

A Park Primer

The Department of Public Works (DPW) manages parks and open spaces in Brookline through its Division of Parks and Open Spaces. The Division is the primary contact for these resources and can be reached by calling 617-730-2088. For more information and contacts, go to www.townofbrooklinemass.com/Dpw/Parks.html

Structure.

There are six major focus areas within the Division of Parks and Open Spaces. Each area is assisted by commissions and committees made up of citizens appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Most of these committees can be contacted by calling the park and open space division. To view a list of current members go to www.town.brookline.ma.us/boards/.

Conservation

The conservation element is made up of a seven member Conservation Commission, a citizen committee, appointed by the Board of Selectmen, as well as a staff position known as the Conservation Administrator. The Commission and staff are responsible for enforcing state, local and federal environmental regulations to provide public safety and to protect the environment. They are responsible for administering the Wetlands Protection Act and the US Flood Insurance program for the town. This group also oversees the management of town conservation and sanctuaries, of which there are three—D. Blakely Hoar Sanctuary, Hall's Pond Sanctuary and Lost Pond Sanctuary.

Forestry

The goal of the forestry element is to preserve and maintain over 50,000 shade trees along public ways, parks, school grounds, cemeteries and all other public grounds. This element provides for the safety of all public ways and grounds through the removal of dead and dangerous limbs and trees and is responsible for replacing trees in areas where they have been removed. This component is managed by the Town Tree Warden and assisted by the Tree Planting Committee, which was one of the first of its kind in the nation. It works with the staff to select and protect the town's street trees.

Public Grounds

The public grounds element maintains 485 acres of public land for passive and active recreation in Brookline. These areas are comprised of 17 parks, 22 playgrounds, land around 12 public buildings, 4 parking areas, and 41 traffic islands. This element provides maintenance and repair of equipment and fixtures, maintenance of playing fields and snow removal. It also maintains 21 playing fields, 22 tot lots, 19 basketball courts and 37 tennis courts through weekly grass cutting, liter pick-up, carpentry and fence repair, field line marking. This element is also responsible for maintaining the Town's athletic facilities providing outdoor sports recreation.

This element is partly overseen by the Park and Recreation Commission. This committee is a policy making board responsible to the Town for providing year-round high quality indoor and outdoor recreation activities for the community. They are responsible for reviewing the condition of the parks, as well as capital improvement (CIP) funding and priorities. One of the Commission's chief responsibilities is to appoint a seven-member design review committee to include neighborhood representation for each CIP project.

School Grounds

The School grounds element provides for the maintenance and improvements to 32 acres of landscaped areas around 10 public schools. They are responsible for pruning trees and shrubs, raking leaves, removing litter, cutting grass, fertilizing and seeding. In the winter they remove snow from walks steps and drives on school grounds.

Skating Rink

This element provides for the maintenance operation of the Larz Anderson outdoor skating rink in coordination with the recreation department and Park and Recreation Commission.

Cemetery

The goals of this program are to maintain and improve the management of Brookline cemeteries. This area is assisted by a selectmen appointed committee, the Trustees of Walnut Hill Cemetery.

Management

In 2000 Brookline implemented a new way of managing its parks and open spaces called zone management. This management strategy assigns individual managers to specific areas of Brookline, making them responsible for the condition of the individual parks and open spaces within their zone. This change has ensured that there is a greater sense of ownership for the parks, and ultimately better management of these resources. There are 5 zones within Brookline and 5 zone managers. These consist of 3 General Park and Open Space Landscape Management Zones, 1 Athletic Field Zone and 1 Horticulture Zone. If you would like to learn more about the zone management and how it pertains to your favorite park call the Parks and Open Space Division at 617-730-2088.

The Open Space

PlanTo qualify for state funding for open space projects, communities in Massachusetts must have an up to date open space plan. The current open space plan for Brookline covers the time period from 2005 — 2010. The plan consists of a comprehensive environmental inventory and analysis of our environmental resources; a description of the open space system in Brookline; a needs analysis for open space in the community; goals, objectives and a five-year action plan. It is an excellent resource for understanding the challenges our open space system faces and includes a comprehensive listing of all open spaces in Brookline, complete with maps. The plan can be viewed online at www.townofbrooklinemass.com/conservation/OpenSpace2005.html. A copy can also be obtained by calling 617-730-2088.

Funding

Public Funding

Local tax revenue and federal and state grants provide public funding for parks and open space in Brookline. Funds are categorized separately under three distinct areas of the town budget. They are the annual operating budget for the Department of Public Works; the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The Putterham Meadows Golf Course is supported by a separated designated enterprise fund.

The Town operates on a fiscal year cycle starting on August first. The initial budgets are developed by staff members and the Town Administrator, and presented for public review in the winter (February). The budget is then reviewed by sub-committees of the Town Advisory Committee, which is made up of citizens appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Citizen input into the budgets can be offered at these sub-committee meetings. The final budgets for the upcoming fiscal year are then voted on by Town Meeting members at the Spring Town meeting in May of each year.

Annual Operating Budget: The parks and open space annual budget includes funds for the maintenance of parks, school grounds, cemeteries, forestry, sanctuaries and other open spaces. The Director of Public Works along with his division managers is responsible for initially developing this budget.

Capital Improvement Program: Recommendations for funding are generated by the Planning Department and other department heads in conjunction with the Town Administrator and Assistant Town Administrator. The CIP budget is a five-year plan that includes projected funding for town parks and playgrounds, conservation, tree planting and other open space projects.

Community Development Block Grants: These federal funds are available only to specially designated low-income areas of town. Historically these funds have generated significant dollars for projects such as Olmsted Park, Brookline Avenue and street tree plantings.

Other Funding

In addition to public funding, the Park and Open Space Division will sometimes apply for historic preservation grants from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for restoring its historic parks. They will also apply for funds from private foundations in partnership with local community groups. Many park friends groups also raise money for park improvements on a regular basis from local citizens. Some have even created endowments for the long-term support of their park.

Other Town Agencies and Citizen Committees Affecting Open Space

Several other Town agencies and citizen committees have an impact on open space and its related funding.

Board of Selectmen's Office:

The Town Administrator and Assistant Administrator work with the Board of Selectmen to oversee all town departments and develop the Town budget.

Department of Planning & Community Development:

In 1998 the Department was re-organized as four divisions—Planning, Preservation, Housing and Economic Development. The Department is involved in a number of issues that affect open space, including the Town's five-year comprehensive plan, all zoning regulations, the Capital Improvements Planning (CIP) budget, and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) which are federal funds administered by the Town.

Recreation Department:

The Recreation Department provides town-wide recreation activities and oversees the golf course and the golf course enterprise fund.

Board of Selectmen:

Brookline's five selectmen are elected for three-year terms. Among their many duties, they are responsible for appointing members to the citizen committees and commissions in Town. They are also responsible for reviewing the budget with the Advisory Committee and making recommendations to town meeting.

Advisory Committee:

The Advisory Committee is the Town's standing finance committee appointed by the town moderator. This Committee devises the town budget and reviews and makes recommendations on all warrant articles brought before town meeting. The Capital Subcommittee reviews all budgets relating to the divisions of the Department of Public Works.

Town Meeting:

Town meeting consists of 15 elected representatives from each of Brookline's 16 precincts. Town meeting convenes at least twice a year, in May and November, to debate proposed warrant articles and approve the budget for the Town. In advance of town meeting any citizen can present a warrant article for consideration. Call the Selectmen's Office for the warrant schedule.

Planning Board:

This five-member committee serves in an advisory capacity on town planning and community development issues.

Zoning Board of Appeals:

The Zoning Board of Appeals meets weekly and hears cases for special permits and variances from the town Zoning by-laws.

Preservation Commission:

The Preservation Commission is responsible for compliance of structures within the town's preservation districts and provides information and support and writes grants for historic buildings and public landscapes.

School Committee:

In addition to overseeing school curriculum, this committee works with architects and landscape architects for expansions associated with schools. Ongoing maintenance of the school grounds is under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Open Space Division."