

Newburyport Parks

Breathing Life Back Into the Bartlet Mall Frog Pond



I. Executive Summary:

Newburyport Parks proposes to run a seasonal rowboat concession on the Frog Pond at Bartlet Mall. The city has acquired the assets to clean the pond which should be available for use by Summer 2017. At that time, we would launch the rowboat concession which would allow visitors to rent rowboats by the half-hour to enjoy the pond and the Bartlet Mall in a way that has been unavailable to the community for several years. Further, rowing on the Frog Pond would utilize locally-made rowing skiffs (rather than paddle-boats) that will link the visitors' participation to Newburyport's rich maritime history. Funds generated would be used to support operating costs of this project as well as for maintenance of Newburyport Parks in general.



II. Rowing on Bartlet Mall:

- A. Walk-up boating concessions on manmade ponds are popular in many cities. Typically, these amenities rely on pedal-style paddle boats. In line with Newburyport's rich maritime history, we would instead use row boats styled after skiffs that were produced here and in our extended community since the late 1700s. Visitors will enjoy spending time together through the physical experience of rowing, enjoyment of the Mall, and an interactive introduction to our maritime and geological history as visitors learn about these boats and the kettle hole they are enjoying. Rowing on the Bartlet Mall will create a unique and compelling link to our past.
- B. Newburyport has received much recent publicity as one of the best places in Massachusetts to live and visit. Currently, our great city offers many amenities for its visitors including shopping, restaurants, museums, boat tours on the Merrimac, playgrounds, and a variety of parks. The addition of a rowing concession at the Bartlet Mall will create a new opportunity for residents and tourists to interact with and create a sense of stewardship for the Bartlet Mall while raising awareness and revenue for the Parks. Further, this activity will help to maximize the use of this underused asset within the City by giving another reason for people to walk up State Street and visit the Mall. Boats on the Frog Pond will further enhance the beauty of the Park and help identify it as a destination for community enjoyment.
- C. Cleanup of the Frog Pond at the Bartlet Mall has been long overdue, encompassing innumerable hours and energy from Parks Commissioners, City Administration and the public. Once the long-awaited cleanup has been completed (see item VI.A below), the Pond can be enjoyed not only as the aesthetic gem that it is, but as an opportunity for interaction, education, and stewardship.
- D. As part of this project, we propose to create a unique partnership with Lowell's Boat Shop, who will provide the skiffs, staff the ticket shed, and maintain the boats. Lowell's Boat Shop, located across the river in Amesbury, is the longest continually operating wooden boat building shop in the country. They are a non-profit entity that teaches local youth how to build boats and educates the public about this rich maritime history. A presence in Newburyport would help strengthen their membership and visibility.

III. Operational Plan:

- A. In-season Plan: The boating concession will be operational from May to October on Thursday and Friday from 2:30 pm to 1 hour past sunset, and Saturday-Sunday from 12:30-1.5 hours past sunset. During April and November, we propose opening the concession Saturday-Sunday from 3-6 pm, pending weather conditions. The concession will be open for the duration of Yankee Homecoming week from noon to 2 hours past sunset and for other special events hosted by the City or by permit for private parties.
- B. Maintenance: The boats and dock will be inspected daily by staff for necessary repairs, which will be made by Lowell's Boat Shop. Boats will be secured to the dock and locked

with a chain during off-hours. Any parks maintenance needs will be made by Parks Staff.

- C. Staffing: One part-time seasonal employee from Lowell's Boat Shop apprenticeship program will man the ticket sale booth during operating hours and be paid minimum wage. We will leverage existing Parks Staff for other needs including regular Park maintenance.
- D. Marketing: Initial marketing will include a social media site, website, and local paper and radio announcements. We will also work with the local Chamber of Commerce to capture the tourism audience and further our visibility north and south to Boston and southern NH.
- E. Leveraging/benefitting existing businesses: Beyond initial boat and oar sponsorship (see item VI.B below), we will reach out to local businesses for potential related amenity sales such as boxed lunches, ice cream, and photography services to further enhance the experience of the boating concession.
- F. Potential extended use: Once infrastructure is in place, there is an opportunity to expand the usage in the winter for skating/skate rentals.

IV. Financial Plan:

- A. Start-up costs: The estimated total startup cost for this project is \$38,000 including boats, oars, and computer for ticket sales. The total estimated funding sources, including boat and oar sponsorships and donations is \$45,500, which would allow \$7,500 to be placed back into the annual operating budget for the first year funding for staff and potential repairs, etc.
- B. Operating costs and budget: The estimated annual operating costs are \$10,000 which includes seasonal staff and software costs for ticket sales. Regular maintenance of the Park will be covered by Parks staff and the City's. If all funding goals are met, the first year of operating costs will be over 50% met to protect against initial low sales until marketing efforts can improve usage.

V. Comparables

- A. Walk-up Boat Concessions in other Towns/Cities: There is precedent for this amenity in several other cities and towns. Within the state of Massachusetts, Boston Pedal Boats rents pedal boats for \$45/hr. along the Charles River, Regatta Point Community Sailing in Worcester rents pedal boats for \$25/hr. on Lake Quinsigamond, and one can rent a pedal boat for \$30/hr. on Wakefield's Lake Quannapowitt. Rowboats are less common, but can be rented on Jamaica Pond in Boston for \$10/hr or at Central Park in Manhattan for \$15/hr. At Prospect Park in Brooklyn, double pedal boats can be rented for \$35/hr. or for \$21.45/30 minutes in Montreal. We are proposing \$15/half hour for this concession.
- B. Walk-up Activities in Newburyport: Current walk-up activities in Newburyport include a visit to the Custom House Maritime Museum (\$7/adult, \$5/child, under 6 free),

Newburyport Whale Watch (\$48/adult or \$33/child for a 4-hour tour), Kayak or Stand Up Paddleboard rental (\$45/half day), or Metrorock Indoor Climbing Gym (\$20/day pass).

VI. Key Real Estate and Capital Assets

- A. Water Cleaning Technology: funding being secured from outside grant sources, cleanup to begin during fall of 2016 and be completed in spring of 2017 (to be confirmed).
- B. Boats & Oars with brass plaques to identify sponsors.
- C. iPad for ticket sales
- D. Software for ticket sales

VII. Next Steps

- A. City approvals: Initial discussions have been made with the Bartlet Mall Commission and the Mayor, and both are enthusiastic about the project, pending cleanup of the Pond. Presentation to the City Council will occur once pond cleanup commences.
- B. Liability Insurance:
- C. Securing Sponsors
 - a. Boat donations
 - b. Oar donations – color oars
 - c. Morrill Foundation
 - d. Port Parks Alliance
- D. Securing Assets
 - a. Boats and dock to be built during the winter of 2016, pending sponsorship

Bartlett Mall Boats

Business Plan

4275

Item

| One-time Start Up Costs | Estimate | Actual |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Boats (5) | \$35,000.00 | |
| Oars (12) | \$900.00 | |
| Plaques for boats | \$375.00 | |
| Plaques for oars | \$250.00 | |
| Paint for oars | \$200.00 | |
| IPad for ticket sales | \$1,100.00 | |
| TOTAL STARTUP COST | \$37,825.00 | |

| Sponsorship and revenue sources | Estimate | Actual |
|--|--------------------|---------------|
| Boat sponsorships (\$5K each) | \$25,000.00 | |
| Oar sponsorships (\$50/each) | \$500.00 | |
| Morrill Foundation/Port Parks Alliance | \$20,000.00 | |
| TOTAL POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES FOR STARTUP | \$45,500.00 | |

| Ticket sales - annual | Estimate | Actual |
|--|--------------------|---------------|
| 854 total operational hours * 5 boats @ \$15/half hr (70% operational) | \$89,670.00 | |
| TOTAL POTENTIAL TICKET SALES IF 70% USAGE | \$89,670.00 | |

| | |
|--------------|------------------|
| \$128,100.00 | 100% operational |
|--------------|------------------|

| Annual Costs | Estimate | Actual |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Liability insurance | City coverage to be confirmed | |
| Software: Squareup charges 2.9% + \$0.30 per ticket sale | \$1,255.38 | |
| Seasonal staff (one ticket booth employee) | \$8,540.00 | |
| Park maintenance | in house | |
| Boat maintenance | by Lowell's Boat Shop | |
| TOTAL ANNUAL COSTS | \$9,795.38 | |