

**Larz Anderson Trust
Recreation & Parks Proposal
Provided by Linda Rice Collins**

The Recreation and Parks Commission began to investigate the possibility of a complete renovation of Reynolds Playground six years ago. Over the past eight years we have invested in engineering studies, Conservation Commission approvals, working with a sports facility consultant, and working with a professional in the business of building outdoor rinks.

We have put together all of that information and have a vision of how that property might be transformed into a usable facility. Marblehead acquired Reynolds over the years in three separate parcels, and they were put together to create the park that we now have.

The overall property contains the Dog Park, lighted playing fields, and an outdoor hockey rink and playing surface.

As we all know the field surface has little or no integrity, and it is actually a relatively dangerous surface for athletics. We can no longer host competitive soccer or lacrosse practices or games. It is permitted strictly for limited practice fields and teams try to find the best area they can. The portion of the playground that is used for the softball field, particularly men's softball, is hazardous in places to say the least. It has been this way for at least the past 40 years. It has been a third-tier property and has not been managed to any significant degree since the late-1970s.

The rink was built and donated to the Town of Marblehead by a group of private citizens interested in ice for hockey, street hockey, and other uses. It was constructed with private funds. The boards were donated by the University of Massachusetts, and the arrangement with the Town was that some amount of money be put in escrow annually for future repairs as might be needed.

It was thoroughly discussed at the time that the Town of Marblehead did not have financial resources to maintain the facility after the donation.

Money was to be contributed on a regular basis to this account through fundraising activities by Marblehead Youth Hockey and/or The Friends of Marblehead Hockey and other Town hockey groups with the Bud Cup, etc. That lasted for a few years and stopped. There are no funds for repairs. The rink will not hold water. We can no longer flood it. The integrity of the surface is gone. The rink needs to be replaced. It will come to a point in the near future when it will probably have to be taken down as it continues to degrade.

We were informed four or five years ago that the Town of Marblehead would be receiving this donation from the estate of Larz Anderson. We had discussions internally as a Commission on how we could best see that money used for the residents of Marblehead. We have always had our thoughts guided by the language in the bequest. The document states that it be used with an emphasis for winter sports. It also states that the money is not restricted to winter sports and can be used for something else as deemed fit by the Board of Selectmen and the Recreation and Park Commission.

I think most of us realized that there was no realistic place in Town to house an indoor rink and that a large outdoor rink was questionable given the residential nature of our neighborhoods. Unfortunately, Marblehead does not have any land that is near commercial or industrial spaces where a rink would be a natural fit. Any location in Marblehead would be in a small residential neighborhood. We also realize that we are not in a position to go into the rink management business at any kind of larger facility. We simply do not have the resources, either financial or manpower.

We have developed a proposal that would use the \$2.2 million at Reynolds Playground and create something that would be true to honoring Mr. Anderson's wishes regarding winter sports and at the same time improve the facility for over 3,500 users annually. In addition, it will provide a safe and improved facility for use by the Marblehead Community Charter Public School.

Our proposal begins with \$200,000 being placed in an escrow account for future repairs and maintenance to the property as they might be needed.

Rink

- An outdoor refrigerated ice surface that would provide ice from roughly mid-November to mid-March.
- The site will not accommodate a 200' x 85' NHL rink. We do not believe we can fit a full-size rink on the property without giving up too much area for a support/restroom facility.
- We are looking at a size closer to 180' which is the size that is currently there.
- We have worked with professionals in the area of rink construction who have indicated to us that in hockey instruction, a smaller sheet may be more desirable for teaching younger players. We believe that we can have an excellent seasonal ice surface.
- There will be a new building that will have both men's and women's restrooms, mechanical room, and possibly a warming area if size permits.
- There will be no roof. We anticipate a problem with neighbors because of the impact a roof would have. It is a fairly sizable structure and we don't think the benefit is worth the investment. We have agreed, however, to engineer the site to be able to accommodate a roof, if in the future this might be pursued.
- The Recreation and Park Department will commit to dedicating an employee to the facility daily during seasonal operation.
- We will provide a new sheet of ice daily and twice on Saturday, Sunday, and school vacation.
- We will not be looking to focus on this as being revenue driven to finance daily operations.
- Recreation programming will generate revenue for the Town.
- We will make ice time available to Marblehead Youth Hockey.
- We envision this rink to be available to the public from toddlers to senior citizens for free skating.
- All ice time will be scheduled through the Marblehead Recreation and Parks Department as we do for all other playing surfaces in town.
- During spring, summer, and early fall the rink will also serve as a street hockey venue and can be made available to other youth sports as programmable practice space.

Playing fields

- Our plan calls for new playing fields. There will be two practice fields side-by-side that would have one orientation during the spring season and another orientation during the fall season.
- In other words, the fields would go from the rink to the dog park in one season and go from Meadow Lane towards the Charter School in the other.
- The area could be lined for one large regulation soccer field with significant surrounds or two smaller fields.
- The softball field will be rebuilt with a new backstop, benches, and laser-graded infield. It will be sized to accommodate both a 60 foot and 70-foot infield so that it could be used by pony league baseball. The Town has never had a 70-foot diamond.
- New lighting would be installed throughout.

Site Preparation Plans

- We have done engineering studies and have determined what we have for soil profiles by doing borings throughout the field. There are different construction methods that we would employ to mitigate soil moisture and water from rain events.
- The engineering plan calls for a retention cistern below the field to collect rainwater and release it slowly into the Town system.
- We have Conservation Commission permitting in place.
- We have worked with a sports field consultant to get preliminary ideas on the overall development of the property including the rink.

Snow Making

- If it was determined there was enough interest, we could invest a modest sum of money in snow making to make snow for cross country skiing and snowshoeing as weather might permit.
- We could create paths around and across the property for winter recreational activities.

Reynolds Dog Park

- The use at the Dog Park is year-round. It has surprised all of us at the intensity of use that this facility gets. It was all privately funded in the beginning and we now assist with some of the ongoing costs and repairs.
- There is a very active group that is involved in working with us on the Dog Park and it has been that way from the beginning.
- We would like to include them in this process of improving the entire property. We have agreed to provide a portion of the renovation funds (up to \$25,000) to upgrade the existing Dog Park and provide additional improvements to the area between the Dog Park and Lime Street Extension.

We feel that this plan will represent the hockey community, the recreational ice-skating community, soccer, lacrosse, football, both girl's and men's softball, and baseball, along with the dog owners in Town and MCCPS.

So many people could be impacted by an overall improvement to this property, and we believe that we will be in keeping with the wishes of Mr. Anderson. In a discussion three years ago with the attorney and trustee of the Anderson Trust, the above plan was presented and received a positive response. Our feeling is that this would serve the entire community and respect Mr.

Anderson's wishes. We look forward to working with all of the groups involved to create a First Class facility that will benefit all of the residents in the Town of Marblehead.