



# Town of Trumbull Recreational Field Use

TOWN OF TRUMBULL, CT

December 19, 2016

Therese Keegan  
Financial/Accounting Controls Analyst



[tkeegan@trumbull-ct.gov](mailto:tkeegan@trumbull-ct.gov)

Phone: (203) 452-5072

December 19, 2016

Mrs. Elaine Hammers, Chairperson  
Town of Trumbull Board of Finance  
5866 Main Street  
Trumbull, CT. 06611

Dear Mrs. Hammers,

I respectfully submit the enclosed report entitled Town of Trumbull – Recreational Field Use.

The objectives of this audit were to:

- Determine whether the inventory of Trumbull fields was adequate to current and future need,
- Ensure existence of and compliance with a comprehensive Field Use Policy,
- Ensure Matrix Consulting Group recommendations related to Field Use had been appropriately and permanently addressed,
- Ensure user group and taxpayer funds for Fields were optimally utilized; that Fields were efficiently, equitably and consistently assigned and that Fields were economically and appropriately maintained.

I would like to thank Stuart McCarthy, Director of Parks and Recreation, for his assistance in the completion of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Keegan  
Financial/Accounting Controls Analyst

## **Table of Contents**

<b><u>Section</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Background	4
Scope & methodology	4
Current Field Use Policy/Process	4
Findings & Recommendations	6

## **Background**

In 2015 the Town contracted with the Matrix Consulting Group to review and report on the Town of Trumbull's Parks and Recreation policies, processes and procedures. On December 15, 2015 Matrix issued a widely encompassing report, entitled "Management Audit of the Town's Parks and Recreation Activities". The report provided:

- A profile of the Department of Parks and Recreation,
- A comparison of current processes to "best practices",
- An evaluation of staffing, structure and service levels,
- Twenty-five high level recommendations for improvement, including priority and estimated cost to implement. Subsequent chapters of the report provided guidance as to how to accomplish.

Three of the report's 25 recommendations specifically relate, at least in part, to Field Use:

1. The Department should develop a five-year comprehensive recreation strategic program plan to identify goals, objectives, performance measures and **facility needs** and priorities to guide the future direction of program and services offered by the Department.
2. The Recreation Division should develop a division-wide program and **administrative manual** to provide consistent guidance and direction to administrative and program personnel in the implementation of Department programs and services.
3. The Department should develop a cost recovery plan and policy that establishes a cost recovery model for **recreation programs and park amenities** while balancing the need to provide core services at minimal or no cost.

## **Scope and Methodology**

The objective of the Field Use recommendations was to ensure Trumbull's Parks and Recreation Department utilized Trumbull's fields efficiently, economically, consistently, equitably and in accordance with written policy.

This report includes current data to update these previously reported findings. Additionally, this report proposes a comprehensive Field Use Policy for review and potential implementation.

- Interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including the outgoing Recreation Director, the current Director of Parks and Recreation, and end users of the program.
- The current Field Use Policy was requested for review and testing.
- A comprehensive list of Trumbull's fields was requested along with detail of the scheduling methodology.
- Billing records were requested to determine whether charges were consistently applied and collected.
- Requested comprehensive program plans to identify adequacy of future facility requirements.

## **Current Field Use Policy/Process**

The Parks and Recreation Commission approves applications for use of Board of Education or Town of Trumbull property.

Field users are assigned to one of three Groups as summarized below:

Classification	Residency requirement	Group comprised of	Scheduling priority	Billing implications
Group 1	100%	Core groups Reciprocal scholastic arrangements	Highest	Lights & lining as needed Other services as requested
Group 2	100%	New groups Senior City (grandfathered at 75% residency) Group on probationary status for 2 years	Secondary	\$75 for field, \$75 for parking lot * May be billed for lights, lining, synthetic turf, other services as requested
Group 3	< 100%	All other	Lowest	\$150 for field, \$150 for parking lot * May be billed for lights, lining, synthetic turf, other services as requested

\* Although in policy, parking lot usage is not routinely billed

Each group must submit the following documentation prior to field scheduling:

- Use of Fields Form from the Recreation Department
- Copy of Insurance Certificate
- Copy of previous year's tax return (N/A for Group 3)
- Copy of final fixed schedule
- Names of coaches and proof of background checks
- Complete roster of all players

Scheduling will commence when the necessary paperwork is submitted. Scheduling will then proceed per the following "Guiding Principles":

- Proposals must be consistent with the rules and regulations adopted by the Parks Commission, the Board of Education and other Town bodies
- Proposals must be consistent with any applicable State rules and regulations
- Schedules would be set based on a priority formula including traditional season
- Preference would be granted to Town residents
- Preference would be granted to non-profit organizations
- Preference would be granted to "good tenants"
- Groups that have had a long standing positive relationship with the Town would be granted preference
- Priority would be given to groups that provided the greatest access and opportunity to Town residents to participate based on:
  - Affordability of programs
  - Number of current participants
  - Accessibility of the program to participants of varying abilities, disabilities, gender

Teams are then assigned to fields in the blocks of time generally required to satisfy the period of time required by the sport. The assignments are manually entered by field into excel worksheets designed in a calendar format.

At season's end, invoices are manually prepared. Invoices include dates of use, description (field use, lights), rate, and total due. Collectability rates are high, although not guaranteed, as most users plan to request fields again in the future.

## **Findings & Recommendations**

**Finding #1:** During the review I obtained 4 policy documents. Another, with pages missing, was posted on the Town website. It was not possible to determine which was most current, or which, if any, by which the Town wished to abide.

**Recommendation:** The Town Parks and Recreation Commission should formally adopt a comprehensive Field Use Policy and ensure distribution to all involved. The Town should include the document on the Department's website, and also include applicable forms and instructions for those requesting Field Use.

Field users require direction and consistent application of rules. It is recommended that the Policy include such issues as:

- How fields and amenities are to be assigned by the Parks & Recreation Department,
- Who has the authority to build, or to perform repairs or maintenance on any structure situated on Town/BOE owned property,
- Who has the authority to perform field maintenance on Town/BOE owned property,
- Who is responsible for damage to Town/BOE structures or fields,
- Specific application process information for Field requestors.

### **Management Response:**

The Parks and Recreation Commission as outlined in the Town Charter has authority for the care management and control these facilities. The Parks and Recreation Commission is in process of updating the Field Use Policy.

(note: the abbreviated policy posted on line has been removed pending the revised policy)

**Finding #2:** Although recommended in the Matrix Consulting audit, the Department had not developed a division-wide program and **administrative manual** to provide consistent guidance and direction to administrative and program personnel in the implementation of Department programs and services.

**Recommendation: The administrative manual recommended by Matrix** differs from the Policy document of Finding #1 as it represents a "how to" guide for administrative and program personnel. Current "Guiding Principles" do not provide clear and consistent administrative direction, including such issues as how to equitably schedule **within-season, with-in Group**.

### **Management Response:**

The Office Manager/Business Manager recommended in the Matrix report to be added to the staff was hired effective 12/15/16. The development of an administrative manual will be undertaken during 2017

**Finding #3:** Although recommended in the Matrix Consulting audit, a five-year comprehensive recreation strategic program plan identifying goals, objectives, performance measures and **facility needs and priorities** had not been completed.

To test whether fields were of sufficient number and that they were optimally assigned, the inventory of recreational fields, including field attributes (i.e. lighting, ideal/secondary use, turf, quality) was

requested. At the time of the request, such a complete inventory was not available; however, one has since been prepared.

**Recommendation:** With a 5 year strategic plan in mind, all Town and BOE assets (fields) should be considered for use. If a field does not meet the needs of any sports program, the Department should consider the cost and effort required to bring it up to a standard which would allow it to be assigned to teams, should the plan determine the need.

Using a five-year strategic plan, the Commission might wish to determine and set aside a portion of fee revenue to cover future needs, such as turf replacement. Then true Field costs will be borne equitably by Field users, rather than by taxpayers, if such is a goal of the Commission.

**Management Response:**

The Parks and Recreation Department has made substantial progress toward the numerous recommendations of the Matrix report. Initiation of a 5 year capital plan requires a significant amount of resources that have not been available during the period of staff reorganization. As resources are available the Department and Commission will consider initiating this recommendation.

**Finding #4:** The Matrix Consulting audit recommended the development of a Cost Recovery Plan establishing a model for **recreation programs and park amenities**, balancing the need to provide core services at minimal or no cost.

**Recommendation:**

The Department completed a Recreation Program Cost Recovery Policy documenting the desired percentage of direct cost recovery the Department/Commission wished to attain by current program category.

The Department should prepare and include an analysis of anticipated fees and associated revenue required by current and future financial requirements of park amenities, as would be available from Finding #2.

**Management Response:**

Program Cost Recovery Policy as recommended by Matrix was developed and approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission in December 2015. As part of the revision of the Field Use Policy the Parks and Recreation Commission may consider developing a similar plan for facility use.

**Finding #5:** Field scheduling is manual and largely historically based. Current scheduling in Excel:

- is time consuming and subject to error
- is subject to personal bias
- is difficult to check for completeness, duplication, omission
- does not track changes
- requires subsequent manual billing, and tracking to collection
- does not lend itself to meaningful reporting
- does not lend itself to planning
- occurs without differentiation between practice and game field requirements
- occurs without regard to a potential variety of maintenance requirements

**Recommendation:** The Recreation Department is currently in possession of scheduling software. Rec Trac has a Facilities Scheduling module which should be implemented to achieve optimal scheduling.

Secondarily, software reports may be able to reduce field maintenance costs. Not all fields require the same degree of maintenance at all times. The Town currently contracts with Tarantino Landscapes to perform field maintenance. Costs are as follows:

FY ended	Amount
6/17 - 4 mo.	76,300
6/30/2016	240,220
6/30/2015	239,644
6/30/2014	257,164

It is further recommended that the current contract, set to expire in June 2017, be extended for six months, and that future bidding run for the calendar year so work is not potentially interrupted during the busy, summer Parks and Recreation season.

**Management Response:**

The Department is currently evaluating the RecTrac facilities module.

Agreed that any future field maintenance agreement should expire at the end of the calendar year to avoid potential operational issues during the playing season.

**Finding #6:** The Town will currently honor field use requests for Christian Heritage School and Saint Joseph’s High School. In turn, Christian Heritage offers a gym for a summer basketball camp. The Town has not requested anything to date from Saint Joseph’s. Written reciprocal agreements do not currently exist.

These schools benefit financially from these arrangements via student tuition. Additionally, the schools have been categorized as Group 1 for scheduling priority even though the key Group 1 requirement is that all participants are Trumbull residents. Those in Group 1 do not pay fees and they take scheduling priority over Group 2 teams which are 100% comprised of Trumbull residents.

**Recommendation:** Reciprocal agreements should be documented and acknowledged by both parties. As with any other Field users, those requesting reciprocal arrangements from the Town should be tested for residency and Grouped accordingly with regard to scheduling priority and fees. These agreements should be viewed as an exchange of equal value, or costs fall to Trumbull taxpayers.

**Management Response:**

The field use status of CHS and SJHS are reflected in the minutes of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Private school use is listed as a specific category recognizing that the participants may not be residents. It is anticipated that the Parks and Recreation Commission will address this issue in the policy review. Agreed that future agreements should be documented.