



Goshen Parks and Recreation

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To the Village and Town Boards of Goshen:

The Joint Recreation Commission is responsible for reporting, on an annual basis, the need for any capital projects that we have determined to be necessary for meeting our obligation to provide recreational facilities and programs for the residents of Goshen. The Village of Goshen code further directs us to provide these recommendations to both the Village and Town Boards. With this responsibility in mind, the JRC would like to submit the following annual report to keep Goshen officials apprised of the present and future recreational needs as identified by the JRC.

We appreciate the continued support of Town and Village officials. Mayor Scott Wohl has been meeting regularly with our recreation coordinator, Trish Sherlock, and responsive to communications with our chairman, Salvatore LaBruna. Supervisor Joe Betro has also been in frequent contact with Ms. Sherlock and Mr. LaBruna. It is worth noting that since taking office Mr. Betro has attended every monthly JRC meeting to date.

The following report includes updates to our 2021 assessment, with some additional recommendations and information, and a discussion of matters we believe are relevant to our ability to meet Goshen's current and future recreational needs.

UPDATES ON PRIOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Pavilion at Myron Urbanski Memorial Park

At the recommendation of the JRC, the Town has moved forward with the installation of a new pavilion at the park on Craigville Road. Site preparations are currently underway, and the pavilion is scheduled to be installed on June 1. Construction should take about 3 days.

The new pavilion will provide addition covered space for our camp activities, particularly during rainy weather, and will also be available for rent when camp is not in session.

There has been some discussion about using the concrete pad under the pavilion as an all-weather pickleball court. Logistics for reserving the space for pickleball have not yet been worked out, and there is some concern that there could be conflicts with other users. We anticipate that many park visitors will want to sit under the new pavilion during soccer and baseball season, and there will likely be rentals for private events. For these reasons, we would prefer the construction of separate pickleball courts in one of the parks so there would be no conflict. We will continue to discuss and investigate our options.

Councilman Rick Florio, who is the Town's liaison to the JRC, is looking into ways to improve drainage in the area of the pavilions and the softball field. Any potential improvements would make this area more usable for recreation throughout the year.

Salesian School Building

At the time of the writing of this report, the bid process has begun for the demolition of the Salesian School building in Salesian Park. It is our understanding, based on conversations with the Town Board, that the demolition is likely to commence in June. Most or all areas of the surrounding park will have to be closed while the building is taken down.

As the JRC has already expressed in correspondence and conversation with both the Town and Village Boards, we believe there should be a discussion about the future use of the building site. The JRC has already suggested that the location would be ideal for a community and/or government center, but we are open to other ideas. Further discussion and planning will be necessary to provide a clear understanding of how the JRC should proceed when it comes to utilizing this area of the Salesian property after the removal of the building.

Skatepark Location

Despite delays, the JRC is committed to constructing skateboarding facilities in Goshen. As we mentioned in our last report, Councilman Rick Florio had been reaching out to Orange County officials in hopes of securing permission to build a skatepark on the former site of the Orange County Jail on Erie Street. It is our understanding (although we have received no correspondence from the County to confirm) that they have agreed to build basketball courts on the above-mentioned, county-owned land. This would enable the JRC to then build a skatepark on the site of our current basketball courts in Erie Street Park. These discussions are all very tentative, however, so we hope to arrange a meeting with a County officials sometime in the near future.

Bathroom at Erie Street Park

Providing bathroom facilities for visitors to Erie Street Park continues to be a priority for the JRC. This has been complicated by the fact that much of the park is located on land owned by the Goshen Central School District. On Sept. 23, recreation coordinator Trish Sherlock, JRC Commissioner Salvatore LaBruna, Village Board Trustee Anthony Scotto, and Mayor Scott Wohl met with Superintendent Kurtis Kotes to discuss Erie Street park. At the meeting Dr. Kotes described 3 ways of moving forward with the proposed bathroom at the park on Erie Street:

1. Changing the lot line, which would give the property in question to the village, enabling us to construct the bathroom without further complications. However, transfer of school property would require a district-wide public referendum. If successful, then all the surveys and other requirements to change the property line could be done. The costs of the referendum are unclear. Costs of the surveys and other paperwork would cost JRC around \$3500 to \$4000. Dr. Kotes pointed out that the risk involved in putting it out for a referendum is that if it fails, we are back to where we started from.
2. A lease agreement, which would allow the school to keep the property in question, and allow us to construct and maintain the bathroom. However, anything constructed on school property would need state approval and have to meet state requirements. Details of the lease and maintenance agreement would also have to be worked out. Trustee Scotto warned that it might be difficult to get utilities connected during construction on school property.
3. A gift from the village to the school, which would mean the village would build the bathroom, then give the bathroom over to the district. From then on, maintenance and ownership would be the school's responsibility. However, the building would still have to be constructed and be approved according to state building requirements.

Dr. Kotes said it was up to us on how we wanted to proceed, but that the district was willing to work with us on whatever path we choose. Mayor Wohl and Trustee Scotto felt that with the above-mentioned hurdles in mind, it might be best to wait and see what happens with the ongoing discussion at the county level, potentially resulting in new recreation facilities for Goshen that would be located on the site of the old jail (across the street from Erie Street park). Rather than moving forward with the school district, they are hoping that talks with the County will yield not only new basketball courts on the site of the old jail, but also a potential location for a public bathroom building.

LONG-TERM PLANNING

Dog Park

The location of the dog park—on a steep hill in Salesian Park—has continued to be an issue. Muddy and/or icy conditions have forced us to close the park this winter (and a few other occasions) for the safety of residents. We have engaged users of the park to discuss possible improvements, and have also made it clear that we are considering finding a more suitable location that does not include potentially unsafe slopes. These discussions will continue with the public and we welcome input from Town and Village officials as well.

Summer Camp

Our summer camp program continues to be extremely popular with Goshen residents. Registrations for the 2022 camp season were sold out in less than eight hours, with many age groups selling out in minutes. Using registration data from the previous five years, we can calculate that historically more than 93% of camp registrations were placed for kids living in the Town and Village of Goshen. Additionally, we can safely estimate that at least 90% of the remaining “out of town” registrations are usually for kids living in the Goshen Central School District but in areas outside of Goshen. In other words, the majority of our campers are overwhelmingly Town and Village residents, and nearly all are Goshen Central School District students. Non-residents (even those in the school district, like those who live in Hamptonburgh) pay a slightly higher fee because residents contribute financially to JRC by way of paying their taxes to the Town and Village.

With the addition of the new pavilion at Myron Urbanski Park, we anticipate being able to offer camp to even more kids in 2023. Town Councilman Rick Florio and Supervisor Joe Betro have also expressed a desire to investigate and plan for additional drainage work to open up more areas of the park. This would further add space available for the use of campers and the general public.

This year we have made the decision to close the park while camp is in session for the safety of the campers.

Parkland Fees

In our 2021 report the JRC recommended that both the Town and Village raise their “parkland fees,” which are paid in lieu of parkland on new residential developments in the Village and the Town. Shortly after our report was sent to the boards, they took action on our request. At a Town Board meeting on March 11, a motion was made by Councilman Rick Florio to increase the Town's parkland fee from \$3,000 to \$3,500. The motion was seconded by Councilman George Lyons, and carried unanimously. On April 26, the Village Board enacted Local Law #1 of 2021 which raised the fees from \$2,500 to \$3,500. With these increases, the parkland fees for the Town and Village are now at the same level. However, with inflation at a historically high level it does not seem unreasonable to suggest raising the fees again.

Playground Equipment

Our parks need new playground equipment. We are in the process of surveying and evaluating the condition of our current equipment to come up with a plan for their replacement. Playground equipment is expensive, so we will need support from the Village and Town Boards as we move forward.

Staffing and Financing

Currently the JRC is staffed by two part-time office employees, and three part-time maintenance employees, depending on the time of year and availability of workers. We strongly believe it would be in the best interest of our parks to have at least one full-time employee. Having our recreation coordinator Trish Sherlock, working full time would enable us to better manage the parks and coordinate with contractors, maintenance staff, and Town and Village officials. It is our understanding that there are ongoing discussions between the Town and the Village regarding how the JRC is funded, and the issue of making this position full time is under consideration.

Insurance

In last year's report we asked the Town and Village Boards to investigate whether or not it was appropriate for the JRC to have its own insurance policy. Making any change to an insurance policy for recreational areas is obviously a major decision. Currently the JRC is providing insurance for recreation areas and facilities in Goshen that would obviously be costly for anyone to insure. In essence, the JRC (with its very small budget) is covering the insurance costs for nearly all the recreation areas in both the Town and Village. At the moment our insurance policy takes up a large percentage of our entire budget. If we add new recreational amenities such as another athletic field, pickleball courts, or a skatepark, these facilities will increase our insurance costs dramatically to the point that we might not be able to afford to keep them open to the public. We believe that if the Town and Village included recreational areas and amenities in their own insurance policies, the municipalities would be in a better position to absorb the costs rather than having the burden placed on the comparatively minuscule JRC budget. There is also case law involving a JRC in Orange County in which the matter of insurance was an issue that seems to support our view that a JRC should not be required to have its own insurance policy. Supervisor Joe Betro has been supportive of our position when it comes to insurance for JRC, and has been investigating the matter. He has informed us that if the Board does not think it would be feasible to drop our insurance coverage, he has suggested making it up in terms of additional financial support.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Town

- Make *recreation coordinator* a full time position
- Improve drainage at Myron Urbanski Park
- Assist us in acquiring new playground equipment
- Consider raising parkland fees

Village

- Make *recreation coordinator* a full time position
- Find a location for a bathroom at Erie Street Park
- Assist us in acquiring new playground equipment
- Consider raising parkland fees

Thank you for taking the time to consider our recommendations. We appreciate efforts to include JRC staff and commissioners in meetings between the boards that are related to recreational matters. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully submitted,

Goshen Joint Parks and Recreation Commission