary, to present a larger united front.

The Four Towns concept is, by its nature, inclusive of the purposes of the thousands of adult residents already directly or indirectly sustaining recreation programming throughout the Four Towns. Creation of an Organization that enables representation of each groups separate objectives in a forum that promotes in depth appreciation of common goals and actively solicits sharing of experiences, issues and opportunities, is indispensable to creation of proposals that; based on accurate assessment of specific characteristics of demand, enable tailoring of specifically responsive actions.

If building a powerful support base is seen as the motive for creation of such an Organization, education may be seen as an essential coincident benefit of its purpose. Many of the facilities created in the Four Towns are the product of a tradition of home-made enterprise. If this satisfies the preference for the most economical development possible, it has failed to recognize and incorporate many of the technical characteristics that enable safe, durable, low maintenance facilities. A mechanism to evaluate existing constructed features with the purpose of inventorying chronic deficiencies, hazardous elements and non compliant conditions does not currently exist in the Four Towns. As the sports associations are the defacto agent responsible for these facilities, it behooves each to have an informed appreciation of the real and legal liabilities of pursuing their accustomed activities, regardless of circumstances, which may impact

them disagreeably. This may be achieved by purposeful, relevant education in a few aspects of physical design.

An opportunity to employ the forum, created by an Organization of the many resident sports associations, as a vehicle for educating members in the significant aspects of facility design and management can: improve the substance and technique of future facility requests; facilitate critical evaluation of existing facilities to guide correction of those with defects; and generally can improve understanding of the fundamentals of field stewardship. As these associations continue dedicating their labor and revenue to improvement of their facilities, maximizing the effect of that work will benefit their purposes directly and the municipalities infrastructure simultaneously.

Direct contribution to planning and design input in the initial sequences of preparation for new development, as a coordinated effort of all member groups of the sports Organization is the best means to inform understanding of interrelatedness of association objectives. This type of collaboration enables an opportunity to consider initiatives jointly and to elaborate basic proposal elements with complimentary elements more supportive of varying needs. It also informs the membership base of upcoming proposals, allowing timely organization of support.

The Four Towns planning process may be capable of establishing much more effective partnerships for sharing resources, initiative and manpower but even that accomplishment will not of itself generate sufficient capital to enable large new projects to proceed independently of municipal revenue sources. Two potentials reside within the capability of an Organization of sports associations that may be managed to influence municipal representatives to more readily support both individual site improvements and line item budget increases for ongoing renovation and maintenance requirements.

The first of these is broad experience in fundraising. Each association represents a network of businessmen and businesswomen skilled in management and comfortable with the logistics of organized campaigning to generate revenue. Moreover, the Mendham's and Chester's both have resident service clubs with perennial missions in support of local recreation. The Pastime Club and Chester PAA are notable representatives of this purpose and if integrated as planning partners in The Organization can provide proven networking techniques as well as specific guidance in local potentials.

The second and most important potential is the intrinsic influence represented by large, closely aligned organizations of citizens. Numerical significance alone is sufficient to attract political attention and if common cause can be developed by inclusion of diverse interests in initiatives for municipal consideration, the prospect of meaningful change will be magnified. Frequently, elected representatives succeed to office on the strength of unified purpose and broad support. Priorities for public services evolve similarly. Successful integration of Four Towns planning will rely absolutely on building common cause. If recreation issues may be commonly regarded as accessible to change by directed influence, that cause will persist.

## **CONSTITUTION AND PROCESS OF A FOUR TOWNS PLAN**

In concept a Four Towns Plan is visualized as one, which shares strengths to respond to weaknesses. In this application those strengths or weakness are those that can be identified in the provision of recreation services.

Each of the four subject towns is an independent political entity with responsibilities to its constituents as determined by its elected officials. Each of the subject towns shares a tradition of cooperation with its neighbors for provision of recreation services and each has empowered citizens associations to organize and manage a variety of forms of activity. Those associations have expanded in participation and extend their influence by inclusion of participants across municipal boundaries. These programs have evolved generally in accord with forms and preferences identified by the citizens associations and are directed by volunteers from their membership. Traditionally, the municipal governments have created or provided space and maintenance services in approximate balance with the needs of resident associations according to their perception of need and coincident with opportunity to prudently commit municipal resources.

This technique has been variably useful because the sports associations extend their influence across municipal boundaries and as they have increased in size, the capability and willingness of adjacent municipalities to supplement facilities has not been uniformly or equitably met. The Chester's and Mendham's have been frequently paired in program delivery but the Four Towns have been joined only by the WMSC program with respect to facility provision. Future system expansion will occur more efficiently and with more political support in the Townships than in the Boroughs as both boroughs are near build out conditions and thus, likely to produce little additional service demand from population increase. The constraints upon elected borough officials to reasonably promote support of recreation initiatives in adjacent municipalities, except under the most novel conditions, will certainly limit flexibility.

***An incrementally increasing reliance upon playfields occurring in the Townships has accustomed popular expectation to a sense that future improvements will advance similarly.*** This is neither fair nor sustainable and will present ever more formidable barriers to individual municipal ambitions where shared programming occurs. By contrast, the sports associations are simply motivated by their special interests, regardless of political realities and have been uniquely successful in advancing those. Their capability is based on well developed linkage to the general public and a hard earned recognition that they can get things done. Capability to direct influence across municipal boundaries is a singular franchise of the associations, one not readily available to municipal Committees or Commissions.

***The four towns' administrations are confronted with a variety of recreation issues that will evolve to demand attention in addition to the current retinue of management tasks that require full commitment of available resources.*** Where administrative options are so constrained by fundamental impediments of available space, discretionary budget and reactive planning, the prospect of advancing new initiatives without broad popular support and without increased options will surely protract time frames to achieve meaningful results. A joint enterprise of the Four Towns, dedicated to the limited purposes of improving recreation services, will direct a potential to access a broader scope of options as well as empowering an enormous talent resource represented by area residents.

Given consent to undertake development of complete, justified and balanced proposals responsive to shared priorities, a Four Towns planning group must create initiatives integrated

with the commitment of broad popular support and ones diversified to satisfy system needs for more inclusive facilities. Precaution by prior recognition that proposals so created will be obliged to satisfy evaluation by four separate municipal reviews will require: organization of adequate citizen support to propel initiatives politically; demonstrable service equity across four communities; acceptable, rational methods for funding and assurance of popular commitment to shared responsibility for management. Creation of proposals that are not sufficiently comprehensive to warrant approval across four separate municipal reviews, will likely result in failure of such initiatives. This likelihood will be evident in advance of decision to forward proposals, as each of the Four Towns partners will have been aware of irresolvable issues in their respective community and presumably, these obstacles will have been eliminated by alternative strategy. Assuring that this sequence is successful will depend primarily on generating unified support of sports associations regardless of separate agendas and commitment of these groups to sponsor advocacy for each other, in turn.

***A Four Towns Process committed to advocacy for service improvement can unite and engage the large citizens association's influence far better than municipal governments are willing or able to.*** It is proposed to create a Four Towns Planning Partnership as the mechanism to undertake the Four Towns planning tasks. This partnership is envisioned as a group of citizens representing the municipalities, athletic and service associations and the general public, working independently of political influence, to identify and evaluate recreation system issues and to prepare proposals for submission to the four municipal administrations for approval and enabling. This Partnership will be a volunteer body, without statutory authority, organized and dedicated to advocacy for improvement of the recreation system by consolidation of human resources and creation of practical proposals for achievement of mutual recreation ambitions. The Partnership will be responsible to prepare its unique philosophy relative to Four Towns system planning objectives focusing on service issues and facility characteristics independent of local municipal initiatives and without infringing purposes of local recreation agencies.

Primary objectives of this Partnership will include: identification of system issues; preparation of practical responses to those issues; consolidating community support for those responses; presenting complete proposals to local administrations for authorization to proceed with the proposal or adoption of the proposal.

Constitution of the Four Towns Planning Partnership will be a task requiring deliberate and critical evaluation of citizens selected for initial membership. Each candidate will be responsible to inform themselves with a large body of knowledge relative to the context of public recreation in the Four Towns including administrative policies, programming characteristics, organizational structure, management and maintenance of facility infrastructure and philosophical relationship of government to its constituents. Each member will need a working knowledge of system issues and deficiencies as they relate to existing programs and each must be capable of prioritizing need irrespective of special interest influence. Each will be obliged to evaluate specific needs of existing programs in the context of whole system capability and to identify coincident potentials of proposed new features to contribute to satisfying unmet system objectives. Each will be specifically obliged to cooperate in informing their community's needs and possible contributions to planning without representing political purposes. Each must be capable of clearly communicating initiatives to their home town interests in a manner that persuades cooperation rather than priority. Each must be committed to a shared vision for the Four Towns and must be determined to advocacy for holistic solutions without parochial bias. Each must be willing and able to recruit volunteer support and to solicit contribution of time and work from

among their network of friends and acquaintances. Some among these must be willing and able to undertake leadership roles and the time necessary to direct and complete complex project proposals. Leadership will be most challenged by setting and enforcing timetable agendas in a large, diverse planning group and will require the determination to sustain continuity of performance by volunteer members. Some members will need to be skilled organizationally and capable of coordinated campaigning for support. Some will need to be capable and creative in methods of public outreach and education; some will need to know how to conduct opinion surveys. A few will need to be exceptionally persuasive to build and empower a committed volunteer base.

Selection of individuals to initially constitute this Partnership must be accomplished by some agency. As none exists with a more informed appreciation of the Four Towns vision than those who now constitute the Steering Committee, that task will likely be most sympathetically performed by those members.

Selection of voting members should be based upon representation of: the sports associations; service organizations (Lions, Rotary, Brookside Community, other); community based recreation sponsors (Pastime Club and PAA); social organizations (Garden Club, seniors, other); environmental associations and conservancies; youth associations (Boy/Girl Scouts); an open, unaligned citizens association and the recreation directors of each town. Liaison with the four municipal governments should be coordinated through the administrators' office by selection of one appointment per municipality. Liaison with the four municipal recreation Committees/ Commissions should be the responsibility of one appointed member per municipality.

The Four Towns Planning Partnership will need to generate broad popular support for its initiatives and consequently, should integrate a membership base as inclusive as resident interest may enable. A large base will require internal lobbying for support of any position and will assure compromises between members to gain tactical advantage, coincidently assuring careful examination of mutually advantageous potentials.

## **Proposed composition of Planning Partnership**

### **Executive Board**

#### *Chairperson*

#### *Vice Chairperson*

<i><b>Corresponding Secretary</b></i>	<i><b>Recording</b></i>	<i><b>Registrar</b></i>	<i><b>Treasurer</b></i>
Prepares newsletter Prepares news releases Prepares Council Updates	Records minutes meeting notices Meeting schedules	Manages membership Statistics, e-mail, Addresses	manages cash account
<i><b>Recreation Director #1</b></i>	<i><b>Recreation Director #2</b></i>	<i><b>Recreation Director #3</b></i>	<i><b>Recreation Director #4</b></i>

### **General Membership**

<b>Sports</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Youth</b>	<b>Civic</b>
<b>Associations</b>	<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Associations</b>
Soccer,	Pastime Club	Garden Club	Boy/Girl Scouts	Conservancies
Football	PAA, Lions	Historical Society	4H, other	Land Trust
Baseball	Rotary,	Newcomers		Other
Lacrosse	Women's Clubs	Seniors, other		
Track/x country	other			
Cheerleading				
Other				

### **Unaffiliated Residents Membership**

Unaffiliated membership requiring only residency within one of the Four Towns shall be available without limitation. One or more unaffiliated residents may, by registration and fee payment (as described for \*participating members), join their interests in the planning process and achieve participatory status subject to maintenance of their membership responsibilities.

### **Recommended General Conduct of Process**

The proposed Executive Board will be selected initially by the Steering Committee to enable start-up. Subsequent positions will be elected annually by the Board and General Membership. Executive Board positions may be filled by any participating member. Each Executive Board member except the Chair and Vice Chair shall select one alternate from the General Membership. Each \*Participating Member organization shall select one or more alternates.

*(Participating membership requires meeting the following conditions: Dues (\$ 10.00) per annum per group are paid; Registration information for all group members (adult and child) must be submitted to the registrar including: name, (Adults names only, in addition to the number of registered children per family), municipality, address, phone and e-mail).*

A representative or alternate **must** have been present at all meetings where subject vote topic was discussed. Attendance shall be confirmed by sign in sheets kept for each meeting.

Meetings will follow forms as determined by the Executive Committee and may be work sessions or regular sessions. All regular meetings will be open to the general public and all regular sessions shall entertain comments from the floor. An agenda for each regular meeting shall be established by the Executive Committee.

Committees may be created by the Executive Board and may include committee members without restriction by membership in the Partnership. Committee meetings may be held independently of regular sessions according to member preferences. Committees must submit findings to the Executive Board (Recording Secy.) in written form. Recommendations, if any must be clearly expressed and supported.

Recorded voting by membership position **must** precede any proposal submitted to any of the four municipal administrations. Consensus voting may be utilized for all internal business.

Regular meeting scheduling and significant matters of discussion shall be published on the Partnership web site and may be submitted to local newspapers according to the Boards direction.

In instances where direct requests, directives or decisions are communicated by any of the subject municipal partners, those communications shall be read entire at the next regular meeting.

Liaison status may, at the Executive Boards discretion, be given to any group or individual representing any agency or organized interest residing generally within or operating generally within the Four Towns. Liaison status enables the subject person/s to attend regular and appropriate executive sessions and to submit requests directly to the Executive Board. Such requests shall be deliberated and decided as priority business.

### **PRIORITY ORGANIZATIONAL TASKS OF THE FOUR TOWNS PARTNERSHIP**

Three fundamental tasks must be accomplished by the Four Towns Partnership. These will be necessary: to create a sufficiently large and engaged participation by residents of the service area; to identify human resources and their capabilities to distribute tasks according to available skills; to facilitate communication of Four Towns objectives by direct contact: to determine popular interests in addition to those represented by existing programs; to build a support base across the four municipalities sufficiently large to influence political decision making and to create the largest possible resource to share in fundraising and in direct system project development.

#### **Task #1- Outreach**

This fundamental task entails soliciting area groups to join the Four Towns Partnership. A statement of purpose and an invitation to membership in the organization should be extended to: each sports association, club or group operating in the system; each service, civic, social or other organization of residents established in the service area; each citizens association engaged in the various school systems. Individual unaffiliated membership should be invited by a press release.

Obligations of membership for any group will include: a current list of all membership of that group with contact information to enable creation of a list for distribution of information and service requests. (Individuals wishing privacy may be omitted)

Obligations of membership for any sports related association programming municipal facilities will also require a full report of; organizational make up, current scheduling, facilities utilized and current descriptions of work performed directly or contracted for facility maintenance.

#### **Task #2 – Resource Inventory**

As implied by its name, this task consists simply of identifying skills of the membership. Members usefully experienced or trained and willing to undertake specific task areas or join particular committees should be asked to prepare a short form describing capability, interest and availability. Willing volunteers with adequate time to dedicate to Partnership projects should be encouraged to undertake leadership positions. Ability to dedicate time will be the significant practical virtue for any task description.

### **Task #3 – Education**

Membership will be initially uninformed of the objectives of the Four Towns Partnership and may represent interests or agendas other than those important to advancement of the process.

A thorough overview of history, purpose and objectives of the Partnership should be discussed in association with a method to incorporate appropriate alternative purposes.

The Executive Committee will have to have reached accord respective of a philosophical position with respect to membership and interrelationships. It will be absolutely essential to enable membership initiative and to exhort willingness to contribute. Tasks of this process are numerous, complex and will be slow to complete. Potential incentives for each group may be significant but rewards for individual service will be few. Encouragement of an attitude of shared responsibility and shared effort and recognition of accomplishment is the “glue” necessary to join such a diversity of interests.

### **CREATION OF A SUPPORT STRUCTURE**

The Four Towns Partnership will require broad popular support and enthusiastic contribution of committed work by its members. In order to sustain this condition it will be imperative to demonstrate that significant accomplishments can be achieved through coordinated effort. As all participants in the work of the Partnership will be volunteers, their efforts will require recognition and reinforcement from within, hence must at least be motivated by a shared vision. Capable leadership intent on cementing the Partnership will be the first contingency of support structure building and should be derived from those willing leaders in existing organizations that recognize the need for holistic planning and are capable of uniting diverse interests to a common purpose. The Steering Committee will need to be thoughtful and circumspect in its initial selections to assure this.

A vision might arise in part from generic direction by the Steering Committee but to be truly representative, must be tailored to address substantial needs identified by the various participants in the Partnership as well. This will require an informed and shared dialogue and a merging of tactics that have been shown to be productive in previous initiatives undertaken by the members. A process of education relative to overall characteristics, needs and opportunities of the Four Towns system must precede informed planning. To be commonly understood, system essentials must also be familiar to the general membership interests supporting the several organizations. Where all involved share a conception of what the process needs to advance, the prospect of unified support will increase.

The numerous sports associations, service associations and civic groups are the available resource needed to create an effective, influential support base. Together, they represent thousands of area residents and if aligned will be capable of advancing their purposes with comparative ease. Joining these groups and informing them to purposes of the Four Towns Plan will be the significant task of the Partnership.

A technique to accomplish this may proceed as follows: The Partnership Executive Committee will invite all associations functioning in the four towns to join the Partnership as members. Membership will require selected representatives of each group to regularly update their constituent residents of Partnership projects and to report problems or recommendations that may



arise within their own organizations in response to evolving proposals. Each will be required to inventory all municipal facilities utilized by their program and to thoroughly report system strengths, weaknesses and short term goals of their group. Each will be required to assess and report their capability and willingness to materially support new initiatives by funding, work or other contribution. Each will be required to actively support selected proposals by community campaigning and by participation in municipal meetings where proposals are being considered. Each will be required to respond to a community interest survey which will be prepared as part of the Four Towns planning process.

Periodic meetings inclusive of the general membership should be conducted by the Partnership to provide an opportunity to present accomplishments or challenges to various project proposals and in particular to launch fundraising or support campaigns prior to forwarding important initiatives. Inclusion and education are the important motives of this type of regular activity and are essential to building credibility among the general population.

### **REPRESENTING JUSTIFIABLE PURPOSE**

If the Four Towns process is successful in building an initial support base representing interests of many aligned groups, it will be capable of substantial influence. This presents an opportunity to introduce equity, balance and diversity to Partnership proposals that may significantly correct very important and universal deficiencies in diversity of accommodation and mitigate traditional bias towards organized sports and a public perception of underserved individual opportunities. Demonstration of a coincident intention to improve the aesthetic and utility of area recreation resources simultaneously with building new fields, and sports associated accommodations, if genuine and substantial, will, at the very least, assuage concerns of those unaffiliated with system organizations.

As the municipal agencies are asked to consider Four Towns' proposals for approval or for funding support, those representatives will be confronted with difficult decisions relative to capability and balance within their current administrative environment. New proposals are rarely received as timely or convenient and even if desirable; recreation improvements still fall into the category of optional commitments of municipal budget resources.

The Four Towns Partnership will need to properly anticipate stress on current administrations and build their own most persuasive basis by clearly and irrefutably justifying need, prior to seeking approvals. ***To achieve this capability a community interest survey that is universal in distribution, broad in scope and significant in terms of response is the most informative vehicle available to evaluate Four Towns preferences.***

In this application, the Partnership may represent distinct advantages over conventional modes of survey conduct as it will be able to leverage its entire membership base by requiring completion and return of surveys in association with registration for a particular activity. If endorsed by the four municipalities as well, each non-participating group may be encouraged to respond if only to balance a perception of narrow purpose. As a general awareness of the survey is gained through membership communication and media outreach a statistically significant quantity of respondents may be reached thus providing an increased public recognition of the Four Towns process and an unprecedented tool for evaluating popular preferences.

Subsequently, as responses are compiled and evaluated, the Partnership should become sufficiently well informed to strategically fashion projects inclusive of the broadest interests of recreation and with appeal to gain the greatest quantity of popular endorsement.

### **INITIAL PLANNING PROJECTS**

The Four Towns Partnership will be confronted by a variety of possible first priorities. Some of the possibilities undoubtedly relate to facility distribution and correction of defects. Others relate to long term planning and particularly to demonstration of legitimacy and potential for the Four Towns Partnership as a viable entity. As the original conception of the Four Towns Plan concerns reassignment of resources as a potential for resolution of emergent service issues and as that premise has not yet been materially altered, it remains as a reasonable starting place. The Four Towns planning therefore should begin to address current system deficiencies as identified in the preceding report as matters of initial priority. In addition, as a variety of significant system planning tasks must be subsequently addressed, it will be prudent to assemble committees and delegate tasks relative to future planning to those to enable work to proceed on a variety of fronts simultaneously.

It is certain that capital intensive proposals will require time to mature and as their ultimate initiation will depend on willingness of municipal governments to support them as funding is available, these should not be undertaken as new issues. Generally, initial projects should concern achievable objectives employing existing system characteristics in new ways to confirm that Four Towns cooperation can be shown to function without excessive stress. By default, the most readily achievable changes must relate to existing conditions of service to organized sports interests as few other functional outdoor recreation forms, with broad popular influence, actually occur. These might be described as resource redistribution projects. Some of the most prominent of these are as follow:

- Assess available fall season space to resolve the acute need for play and practice fields now experienced by the Twin Boro Bears program. As possible find opportunities where lighting can be utilized to expand day length.
- Contrast available infield space against current scheduling to attempt to respond to the shortfall conditions occurring within the Mendham and Chester Little League Programs. Consider balancing across the entire Four Towns system to improve early season practice field availability first, followed by game field availability as this shortfall may be addressed in part by scheduling away games.
- Reevaluate the current relationship of Soccer and Lacrosse programming accounting the increase in field availability that may be produced by access to new facilities at Highlands Ridge, India Brook and St. Johns. Attempt to begin consolidating related sports uses into complexes on single sites to economize management and refereeing tasks. (I.e. evaluate if Ralston may be rescheduled for Lacrosse alone, in spring.)
- Conduct a meeting between the representatives of Chester Track and Cross Country and Mendham Track and Cross country to establish if their operations could be more satisfactorily achieved if joined. ( These programs compete in leagues that prohibit multi-town completion, but are in no way restricted from common practicing) If West Morris Central High School (lighted) were available for both track programs, The Mendham Track future would no longer be subject to limited availability of the West Mendham Morris track facility. Similarly, both x-country programs could share a trail system at

Chubb or Highlands Ridge, introducing a substantial reason to advance trailway completion at one, or both of those sites.

- Conduct a meeting series directed by one or more of the Administrators, involving the Public Works directors from each of the four municipalities to examine and discuss the overall topic of shared maintenance of the system recreation sites. Initial discussion need not include proprietary topics of manpower and equipment pooling but should focus on very practical potentials which may be accomplished without alteration of primary responsibilities or that require exceptional enabling sanctions by the municipal governments. Such topics include at least: joint purchase of bulk materials, hand and power equipment, fertilizers and chemicals, seeds, mulches, sod and seasonally applied materials; redistricting of routine mowing and grooming tasks, in affect trading more distant sites for nearer sites; joint coordination of scheduling relative to the needs of seasonal sports; standardization of cultural practices according to best practice standards for turf nurture; inventory and evaluation of most important maintenance support systems (access drives, irrigation systems, on-site storage) and most significantly, discussion of staff training directed at increasing the skill base of system employees and sharing primary technical expertise across the several staff groups. Training discussion should entail; integrated pest management, turf management, athletic field construction and management, tree pruning, turf disease and pest management, soil fertility and nutrient application, irrigation and compost management. (All of these programs are available annually for certification or general education at Rutgers for nominal fees generally in one to five day formats. Additional specific discussion relative to acquisition of several pieces of equipment needed in the system should be undertaken as these will have a significant cost implication and will need to be shared. These are: a deep tine core aerating machine, a fully portable water cannon and booster pump with hose (hose may be furnished by local fire departments as existing stock is replaced), a non inverting (chisel) plow and a vibratory plow capable of bedding 3" lines 18" min. deep.
- (Three objectives must be met by this process. The first, is establishing if sharing systems can be established that are durable in a cooperative way, without administrative oversight. The second is determining how internal leadership of such a process may be organized to achieve a responsive capability. The last, is to evaluate whether or not a committed relationship to this purpose can be maintained.) These are decisions that must be reached or enforced by the standing administrations. Clearly, voluntary cooperation is by far, preferable and this task needs to establish what will enable that cooperation.

### **INITIAL COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

A variety of tasks will require close evaluation of existing facility components as they are constructed, managed or maintained by existing service agencies to identify what characteristics specifically represent expectations of the various sports programs and to inventory where and how existing management practices may be adapted to meet those expectations. The Partnership will be obliged to decide if physical characteristics and management practices should be unified across the system and if so, what particular basis for conformation is desirable and practical. Evaluation of system relationships will require a fundamental understanding of some of the more important aspects of facility design for safety, compliance and management. A functional appreciation of "best practice" characteristics for each subject form of activity should precede a system wide inventory of developed facilities to identify those most acutely in need of correction and to establish a priority of activity to resolve those deficiencies. When completed for each

activity type, a basic list of projects may be compiled and distributed according to most likely response probability.

The Four Towns have an established tradition of volunteer service for delivery of recreation programming. This tradition is likely to persist as it enables levels of service that would be impossible to replace by recreation employees. This situation, though wholly typical of recreation systems in virtually all communities, nonetheless exposes coaches, trainers, umpires and the children they manage while participating in the conduct of sports, to risk exposures inherent in the physical system or from inadvertently adapting a space for use to respond to insufficient facilities. This circumstance, though commonplace, is wrong and avoidable. Exposure to risk even by innocent complicity or through ignorance should not be expected of citizen volunteers or the public interests they support. The Four Towns Partnership has the potential to educate both the administrations and residents respective of these exposures and begin long overdue work toward elimination of such defects, particularly in new planning.

Research and study appropriate to first understanding; then inventorying and finally preparing proposals for system change will be variously complicated and will require significant time to produce in a form that can be presented to general membership for acceptance. Several topic areas should be considered as quickly as reasonably possible to condition early proposals and should consequently be distributed to sub-committees selected from the general membership.

System characteristics that should be evaluated by committees include the following.

- **Playfield Spatial Characteristics** - Each sport or game is performed on a field, court, or other description of its conventionally recognized space. These are typically depicted or specified in “regulations” published by the organization sanctioning that form of play (e.g. Little League). Regulations vary from application to application and may be significantly different as the level of play varies by age. (High School Federation rules vary from NCAA rules). These are all regulations relative to sanctioning by that particular body and typically do not have statutory force. Nonetheless, in instances of litigation resulting from injury in public facilities, the courts have recognized such published “regulations” as reasonable standards for safe conduct of sports where they apply.

Playfields of the Four Towns exhibit characteristics non-compliant with applicable regulations in practically all circumstances. These most frequently involve distances of separation, location of fences and backstops and proximity to hazardous conditions. In general, they are common to almost all public systems but in some instances, are clearly dangerous. System playfields should be carefully inventoried, field by field for all sites in use and compared to an appropriate “regulation” diagram for that sport, recording all circumstances that present non-compliant conditions. These will most frequently involve the marginal space surrounding or separating fields but will also include many situations where fencing conditions, adjacent steep slopes or vehicle ways produce unreasonable risks. When inventoried, these should be arranged in order of severity and furnished to the municipalities with recommendations for repair or replacement.

In future negotiations, the sports associations will be asked to “prove” that their representations of deficiency are valid. This can be legitimized more conveniently by being able to appreciate what specifically discriminates a space from a field. Several “spaces” in the Four Towns system are known as fields simply as a consequence of their

prior use. Extension of the same logic may materially ease the insufficiencies cited but won't do much for recreation. The practice of commandeering any available space as a field is a matter of policy, which should be closely examined, as typically, it exposes participants to risk and diminishes the quality of experience intended.

- **Compliance Characteristics** – The entire spectrum of outdoor recreation sites within the Four Towns are characterized as places of public accommodation. As such their development is conditioned by rules of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Retrofitting to resolve non compliant circumstances in places of public accommodation was mandated years ago and should have been accomplished within all public facilities. Unfortunately, *none* of the Four Towns recreation sites and amazingly, *none* of the system school sites are compliant with these requirements. Failure to have incorporated these modifications long ago reflects usefully upon the level of recognition of technical requirements for public outdoor recreation as characteristics of municipal philosophy. Such accommodation represents minimal civil deference to this societal fraction and is required! It should be accomplished.

A Committee tasked with study of ADA requirements to identify the few applicable requirements and circumstances where these apply should be formed. Subsequent to learning this information, this committee should inventory and checklist all recreation sites identifying deficiencies. These should be forwarded to the four municipalities for further consideration.

Many of the deficiencies that occur will involve barrier free routes to activities. As creation of these is exactly consistent with pathway and exercise themes appropriate to system sites, it is likely that specific defects can be resolved simultaneously with creation of general recreation features.

- **Turf and Playfield Surfaces** – Field surfaces are the most influential single factor contributing to comparative attractiveness and utility of system playfields. Consequently their characteristics and management directly influence the frequency and quality of play they may sustain. Their condition influences not only availability but the manpower and material expense required to maintain them in satisfactory condition. In fact, the greatest single expense borne by the four municipalities related to recreation is the annual cost of field maintenance.

As the Four Towns Partnership is intent to better utilize existing resources, maximizing the effectiveness of the largest budget commitment is an obvious opportunity. Achievement of this purpose will require significant improvement of the knowledge base of the sports associations and a coincident improvement in both the knowledge base and skill base of maintenance operatives. Fortunately, this is fairly achievable presuming that once trained, responsible individuals remain in place.

During the process of field study and interviewing sports associations, a variety of citations and observations were made relative to playfield conditions.

The most repeated of these include: Chronic wetness; seasonal wetness; periodic wetness; ruined turf (mud); damaged turf; irregular turf surfaces; soggy surfaces; soft surfaces; hard surfaces; turf too long; ruts, rocks; difficulty repairing/replacing/renovating. Field

observations most frequently repeated included: Compacted soil; impervious or low permeability (saturated) soil; disturbed soil; infertile soil; weedy turf; turf too closely mowed, turf scalped or rutted by mowing; heavy truck wheel tracking; poor reseeding practice.

Few situations reported or observed were remarkably bad or unusual and overall management was typically satisfactory. Nonetheless an enormous improvement in turf quality and surface durability can be produced by a few fundamental and inexpensive alterations of current management practice. Other, more site specific problems will require some capital commitment.

The Four Towns Partnership should establish a permanent committee with a permanent interface with the four Public Works Departments to build understanding and skills.

Many possible topics exist but the most important are these:

**1. Drainage Issues**

Where drainage issues have been experienced under the same weather conditions for years, other than in very early spring, *they are chronic* and need to be corrected by constructed improvements. Where drainage issues are seasonal (every spring) their hydrologic condition needs to be studied. Interception or sub drainage will generally relieve the problem. Where drainage issues are periodic (after heavy rains) minor surface modifications uphill will frequently eliminate the problem. Where historically experienced, drainage issues should be corrected in order as above. In some cases (where infields are on the low side of playfields the problem may not be worth fixing. Plan to close that field if issue is severe.

It is important to resolve chronic drainage issues because they incrementally deteriorate that field area and contribute to subsequent damage. They are a repetitive maintenance cost, which in time will be greater than the repair.

**2. Compaction Issues**

The bulk of other reported and observed defects are caused by or related to compaction. Simply stated, good turf health is contingent on good soil condition. Ideal soil condition for turf growth exhibits 20% - 30% void space (air) within the soil. All important soil reactions and nutrient cycles require air. As they are utilized for play, soils become compacted (voids are eliminated) consequently, gaseous exchange, nutrient availability and root zone vitality diminish. When wet, remaining voids are filled with tightly held water, eliminating more air. Roots drown or die, soils become septic, nutrient exchange ceases and soil changes to an anaerobic (no air) condition. Grass can then only grow in the topmost levels of the soil and are vulnerable to drought, physical damage, freezing, disease and insect infestation and quickly thin and become weed infested. If not regularly aerated and renovated, impacted soils fairly quickly become ruined soils, having lost their internal structure, soil organisms, capability to exchange soil gasses and nutrients all contributing to a hostile growth medium for turf. This affect can be seen at West Morris Mendham High School fields where chronic abuse and insufficient maintenance now demand extraordinary renovation sequences.

All Four Towns soils are comparatively fine textured (high fine sand, silt and clay content) and are very subject to compaction. Regular relief of compaction is the most important single maintenance procedure necessary to system turf health and one rarely and only partially accomplished under current management. It is reported that two aerovators have been purchased in the public works arsenal but these are useful only for shallow aeration. Chester Township lists a core aerator as part of its equipment but if so, it is too rarely and to lightly utilized.

Acquisition of appropriate deep tine core aeration equipment is a reasonable shared expense for Four Towns participation as it is needed system wide. Understanding its appropriate and timely use and performing regular aeration is a significant cultural deficiency which when corrected will significantly improve drainage, soil condition and turf growth, yielding a decrease in maintenance cost.

### 3. **pH Balance and Soil Nutrient Issues**

System fields were observed to exhibit: various percentages of grass cover; fairly high weed contamination percentages; non uniform growth and color and weak growth. Compaction contributes to all of these conditions as does soil nutrient availability and likely pH. pH is an expression of hydrogen ion concentration and is commonly understood to mean relative acidity or alkalinity. Its level is uniquely significant in turf supporting soils as it acts as a regulator of availability of soil nutrients and the rate of chemical reactions necessary to nutrient production by soil organisms. “Ideal” pH in turf soils for cool weather grasses is on the acid side of neutrality (pH 6.0 to 6.5). When maintained in that range, the greatest availability of soil nutrients will occur through typical soil reactions. When pH is significantly lower or higher nutrients may be bound in unavailable compounds or soil components or soil reaction rates will be diminished or will cease. Managing pH in area soils is remarkably easy, requiring periodic testing and as necessary correction by addition of lime compounds or iron/sulfur compounds. Problem soils can be analyzed and corrected by application of a variety of commonly available soil amendments.

Soil nutrients (as applied in turf management) are characterized in two groups generally. These are named macronutrients (**Nitrogen, Phosphorous, Potassium**, calcium, magnesium and sulfur) and micronutrients (iron, manganese, boron, molybdenum, copper, zinc and chlorine) the macros are most familiar as the first three are represented on most common fertilizer products. The others are less commonly known as their presence in very tiny quantities, if available in solution to plant roots, suffices to assure strong growth.

When present at optimal levels in near neutral soils these join in a host of soil reactions both chemically and biologically driven to produce strong, deep, vigorous plant root, stem and leaf growth. When deficient, excessive or not present, any of these can produce disproportionately large limitations to turf growth.

The desirable goal is to optimize chemical balance to optimize growth, which, when occurring in cool seasons (spring, fall) will enable turf grasses to out compete weeds and most invasive species eliminating them from the turf.

Management to optimize soil nutrient levels is also rather easy in most circumstances. Periodic soil sampling and delivery of samples to the Rutgers lab with appropriate fees (\$35.00 +/- per sample) will return reports identifying soil macro and micro nutrients, soil textural classification, pH and organic content as well as management recommendations for modifying fertility.

#### **4. Invasive organism issues**

Healthy, vigorous, dense turf grass is rarely subject to debilitating disease, weed, insect, bacterial or fungal infestations. Weak, thin, unthrifty or impacted grass turf is an open invitation to all forms of infestation. Conventionally, such infestations raise alarm and are promptly dosed with noxious chemicals to stem the infestation or broad spectrum chemical prophylaxis to prevent future attacks. This is symptom response, not good management practice.

Diligent attention to compaction, fertility, pH and proper mowing generally will suffice to minimize treatable infestations and almost always eliminates the need for broad spectrum controls.

Capability to recognize deficient cultural and structural conditions and to identify specifically invasive organisms enables minimal applications of specific controls avoiding the cost and time involved in preventative controls and indiscriminant universal treatments.

The host of invasive organisms is fairly large but comprehensible according to presentation; physical influence, time of year, temperature, recent weather conditions and circumstances when recognized. The key words here are when recognized. Capability to recognize infestation quickly and accurately is valuable as it enables response before broad transmission can occur. The simple ability to recognize that something seems wrong is frequently sufficient as the extension service agent can identify problems quickly, accurately and without cost. The Four Towns Partnership should certainly advocate a comprehensive “greening” of management practices, endorsing education and structural health and dissuading application of chemical agents except when unavoidable.

#### **5. Turfgrass itself**

The Four Towns system fields have been constructed, repaired, renovated or otherwise maintained, in part by new turf grass seeding. It is extremely unlikely that the grass seeds selected for the various tasks were the most appropriate selections for their intended application. This is likely because the very best performing seeds, ones tailored to specifics of site soils and management practices, are not sold or even available through common vendors or tradesmen.

Turf grasses are continually subject to trials and evaluation for specific capabilities at the university and commercial levels of research and development. Unfortunately those with the best intrinsic capabilities will rarely reach commercial markets because they are not necessarily the best volume seed producers. This factor alone renders most of the very best adapted grasses unacceptable for the expensive processes of seed production. Though little known



by typical consumers, these best seeds for particular capabilities (droughty soils, low fertility, physical abuse, short mowing, early green-up and dozens of other factors) are available through smaller specialty growers and retailers at costs only nominally greater than recognizable Brand Name seeds. Where turf grass capabilities are closely matched to cultural conditions they will grow under, their prospect for success is significantly improved.

Once soil conditions are quantified, seeds specifically selected for suitability in a specific playfield application can be applied to all future management, further reducing the prospect of problem turf. This knowledge like most other turf matters is accessible and comprehensible if studied. The sources and types can be found through Rutgers and particulars of seeding and establishment provided by the supplier.

## **6. Renovation and Reconstruction**

Unless meticulously designed, constructed and diligently managed, turf fields require periodic renovation or, where grading and drainage system modifications are planned, reconstruction. These tasks should be planned for several of the Four Towns playfields to correct drainage issues and to convert sub-standard conditions to adequate conditions.

Renovation/reconstruction projects are capital intensive and typically require one full year of “down time”. They are worthy of consideration as such sequences frequently yield more serviceable fields at less cost than new construction.

Renovation to restore uniformity to surfaces, remove rocks or to eliminate inappropriate landforms without extensive deep regrading can be completed fairly quickly and occasionally occupied for use in somewhat shorter time frames by use of non-inverting plows and superficial regrading.

Non inverting plows (chisel plows) are common agricultural implements used to loosen soil deeply (12”-18”). They are drawn across site surfaces by conventional large tractors and lift the entire soil profile from beneath, leaving the surface relatively intact except where rocks are pushed through the soil surface. Resultant soil surfaces are marked by series of long slits and soil is deeply fractured. Subsequent finish grading with power rakes, or power surface graders create a new, uniformly shaped surface ready for reseeding.

This procedure type is included because it can be reliably accomplished by local forces fairly cheaply in appropriate applications (Black River Practice Fields) and can be done with inexpensive, durable equipment.

## **7. Utility Provision-Water Service**

Accessible, adequate water service to enable appropriate field management is a shortcoming of most of the Four Towns system playfields. Whether water is available as irrigation systems is less important than availability for occasional support of repair and renovation sequences. Without water in sufficient volume at useful pressure, seeded turf repair is liable to minimal performance or complete failure.

The Four Towns Partnership should examine methods to provide service whether by well development or where available, extension of utility system mains. If yields are not adequate to enable direct pumping, supplemental wells or small hydro pneumatic systems may be required to establish service. In locations where significant surface water is nearby, portable draughting systems may be used for small applications.

#### **8. Minor Topics**

During the course of field study, some turf establishment projects were observed. These illustrate some practices, better avoided, regardless of time constraint. They include: *Seeding out of season*; this practice is almost invariably not worth the effort. If new turf grass cannot be planted in late March to early May or late August to early October, plant only a sacrificial nurse crop (annual/perennial rye). These quick germinating, tough plants will stabilize earth surfaces until the next proper planting season.

*Seeding by hydraulic spraying of seed*; this practice is cheap but inferior. Results are almost always poor. Properly done, grass seed is placed just below the soil surface by mechanical seeders or lightly raked into the soil surface. This assures protection from sun and wind and maintains contact with moist soil (tender roots don't thrive in air).

*Mulching by hydromulchers*; using starch or fiber or paper slurries is cheap but inferior. Results are almost always poor for long germination seed types (bluegrasses, fescues), as the mulch is typically long gone by the time germination occurs.

Appropriate mulching, as a minimum condition requires uniformly blown or hand placed full length (not chopped) hay mulch, tacked or bound if exposed to windy conditions. Mulch must be replaced if disturbed or blown off and the mulched soil surface must be kept moist for a minimum of three weeks where bluegrasses are used. Longer watering periods may be necessary in late spring as sunny, windy conditions can fatally desiccate newly germinated seeds in a single day. Where bare soil surfaces occur in late summer and early fall they will, without exception, be inoculated with wind borne weed seeds. If dense, well rooted turf grass is established in that fall, the problem potential will be minimal. If not, the next spring replanting will be accompanied by pre emergent weed killer application.

The preceding topics are the few most important matters to be mastered if successful long term turf management is desired. The Four Towns Partnership should acquire this knowledge base internally and as possible, in coordination with responsible individuals in the four Public Works Departments.

### **INITIATION OF A SYSTEMWIDE PREFERENCE SURVEY**

Recreation system stresses, program growth and elaboration and increasing cost associated with placement of new or renovated facilities has motivated the Four Towns to consider resource

sharing. The needs expressed by sports associations for more or improved facilities have been variously represented and are legitimate. Thousands of residents are participating in or directly involved with youth sports programming and are organized to attain their objectives. Each of these factors lends credible basis to a premise that greater commitment to sports generally is familiar and important to a large number of Four Towns residents. It is not clear and not verifiable currently whether or if the remaining residents, those not involved with sports programming, have sustaining interest in public recreation or any interest at all. No competent, inclusive measure of overall support for recreation system diversification or expansion has been taken. Consequently, no useful reference is available indicating which facility types or services may be hoped for or important to the young children, teens, adults and seniors who might also benefit by appropriate future improvements other than playfields.

Creation of a comprehensive, current, statistically significant reference is more important to ambitions of a Four Towns Partnership than it has been to local planning purposes. Four Towns proposals will require elements of accommodation and support across four independent municipal approval sequences where successful promotion to each will depend on broad popular understanding and support. Special interests that may have been very influential in local politics will not as easily create similar momentum in adjacent communities. As important, is the presumed underlying desire to introduce better, more diverse, more inclusive planning as a fundamental goal of Four Towns process.

Since the Four Towns Planning process will focus upon recreation in particular, proposals that may be introduced representing those purposes will be evaluated by each of the partner municipalities in the context of current political and fiscal perceptions of elected representatives. Typically, elected officials disinclined to support a particular issue, will impose a variety of conditions or qualifications demonstrating that a proposal is needed, timely and consistent with objectives of the municipality. Often, these requests are simply obstructive, relying upon the difficulty involved in “proving” need in an objective manner somewhat quickly, to advance an approval process. The status of current recreation planning objectives endorsed by any of the four municipalities is sufficiently indistinct that consistency, with few exceptions, will always be subjective.

Overcoming arbitrary or very conservative positions can always be accomplished by prior demonstration of strong popular support but avoiding tactical impediments to a given initiative can be most reliably achieved by careful preparation of cogent statements of justified need, proposed methods of response to that need and means to enable implementation and management of those methods. The Four Towns Partnership should anticipate that these criteria must be met as a matter of course for all proposals.

This exercise is as important to pre-submission evaluation of a potential initiative as, if realistic means and methods cannot be coupled with adequate support; the proposal is not yet ready to advance. This internal test is one very frequently omitted by resident groups and one, which frequently results in failed proposals.

As the Four Towns Partnership seeks to pursue recreation proposals, a real appreciation of those interests most appealing to the whole community will be essential to find common ground and to exploit the broadest alignment of interests by inclusion. A survey of community recreation preferences is the most reliable basis to elicit this sort of information. It is a tool the Four Towns process will require to legitimately inform subsequent planning.

Preparation of an appropriate preference survey can be materially aided by electronic techniques and may be a process yielding statistical significance by engaging the cooperation of sports, service and civic organizations of the Four Towns. In aggregate, these organizations represent at least one member of over 3,000 area families or approximately half of the entire Four Towns population. Over the course of one year, with cooperation of all of the sports associations required to register in one of the existing sports programs and with voluntary cooperation of the service and civic associations it should be possible to assemble returns from the bulk of these residents. With a repeated appeal, supported by the municipal administrations and reported in the local press, additional respondents sufficient to assure a return of 30% to 40% of Four Towns residents should be achievable. A return of this magnitude will assure a usefully accurate measure of resident recreation interest and will provide an influential report enabling productive strategic planning of priorities.

Preparation and distribution of the survey form will require assistance of some participants sufficiently skilled in computer programming to establish a Four Towns web site and to prepare a survey form designed to be electronically compiled as returns are received. It will remain necessary to review each form to compile text responses, but if returns are in a typed format these can be assembled and subsequently compiled. A printed copy of the survey must be prepared for distribution to any respondent wishing to use a paper form and these will require individual recording into electronic form.

Composition of question groups and technique of survey formatting will require a concerted, patient and well conceived collaboration of planning to assure that responses yield information across a very broad scope of topics without being discouragingly long. This process must be performed by the Four Towns Partnership but will certainly benefit by experienced technical advice if appropriately experienced participants can be found to contribute.

Structure of the survey form itself will be critical to ascertaining useful information and presumably should be composed to primarily address alternative preferences for recreation, deficient service issues, aesthetics, support systems and utility for various age groups. Eliciting responses to questions that are not frequently considered in any depth, particularly those concerning features or opportunities not well represented in a recreation system will require a number of written responses as well as selection from multiple choice questions. Preparation of a survey form that is sufficiently interesting to maintain a respondent's attention requires that questions are presented in a manner that stimulates some personal reaction based on reference to their own experience. This is extremely difficult where such an array of potential interests are concerned and where it is necessary to gain information from elements of the population that will not actually respond (children) or those with few expectations based on familiar service levels. In anticipation of this sort of difficulty, it is recommended that a "trial survey" be prepared and issued for completion by twenty to thirty selected residents and subsequent to completion, these respondents will be interviewed to identify reactions to the survey form and format. These responses will then be utilized to revise the survey prior to distribution.

Prior to issue of the survey, it will be absolutely necessary to conduct a process of notification and information presenting the survey and its significance to the Four Towns residents. If possible, this should include an endorsement and press release sponsored by each of the partner municipalities.

## **LONG TERM PLANNING PROJECTS**

The Four Towns Partnership will need to carefully evaluate the entire system to produce proposals that function to balance community wide needs for facility expansion. This may logically include elimination of some of the most marginal system fields perhaps in combination with revision of traditional use to provide some more appropriate function.

Sports associations have grown in registration and varieties of program types sponsored and have come to prefer grouped multiple venues or complexes, where their resources can be consolidated and where many participants create a more attractive social environment. Where service delivery is directed at a regional population rather than a single municipal population, creation of complexes capable of accommodating large numbers of visitors and useful to host games, playoffs and tournament events is more efficient and less costly than distributing single facilities across many sites. As this format has evolved historically, future planning to maximize the capability of these sites (Chubb, Black River/Highlands Ridge, Mendham Middle School and St. Johns) is the most prudent course. Other system sites, currently fully developed, should be considered simultaneously to determine if their sport field spaces can ultimately be programmed for practice alone, left unprogrammed for pick-up play, or reconfigured to provide the many underserved recreation forms that may be created.

### **A REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN**

One potential for systematic development of a wholly responsive regional park is prominent in the Four Towns inventory of sites. It is the combined site encompassing Black River Middle School, Black River Fields, Black River Practice Fields, Highlands Ridge Park and potentially, a portion of recently acquired lands of the former Lucent parcel. This group of tracts is distinctive in so many potentials that only an unrestricted Chubb Park could be similarly useful. Its most prominent virtues are these:

- The location of the parcel group is as close to centralized in the Four Towns as major roadways allow. It occurs at the intersection of two local arterial roads and within one mile of route 24. It is three minutes distant from Chester Borough (by car) and ten minutes distant from Mendham Borough.
- The site group is adjacent to a small number of adjacent residences and has ample space and forested perimeters to assure considerate separation distances from proposed development.
- The Highlands Ridge and Lucent sites contain many open field areas and have been previously developed with a connected network of vehicle ways. All areas of both sites can be easily accessed and could accommodate thousands of cars of overflow parking as may be occasionally useful to accommodate very large events.
- The Black River Practice Field site (if made available by change from Board of Education ownership) consists of nearly flat space sufficient, to create six full sized soccer multi-purpose fields, two multi-purpose baseball/softball fields, parking for 200 cars and yet, preserve adequate marginal space to construct amenities landscaping and support structures. This site alone is capable of balancing remaining system demand for soccer, lacrosse and baseball fields. Its topographical characteristics and soil are assets

rather than limitations, enabling economical redevelopment and utility placement. This is the best of Four Towns sites respective of site work potential, only the field areas occurring at St. Johns are as adaptable to future playfield development.

- The Black River School site includes large parking areas, outdoor courts, utility infrastructure and one large unutilized field space sufficient in size and not visible from exterior views. It presents an opportunity to create a lighted multi-purpose field in natural or synthetic turf. Proximity to the school building enables access to restrooms to support large spectatorship events.
- The Highlands Ridge Park is currently being developed with additional baseball and soccer fields immediately adjacent to the Black River Fields. The site remainder can be developed to incorporate court groups, assembly/ event areas, playgrounds, sitting and picnic areas and limited indoor functions. Its lane and pathway system is now competent for many forms of pedestrian, bicycling, running and cross country recreations and that same system is connected to the adjacent natural lands of the Evans Preserve. Highlands ridge Park has open, rolling hillsides and forested lowlands. Its variety enables site areas to be used actively while other, nearby locations remain invisible and undisturbed.
- Lands of the Former Lucent site will be planned by Chester Borough for a variety of purposes. In the event that open space elements of the property adjoin Highlands Ridge, the potential to jointly sponsor greater recreation interests there further compliments the potential of the three Township sites. It is known that the YMCA maintains an interest in this site and has asserted a willingness to explore opportunities for development of a center there. This prospect deserves careful scrutiny and if reasonable, strong advocacy as well. A major YMCA presence in this central location is a prospect that so importantly diversifies swimming, health and fitness training, after-hours recreation, winter season programming and child care interests, that it should be facilitated if possible.

This combination of sites appears to have the capability to be readily adapted to meet all of the Four Towns athletic field needs for a very long time, assuming current demographic characteristics evolve as anticipated. Thorough development proposals for playfield construction here, based on more comprehensive design and spatial arrangement to minimize subsequent programming conflicts, coupled with initial incorporation of adequate utility support and revised management practice, may enable closure or revision of use of other system facilities. Accustomed management practices may be redirected to a significantly more concentrated group of features, economizing logistics of transportation and maximizing the effectiveness of volunteer management procedures. Creation of a regional park and athletic field complex will be an evolutionary process, requiring years to unfold. Physical arrangement of site areas with dissimilar appropriate capabilities will enable several component elements to advance simultaneously without interruption of activities on previously completed features. This capability may be useful to enable various purposes to proceed independently in planning, funding and finally, construction, according to capabilities of sponsoring interests.

It is strongly recommended that if possible the Four Towns Partnership undertake a Master Plan Concept for this complex of sites, incorporating as many entities as may be found appropriate to contribute. Ultimate development of portions of this site that are conceived to be responsive to a given groups unique interests, initiated by that group and supported by the entire Partnership in concert, will demonstrate whether a Four Towns Partnership is a viable agency.

## **AN INDOOR SPORTS COMPLEX**

The Four Towns population will continue to seek alternative opportunities to continue fitness training, exercise, swimming and indoor sports during the winter months. Existing sports programs will, to a more limited extent, also seek out off-season opportunities to train and practice soccer, basketball, track and particularly, swimming. Appropriate venues offering diverse forms of aerobic, dance and martial arts training, day care and before and after care, cultural, performing arts and educational programs are likewise few and frequently conducted in inconsistent, amateurish fashion. These activities are available regionally at YMCA facilities and locally at private clubs but are not available in quantity, diversity or proximity satisfactory to represent a viable popular resource. Registration and participation particularly in water activities, child care and personal fitness programs has increased steadily over time in the YMCA systems indicating that the regional population will tolerate considerable travel inconvenience as well as cost to secure quality indoor recreation.

The task of creating an adequate indoor recreation facility is too large to be successfully accomplished even by a combination of the Four Towns but remains a practical consideration presuming that an exterior agency can be induced to provide and manage desired services.

While not particularly imperative as a current necessity, planning to the extent that a mutual accord can be reached to optimize the potential to attract such an organization is possible.

It is recognized that The YMCA has previously conducted evaluations of potentials for expansion of their service mission into western Morris County without productive results. It is reported that proposals forwarded by Mendham Township to explore the prospect of small satellite functions delivered from existing structures at India Brook Park were strongly discouraged by the few local residents adjacent to the site.

Recognizing that a xenophobic reaction to most new and unfamiliar proposals is a uniform characteristic of almost any type of major new development, the administrative bodies of the Four Towns should properly consider the protracted advantages in community service possible through such an accommodation. As the regional population growth stabilizes and communities are increasingly inclined to seek means of improving recreation service at least direct cost, some area municipality will decide to facilitate the YMCA's mission by producing a suitable site or structure proposal enabling a long standing interest to be realized. If the Four Towns Partnership is sufficiently farsighted to evaluate what the best planned opportunity for long term goal setting implies, an initiative shared by the Partnership to decide if indoor recreation available locally is desirable or not, is a simple objective. If it is seen as a supportable ambition, possible current opportunities can be quickly identified and discussed, enabling subsequent exploration of particulars of that selection with the YMCA.

Evolution of a scheme of the scope involved here is one that will require years of potentially complicated process to initiate, presuming a satisfactory opportunity is found. Beginning the whole sequence requires only initial interest and the commitment to explore options. It is a task appropriate for the Four Towns Partnership to undertake.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **TOPICS CONCERNING THE ENTIRE SYSTEM**

#### **EXECUTIVE ACTIONS -**

*It is recommended that the administrations of Chester Borough, Chester Township, Mendham Borough and Mendham Township (The Four Towns) agree to join their resources and consolidate their planning for joint future management and programming of primary outdoor recreation activities, thereby enabling a Four Towns process. .*

The Four Towns exhibit a variety of conventional forms of outdoor recreation and programming typical of well established, older communities with rural roots and rapid contemporary growth. Though remaining opportunities available for exploitation as future recreation space are very different according to community, traditions of programming are shared and identical, particularly as the great bulk of actively participating citizens have joined in organized sports programs. Disparities in opportunity to conveniently increase existing programs or to introduce new facilities will confront the Boroughs more significantly than the Townships and it appears reasonable and practical to plan jointly for the creation of new features to meet the common needs of neighboring residents.

It is not known whether or how the Four Towns will collaborate in pursuit of common objectives, but it is clear that a dedicated effort to plan together and to find ways to share responsibility and the potential benefit of new or reorganized forms for delivery of outdoor recreation offers economies and possibilities greater than any single entity could practically anticipate.

Presuming that a common cause is recognized and that commitment at the level of the four municipal administrations to purposefully share their resources is gained, much immediate relief of system problems can be achieved by equitably balancing use of existing resources in service of the entire combined need. Sweeping aside jurisdictional prerogatives and traditional routines of management may be stressful initially but as skepticism is replaced by opportunism, a variety of possibilities awaiting employment will emerge.

Success in this enterprise is almost entirely contingent upon the will of current administrations, as their unified acceptance of a changed paradigm for recreation delivery as well as commitment to directive executive action to enable necessary management reorganization, underlies the entire concept. Administrative advocacy and enthusiasm for an unproved system may be the greatest obstacle to traditions of conservatism, particularly in a system where daily operational responsibility for the conduct of the largest conventional recreation programs is typically administered by somewhat autonomous citizens' organizations. Although this form is the accustomed norm for recreation programming across the Four Towns, reliance upon the will of vested interests to shape policy for the community entire yields bias in planning and ultimately, bias in expenditure of municipal resources. Similarly, unexamined belief that service facilities are competent or appropriate based on tradition and anecdotal information, is a poor substitute for a regular, informed inventory of existing conditions comparative to best management practice. Improvement of techniques of facility evaluation and systematic communication of emerging program initiatives enabling planning on a proactive basis, offer an expedient that at



once demands forward thinking and obliges a much more integrated relationship between administrative and operational agencies.

The Four Towns citizens have historically participated in a variety of shared initiatives. Recently, the citizens joined forces with government proposals to secure open space by dedication of tax revenues. Others aligned themselves to secure funding and political support for creation of a pool complex and synthetic field surfacing. Sports associations have traditionally raised revenue to supplement athletic field construction and maintenance. In each such instance, significant objectives were reached as aligned interests were organized by dedicated leadership to enhance their influence. Similar objectives remain to be met within the Four Towns recreation system. If few are as compelling as those above, in aggregate, they represent a cause to compliment the quality of daily life and an opportunity to fulfill the potential for a recreation system that is inclusive of all residents regardless of age, preference or affiliation.

A shared vision and committed leadership dedicated to applying the physical attributes and human resources of Four Towns in concert, is the essential prerequisite to initiating such an enterprise. It is incumbent upon the elected representatives of the Four Towns to endorse sharing resources with their neighbors, in a cooperative spirit, to initiate such a prospect.

*It is recommended that the Four Towns identify and inventory existing irregular or non-compliant conditions occurring on and adjacent to existing outdoor sports playfields system wide and prioritize a sequence of improvements to eliminate those conditions.*

The nature and description of such subject deficiencies is elaborated in preceding text and discussed variously according to significance.

*It is recommended that the Four Towns establish elemental consistency standards for each of the several venue types programmed for public recreation and that each meet minimum standards for conformity and physical conditions to be satisfactory for play.*

The nature and description of such subject characteristics is elaborated in preceding text and discussed variously according to significance.

*It is recommended that representatives of the Four Towns meet with representatives of the local school boards to establish agreements for resolution of irregular conditions and non-compliant characteristics of playfields at elementary and middle school sites.*

*It is further recommended that representatives of the Four Towns meet with the Chester Board of Education and Middle School administration to examine the prospect of joint planning to create a lighted multi-purpose field in the rear of the School.*

Current operational conditions of Mendham High School facilities have evolved to constrain utilization of sports fields there by area recreation programs.

*It is strongly recommended that representatives of the Four Towns meet with the West Morris Regional High School Board to discuss the following topics, (irrespective of the existence of a Four Towns agency).*

- 1) Indoor facilities at the Mendham High School, particularly restrooms, are not available for support of traditional recreation programming. As such facilities exist; administrative prerogatives are the only impediment to their availability. As representatives of the*

*ultimate statutory authority, the Municipal Administrations may impose their preference to correction of this unreasonable circumstance.*

- 2) *The land parcel adjacent to Black River Fields is and has been long utilized as general recreation space supporting area soccer and lacrosse programs. Its availability and potential to resolve numerous spatial issues confronting recreation programming in the Four Towns is the most important of all future prospects for recreation system expansion. This parcel is owned by the Board of Education, unreasonably thwarting sports association planning to invest in field improvements. The Administrations should exert their influence to permanently secure this parcel for community use by acquisition of the tract.*

## **ADDITIONAL FACILITIES**

It is observed that reasonable prospects for continuation of traditional participation in the Twin Boro Bears youth football program are sufficiently impaired by loss of available field space that extraordinary measures to provide appropriate practice and game facilities (at home) should be considered a priority purpose.

*Therefore it is recommended that the Four Towns collaborate to secure two practice fields and one game field to accommodate Twin Boro Bears fall programming.*

It is recommended that unutilized field space at Memorial Park and Black River practice fields be prepared for practice use and that the lower soccer field at St. Johns Academy site be reserved for games. Note: The St. John's site has been lighted by previous occupants and is regarded as a reasonable prospect for reestablishment of that practice as the Bears have provided portable lighting to support its programming in the past. It is recommended that this site be considered as the future "home" of the Bears and be developed to include a single, lighted game field and two multi-purpose practicing spaces.

Recent circumstances related to synthetic turf scheduling at Mendham High School have practically eliminated access to the running track and field events activities traditionally utilized by the Mendham track program. This has resulted in a severe disability to train for competition.

*It is therefore recommended that the Four Towns secure the facilities at West Morris Central High School for training of the Mendham Track athletes.*

Note: this is a lighted facility and may be available later than typically possible in early spring to protract the Club's training sequences.

*It is recommended that The Four Towns undertake planning and development sequences applicable to increase of mainstream baseball fields of the following descriptions:*

- 1) Youth baseball fields (2) to satisfy current program demand relative to the Chester Little League operations.
- 2) Youth baseball fields (2) to satisfy current program demand relative to the Mendham Little League operations.

(Note: completion of the newly created field at Highlands Ridge Park represents one of the recommended additional fields associated with Chester LL programs)

*It is recommended that The Four Towns provide space for two additional full sized soccer/multi-purpose fields at Black River practice fields to enable West Morris Soccer to consolidate its*

*games at that facility, consequently reducing scheduling demands on Ralston Field to better accommodate a growing Lacrosse program. This is consistent with the recommendation to acquire this tract and dependent upon that precondition.*

Each of the sports associations interviewed during this study represented a distinct preference to consolidate their activities into a few “complexes” rather than individual field sites in diverse locations, particularly for game situations. This circumstance is emerging at Chubb Park and the Black River /Highlands Ridge Complex.

*It is recommended that the Four Towns evaluate their entire inventory of fields with the purpose of creating such groups of similar playfields and as possible, eliminating stand alone fields in other locations to enable reprogramming of use of those spaces.*

The outdoor summer basketball program has demonstrated extraordinary participation interest in a fundamentally novel form of organized sport. Available facilities supporting this program are too few and inadequately supported.

*As basketball courts are insufficiently available throughout the system, a purpose to plan for increase of these, particularly as lighted facilities is recommended to support increase of this activity type.*

Skateboarding, rollerblading, and bicycling have evolved over a sufficient long time to confirm that they are legitimate recreation activities with persistent support among contemporary youth and young adults. These activities are not served within the Four Towns.

*It is recommended that the Four Towns collaborate to select a single location and facilitate initial placement of hard surfaced features to support this group of functions.*

Note: development of complete, fully equipped skate park facilities is comparatively costly but spatial requirements are small. Enabling area supporters to generate support or resources for construction is observed to provide a meaningful demonstration opportunity to confirm area demand for the activity.

## **RECREATION ACTIVITY SUPPORT**

Residents of the Four Towns are typically modestly supported by conventional amenities within area recreation sites. Significant deficiencies are characterized as restrooms, potable water supply and sheltering structures. On site storage facilities enabling organizations to safely secure equipment and supplies on site have been uniformly cited as a need. Restrooms are not an optional feature within public recreation area. They are required by statute and must meet a variety of conditions for compliance. Restrooms may not legitimately be substituted for by porta-johns.

*It is emphatically recommended that the Four Towns initiate a plan to develop restrooms at all public recreation sites despite cost or inconvenience.*

## **AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS**

The outdoor recreation facilities and sites within the entire Four Towns system are minimally decorated with landscape plantings, furnishings, gardens enclosures, structures, or other constructed evidence of an intent to create beautiful public spaces.

*It is recommended that the Four Towns determine if aesthetic character is a potential that should be enhanced in recreation sites.*

## **UTILITY SYSTEMS**

Recreation facilities in the Four Towns System are typically rudimentarily provisioned with utility systems. Provisions of potable water service and wastewater management systems are particularly influential or potentially limiting to advancing development ambitions and maintenance procedures.

*It is recommended that utility extension planning be initiated for all system sites.*

## **MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL TRAINING**

Management and maintenance of natural systems and public facilities is ever more demanding and constrained by statute. Liability in time, expense or damages increases as diversity of system features increase. It is likewise, increasingly important to improve the knowledge and skill sets of management operatives as their numbers rarely increase in proportion to task assignments.

*It is recommended that the Four Towns collaborate to subdivide technically different operational components into responsibility groups assigned to groups of employees and that each such group begin to train to create a knowledge base at once, directly applicable to the tasks of recreation system management and uniform across the Four Towns.*

## **UNDERSTANDING WHOLE SERVICE SYSTEM NEEDS**

The Four Towns outdoor recreation system has grown primarily around active sports organizations. Many other individual, passive, contemplative, educational and social possibilities are little served or not served at all. It is certain that residents of a variety of other interests are shared by the very young, older citizens, social groups and area adults that simply can't be found in the Four Towns system. This is a notable defect in area planning and one that should be balanced.

*It is recommended that the Four Towns undertake a system wide survey inclusive of all residents and resident associations with the specific purpose of identifying unmet interests in the communities. It is further recommended that the findings of this survey be utilized to adjust or to compliment future proposals for more traditional program expansion.*

## **FUNDING FUTURE RECREATION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS**

A substantial number of potentials have been proposed and in part, explored during preparation of this report. It is apparent that enormous capital sums would be required to realize many of these. In the future, capitalization of recreation project proposals will reliably constitute the most imposing obstacle to resolve.

*It is recommended that the Four Towns consider preparation of a public question to be presented in each of the communities to establish a fund similar to that utilized to secure open space acquisition proposals for the specific purposes of recreation system expansion and management.*

## **ENABLING**

*It is recommended that the Four Towns establish a separate agency representing the outdoor recreation system interests of the four towns tasked with study and evaluation of the issues confronting recreation system and program delivery system wide and to prepare recommendations for shared response to these, for subsequent administrative action.*

## **APPENDIX 1**

Excerpted text sections of responses to questions posed to sports associations. Note: this appendix includes only selections of responses from associations that prepared written responses. As many organizations chose to respond during interview sequences, the return of written comments does not represent the statements of all associations interviewed during this process.

### **RESPONSE CITATIONS FROM CHESTER LITTLE LEAGUE**

Q. Evaluate the support you receive from the Township/Borough. If there are specific issues, please describe them.

A: *Through early 2008, we received minimal support. We pay \$19K annually for our own landscaper to groom the fields, sometimes cut them if the municipality has not gotten to it, and line them. In benchmarking other municipalities, we are in the minority in terms of municipal support. In the middle of the 2008 season, the township acquired a grooming machine and committed to daily maintenance of the township fields. This has been a vast improvement in playing conditions, and will allow us to save a substantial portion of our annual budget and re-invest that in our program's equipment and possibly, additional municipal infrastructure that would benefit our program.*

Q. What is your relationship to both public works departments?

A: *There was very little relationship until the township acquired the grooming machine in 2008. The borough cuts grass and has performed some cleanup and occasional maintenance, but even the food booth at the municipal field – which Chester LL built and has recently paid to renovate the interior of – is "owned" by the borough and has been rarely addressed....although we hear the borough is evaluating the condition of the rest rooms and considering restoring them.*

*From our perspective, a wonderful opportunity for the two-headed Chester's to work together is on field grooming. The majority of our playing fields are in the township, and now being groomed regularly by them. Two of our most used fields, however are located in the borough. Were the borough able to work out compensation or other type of agreement with the township, we could have all of our fields groomed by the 'municipality' and allow us to re-invest our entire \$19K landscaping budget in the program.*

Q. What is your relationship to the recreation director?

A: *We have a good relationship with the townships parks committee, and are the designated primary users for the baseball fields since we are the primary recreation baseball program. We had significant problems this spring with the shape of the Chubb fields, and that group responded with the purchase of the grooming equipment and coordination of the public works staff to perform the work on a routine basis.....We have less interaction with the Borough; they have recently replaced the backstop on the Borough LL field, and we hear they are considering replacing the backstop on the Babe Ruth field. Most recently, we fought over the use of the food booth – the recreation director was insisting it not be used by us for fundraising at the annual craft fair and that it be turned over to others to do the same. Hard to swallow when the Borough has put virtually nothing into its construction, maintenance, upgrades or prior use. In fact, we are not*

*allowed to even put a sign designating it as Chester LL – probably the only municipal baseball field in the country without a sign identifying what it is.*

*LL has paid for sodding of the two infields at the municipal fields, and attempt to keep that grass alive and growing, and the new scoreboard, which was assisted by a donation related to the passing of a former coach and board member. The assistance from the Borough is less than that expected by taxpayers in one of the wealthiest areas of the country.*

Q. Do you identify system deficiencies?

- field condition - on-site storage - maintenance

A: *Field conditions are usually ok but most fields have been overloaded every year with just a dump truck load of clay, which in a few cases has build up to a dangerous "lip" on the infield/outfield transition. There are some drainage issues on the township fields which they have attempted to address. Chubb fields could use a better storage shed dedicated to our use. The hillside adjacent to softball field #2 has eroded to the point where it is dangerous and needs some maintenance; this has been pointed out to the township for several years but not addressed.*

Q. Seating/shade, shelter

A: *Dugouts are always an improvement, or at least shade over the bench areas for those fields in prime use during late spring and summer*

Q. Safety, convenience, aesthetic

A: *In addition to the slope at Chubb softball field 2, several fields could use some modest regrading due to the lip that has built up from the annual addition of clay. Regular grooming has aided in safe field conditions at the township fields. The grass infields at the municipal fields would be safer if the routine watering of the grass were possible. There is a well, and we hand water when possible but it is difficult for volunteer organizations to due this routinely*

Q. Do you have facility goals beyond the conditions that exist? Please describe them.

A: *We have attempted to increase our useable field space through the addition of batting cages that we have bought, and will buy more if possible, with our existing funds. Borough assistance in the installation of permanent sleeves and a power outlet at the municipal LL field would help us make this a reality. The installation of cages at Chubb was derailed by the township's requirement, due to their insurance policy, to surround any installed batting cage with an 8' high cyclone fence. This has added to the cost of the project, and turned what would be a temporary, seasonal feature into a permanent one. A more reasonable interpretation of what is an "attractive nuisance" (which the fields and backstops already are) would help us make this happen at a reasonable cost and within an implemental timeframe.*

*The ability to do this now will help take the scheduling bottleneck and that pressure off in the short term, as we can increase the number of team practices occurring simultaneously. The long term part of our plan is to be in position, following one more year of fundraising, to work with the township to make additional LL baseball fields a reality. At present, the approved fields at Parker Road are a targeted project for LL to*

*be able to contribute financially to, working with the township to explore the application of other grant monies to help facilitate construction.*

Q. Do you have an interest in lighted facilities?

A: *Absolutely yes.....the addition of lights to one or two fields would provide the scheduling flexibility that may possibly eliminate the need at present to construct new fields.*

Q. Please describe any chronic issue your group would like to change or unmet ambition you hope to achieve.

A: *More municipal pro-active support to the program. It starts with field maintenance (which as noted has improved this year with the township, but needs to go a step further) and support of a common agenda.....we are a volunteer group providing recreation opportunities for kids, which you think would be a common agenda.*

Q. What is an ideal youth baseball/softball field? (Experiential characteristics) Be prosaic.

A: *Municipalities that do it better (Mt. Olive, Bridgewater, Readington come to mind) have built one large complex that houses baseball and softball fields. LL baseball fields and softball fields are actually interchangeable through the use of portable pitching mounds. Locating four fields back to back around a common area, typically housing a food booth (that could actually be profitable and make money due to the number of people present when open) and maintenance shed minimizes space and maximizes convenience for all. There is dedicated maintenance equipment at the complex, so fields are groomed and lined via a mix of municipal and volunteer labor. The common area structure often contains a second-floor meeting space that becomes the recreation program's HQ, and it is used for coach and volunteer training, organizational meetings, etc. and doubles as community space. There is ample parking, covered bench areas or dugouts, and lights on several of the fields. The facility is secured by a gate in off hours (evenings) to discourage vandalism, and locked / unlocked daily by the local police dept. Such a facility allows the organization to conduct fundraisers such as the hosting of tournaments, etc. With our recreation and travel programs now playing spring, summer and fall seasons, it would have virtual year-round use. It becomes a source of pride for the community, and helps build the program interest to increase participation and introduction of children to the game.*

*Likely not a reality in our community, as we have built out fields over time as space has become available. But, there are some very nice benefits to it.*

## **RESPONSE CITATIONS FROM MENDHAM LITTLE LEAGUE**

### **GROUP MOST NEEDS – DESCRIBE CONCISELY**

1. *Mendham Little League needs baseball fields that have adequate drainage. Many of our fields do not drain properly.*
2. *Mendham Little League needs fields that have proper safety fencing to protect players and spectators.*
3. *Mendham Little League needs more baseball fields as the current fields we have are too over crowded and over used. Space permitting a lighted field would allow more games to occur.*



4. *Mendham Little League fields are currently maintained by the Township and Borough. The fields need to be more consistently maintained as often they are not prepped and grass not cut before games.*
5. *Mendham Little League needs more fields with restroom facilities.*
6. *Mendham Little League needs more fields for games and practices.*
7. *Mendham Little League needs to be able to utilized existing field before 4/15 of every season. The Town and Borough often do not release the field until the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in April, which makes the season too difficult to manage if weather issues become a factor.*