

Received 1/20/26
10:52 AM Jodi Moore, ATC

Town of Durham – Board of Recreation Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2026 7 p.m.

Durham Community Center – Room One

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/ruOytfXS4KuQ09pUA3atbH7KhpK9NyAiJ6WY-63wyvT145X0gWNSGxjAo4CaGFU4.BQxcxSHOm47XMwpm?startTime=1767916923000>

Passcode: #8.4TVTE

Call to Order/Roll Call: 7:03 p.m.

Present: Dave Mastroianni, Janet Morganti, Pam Carey, Mallory Castro, Chris Balay, Kathy Marzano, Jane Eddleston.

Absent: Kim Johansen, Stephanie Fischer, Rita Van Steenberg and Brian MacDuff

Pledge of Allegiance led by Dave M.

Seating of Alternates: Kathy Marzano.

Motion made by Mallory C. to nominate Dave Mastroianni as temporary Chair; second by Pam C. All aye.

Motion made by Chris B. to nominate Janet M. for chair, second by Mallory C. No other nominations for chair. Janet M. elected chair.

Motion made by Janet M. to nominate Chris B. as Vice Chair, second by Pam C. No other nominations for vice chair. Chris B. elected vice chair.

Motion made by Dave M. to nominate Mallory C. as secretary, second by Pam C. No other nominations for secretary. Mallory C. elected secretary.

Dave M. made a motion to approve the minutes for the December 11, 2025 minutes, second by Chris B. Janet M. and Jane E. abstained. Motion passed.

Public Comment

Lucy Meigs of Coginchaug Outdoor Enrichment Center (“COEC”) provided a summary of the past year and shared her thoughts on programming for 2026. In 2025, COEC was able to host six programs sponsored by Durham Recreation. Middlefield Recreation is also interested in partnering with COEC this year. There will be a number of outdoor activities and environmental informational series for the community. **(COEC summary attachment included with minutes.)**

Chair Comments: Janet M. had no comments and turned comments over to Dave M.

Dave M. Comments

Committee participation needs to increase to ensure the success of Recreation offerings and maintain community participation. The Holiday Lights Tour was successful, and discussion took place regarding possible changes to voting and categories for 2026.

There will be a push to engage with local small businesses at the March Farmers’ Market to help increase community awareness.

An outdoor ice skating rink is still being considered and explored. On a positive note, land for the rink would be repurposed for the winter season and could otherwise continue as a recreational field without issue.

There is an opportunity to receive donated equipment from school closings in Vermont that could be repurposed for our community's use. Lindsay D. offered to help with transport of supplies if the Committee decided to proceed with receiving such donations.

Holiday Lights Tour Recap

There were a total of 334 votes for People's Choice, although it is possible that individuals were able to vote multiple times. The Committee discussed possibly beginning sign ups and judging earlier next year to allow for greater participation.

Winter Farmers' Market

There are five remaining market dates for the winter season. As of the last date in March, Dave M. will no longer be leading and organizing the Market series. The Board of Selectmen is considering having the Market hosted by the Town once again, although this might require additional legwork. It will be important to obtain and share a reliable plan for current vendors so that they may plan their activities accordingly. It was suggested that any Market hosted by the Town coordinate with Economic Development.

Outstanding Receipts

There are no outstanding receipts from Committee members at this time. Submission of these is important to record accurate costs for events and allow for reliable future planning.

Healthy Community Wellness Grant Invitation

Morgan Perry (Social Services) passed on information from a consulting firm that works with towns to set up outdoor fitness courts, namely the National Fitness Campaign ("NFCHQ"). Estimated total project cost would be between \$160,000 - \$270,000; the state typically awards two to three grants for such projects of \$30,000 - \$35,000, which mainly covers equipment. No deadline is currently known for project application or grant submission. The Fitness Court would offer a flexible exercise space for multiple age groups and could be easily accessible from the Community Center.

2026 Proposed Budget

The 2025-2026 proposed budget was submitted. Waste removal and portable toilets might be areas to consider for cost savings. There was a \$500 increase for summer Recreation program supplies, and an increase of \$800 for the summer concert series. There is an \$800 surplus from last year. Allotment for holiday programs decreased from \$3,700 to \$1,600. Capital reserve still exists but is currently allocated. Overall, there is \$3,000 less in the proposed budget compared to 2024-2025.

General Updates

Overhead coverage is still needed for slides at the Community Center playground, which grow hot quickly in direct sun.

New picnic tables are needed for the Allyn Brook Pavilion.

The Fun Run will take place again this summer as confirmed by the Benchwarmers organization.

The Committee discussed opportunities for expanded Recreation programming, including more offerings for adults in pottery and crafting and more classes for young children.

2026 Event Calendar

- Easter Egg Hunt: Saturday, March 28, 2026 (in case of rain, will take place inside the Community Center)

- National Night Out: Tuesday, August 4, 2026
- Fun Run: TBD in partnership with the Benchwarmers
- Summer Concert Series: TBD (series will run from the end of June through September)
- Trunk or Treat: Saturday, October 24, 2026
- Christmas Tree Lighting: Saturday, December 5, 2026
- Holiday Lights Tour: TBD

Motion to adjourn 8:22 p.m. made by Janet M. second by Pam C. All aye.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mallory K. Castro

Coginchaug Outdoor Enrichment Center (COEC)

Summary of 2025 Programs and tentative/possible 2026 Programs

Our mission is to inspire outdoor and nature related experiences that will foster appreciation and stewardship of the Earth. We aspire to provide programs to connect people of all ages and abilities to their local environment and cultivate thriving sustainable communities.

2025 Programs - the 6 programs with name and date in bold were sponsored by Durham Recreation. The last 2 programs (with *) were made possible by a grant from CVEF.

- **Backyard Chickens** with Marilyn Keurajian and Paul Benjunas (24 in attendance),

Mar 29

- **Meet Your Weeds** with Aubree Keurajian (21 in attendance) **Jun 25**
- **Heron & Beaver Hike** with Lucy Meigs (15 in attendance) **June 27**
- Tabled at the Bobolink Festival, July 12
- **Tick Talk** with Scott Williams PhD, CAES, **Aug 14** (11 in attendance)
- Fairgrounds Pollinator Garden Work Party Sept 22 (8 in attendance)
- Durham Fair Discovery Center - Presented a variety of nature experiences to fair goers
- **CT Foragers*** - with Amy Demers **Oct 22** (18 in attendance)
- **A Place Called Hope*** - **Nov 8** (54 in attendance)

2026 Planned/Tentative Programs - At this point only the first program scheduled. For the rest of the planned programs the approximate date is listed. Mary Farnsworth (New Director of Middlefield Park & Rec reached out to us. She would like us to offer a portion of our program through the Middlefield Rec. The programs that are underlined will be (or will likely be) offered through the Middlefield Rec. The program in bold are ones we hope to offer through Durham Park & Rec.

- Native Seed Starting Workshop, Jan 24 at Middlefield Community Center, Middlefield Rec
- Winter Full Moon / Owl Hike in Middlefield (probably Jan 31 or Feb 1 or do in March)
- **Upcycled Fabric Wreaths - March or April?**
- **Fossils & Local Geology program** and reception for the dinosaur footprint - **late Feb or March?**
- **Vernal Pool Walk** at the Field Forest in early **April** (or late March)

Examples of other Programs that we hope to offer in 2026 (or 2027)

- **Making Cordage from local plants** - Oct/Nov
- Repair Cafe - Don't Feed the Landfill
- A Series on Trash Art
- Coordinating an outdoor program with Durham Arts Council
- Wildflower ID program on Open Space
- CT Aquatics fishing class at Miller's Pond