

Chapter VII: Recreation

I. Introduction

The town of Bristol's Master Plan includes a vision for maintaining and improving community assets that support public safety, recreation, transportation and the general welfare. The Master Plan further seeks to assure that its infrastructure at the local level is continuously updated and upgraded to meet the current and future needs of the community.

In 2005 the Planning Board, as part of expanding the town's Master Plan, conducted a Recreation Survey to gather input from residents and users on local recreation facilities.

This section of the Master Plan:

- identifies recreation facilities located in the town of Bristol
- reports on survey results received on each facility
- makes recommendations for possible action based on survey results and Planning Board consideration

II. Town of Bristol Facilities

Town facilities include both town-owned and town-supported facilities. They consist of two beaches at Newfound Lake, Kelley Park and its associated facilities, the Tapply-Thompson Community Center and facilities located at the Newfound Memorial Middle School and the Newfound Regional High School. In addition, a number of federally-owned, state-owned and privately-owned facilities are located within the town. Recreational facilities of all kinds used by 50% or more of the respondents include both town beaches, Wellington State Park, Profile Falls and the Tapply-Thompson Community Center. Approximately 1,800 surveys were distributed in Town Reports; 43 surveys were returned. Many thanks to those who took the time to complete and return their survey.

Town Beaches

The Town is fortunate to have two beautiful beaches located at the southern end of Newfound Lake. The town beaches are one of the most popular recreational resources in Bristol, as reflected by the survey results included in the table below.

Facility	Used in the past year	Number who rated facility	Rated good or excellent	Rated as needs improvements
Cummings Beach	54% (23)	30	70% (21)	30% (9)
Avery-Crouse Beach	67% (29)	32	56% (18)	44% (14)

Please note:

- Usage includes all members of the respondent's immediate family
- The % figures in column 2 are based on the number of surveys returned
- The % figures in columns 4 & 5 are based on the number who rated the facility
- Respondents were given two choices in rating the facilities: "good or excellent" and "needs improvement"

There is a Town Beach Commission that is charged with regular maintenance of the town beaches and suggesting improvements as appropriate.

The town provides a budget for a salary account for part-time maintenance and patrols of the town beaches as well as for maintenance and minor improvement. Raking is done at both town beaches in the spring and once or twice a week during the season at Avery-Crouse and twice a season at Cummings. Both beaches are patrolled on a daily basis, weather permitting, in the summer. Cleaning of both beaches is also done on a daily basis.

Trash barrels and dumpsters have both been tried at the town beaches over the years. Unfortunately the trash receptacles were also used as public dumping stations. There has been no increase in trash at the beaches since the dumpsters were removed, resulting in a significant savings of money.

At one time there was a Master Plan for Cummings Beach, with a vision that included a bathhouse and swing sets.

Respondents to the survey made the following recommendations:

- More raking at the town beaches
- More sand on town beaches
- Better maintenance at the town beaches as they are often dirty and smelly
- Restrict dogs at town beaches and enforce
- Restrict boats from anchoring at end of Avery-Crouse beach and enforce
- Rubbish and debris needs to be picked up/cleaned up more often at all town facilities
- Bathrooms and trash receptacles at all town facilities

Some of the issues the Town Beach Commission is dealing with at the town beaches are:

Avery-Crouse Beach

- Repairing a retaining wall as road protection and adding a walking path alongside it
- Improvements to several of the existing culverts
- Creating a launch area for canoes and kayaks and parking
- Landscaping improvements

Cummings Beach

- Deterioration of rock wall and parking.

Recommendations:

Ways to enhance the town-owned beaches should be a top priority since the beaches are popular with residents and are a big part of what makes Bristol attractive to summer visitors. Parking at both locations is problematic and will only increase over the years. Creative solutions to acquiring additional parking need to be explored. The guidelines for acquiring a beach permit and the fee schedule may need to be revisited and revised. A master plan should be established for the town-owned beaches. This plan and the way to fund it should be incorporated in the town's overall Capital Improvements Plan.

Kelley Park

Kelley Park with its central location and multiple uses is one of Bristol's most significant recreational assets. It provides facilities for baseball, tennis and soccer and includes a playground area for younger children. It is adjacent to the Tapply-Thompson Community Center and the both the Elementary and Middle schools and is used by all of these. It also hosts the Summer Carnival, Old Home Day and the NH Marathon. The widespread use of this facility is reflected in the table below based on the 2005 Recreation survey.

Facility	Used in the past year	Number who rated facility	Rated good or excellent	Rated as needs improvements
Kelley Park fields	49% (21)	27	59% (16)	41% (11)
Kelley Park playground	30% (13)	18	67% (12)	33% (6)
Kelley Park tennis court	16% (7)	16	50% (8)	50% (8)

Please note:

- *Usage includes all members of the respondent's immediate family*
- *The % figures in column 2 are based on the number of surveys returned*
- *The % figures in columns 4 & 5 are based on the number who rated the facility*
- *Respondents were given two choices in rating the facilities: "good or excellent" and "needs improvement"*

The Kelley Park Commission is responsible for the maintenance of Kelley Park and for implementing the Kelley Park Master Plan.

Respondents to the survey made the following recommendations:

- Rubbish and debris needs to be picked up/cleaned up more often at all town facilities
- Bathrooms and trash receptacles at all town facilities
- Maintenance/upkeep of Kelley Park – tennis courts in particular as well as the outdoor basketball courts near the middle school. Resurface and install new nets.
- Allow use of restrooms at Kelley Park for all activities
- Repair softball/soccer field at Kelley Park
- Keep Kelley Park well maintained
- Kelley Park baseball/softball fields; catcher's mound behind home base needs to be addressed as it fills up with water when it rains.
- Face speakers towards business areas of town when music is involved rather than towards residences
- Improving fields at Middle School and Kelley Park
- Light ball fields at Kelley Park. Concession stand and bathrooms need to be put in between both fields and open to the public during games.
- Access to the restrooms at Kelley Park.
- Kelley Park needs bandstand, electrical hookups and water for program needs. Better entrance and exits.

Recommendations:

The Kelley Park Commission needs to keep their master plan updated and to work toward its implementation. They should work closely with the Capital Improvements Plan Committee to plan for and fund needed improvements. The main issues surrounding Kelley Park fields, playground and tennis courts according to the recreation survey largely involve the need for better maintenance of the existing facilities. Consideration needs to be given to providing access to restrooms and concession stand for all activities. New projects worthy of consideration for the master plan would include providing electrical hookups and water for activity needs, lighting the ball fields for evening play and building a bandstand.

School Facilities:

The outdoor basket ball court near the Middle School and outdoor facilities at the High School are owned and maintained by the Newfound School District. While fewer than 15% of the respondents to the survey reported using these facilities, they are nonetheless important to those who take advantage of them. The table below summarizes the survey results.

Facility	Used in the past year	Number who rated facility	Rated good or excellent	Rated as needs improvements
Outdoor Basketball Court (near Middle School)	14% (6)	13	23% (3)	77% (10)
High School Facilities (outdoor)	12% (5)	11	91% (10)	9% (1)

Please note:

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- The % figures in column 2 are based on the number of surveys returned
- The % figures in columns 4 & 5 are based on the number who rated the facility
- Respondents were given two choices in rating the facilities: "good or excellent" and "needs improvement"

Since maintenance of these facilities is the responsibility of the Newfound Area School District, the Town of Bristol has little control over these facilities.

There was one respondent suggestion relating to these facilities:

- improve the outdoor basketball courts at the middle school; more baskets.

Recommendations:

It appears that better maintenance of the basketball court, additional baskets, access to restrooms and a trash receptacle would be appropriate improvements to the outdoor basketball court near the Middle School. Survey results suggest that access to restrooms and a trash receptacle would be appropriate improvements to the High School's outdoor facilities.

Tapply-Thompson Community Center (TTCC)

The Community Center is one of Bristol’s most important recreational resources and has been for many years. While funded in part by the town of Bristol, TTCC also receives the support of other towns in the region and raises over \$40,000 per year in private support. They provide a number of organized activities for different age groups and have over 200 children registered their After School program. Their main facility (the old Methodist Church building owned by Bristol Federated Church) is located on North Main Street across from Kelley Park , and they have access to the school gyms and playing fields. TTCC is actively involved in a project to build an Intergenerational Center with the Bristol Area Senior Services and they are raising money for this project through the “Friends With a Vision”.

Survey results are summarized in the table below:

Facility	Used in the past year	Number who rated facility	Rated good or excellent	Rated as needs improvements
Tapply-Thompson Community Center (TTCC)	51% (22)	21	71% (15)	29% (6)

Please note:

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Respondents to the survey made the following recommendations/observations:

- Why is there a charge for everything offered? Everything used to be free. Exorbitant! Why? Yet it is tax-supported.
- Inadequate rest rooms
- Why isn’t the shooting range in the TTCC being used?

Recommendations:

Although run by a professional staff, TTCC maintains close community ties through an Advisory Council which meets weekly. The town should continue to support TTCC’s efforts to provide services to a wide range of individuals, but should leave its operation to those entrusted with it. The Intergenerational Center project is worthy of support.

III. Other Public Facilities

The town is fortunate to have a number of non town-owned facilities which contribute very significantly to the recreational opportunities available in Bristol. Particularly notable are Wellington State Park (beach/picnic area/hiking trails) and Profile falls, both of which were used by nearly two thirds of the respondents and rated “good or excellent” by over 85% of the users. Even though the other

facilities in this group were not as heavily used, most were rated very highly by those who rated them. In fact, these facilities were generally ranked much more highly than the town-owned facilities covered in Section II. While it would not be appropriate for the town's master plan to offer recommendations for non town-owned facilities, the survey results are provided here to provide some indication of their contribution to the overall recreation picture.

Facility	Used in the past year	Number who rated facility	Rated good or excellent	Rated as needs improvements
Ayers Island Picnic Area	5% (2)	3	67% (2)	33% (1)
Wellington State Park (beach/picnic area hiking trails)	65% (28)	28	96% (27)	4% (1)
Wellington State Park (boat launch)	33% (14)	17	94% (16)	6% (1)
Wells Field	21% (9)	12	58% (7)	42% (5)
Wells Field Sliding Area	26% (11)	15	80% (12)	20% (3)
Mooney-Clark Landing (boat launch on Pemi River)	26% (11)	14	71% (10)	29% (4)
Kayak/canoe launch on Pemi River (below Ayers Island Dam)	9% (4)	5	100% (5)	(0)
Slim Baker Lodge/Inspiration Point	42% (18)	15	93% (14)	7% (1)
Snowmobile Trail (any)	23% (10)	11	82% (9)	18% (2)
Hiking, X-country skiing or mtn. Bike trail (any)	28% (12)	11	91% (10)	9% (1)
Profile Falls	58% (25)	23	87% (20)	13% (3)

Please note:

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- The % figures in column 2 are based on the number of surveys returned
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IV. Commercial Facilities

Commercial facilities are for-profit enterprises which provide a source of recreation. They might include such things as ski areas, bowling alleys and water parks. Businesses which rent recreational equipment would also fall into this category. The recreation survey made no reference to this type of facility.

In the past, Bristol has had a small number of commercial recreational facilities. These would include an arcade (The Manor), a roller rink (on Lake Street) and sailboat rentals (Peter Brown's marina). Currently there is almost a total lack of commercial recreational facilities in Bristol, though one local business rents kayaks (Shackett's Store), one rents boats (West Shore Marine) and one rents bicycles (Alternative Wheels which is run by the School District). One of the reasons for the lack of commercial recreational facilities is the high cost of insurance required to run such a business. Nevertheless, it would seem that Bristol's tourist-oriented economy might provide an opportunity which is largely being overlooked. Bristol should welcome new commercial recreational facilities, as they potentially could help to attract more tourism to the local area.

V. Additional Facilities Recommendations

The recreation survey included a question asking what new facilities would be rated as having a high priority for development. The survey assumed that the planned multi-purpose path would be underway, so this was not included among the choices. Survey results are shown in the table below. It is interesting to note that the top two choices involve extensions to the trail system which will be created by the new path. These results would suggest that these trails should have a high priority despite all the difficulties encountered in bringing the current trail to fruition.

*Survey results of the facilities that should have the highest priority for development by the Town of Bristol in the next few years:
(Please note that % is based on the number of surveys received: 43)*

Facility	Number Indicating as Priority for Development
Extension of Multi-Purpose Trail to downtown area along Newfound River	60% (26)
Trail connecting Profile Falls Rec. Area with former RR station area off Central St.	58% (25)
Skateboard park	37% (16)
Picnic Area near downtown (off Central St. near former RR station)	37% (16)
Gazebo/Bandstand	30% (13)
Fishing pond on Newfound River	26% (11)
Outdoor ice skating rink	21% (9)
Danforth Brook fishing pond	14% (6)
Youth group camping area on Fowler River, having access to Newfound Lake	14% (6)
Shooting range	12% (5)
Indoor Pool	12% (5)
ATV Trail	9% (4)
Indoor tennis courts	2% (1)

The proposals receiving the next highest support were for a picnic area in near downtown in the old railroad station area and for a skate park, with 37% of the respondents rating these as a high priority. The picnic area proposal might be

included as part of a trail extension “master plan” or as part of the downtown revitalization effort. Grant money should be available for such a project, and it deserves serious consideration by the Capital Improvement Plan Committee. The skate park proposal has been discussed for several years and some fundraising efforts toward this goal have been made by the M.O.S.H. (Method of Skating Hard) group organized by TTCC. However, no specific proposal for location or design has been presented to the town. This is another project for which grant money may be available. For example, the National Park Service’s Land and Water Conservation Fund can provide a 50% match for outdoor recreational facilities which are open to the public. The strong public support for this project suggests it should be put on a faster track by the Capital Improvements Plan Committee.

The high level of support for a gazebo or bandstand was surprising considering the fact that there has been little discussion of such a proposal. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this would be an appropriate project to consider for inclusion in the Kelley Park master plan.

There was considerable support for restoration of the fishing pond on the Newfound River. Unfortunately, this depends on the ultimate disposition of the Freudenberg dam, which is largely beyond the control of the town.

The final project rated as high priority by 20% or more of the respondents is an outdoor ice rink. The trend toward warmer winters makes the practicality of an outdoor rink questionable. That being said, it has been suggested that a good place to locate an outdoor ice rink would be outside the fence line of Wells Fields. Berms could be built, into which water would be poured; we’d then have a skating rink next to where people sled. This ice rink would be very weather dependent. As the local prep schools have learned from experience, reliable ice requires a roof and refrigeration, making it a costly facility to build and maintain. It would be hard to justify the cost of such a project.

The survey did not specifically ask for opinions regarding the intergenerational center proposed by the Friends with a Vision group. Such a facility would no doubt be a useful addition to Bristol’s recreational facilities and is worthy of support.

VI. Additional Events

In addition to the facilities identified in this report, these are many of the events that contribute to the recreational opportunities in Bristol:

- Naturally Newfound Fair in May
- Mooseman Triathlon in June
- Bristol Historical Society Walking Tour or Downtown in June
- Golf Tournament in June
- 4th of July Parade and Fireworks in July
- Summer Carnival in July
- Annual Art Show in August
- Bristol Old Home Day in August
- TTCC Lobster-Chicken Dinner in August
- Penny Sale in August
- Newfound Rendezvous in September

- NH Marathon & 10 K Road Race/Walk in September/October
- NH Marathon Arts & Craft Fair in September/October
- Annual Apple Festival & Craft Fair in October
- Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony & Craft Fair in November

Each of these events makes a unique contribution to the recreational opportunities available in Bristol and deserves town support. In fact, several of these events already receive direct support from the Police and/or Fire Departments. The town should encourage the creation of new events and continue to be willing to consider town/sponsor partnerships which will be of mutual benefit.

VII. Summary

The final question on the survey asked for an overall rating of the recreational facilities available in Bristol. As shown in the table below, the results are clustered around a “Good” rating, which was selected by 42% of the respondents. This is consistent with the individual ratings where most facilities were rated “Good or Excellent” by 50% to 75% of those who rated them. These results suggest that while the existing facilities generally receive passing marks, there’s room for improvement in a number of areas. In addition, several proposals for new facilities seem to have considerable support and should be considered for future development. Since much of the town’s economy is based on tourism and recreation, the town might well be wise to give considerable attention to the specific recommendations made throughout this chapter. Some of the recommended improvements require modest funding and can be achieved through the annual budgeting process. Major improvements and additional facilities require long-term planning through inclusion in the Capital Improvements Program.

(Please note that % is based on the number of surveys received: 43)

Rated Excellent	Rated Very Good	Rated Good	Rated Fair	Rated Poor
9% (4)	26% (11)	42% (18)	21% (9)	2% (1)