



Dear Selectmen:

The Chester Park and Rec Commission wishes to enlist the financial and collaborative support of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance in bringing needed enhancements to North Quarter Park features and facilities.

This appeal is made in response to the recent rejection of the Library Building Committee initiative to develop the North Quarter Park site, recreational areas, library, and community center in a holistic plan. With that initiative off the table, we feel that the need to upgrade park features and facilities must now be addressed as a separate and urgent piece.

In its present condition, NQP falls well short of meeting its potential as a destination for Chester residents of all ages simply to enjoy the recreational and natural features that this splendid property has to offer. Over decades, improvements have been long in coming and short on sufficiency. A visitor to NQP today would see that there is little to draw the interest of older kids and adults, and that parents of young kids can be forgiven the urge to drive out of our community to seek richly featured, newly constructed playgrounds elsewhere. This is not hyperbole; we know from reports that this is actually happening.

With this deficiency in mind, our commission has encouraged director Liz Netsch to advance for your consideration a list of desirable items – and estimated costs – for enhancing features and facilities at NQP. This list, which has been submitted separately, takes into account the following factors:

- Equipment items proposed are highly portable and can be re-positioned in the event that disruptive site work is undertaken in the future, either to revisit the LBC plan or merely to address the drainage patterns bringing eroded silt to Chester Creek from surrounding up-elevation areas.
- Features and facilities proposed target a range of age groups, from preschoolers to young adults, so that there is balance in meeting the recreational needs of the entire community.
- All existing equipment that remains viable will be cosmetically restored, assessed for safety, and maintained as required.

The enhancements proposed represent a capital expense that significantly exceeds the bounds of a typical Park & Recreation budget, so we are looking to the BOS and BOF to acknowledge this as an investment priority for the town and identify means to fund it as such. For its part, the commission is identifying ways to limit expenses within its usual operating budget so that resources can be allocated instead toward park enhancement. For example, the expense for high-level maintenance of non-critical field areas at the park and the elementary school has been eliminated from the current Park and Rec budget proposal.

It is our hope that we can work together with the BOS and BOF in the weeks ahead to evaluate the improvements proposed, build a budget and financing plan for executing them, and thereby bring new life to a valuable community asset.

Sincerely,

Members of the Chester Parks & Recreation Commission