



# GROTON

## PARKS & RECREATION

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## GPR01.01 - Citizen Input Policy

Groton Parks and Recreation feels that it is essential for the good of the Department to solicit resident input on many of its decisions and actions. The Department may utilize the following methods to obtain resident input.

- a. Public Comment opportunities at meetings of the Parks and Recreation Commission and those various boards and task forces.
- b. Staff may conduct focus group meetings from time to time with specific user groups in order to gain input on a variety of issues. Focus groups are usually comprised of a small group of users who have an interest in specific programs or facilities.
- c. Staff may conduct surveys in order to gain their input on a variety of issues.
- d. Residents are encouraged to submit their ideas and suggestions for improving the programs and services offered to the community. Staff should initiate feedback by conducting regular program evaluations to measure participant satisfaction levels and to improve upon the services provided.

## GPR01.02 - Cooperation with Community Organizations Policy

To promote and enhance efficient use of resources and effective delivery of park, facility and recreation services, Groton Parks and Recreation shall strive to develop cooperative inter-agency agreements with other public and private entities, and especially intergovernmental cooperation agreements with local, state, and federal governmental agencies including the following:

- a. Relationships with Particular Groups; Liaisons. Groton Parks and Recreation desires to maintain its valuable relationships with various sports and civic groups. Staff members or Commissioners may be appointed to serve as liaisons between the Department and some of these organizations.
- b. Groton Public Schools. Groton Parks and Recreation encourages cooperation between the Department and Groton Public Schools in the development and use of facilities and equipment, when such cooperation results in efficient and effective programming that is beneficial to Groton Parks and Recreation, Groton Public Schools, and residents.

### **Development and Management of Land & Facilities**

The Department strives to work with other organizations and governmental entities including local municipalities and schools in the development and use of land and facilities when practical and when such cooperation produces mutually beneficial results such as increased efficiencies and/or increased recreational opportunities for residents. Department staff should be aware of and participate, when appropriate, in governmental planning efforts for the community.

### **Lending of Equipment**

Lending and borrowing of equipment are common among governmental entities such as departments, municipalities, and schools. The Director is empowered to both loan and borrow equipment when determined necessary. The Director is granted the authority to waive or establish a fair and equitable rental rate on specialized pieces of equipment.

## GPR01.03 - Community Organizations Use of Department Property

Groton Parks and Recreation has long worked in cooperation with community organizations to enhance the recreational and educational opportunities available to Groton residents. The Department is very appreciative of the work of these organizations and desires to nurture its relationships, and to foster new and expanded relationships in its continuing efforts to best serve its constituents. The Department considers partnering organization's mission, size, the length of time they have provided service, target audience and other factors when deciding to make its property, facilities, and equipment available.

For times when the Department's property, facilities, and equipment can be used for community benefit by these organizations, the Department clearly identifies the arrangements since both sides need to agree and understand the scope.

- The Department identifies property, facilities, and equipment that the Organization may use, and the term during which it may use them.
- The Department identifies services and assistance that it can offer the Organization in support of the work it undertakes.
- The services and programs that the Organization will offer its constituents are clearly identified.
- The Department sets any fees and other financial considerations of the affiliation.
- The Department sets basic policies regarding the use of its property.
- Standard waiver, indemnification, and insurance provisions apply.

## GPR01.04 - Volunteers

The Department recognizes the need for volunteers in order to successfully implement programs and services. Whenever possible, volunteers are utilized to maximize community involvement and to enhance the overall quality of parks, programs, and facilities.

For the safety of participants and facility visitors, any volunteer who will directly supervising youth without the presence of a Department staff member must pass a criminal background check on an annual basis. Other volunteer positions may also be required to complete a background check depending on the type of services and/or the location of services to be provided. Any applicant who refuses to sign a release to complete the background check will not be considered eligible for volunteer work with the Department.

## GPR01.05 - Public Information Policy

The Department has a responsibility and a commitment to disseminate information regarding agency operations, programs and events, and parks and facilities in a prompt, fair and accurate manner to the community and the media. In addition, it is the Department's responsibility to provide a timely, fair, and accurate response to issues and inquiries raised by residents and the media.

This Policy is founded on the following principles:

- a. **Transparency.** The Department is committed to approaching disclosure of information in a proactive, open, honest, and fair manner. Information concerning the Department's operational and institutional activities will be made available to the public in order to foster a relationship of mutual trust, cooperation, and respect.
- b. **Accountability.** As a governmental institution entrusted with public resources, the Department is accountable to its taxpayers whose best interest is at the center of all decision-making.
- c. **Law-Abiding.** The Department and employees will abide by all local, state, and federal laws governing the release of public information, including the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- d. **Public Engagement.** Public engagement enhances the Department's effectiveness and improves the quality of its decisions. The Department will solicit public input and feedback on an on-going basis and as part of planning and decision-making processes when appropriate.

### **Responsibility & Methods**

The Director oversees the process of dissemination of information to the public, including the media and elected officials. The Department uses a variety of communication and marketing tools, including but not limited to seasonal program guides, Department web site, social media, press releases, flyers, banners, newspaper advertising, and electronic newsletters. Media inquiries are routed to the appropriate staff member with responsibility to respond.

Responses to public FOIA requests will managed by the Director, following all applicable laws as well as established Department policies and procedures.

## GPR01.06 - Donation Requests

### **Donations Requests**

Groton Parks and Recreation recognizes that from time to time contributions will be requested of the Department for goods and services. It is the Department's intention to provide assistance to those organizations that request it in the form of a donation for a charity or event in a timely and fair manner when possible. The donation(s) to organizations are typically limited to offering free services, rather than donations of money or hard goods.

Not for profit groups in the Groton area can request donations of items for charity auction. All requests must be made in writing and the determination of the type/value of the donation shall be at the discretion of the Director or Director's appointee. The request must be made in advance, and is limited to one donation per organization, per year.

Donations may include but are not limited to:

- Complimentary program registration
- Complimentary Golf (limit 4 daily golf passes with cart included)

Conditions:

All passes and certificates will have an expiration date and must be redeemed by that date. All passes and certificates are non-refundable.

## **GPR02.01 - Needs Assessment**

In order to facilitate the involvement and input of residents and guests in the long range planning and decision-making process affecting the delivery of park, facility and recreation services, Groton Parks and Recreation will conduct comprehensive attitude and interest surveys and assessments. The results of the needs assessments will be shared with the public.

## **GPR02.02 - Park Master Plans Policy**

All land controlled by the Department shall serve an intended park and recreation purpose which provides public benefit. The type of use may vary from a highly developed parcel which provides for active, programmed recreation and park services to one which is undeveloped and utilized as a passive open space site. Prior to committing to the development of a previously undeveloped open space, or redeveloping a park which significantly modifies its previous use and purpose, Groton Parks and Recreation will review and approve a Park Master Plan. This plan will govern the park site's development and will protect and preserve desirable qualities of the resource base.

Each Park Master Plan shall consist of a concept drawing which shows the spatial arrangements of various components of the plan, such as playground areas, athletic fields, buildings, pathways, landscape, etc. Prior to adopting a park Master Plan, staff will hold a public meeting, if applicable, to gather input from the community and surrounding neighborhood. Input gathered from these meetings, along with recommendations and standards included in community and Department planning documents will be used by staff to develop a preliminary draft with cost estimates and will be presented to the Town Council for final approval. Groton Parks and Recreation shall endeavor to keep the master plan current and shall undertake a thorough review of the master plan at least as often as every 10 years.

## **GPR03.01 - Budget Philosophy**

The Department strives to maintain the most efficient and effective use of resources provided by tax payers and users of the Department's facilities and services. Fee supported budgets shall adhere to a fund balance policy. Whenever possible, unnecessary programs will not be offered or will be eliminated. Services and programs will be offered at the most reasonable cost and fees.

## GPR03.02 - Fund Balance for Fee-Based Budgets

This policy is established to provide financial stability, cash flow for operations, and the assurance that the Department will be able to respond to emergencies with fiscal strength. It is the Department's philosophy to support long-term financial strategies, where fiscal sustainability is its first priority. It is essential to maintain adequate levels of fund balance to mitigate current and future risks (e.g., revenue shortfalls and unanticipated expenditures) and to ensure stable provision of services.

### **Minimum Fund Balances**

The Department is committed to the goal of holding fund balances stable and attaining a minimum balance of 25% for operating funds. Operating funds include: The Recreation and Senior Activities Fund and the Shennecossett Golf Course. If the overall fund balance is over 25%, a plan lasting no more than three years will decrease fund balance to 25% with budgetary adjustments to revenues and expenditures.

## GPR03.03 - Revenue Policy

The Department uses multiple sources of revenue to supplement the General Fund support received, because it is not financially feasible or healthy to rely solely on one source of revenue. Some of these sources may include fees and charges, rentals, sponsorships and donations, and program revenues. The Department will evaluate all new sources of revenue before acceptance to prevent compromising the mission of Department. The Department is always vigilant about finding new sources of revenue to improve the revenue mix of the Department.

The following revenues sources are based on the Government Finance Officers classifications that are used in the Department's annual financial audit as well as annual budget.

- a. Taxes. The Department receives General Fund support funded primarily from local property taxes.
- b. Fees and Charges. Groton Parks and Recreation charges fees for facility usage and program participation. The Department will not charge fees to residents for entrance into parks, playgrounds, trails, open spaces, or informal use of outdoor athletic facilities. Fees and charges are determined based on the Department's Fee Policy.
- c. Rental Income. The Department receives rental income for facility usage including exclusive private use and vendor rights.
- d. Sponsorship and Donations. The Department pursues a variety of sponsorships and donations to help fund its recreation programs and other special events. This is done to reduce the burden on tax payers and participants for programs and events.

## GPR03.04 - Sponsorship Policy

In an effort to utilize and maximize the community's resources, it is in the best interest of the Department to create and enhance relationship-based sponsorships. This may be accomplished by providing local, regional, and national commercial businesses and non-profit groups a method for becoming involved with the many opportunities provided by the Department. The Department delivers quality, life-enriching activities to the broadest base of the community. This translates into exceptional visibility for sponsors and supporters. The goal of this policy is to create relationships and partnerships with sponsors for the financial benefit of the Department.

### **Sponsorships vs. Donations**

There is an important difference between a sponsorship and a donation. In general, a sponsorship is cash, products, or services offered by a sponsor with the clear expectation that an obligation is created. The Department will be obliged to return something of value to the sponsor. The value is typically public recognition and publicity or advertising highlighting the contribution of the sponsor and/or the sponsor's name, logo, message, products or services. The sponsor usually has clear marketing objectives that it is trying

to achieve. The arrangement is typically consummated by a letter of agreement or contractual arrangement that details the particulars of the exchange.

In contrast, a donation comes with no restrictions on how the money or in-kind resources are used. Because donations or gifts are given without restrictions or expected benefits for the donor, a policy is generally not needed. Notably, donations are eligible for a governmental donation receipt for tax deduction purposes. Also notably, the Department reserves the right to refuse any donation, whether because of restrictions or expectations related to it or for other sound reasons.

This Policy specifically addresses sponsorships, the terms of sponsorship agreements, and the benefits provided to the Department in return for the resources provided by the sponsors.

### **Guidelines for Acceptable Sponsorships**

Sponsors should be businesses, non-profit groups, or individuals that promote mutually beneficial relationships for the Department. All potentially sponsored properties (facilities, events or programs) should be reviewed in terms of creating synergistic working relationships with regards to benefits, community contributions, knowledge, and political sensitivity. All sponsored properties should promote the Department's Mission, Vision and Values.

The first major criterion for the Department when determining whether to accept a sponsorship is the appropriate relationship of a sponsorship to the Department's Mission, Vision and Values outlined above. That determination of appropriateness is based in large part on objective analysis, but ultimately is vested in the sound exercise of the Department's discretion, considering all of the many factors that may be involved. The following questions are the major guiding components of this policy and will be addressed prior to soliciting potential sponsors:

- Is the sponsorship related to the purpose of the facility or programs and does it help promote the Department's Mission, Vision and Values?
- Will the sponsorship help generate more revenue and/or less cost per participant than the Department can provide without it?
- What are the real costs, including staff time, to the Department in accepting the sponsorship and the cash, products, and services resources that come with the sponsorship?

Some potential sponsorships are inappropriate and will not be considered by the Department. A partial list of categories of such sponsorships includes:

- Sponsorships that involve or promote environmental, work, or other practices that violate or threaten international, federal, state or local law or that promote or encourage drugs, pornography, alcohol, tobacco, or firearms.
- Sponsorships that duplicate, mimic, or create confusion regarding the nature or identity of any program of the Department.
- Sponsorships that may exploit participants or staff members of the Department.
- Sponsorships that offer benefits or opportunities that may violate laws or Department policies.

### **Non-Commercial Forums Prohibited**

When entering into a sponsorship that includes commercial advertising on behalf of the sponsor, Groton Parks and Recreation intends to create only a specifically limited forum for that advertising. Also in furtherance of this strict policy, the Department states the following standards underlying this policy:

- The Department desires to avoid the delivery and exposure of all non-commercial messages to the "captive" audiences at Department events;
- The Department seeks to avoid all entanglement with constitutional questions related to "viewpoint-related" decisions and with the danger that the Department will be associated with any non-commercial messages;

- The Department desires to maximize income by allowing commercial advertising when appropriate, and seeks to avoid dissuading potential sponsors and the residents and others who participate in its programs by allowing any non-commercial messages, some of which could be inappropriate or offensive to the public;
- The Department desires to maintain a position of neutrality on political and religious issues; and
- The Department seeks to avoid the danger of “excessive entanglement” with any religion or political organization or point of view.

### GPR03.05 – Use of Contractors

It is in the best interest of the Department to seek the advice of expert consultants when the Department determines it is appropriate and shall use the advice of those consultants as an aid for decision-making. Additionally contractors are also used to offer programs and or provide services that wouldn't be possible using staff resources alone. Contractors shall conform to all Town policies and requirements.

### GPR04.01 - Memorial Program

The Memorial Tree/Bench Program is designed to help beautify the Department's parks and allow community members to honor a special person or occasion. Persons wishing to commemorate a special event, such as a wedding anniversary, birth date, or memorial to a loved one or relative may do so by having a tree planted or bench installed in any of the Department's parks.

1. A one-time donation will allow the individual to adopt a tree or bench that has been planted in one of the Department's parks.
2. Each adopted tree or bench an engraved plaque will be displayed near the base of the tree or bench with the individual's name.
3. Department staff will take responsibility to maintain the tree and bench and will guarantee the replacement of the item. However, Groton Parks and Recreation reserves the right to relocate the tree or bench at their discretion due to future changes in the design of the park.

### GPR04.02 – Public Education and Enforcement of Park & Facility Rules

The effective management of Department parks and facilities is a complex responsibility, due in part to the number and diversity of visitors and recreational opportunities present at these public spaces. While members of the Groton Police Department are authorized to execute law enforcement functions, all Department employees have an obligation to support these efforts by educating and informing the public of laws, rules, regulations, and policies, enforcing Department rules and regulations, and deterring unlawful activities.

The following efforts increase the public's compliance with laws, rules, regulations, and policies and should be utilized by staff, when appropriate:

- a. Staff presence allows for the observation of activities, grounds, and facilities, while making employees more readily available to visitors.
- b. Patron interaction allows employees to inform and educate the public as to rules, as well as reasons for the rules.
- c. Signage serves to make visitors aware of site rules and regulations.
- d. Proper maintenance and cleanliness increases the likelihood that visitors will hold a greater appreciation for parks and facilities and will exercise a higher degree of care and respect for the rules.

- e. Crime prevention through environmental design prevents negative behavior through physical design of parks and facilities incorporating four principles: natural access control, natural surveillance, territoriality, and maintenance.

## GPR05.01 - Definitions

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Definition of User Policy is to categorize guests of the Department and assist with setting their fees and charges for Department programs, services, memberships and facility use.

### **Definition of Users**

- a. Residents. Residents are defined as individuals or organizations that reside within Town of Groton boundaries.
- b. Nonresidents. Nonresidents are defined as individuals or organizations who do not reside within Town of Groton boundaries.
- c. Seniors are defined as persons aged 55 and older.
- d. Non-Profit Organizations. Non-Profit Organizations are defined as nonprofit groups, as stated by the State of Connecticut, and are dedicated to serving Department residents.

## GPR05.02 - Fees and Charges Policy

Groton Parks and Recreation uses multiple sources of revenue to supplement the revenue it receives from the General Fund. A primary source of revenue is fees and charges collected from participants of the Department. It is not financially feasible or healthy to rely solely on one source of revenue to support a diversified quality parks and recreation program. The Department will evaluate its Pricing Policy regularly to balance the needs of revenue with keeping programs and services available and affordable.

Groton Parks and Recreation offers its programs and facilities not only to its residents but also to nonresidents. Because non-residents do not pay property taxes in Groton, to support the Department's programs and facilities, the Department must adjust its fees for non-residents so that they provide financial support to the Department similar to the support provided by residents.

## GPR05.03 – Financial Assistance

Groton Parks and Recreation recognizes that families and individuals residing within Groton may experience economic hardships. In keeping with the Department's mission, Groton Parks and Recreation offers financial aid discounts for Recreation Division programs to families that qualify so they may enjoy the many benefits of parks and recreation. Residents need to qualify annually to receive the discounts.

## GPR05.04 - Refunds

### **Satisfaction Guarantee**

Groton Parks and Recreation is committed to providing the highest quality service to our customers. If you are not fully satisfied with any of our services or classes, we want to hear from you. Please give us the opportunity to resolve your issue.

### **Refunds**

- No refunds after the 2nd meeting of a program
- A \$15 administrative fee is charged for any money returned
- Administrative fees are waived if a class is canceled or when a refund is placed on account
- No refunds within 2 weeks of start date for each camp week.



- We do not issue refunds for a child who is suspended or dismissed from continuing attendance due to behavior issues.

## GPR05.05 - Recreation Program Philosophy

Groton Parks and Recreation should provide a broad and diversified selection of recreation programs and services for various ages and interests. The Department, in planning recreational programming and special events, shall take into consideration the participants' needs, geographic location, financial resources and safety.

## GPR05.06 - DEI Commitment

Groton Parks and Recreation strives to be a leader in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). The department actively celebrates the diverseness of the community, works to identify and correct conditions, policies and procedures that have disparate effects on segments of the community, and welcomes people from all backgrounds to be integral members of the decision-making process.

The Department takes steps to identify any marginalized or underserved segments of the community and actively works to be welcoming for those segments. Some examples of these community segments are LBGTQ+, racial and cultural groups, people with special needs, people who speak other languages, military connections, household with limited financial means, and many other characteristics. Members of the Department are leaders on Groton Diversity Equity and Inclusion Collaboration, whose mission it is to work on these issues across the entire community.

The Department strives for equity by:

- making all programs, services and activities equally available and accessible.
- making special efforts to be welcoming to all citizens, particularly those who are underserved or disadvantaged.
- striving to enhance each individual's potential for full participation in programs and services of their choice.
- providing specialized programs specifically designed to meet the needs of those with different interests, abilities or backgrounds.

All programs and activities are available to Groton residents with disabilities. Upon request, we provide reasonable modifications, including extra staff support when necessary, to allow your participation. Please use the comment section on the registration form or attach a separate sheet to the registration form detailing your circumstances and any assistance requested. It is also required that you complete the Inclusive Recreation Assessment, available at GrotonRec.com or from our office with your registration. This form helps us determine any necessary modifications to enable participation. The interests and needs of an individual participant will be addressed, the concerns of the family will be taken into account, and options and choices will be made available to individuals with disabilities. Participation may be delayed or denied if program registration is not received in a reasonable amount of time to secure the assistance required.

## GPR05.07 - Wireless Internet Access

The Town of Groton has implemented wireless internet access for patrons who wish to use their own wireless electronic device when in certain parks and facilities.

### **Guidelines**

All users are expected to use the wireless access in a legal and responsible manner, consistent with the values of the Town of Groton and the recreational, educational and informational purposes for which it is provided. Misuse of Internet access will result in loss of the user's wireless access privileges and may result in

suspension or termination of access to Town property. It is not acceptable to use supplied wireless internet services to:

- a. Digitally reproduce and distribute copyrighted materials;
- b. Degrade or disrupt equipment or system performance;
- c. Vandalize the data of any other user;
- d. Gain unauthorized access to resources or entities;
- e. Invade the privacy of individuals;
- f. Violate federal, state, or local laws or regulations, including those regarding accessing, viewing, printing, and distributing sexually related content; or
- g. Engage in any activity that is offensive or creates an intimidating or hostile environment.

A patron's electronic device must be configured with virus protection using current virus definitions. Patrons are expected to know how to configure their own equipment for wireless use. The Town does not offer wireless access support.

As with most public wireless "hot spots," this wireless connection is not secure. Another wireless user can potentially intercept any information being transmitted. Patrons should not transmit personal information such as credit card numbers, passwords or other sensitive information while using any wireless "hot spot." WiFi users assume all risks and responsibilities to provide anti-virus protection and appropriate security settings on their device and should take appropriate precautions when using this service.

The Town is not be responsible for any information (i.e. credit card numbers, passwords, etc.) that is compromised, or for any damage caused to patron's hardware or software due to electric surges, security issues or consequences caused by viruses or hacking.

WiFi users should be certain that their devices are secure at all times and should never be left unattended, even for brief periods of time. Theft of such devices is not the responsibility of the Town.

Use of Town's wireless network is entirely at the risk of the user. The Town of Groton disclaims all liability for loss of confidential information or damages resulting from that loss.