

PARKS AND RECREATION

(Adopted 1973, Revised 1985, 1989, 1995, 2001)

The League of Women Voters of Westport recommends that the Town of Westport, through its appropriate agencies, be responsive to the active and passive recreational needs of the residents, and that the Town's recreational facilities and parks be well maintained.

The Town should develop a philosophy for parks which would include a vision of parkland conducive to the highest and best use of leisure for all town residents in parks, programs and facilities.

LWV supports a broad-based recreational program for all segments of the community--one that meets its changing needs. The Recreation Commission should establish criteria for present and future programs based on the facilities that are available or needed, the cost, the impact on the environment, and the impact on neighborhoods. There should be continual maintenance of recreational facilities with special emphasis on safety. The Town should maintain the existing percentages of approximately 85% user fees and 15% town taxes. Major adult programs should be self-supporting, and youth programs subsidized. Financial assistance should be available to both youth and adults who are in need. A brochure, listing facilities and programs, should be available to every resident.

Explanation:

The Town of Westport should have a long-range plan for developing, maintaining and upgrading all facilities under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, the Town should develop a detailed, comprehensive plan for each park, which would include a landscape design, use designations, and details for achieving goals. In all expansion and improvement projects the impact on the environment, and on neighboring properties, should be carefully weighed.

LWV Westport supports a **Parks and Recreation Commission** with a strong commitment to parks. To allow for greater emphasis on parks, we support a Commission of at least seven members with commissioners who reflect a strong interest in parks and passive recreation. A staff member with specific responsibility for parks should be present at all Commission meetings. To facilitate improved functioning of the Commission, we recommend staggered terms.

LWV Westport supports the creation of a **Parks Division** within the **Department of Parks and Recreation** to balance passive recreation needs with those of active recreation. A program for passive recreation should be developed. We support open communication between the Department and Commission and other town agencies, both public and private. Specifically we support increased cooperation between the Conservation Department and the Department of Parks and Recreation. The League also recommends that there be information about all parks and active and passive programs in the Parks and Recreation Program Guide currently mailed to all town residents.

PARKS. LWV Westport would like the Town to be proactive in acquisition of land for open space and parks. There is a need for more parks and neighborhood playgrounds in various sections of the Town. It is important to provide for both passive and active recreation, including nature trails, benches, safe places to walk and jog.

Maintenance should be a high priority with strict adherence to a maintenance schedule and committed budget support. It should include

- proactive tree and shrub care: pruning, feeding, spraying, and regular irrigation;
- prompt removal and replacement of trees and shrubs when necessary;
- regular path maintenance: adding or replenishing wood chips, pavement repair;
- appropriate erosion control.

We support a carry-in/carry-out policy for trash except in parks where concessions exist. To accomplish this effectively, we support active public education.

All parks, large and small, should be clearly identified with signs appropriate to a natural setting. Signs should also include regulations governing use of the park and the park's special features. Specimen trees and shrubs should be identified.

Unobtrusive portable toilets should be placed in appropriate locations.

Parking should be adequate for park's use. Permeable parking surfaces should be used wherever possible.

MAJOR PARKS

1. **Longshore Park.** We support the optimal use of Longshore Park as a community recreation center.
 - a. The Parks and Recreation Department maintenance area (including the building) should be relocated. There is a need for a more efficient parking pattern throughout the park.
 - b. The Town and the Parks and Recreation Department should monitor and support Longshore Inn and the Sailing School for the benefit of the Town and its residents: the golf course should only be available to Westport residents and their guests, and guests at the Inn. Proper identification should be required and the course should be well maintained. Short and long-term planning should provide for unobstructed views of the water, to the extent possible. Safety considerations, such as improved signs, should be a priority.
2. **Winslow Park** should remain passive open space for recreational uses without permanent structures. Consideration should be given to designating areas for specific purposes. Pathways and seating areas should be improved.
3. **Baron's South** should be retained as a park with adequate parking and amenities.
4. **Other parks.** Riverside Park should be upgraded and enhanced to incorporate the portion acquired in 1997. All other parks should be properly maintained and improved as needed.

5. **Potential parks.** The Town should consider converting existing land parcels into parks. The League supports the Town's acquiring suitable parcels when opportunities arise.

BEACHES should be cleaned, groomed and replenished with sand regularly. Garbage cans should be provided where needed and emptied as necessary; containers for recyclables should be available.

1. Picnic tables should be available to meet normal demands, including access for the disabled, and should be strategically placed for large outings. Adequate numbers of **benches** should be available, especially around playground and viewing areas.
2. **The Bathhouse** should be maintained and cleaned regularly. Adequate bathroom facilities should be available and portable toilets provided for that part of the season when rest rooms are closed. Operation and upkeep of the concession stand should be monitored.
3. Sufficient **lifeguard services** should be provided at beaches. Parking areas should be well maintained with handicapped parking available; parking rules should be observed and enforced.

TENNIS. We support having an adequate number of public tennis courts throughout the Town and providing proper maintenance of these courts. Lighting for the tennis courts at Longshore Park should be adequate and tennis practice backboards should be provided.

PLAYING FIELDS. The Town of Westport needs multi-purpose and baseball fields sufficient to meet current and future use. We also support additional fields, as approved by the P&Z in 1992.

Consideration should be given to the following:

1. Playing fields should be rotated regularly.
2. Playing should be controlled, especially in the wet (spring) season.
3. Playing fields should be available to all age groups.

ICE SKATING. An opportunity for ice skating is desirable for Westport residents. If an indoor-enclosed rink is proposed, it should be a private enterprise on commercially-zoned property.

BICYCLING. Bicycle lanes should be well-maintained for safety, and where possible, extended. Town roads should have white lines on the right side of the road, where feasible, as a demarcation between vehicular traffic and the pathway.

FUNDING: We do not support the current policy of funding the entire Parks and Recreation Department budget from program fees, beach stickers and hand passes.

Parks: Tax revenues should fund enhancement and maintenance of parks. The Town should seek additional funding from grants available through public and private sources. The role of Friends groups should include advocacy and fund raising for enhancement supplementary to Department responsibilities.

Recreation: Major adult programs, i.e., golf, tennis, boating and beach, should be self-supporting. Youth programs should be subsidized. Financial assistance should be available to both youth and adults who are in need.