

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, coincidentally assuring careful examination of mutually advantageous potentials.

Proposed composition of Planning Partnership

Executive Board

Chairperson

Vice Chairperson

<i>Corresponding Secretary</i>	<i>Recording</i>	<i>Registrar</i>	<i>Treasurer</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>Recreation Director #1</i>	<i>Recreation Director #2</i>	<i>Recreation Director #3</i>	<i>Recreation Director #4</i>

General Membership

Sports Associations	Service Organizations	Social Organizations	Youth Organizations	Civic Associations
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 IIQ, 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 2nd week in April, which makes the season too difficult to manage if weather issues become a factor.*