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**Administrative Order**  
**Establishment of Recreation and Youth Services Department**

September 26, 2023

**WHEREAS**, Article 5, Administrative Organization, Section 5-1, Organization of City Agencies, of the Newburyport Home Rule Charter authorizes the Mayor to reorganize, consolidate or abolish any City agency, in whole or in part, or to establish such new City agencies as is deemed necessary; and

**WHEREAS** Newburyport Youth Services has been serving the needs of young people and families in the city since 2005, and provides recreational and community services that foster positive youth development; and

**WHEREAS** Adult recreational activities and programming were officially moved to Youth Services following the Council's approval of the Parks Reorganization Plan in February 2022; and

**WHEREAS** the Mayor aims to officially establish a department that is focused tasked with recreation and the needs of youth in the City of Newburyport; and

**WHEREAS** the Mayor has included herewith a message to the Council explaining the benefits expected to result from this proposed change and the sections of existing ordinances that will need to be amended.

NOW, THEREFORE, Be it ordered that there shall be officially established a Recreation and Youth Services Department in the City of Newburyport. Any needed amendments to the City's Code of Ordinances will be brought to the City Council for consideration to effectuate this Order and Attached Plan with respect to the organization of the Recreation and Youth Services Department. This administrative order will come into effect in 60 days, unless disapproved by a vote of the Council.

Sean R. Reardon  
Mayor



# Administrative Order Establishing Recreation and Youth Services Department

Mayor's Message

Sean R. Reardon  
Mayor

September 26, 2023

## **Official Establishment of Newburyport Recreation and Youth Services**

This message accompanies the administrative order submitted to the City Council officially creating the Department of Recreation and Youth Services. Article 5, Section 5-1 of the Newburyport City Charter, titled "Organization of city agencies," requires that an administrative order be filed with the City Council by the Mayor in order to organize the city into operating agencies. The Charter provision states in pertinent part as follows:

*"The mayor may, subject only to express prohibitions in a general law or this charter, propose to reorganize, consolidate or abolish any city agency, in whole or in part, or to establish such new city agencies as is deemed necessary, but no function assigned by this charter to a particular city agency may be discontinued or assigned to any other city agency unless this charter specifically so provides. The mayor may from time to time prepare and submit to the city council administrative orders that establish operating divisions for the orderly, efficient or convenient conduct of the business of the city. These administrative orders shall be accompanied by a message of the mayor which explains the benefits expected to ensue and advises the city council if any provision of an administrative order shall require amendments, insertions, revisions, repeal or otherwise of existing ordinances."*

This outline lays out the plan for this department, which will preserve the current functioning of Newburyport Youth Services, while officially incorporating recreation for community members of all ages, which was approved in the Parks Reorganization Plan approved by the Council in February 2023. The plan also includes an overview of the sections of the City's Ordinances that may need to be updated to accompany this official establishment.

## **History of Newburyport Youth Services**

The Newburyport City Council voted in December 1998 to accept Mass General Law G.L., c. 40, § 8E, which allows municipalities to create Youth Commissions. By State Statute, such commissions are created...:

*"...for the purpose of carrying out programs which may be designed or established to meet the opportunities, challenges and problems of youth of said city or town and in conjunction with any similar or related programs of any agency of the commonwealth or any agency of the federal government."*

In 2005, under Mayor Mary Anne Clancy, the City hired a Supervisor of Youth Programs who would report to the Mayor and also had reporting responsibilities to the Youth Commission. Also in 2005, the Youth Commission released a Five-year plan that essentially set the groundwork for a Youth Services Department, and identified needs for a community center, an improved middle school drop-in center, and increased collaboration on efforts to reduce underage substance abuse. That year, the Administration, together with the Youth Commission, shifted their earlier vision for a Parks and Recreation Department to instead create a Youth Services Department.

The mission of Youth Services is to meet the apparent and underlying needs of children and families, and to run high quality programs accessible to all. In its early years, Youth Services focused on recreation and programs for children of all ages and the services offered expanded with a large federal grant for substance use prevention work. The BEACON Coalition was started with support of a Drug Free Communities grant. Since then, the department has always had a position assisting with the BEACON and its initiatives. The department grew for nearly 15 years, adding programs and services, as well as positions, to meet identified needs in the community. The department has grown to now serve over 2,000 young people a year with nearly 4,000 registrations, which does not include the thousands of people who are served through the department's free community events.

The Department is largely self-sustaining, as all of its recreational programs are funded by registration fees. Since the Department's inception, it has brought in nearly \$1.2 million in grant funding in the last five years and close to \$2.4 million over the Department's history to support the department and community partners, including the schools. Over the past 20 years, departmental spending has consistently remained below 0.5% of the General Fund budget, currently accounting for 0.4%. To better identify fixed and recurring costs, the City has allocated these known costs to the general fund, offset by a budgeted transfer from the recreational revolving fund. This allows the revolving fund to reflect variable costs, which can be difficult to budget for from year to year.

Nonetheless, all spending, whether for payroll or operating expenses and regardless of funding source, must still pass through the Finance Department's review process and must comply with all city policies, such as those related to travel and training, gifts and grants, procurement, and other practices. Moving forward, we will ensure that the annual budget reflects this new department structure, including all resources that are utilized in support of its mission.

While the work of the Department was initiated in 2005, the Department was never officially created either in the City's ordinances or through the Administrative Order process that is described in Section 5-1 of the Charter. This makes sense, as the Department's activities pre-date the provision regarding the organization of the city into operating agencies, which was passed in November 2011 following the 2010 Charter Review process.

## **Proposed Structure**

This Order will create a Recreation and Youth Services Department that is tasked with running high quality recreational activities for Newburyporters of all ages, engaging youth in positive activities outside the school day, and meeting underlying needs of children and families through effective community services. The Department will have two divisions to better focus the offerings of the agency.

### **Recreation and Enrichment Division**

This division will be responsible for creating and facilitating recreational programs, activities, and events for community members of all ages. They will work with community partners to gauge interest in activities and look at how best to use the recreational assets of the city. The recreation department will run activities that may include the following:

<b>Youth</b>	<b>Families</b>	<b>Individuals/ Adults</b>
Seasonal recreation programs; Sports & skills	Community events (i.e. Touch a Truck)	Outing Clubs: hiking, biking, walking, nature, skiing, etc.
Vacation week programs	Summer family entertainment series	Recreational Games: pickleball, etc.
Leagues: E-sports, Destination Imagination; First Lego League	Pre-school Open Gym	Adult Leagues: softball, beach volleyball, etc.
Seasonal Enrichment programs: STEM, arts, music and movement	Age Specific Playgroups	Adult pick-up games
Ski & Snowboard Club (after school, early release and vacation weeks)	Family parties/ dances	Fitness Classes
Inclusive and specialized programming for individuals with disabilities or special needs	Family programs (i.e. family tennis lessons)	Adult wellness programs

The primary work of the Division will be to organize and facilitate programs throughout the year for a diverse set of Newburyport residents. It will facilitate all summer programming for youth and year-round programming for youth and adults. They will work closely with the Council on Aging and other groups providing public programming to look for opportunities for collaboration and to reduce overlapping offerings.

***Funding Sources***

This division receives support for staff, facility, and software overhead through the City’s Operating budget. The majority of its work is funded through user/activity fees, which are currently structured using the aforementioned revolving fund. The division can also receive recreation focused grant funding and gifts, though it does not rely on this funding.

***Resources Needed***

This division requires a significant amount of part time staff through peak programming and recreation months, namely summer and school vacation periods. This staff is managed by full-time coordinators and other staff who do the year-round work of planning, registration, marketing, hiring, and everything else that goes into recreation programming. The division has full time positions for an Associate Director of Recreation and an Activity Coordinator and receives assistance from an office manager, the Associate Director of Youth Programs, and the Director of Recreation and Youth Services. The Division also requires a significant amount of space for all these activities, and works with City and School staff to find suitable locations. This is a challenge based on the limited amount of space in the City and the number of activities taking place.

## **Youth Development and Services**

This second Division is responsible for positive youth development, engaging youth in healthy activities outside of school and formal programming, and for supporting mental health and substance abuse prevention. Programs aim to engage older youth (middle and high school aged) in positive and healthy activities and enrichment programs.

The Youth Development and Services Division operates a Youth Center outside of school time and hosts events on weekends to provide middle and high schoolers with a positive environment for activities and enrichment. They also organize clubs and programs within the center to develop hobbies and skills that interest youth. In addition, youth programs include teen trips, affinity groups, a Youth Council and enrichment activities for youth that are in middle and high school grades and are distinct from the Recreational Division's programming. The Division provides educational programs on life skills and workforce development and certificate programs like babysitting and first aid. In addition to the Youth Center, staff also operate the Learning Enrichment Center in the Kelleher Gardens development to support the social and academic development of children and families living in public and/or low income housing

The Division also oversees community initiatives, partnerships, and activities that support children and families and can assist in intake and making referrals for outside services. It works closely with partners in the City including the Health Department, Council on Aging, Newburyport Police Department, and Newburyport Public Schools. It also develops partnerships with agencies including Pettengill House, Link House, Community Services of Newburyport, Our Neighbors Table and the Jeanne Geiger Center, and others. The Division oversees a social services monthly network and employs a licensed social worker to provide referrals and supports. The division does not provide clinical support. These relationships allow for effective and efficient referrals to meet community members' needs.

All of these services build on a foundation of building youth assets. This focus is set and maintained by the coordination of and participation in the BEACON Coalition, a citywide partnership to support positive youth development as well as capacity building in community partners. the Coalition was formed from the Mayor's Taskforce on Substance Abuse. The positive youth development philosophy and associated initiatives build protective factors (assets) in young people to reinforce academic support, healthy choices, and civic engagement. This coalition helps facilitate community assessments to provide data on youth development and identify areas for improvement. This Division also provides support to the community through resources for parents and families. This includes a Parent Speaker Series, Affinity Groups and Events, and outreach to underserved populations.

In its ten years of Drug-Free Communities Grant funding, the BEACON Coalition proved the effectiveness of youth substance use prevention through a positive youth development framework. Because of this success, surrounding communities were interested in partnering together. Further, funding through state and private channels for substance use prevention have moved to a regional approach. This approach acknowledges that youth do not just live within the mapped boundaries of a town and that partnering agencies serve multiple agencies. Because of its history of success and leadership in this area, the Division also oversees and administrates multiple regional grants that enable these partnerships and work to continue, while focusing on our City.

### ***Funding Sources***

This division receives support for staff and facility overhead through the City's Operating budget. The youth center is partially funded through user fees, as participants pay annual memberships to use the drop-in center. Much of this department's work is funded by grants, including state and private funding. The division also receives some gifts and donations to support certain initiatives and programs.

### ***Resources Needed***

This division has full time positions for an Associate Director of Youth Programs as well as an Associate Director of Prevention Partnerships, which is mostly grant funded. There is also an activity coordinator, a support coordinator, and the Learning and Enrichment Center Coordinator, which is split with the Newburyport Public Schools. The division receives further support from the office manager and the Director. This work also requires space for the youth center, and for all the prevention and youth development programming.

## **Benefits to the Community**

The City has benefited from the services provided by the existing structure for nearly two decades and we believe this new organizational plan will only strengthen and broaden the reach.

In the past, the City has had recreational and enrichment programming taking place from a number of City departments. This consolidation of recreation in one department will create simplicity for residents, and all programs will be accessible through one scheduling and reservation platform.

The expansion to adult recreation will increase opportunities for multi-generational programming and we expect strong coordination with the Council on Aging and others to provide programming that meets all ages. This department is also committed to meeting the needs of underserved populations, which helps fulfill the Mayor's strategic plan goal of improving the accessibility of City services.

We also believe residents benefit from this plan with a fee structure that keeps program costs an affordable choice, including access to those with financial hardship and while also generating funds to pay for full time staff.

This departmental establishment aims to clarify the role of Recreation and Youth Services and shows which supports and services youth and families can anticipate receiving from the Department.

## **Ordinance Changes**

This document is required to list any ordinances that need to change based on accepting this order. We have identified three such ordinances.

1. Sec. 2-394. - Departmental revolving funds  
This section of the code lists the Director of Youth Services as the person responsible for the Recreational Services revolving account. This title may change with the incorporation of this Order, and that may need to be updated.
2. Sec. 2-34. - Responsibilities of committee on community services  
This section will need to be updated to say that the Committee has jurisdiction over the Department of Recreation and Youth Services, rather than Youth Services.

3. Zoning Ordinance of the City of Newburyport: Section XXXII. - BROWN SCHOOL OVERLAY DISTRICT

This section specifies scenarios with Newburyport Youth Services on and off-site. This may not need to be updated on its own as the intention of the language is clear.

### **Next Steps**

This Order will be reviewed by the Council and will become effective in 60 days after introduction unless it is voted down by the Council. It would require a vote of 6 votes to confirm or reject the plan. At least one public hearing must be held on the proposal. The Administration looks forward to working with the Council to provide any information needed to advance this plan.