

**Section 6:**  
**Culture & Recreation**



**REPORT OF THE WESTON CULTURAL COUNCIL**

The Weston Cultural Council is charged with distributing money allotted to the Town by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Grants are awarded to individuals or groups in support of projects in the arts, humanities, and sciences that are a benefit to the residents of our town. Despite public gathering restrictions, most of the grants awarded by the Council in 2020 were utilized, with many programs switching to an online format or taking advantage of an extended deadline of September 2021 with the hope of scheduling in-person performances. The Council received 21 applications in the fall of 2020 and was able to award 15 grants for completion in 2021. The available funds included \$4,900 from the state, a matching grant of \$4,800 from the Town, and additional unencumbered funds that were unused in 2020 due to the public health emergency.

**Grants Awarded for 2021**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Council Liaison</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Performance Date</b>
Brave Space Online Book Club for Adults	Jacob Sagrans	\$500	Jan. - Dec. 2021, 3 sessions/month
Wellesley Symphony Orchestra: Concert, Online	Chris Martin	\$300	February 14, 2021
Margaret Wiss: To the Moon and Back Dance Performance	Sonali Tambe	\$700	Summer 2021, in- person and online
Art & Innovation Center Speaker Series - Through the Lens of Art: Building Bridges of Empathy, Understanding, and Inclusion	Jacob Sagrans	\$750	March, April, May 2021, in-person or online
Charles River Sinfonietta: Chamber Music Concert, Online	Paul Angiolillo	\$200	Summer/fall 2021, on Weston Media Center
Wonderland Spectacle Co. Art and Nature Videos for Kids: Hike to Norumbega	Anthony Butler	\$300	TBD, 2021
Weston Friendly Society: Website Redesign	Tom Kilgallen	\$850	Ongoing
Whipple & Morales: Duo Pianists in Concert, Online	Chris Martin	\$250	Between March and December 2021
Henry David Thoreau: Lyceum Lecture	Francis Parker	\$430	November 9, 2021
Discovery Museum: Open Door Connections	Francis Parker	\$300	Ongoing
Weston Council on Aging: American Art Lectures, Online	Chris Martin	\$550	March 9 & April 13, 2021
Wayside Rail Trail: Murals in Weston	Sonali Tambe	\$3,000	Spring 2021
Land's Sake Farm: Open Farmyard	Tom Kilgallen	\$1,550	May - October 2021
Spellman Museum: Stamps Come Alive	Francis Parker	\$1,300	Five programs in 2021
Weston Library Music Series: Harp Concert with Shelley Otis, Online	Tom Kilgallen	\$525	March 28, 2021

2020 Weston Cultural Council Members

*Appointed by the Select Board*

Anthony Butler, Co-chair	April 2021
Chris Martin, Co-chair	March 2022
Tom Kilgallen, Treasurer	April 2021
Paul Angiolillo	March 2022
Francis Parker	March 2022
Jacob Sagrans	March 2022
Sonali Tambe	August 2023

## REPORT OF THE WESTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

*When COVID-19 shut down our library and event spaces the Trustees decided to act in the face of all the obstacles. The Board wanted to support the mission of the Library to be a lifelong resource for learning while at the same time being mindful of the incredible role that our staff would undertake to make this happen. When patrons were unable to come into the library, we doubled down on our supply of online ventures.*

*Patrons borrowed more eBooks, digital audiobooks, digital magazines, streaming video, and downloadable music than ever before. We shifted resources to accommodate these changing demands and managed to reach more patrons than ever. Online programs, online book groups, virtual concerts all became part of the library repertoire. Staff embraced a curbside pick-up plan that was a tremendous success in the community.*

*Our directors quickly utilized amazing software programs that adjusted with usage to help with reservations, deliveries, and finally, foot traffic when the building slowly reopened with restrictions. With routines upended it was time to innovate and our staff worked together to invent new ways to provide the amazing resources available through the town library.*

*When most other resources were unavailable, the Library managed to provide us with so many options to stay connected and continue to strengthen our community in a difficult time.*

*The Trustees of the Weston Public Library*

2020 started like most other years at the Weston Public Library. From January to early March our study spaces were filled with students, 20+ programs for patrons of all ages were offered each week, and it seemed like our biggest challenge was finding enough copies of “American Dirt.” The library was a busy place seven days a week. That changed in March when Weston and the world learned of a quickly-spreading global pandemic.

By the end of the month, the Library had closed its doors to the public for a then undetermined amount of time. Despite this uncertainty, Library staff immediately began devising plans for how they could continue to offer Library services remotely.

One of the first steps taken was to vastly expand the e-library holdings. Staff quickly increased the size of the Overdrive Advantage collection of eBooks and digital audiobooks by over 30 percent. The number of checkouts allowed per month was tripled in the always-available digital library service, Hoopla. Furthermore, staff worked with database providers so that the Library could offer resources that were previously only available onsite for home use.

These efforts, in conjunction with a push to issue digital library cards, made it so that 2020 was the e-library’s most successful year on record:

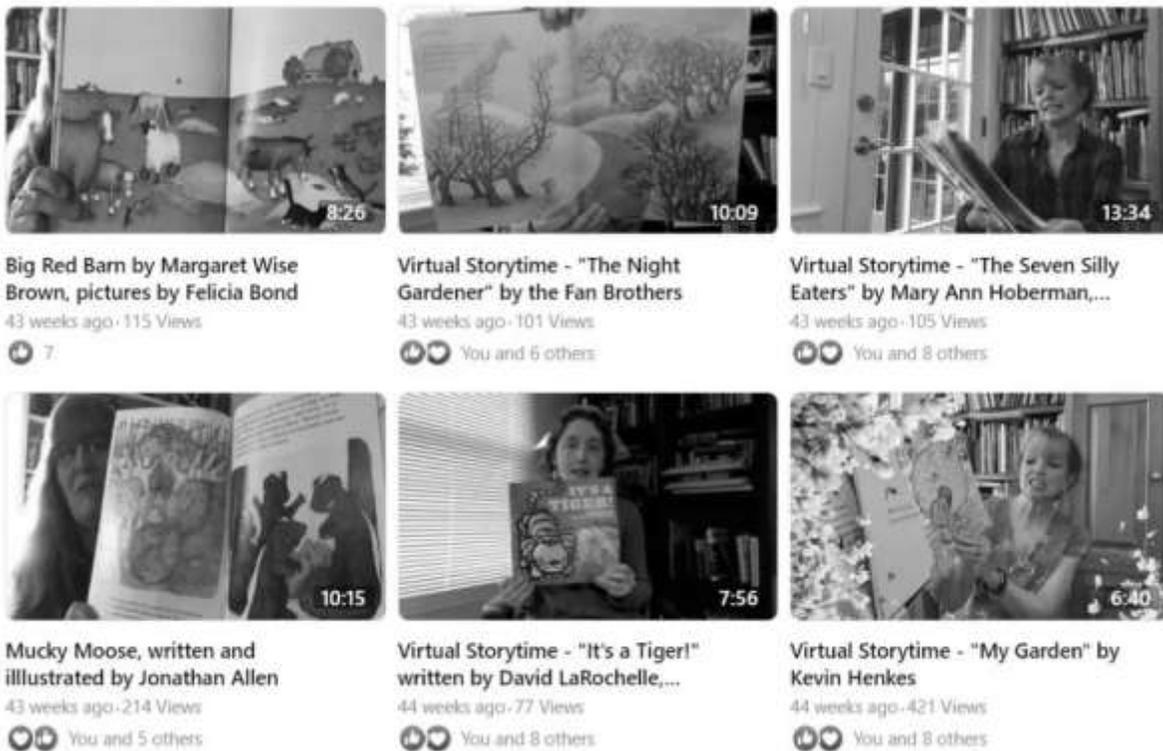
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Hoopla borrows (eBooks, audiobooks, music, video, comics)	1,252	7,210	476%
Overdrive borrows (eBooks, audiobooks, video, magazines)	17,929	25,916	45%
RB Digital (digital magazines)	1,147	1,810	58%
Freegal (downloadable music)	808	983	22%
Kanopy (streaming video)	893	2,511	181%
<b>Total e-Library usage</b>	<b>22,029</b>	<b>38,430</b>	<b>74%</b>

Beyond promoting existing e-library services and databases, staff also worked to connect with patrons in new and exciting ways. Just over a week after closing our doors, Youth Services staff began offering virtual storytimes on Facebook Live each weekday. In total, the Youth Services staff did 194 Facebook

Live Storytime videos that had 15,427 views in 2020. The Dial-a-Story telephone storyline was also popular among families and featured a new story regularly.

The Library also took this opportunity to launch its YouTube Channel and create 42 videos on a variety of subjects, including instructional videos on how to use e-library services, celebrations for National Poetry Month, craft classes, and even concerts. The most successful video on the channel was the premiere of the Music Committee's virtual concert series featuring Jon Sakata and Jung Mi Lee performing a piano four-hands concert with 1,094 views on YouTube alone and many more watched on Weston Media Center's cable channels and streaming website. This concert reached more than 10 times the number of music lovers than what could have been accommodated in person in the Community Room.

Virtual programming continued to be a success throughout the year, with the Library hosting three monthly books clubs for adults, all-ages cooking classes with Chef Rob (with some sessions getting over 400 viewers), advanced ESL classes, author talks, virtual craft programs for kids, teens, and adults, and other bolder choices, like Introduction to Tarot, and Forensic Science Roadshow. As in a normal year, test prep and college admissions workshops were popular among teens.



One program of note was the Creative Writing series hosted by local author Pam Wight who carried on correspondence more or less uninterrupted with her program participants, even those who had no internet access. She sent out writing assignments and words of encouragement and eventually taught her enthusiastic class in the Library's parking lot. By year's end, as colder temperatures and foul weather precluded open-air gathering, the writers had adapted to meeting through an online platform. This group coalesced under Ms. Wright's guidance just over four years ago and a core group has remained committed to their work and each other ever since. One remarked that the group has become for her a "treasured life experience" and that "creating with words has become a passion that I can't live without."

The Library ramped up its digital outreach dramatically in 2020 as well, using its blogs "Feast on Books"

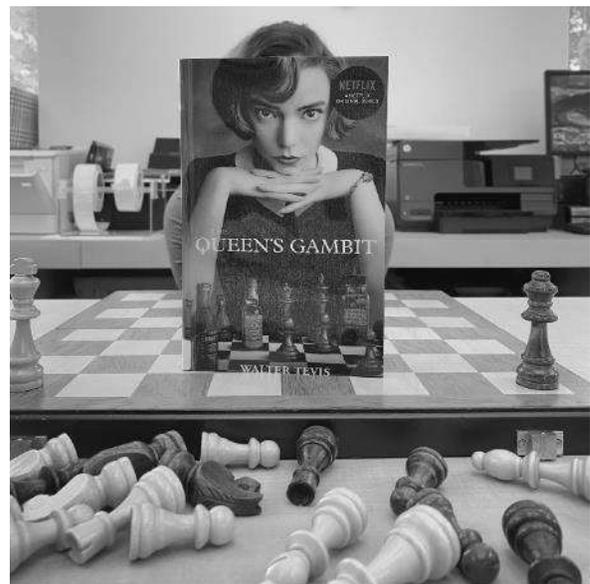
and “Bella on Books,” and social media accounts. Library staff posted 87 percent more in 2020 than in 2019.

	# Posts 2019	# Posts 2020
Facebook	496	912
Instagram	124	506
Twitter	568	799
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,188</b>	<b>2,217</b>

The most successful post of the year was one of our #bookfacefriday posts, with 1,463 likes on Instagram.

One of the silver linings of the pandemic was that it highlighted a pressing need for a more robust, mobile-responsive, and accessible website. To improve the online experience of our patrons, the Library embarked on a full website redesign in the fall of 2020 that involved the creation of over 90 individual web pages. The new westonlibrary.org features an easier-to-use homepage, communication elements that allow the Library to disseminate information to our patrons quickly and easily, and a calendar that integrates with other Weston departments seamlessly. The Library is thrilled to have a website that will continue to grow and develop as the needs of the library and its patrons' change in the years to come.

The Library Board and staff are sensitive to the fact that not having home internet was and is a huge barrier to access to entertainment, information, and human interaction during this challenging time. As such, the Library partnered with Weston Media Center to offer some programs on cable TV channels. Staff was also available by phone to provide information, to fill requests, and even just for a short chat. For those with personal internet-enabled devices, the Library was able to offer free and open public Wi-Fi from the parking lot, even when the building was closed.



While Library staff members were excited to offer virtual programming and explore new ways to connect with patrons, we were eager to safely expand service offerings. After working closely with the Weston Health Department, Emergency Management Team, Facilities Department, and others throughout the spring, the library was reconfigured to allow for appropriate physical distancing, Plexiglas partitions were installed, staff was trained in safety practices, sanitation products were procured, and a rigorous cleaning regimen was implemented. Because of herculean efforts by the custodial and administrative staff, the Library was able to accommodate the safe return of all library workers to their regular schedules by the first week in June.

Within days of returning to the library, limited services were up and running, most notably, contactless curbside pickup of materials. Curbside pickup became an overnight success. Patrons could request materials by phone and staff would package and deliver their items to the trunk of their car. In July, the Library implemented a fully online pickup system using the Capira Curbside app and website. Capira Curbside analytics showed over 4,000 curbside reservations placed online in 2020. This number does not include the countless telephone and walk-up pickup requests the circulation department received and accommodated outside of the online system.

Because patrons were not able to physically enter the building, librarians were kept busy selecting items for those that were not sure what to borrow next. A large portion of library materials provided via curbside pickup was specifically selected by our Youth Services and Reference librarians to fit the interests, reading level, and needs of individual readers by asking thoughtful questions and using knowledge of what a particular reader had enjoyed previously.

Curbside pickup also provided an avenue to add physical elements to virtual programming. The Youth Services department distributed over 1,000 take-home craft kits. The perennially popular “DIY Pinterest Craft” programs offered prepackaged supplies, and book clubs expanded from eBook-only titles to offer a full array of formats.

Library staff was also very busy with behind-the-scenes work, such as checking in the thousands of items that went through the quarantine system each day. Weston was also one of the first libraries in the Minuteman Library Network to begin filling requests from other Minuteman Library patrons to have Weston-owned items delivered to their library.



*Mr. Spock was on hand to help distribute materials during curbside pickup*

As in other years, one of the most time-consuming and rewarding behind-the-scenes tasks is collection development. Library staff managed to add almost the same amount of material as the previous year to the collection despite being out of the building for several weeks. In 2020, 10,752 new physical items were purchased, processed, and added to the library collection. This total amount included:

- 7,982 Books 449 DVDs
- 204 CD Audiobooks
- 98 Music CDs
- 94 Playaway Audio devices
- 1 Playaway View & Tablet device
- 3 Book Club kits
- 8 pieces of equipment, puzzles, and Library of Things items
- 1,913 magazine issues

The Technical Services and Circulation department also spearheaded several new initiatives to improve the collection as a whole. Their work included refreshing the paperback collection, adding durable laminate covers to adult paperback books to promote longevity, the addition of “Binge Boxes” with multi-disc compilations of movies on a particular theme, further expanding the “Library of Things” collection, and relocating and expanded the graphic novel collection.

Throughout the early summer, staff continued to make building modifications to prepare to reopen the building to the public. The Youth Services Department also launched a virtual 2020 Summer Reading Program in the last week of June. The program was kicked off with an introductory video starring Miss

Kelly, Miss Karen, and Miss Casey that aired online and on Weston Media channels. Like in previous summers, the program involved logging reading and completing challenges online. In all, there were over 50 challenges in the Reading Program and 20 challenges in the Preschool Program. Each time readers completed a challenge, they were entered into weekly prize drawings, where the prizes could be picked up during curbside pickup.



*With the help of Weston Media Center, we announced the Summer Reading Program 'Imagine Your Story'*

#### Summer Reading Stats:

- 23 Preschool readers logged 1,312 books and completed 68 reading challenges
- 77 first through sixth-grade readers logged 2,227 books and completed 313 reading challenges
- The 25 teen participants were particularly active in attending virtual programming. They also read 188 books collectively
- One super-reader, Jessica Marill, completed every available challenge!

Every reader participating won at least one weekly prize, and everyone received a book and a bag of reading prizes at the end of the summer. Bobby Ferguson was the lucky winner of the grand prize raffle at the end of the summer. The ever-popular Guessing Jar was filled with fun-shaped erasers instead of candy this year. Jessica Moy had the winning guess.

One of the most exciting developments of the summer was welcoming patrons back into the Library. Starting in August, patrons were encouraged to book 30-minute browsing and computer use appointments. They were able to schedule their appointment online using our appointment booking system or by calling the reference desk. Upon arrival, patrons were greeted by a staff member that would explain how library use would be a bit different due to public gathering restrictions. The Library also set aside special browsing times for senior citizens and medically vulnerable individuals.

As word of the Library building reopening spread, requests for the use of public computer stations, the color printer, photocopier, and flatbed scanner increased. To ensure patron safety, waterproof keyboards and mice were quarantined and sanitized after each use. Many patrons also chose to utilize the Library's open Wi-Fi network from the comfort and safety of their cars from the parking lot.

In all, since the Library began offering browsing appointments in late August, 4,419 patrons have reserved a time to browse or use the computer. Many more walk-ins also visited the Library between August and December as capacity limits allowed.

Despite being a challenging year, Westonians continued to borrow items with enthusiasm. In total, 236,271 physical library books and items were checked out in 2020.

Here is a look at some of the most popular items of the year:

#### Adult Books:

1. "The Vanishing Half" by Brit Bennett
2. "Caste: The origins of Our Discontents" by Isabel Wilkerson
3. "American Dirt" by Jeanine Cummins

#### Adult DVDs:

1. "1917"

2. "John Wick: Chapter 3"
3. "Terminator: Dark Fate"

#### Children's Books

1. "Guts" by Raina Telgemeier
2. "Sisters" by Raina Telgemeier
3. "Dog Man: For Whom the Ball Rolls" by Dav Pilkey

#### Children's DVDs:

1. "Aladdin"
2. "Toy Story 4"
3. "Pokémon: Detective Pikachu"

#### Top Digital checkouts

- eBook: "Throne of Glass" by Sarah Maas
- Digital audiobook: "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" by J. K. Rowling
- Digital magazine: "The New Yorker"
- Digital comic book: "They Called Us Enemy" by George Takei



*When we were able to return to the Library, we were greeted with 93 bins of books from other libraries that had been in a storage warehouse since March*

Despite the challenges of 2020, it is clear that the Weston Public Library is entering 2021 as a more nimble and resilient institution. Library staff members have embraced change with enthusiasm. We have learned to consider limitations carefully, but to see them as an opportunity to think creatively. Most surprisingly, at a time when we have had to stay physically distant, we have worked more collaboratively with one another, with our counterparts at neighboring libraries, and with our colleagues from other town departments than at any other time in recent memory. While we all hope for a return to normalcy in the coming months, we also hope to maintain this collaborative and creative momentum long into the future.

#### The Friends of the Weston Public Library

Amidst the challenges of 2020, the Friends of the Weston Public Library (the Friends) furthered its mission "to encourage and promote the development of a strong and active public library, which serves as an educational and cultural center for the Town.... (and) to foster community engagement with the Library by sponsoring events and programs to augment Library services and resources not otherwise funded."

The Friends were off to a good start in 2020 when the pandemic shut things down. Membership numbers were up, the Hospitality Committee was organizing a tropical-themed Staff Appreciation Luncheon, and the Special Events Committee was looking forward to teaming up with the Art & Innovation Center (AIC) on some community engagement projects. The Friends held its last in-person board meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup>. Monthly meetings resumed in May via an online meeting platform, and the Board focused on planning safe ways to support the Library.

*Book and Bake Sale* - Traditionally, the Friends organize two annual community events: The Fall Book and Bake Sale in November and the Summer Book Sale in June. When it became clear that a summer sale would not be possible, the Board focused on planning an adjusted fall sale. Three small "Pop Up" sales in the library parking lot were held in October. In collaboration with the AIC and following public health guidelines, the Friends were able to hold an in-person sale in the Reading Room. The Board organized a multi-day sale on November 12-15<sup>th</sup> and three additional sales on November 28<sup>th</sup>, December 5<sup>th</sup>, and December 11<sup>th</sup>. "Pop-up" and Reading Room sales raised a total of \$4,429.00. The opportunity to have book sales in the Reading Room was a pandemic silver lining. The Friends were grateful to be able to safely continue this annual tradition and felt it was an effective way to promote the AIC as the

Makerspace branch of the Library. Adding to this effort, the Special Events Committee organized a group of board members who made AIC and Weston Public Library logo tote bags with the Cricut maker at the AIC. The Friends sold the tote bags for \$10.00 each at the book sales. Also, Friends members who donated at the \$250+ level received tote bags.

The Friends could not include the Bake Sale component of the 2020 fall event due to the virus. The Bake Sale Committee began planning a virtual baking class at the AIC to be held in 2021.

Book cart sales were discontinued and book donations were temporarily prohibited. The Friends began accepting donations again during the “Pop up” and AIC sales. When necessary, board members scheduled home pickups.



*Membership* - The generosity of Library supporters in 2020 was inspiring. Friends memberships increased slightly, 436 v. 398 in 2019. Funds raised increased by about 19 percent over 2019, \$34,155.00 v. \$28,732.00.

*Music Committee* - The Music Committee worked hard with its network of musicians, Assistant Director Allison Palmgren, and Weston Media to take its popular Concert Series online. The Virtual Concert Series season opened with a performance by Jon Sakata and Jung Mi Lee, details of which were described earlier in this report.

*Newsletter/Publicity Communications* - Three digital newsletters issued in February, June, and October as well as email blasts kept the community informed regarding Library and AIC programming and updates. Publicity/Communications kept the community informed via Instagram and Facebook posts and Town Crier announcements. One longer Town Crier article to promote public awareness of Library and AIC pandemic resilience was published in the December 31<sup>st</sup> issue of the Town Crier.

The Friends Board proudly supports the Library and would like to thank the community of Weston for its help by becoming members, participating in sales and events, donating books and materials, and volunteering on boards and committees.

*Arts and Exhibitions Committee* - Members of the Arts and Exhibition Committee work tirelessly to include an ongoing rotation of art in the Library’s gallery by inviting local artists to show their work each month. Because of the coronavirus, only four artists were featured in 2020: Debra Olin, Steve Charlip, Paul Angiolillo, and John Pacheco.

Patrons were treated to a variety of styles and mediums, including painting, prints, and sculpture.

#### Weston Art and Innovation Center

The AIC started 2020 with a full roster of classes, events, and Open Houses as well as a growing number of commitments to rent the Reading Room, Conference Room, and the maker spaces. Due to the pandemic, the Center closed in mid-March after having been open for only six months. The capacity

restrictions subsequently implemented resulted in limited patron attendance, but resourceful staff experimented with online programming and had success offering classes with limited enrollment on the back patio of the building and through an online meeting platform. New full-time manager Jean Arturi also published a weekly e-newsletter throughout the year and used that avenue to offer classes and present subscribers with unique and interesting ways to occupy themselves by learning and exploring online during their sequestered time at home. One result of the ongoing pandemic was the development of a whole new section of the website devoted to activities and remote events to enjoy during this extraordinary time where the internet still allowed people to travel and congregate.

The vinyl cutter continued to generate a lot of interest for classes and during Maker Lab. There is also consistent enrollment for painting, drawing, photography, software, flower arranging, and needle felting classes. Instruction requiring the common use of some equipment, such as the laser cutter, was not possible this year. The annual 'Fix It First' events were not held, nor were the monthly Open Mic Night, Storytelling Slam, and other routine programs. All were canceled but will return as soon as they can.

Rental inquiries and commitments were strong and indicate that the Reading Room is an attractive space for gatherings. The Reading Room was used for a wedding and wedding reception this year and was attractive for family, school, and corporate events such as cocktail parties, seminars, business meetings, exhibits, and interviews.

The large round tables the AIC purchased to encourage sit-down dining significantly boosted overall interest. The Conference Room proved popular for intimate groups, such as a monthly writers' group and a filmmaker conducting auditions. In November, under strict public health safety guidelines, the Reading Room successfully hosted the annual Friends of the Weston Public Library Book Sale.

Staff and Advisory Board members conducted a long-term project to re-design the website, which was completed in June. The Programming Committee initiated a review of marketing strategies and subsequently implemented a project to develop a more sophisticated long-range marketing plan that will define how best to broadcast the availability of classes, events, and rental opportunities not only throughout Weston but to neighboring towns. The long-term viability of the AIC is dependent on attendance and rentals coming from beyond Weston's borders and so effective marketing and outreach are a key element to success.

Once greater numbers of people receive the vaccine this spring and summer, the AIC will welcome everyone back in a celebratory Grand Re-Opening in September 2021.

2020 Members of the Board of Library Trustees

*Elected by the Voters*

Julie Panagakos, Chair	2023	Susan Scott	2021
Joseph Mullin, Vice-chair	2023	Dee Freiberg	2021
Emily Hutcheson, Secretary	2022	Linda Delaney	2022



## REPORT OF THE RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The Recreation Department started 2020 with its traditional and new program operations, including ice skating lessons, men's hockey, and free skate at the Rivers Ice Rink. The first year of organized ice skating went very well, taking in revenues of around \$32,000 while expending only around \$27,000 on rental fees and instructor costs. New membership fees were established for the upcoming Memorial Pool season, and marketing strategies were planned to increase membership, attendance, and fun. Weston Red Waves was having a banner year under a new coach and Weston Junior Broadway had successfully transitioned to the Weston Friendly Society with an exciting show planned for mid-March.

Then COVID-19 hit.

All Recreation Services were effectively shut down with the Governor's State of Emergency Order on March 12<sup>th</sup>. Public buildings were closed, most staff had to work from home, and strict cleaning and safety protocols were enacted. Summer camp and pool registrations were suspended and the Department ultimately had to refund all fees collected for spring and summer programs.

Through the spring, staff collaborated with colleagues around the state and country to try to make sense of what services could be provided during the public health emergency and how required safety protocols would impact operations. Department staff worked with colleagues at the Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association to assist with statewide safety protocols being developed and the Assistant Director participated in meetings with the Governor's Aquatics Task Force Subcommittee.



*Weston Red Waves team picture taken on Saturday, February 29, before what eventually became their last in-person competition of the season. The remaining season was abruptly cancelled later that week due to COVID-19 concerns.*

Ultimately, summer camps were canceled. It was determined to be too dangerous to allow camps to take place within the Weston Public School buildings, given the safety protocols that were developed, standards for cleaning and disinfecting, and other unknown variables at the time. Memorial Pool remained closed for the season due to strong concerns regarding staff implementing required safety protocols and obtaining adequate lifeguard training, impacts to the budget caused by limited attendance, the malfunctioning of a critical submersible well pump, and other increasingly insurmountable variables. The pool closure announcement was met with strong opposition from the public. Many were quick to note several surrounding towns had developed protocols and were opening their facilities; however, many other communities closed their pools for the same reasons as Weston.

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, the Governor announced "Phase I" of his re-opening plan for Massachusetts, which lifted restrictions for some in-person activities and allowed the Department to reopen fields and tennis courts. After some logistics discussions, the Emergency Management Team and Recreation Department developed a protocol plan for general exercise activities. Signs were posted at all locations outlining the conditions under which people could use the spaces, which essentially stipulated wearing facemasks and social distancing. No group activities, including pickup sports games, were permitted.

As the state moved through phases II and III of its re-opening plan, organized youth and adult sports groups were permitted to operate at various levels depending on the nature of the sport. The Recreation Department and Emergency Management Team developed an approval process to allow activities within the state guidelines, then developed protocols for more traditional Recreation offerings. Eventually, more traditional programming returned at a very limited and highly regulated level.



*Children engage in a summer program activity while wearing masks and physical distancing*

The September 11 Memorial Flag event took place in-person with strict safety protocols, and new single-day intergenerational events were developed in partnership with the Council on Aging, including an outdoor tai chi class and a trail walk on the newly opened Legacy Trail. Most other community-wide programs and events were canceled, including the Summer Concert Series, Ice Cream Social, and the Spring Egg Hunt.

By the end of 2020, much more was known about the spread of the coronavirus and some vaccines had received emergency approval, providing hope of a return to normalcy. The enacted public health protocols have become routine, and the variety of activities is slowly growing. But, with widespread distribution expected to take months, we anticipate continuing to offer a reduced level of service and accommodating strict safety protocols through much of 2021.

### Programming

*Adult* - In January, residents were excited about a new class to help perfect their golf swing and a fly-fishing casting class, which were being planned for the spring. Adult exercise programs continued to serve the Weston residents as they have for many years. During the shutdown, we began offering virtual group exercise classes at no cost to participants. These continued through the end of June and maintained a healthy participation level, with the yoga class doubling its participation. In July, the adult exercise classes continued online with a participation fee. We also celebrated the 39<sup>th</sup> year of Kathy Langenberg's class, composed mostly of the same people for the entire time.

Where regulations permitted, a Pickleball program was developed with beginner and advanced lessons. The faithful group of players met weekly until late fall. This program proved to be extremely popular and there are plans to expand it in the coming years.

*Events* - Many fun virtual activities were organized through the Weston Recreation Facebook page, including a snowman building contest, a scavenger hunt, nature bingo, a Star Wars Day on May 4<sup>th</sup> (May the Fourth Be with You), organizing a bear hunt by encouraging residents to place teddy bears in their windows, hosting baking classes, and organizing a Halloween costume contest for pets.

Some creative planning was needed for the September 11 Flag memorial event. Community participants registered in advance and were assigned to one of four timeslots to place the flags. Groups were limited to 25 people and individuals were assigned rows on a grid that would ensure proper social distancing for placing their flags. Many Town employees from almost all departments volunteered to help with the event. By its completion, almost 100 people were able to safely erect 3,000 flags on the Town Green. Most other September 11 Memorial events were conducted virtually, including ones hosted in Boston and the



*Children playing kickball during summer programming*

gymnastics, and karate returned. The much-loved cooking programs were transformed into science and Lego programs with the same instructor. A rotation of times entering and exiting the building for programs became the norm and no one missed a beat. It was a great way to see the resiliency of the Department in action.

*Summer Camps* – Public health guidelines and restrictions, and lack of access to appropriate facilities, prevented us from having a traditional summer camp. After attending many workshops and learning sessions, we put together a shortened five-week program at Burchard Park called “Alternative Summer Programming.” Our dedicated camp directors transformed Burchard Park into a camp-like space with cleaning supplies and individual boxes for each participant put together. A new routine was established for everything from drop off to pick up, all while wearing masks with smiles for days under them.

We enrolled 245 participants from kindergarten through fifth grade in programs related to arts and crafts, sports, and outdoor adventure. Through creative and determined staff, many participants tried something new and found some “normalcy” in a very strange summer. We had zero COVID-19 infections, exposures, or closures, which was to be commended. With the help of Fire Chief David Soar and the Fire Department, we had enough personal protective equipment to get through the summer when supplies were limited.

Even with the fewer hours and days offered, programs had waitlists for sessions and parents reported success all around. They were very appreciative that the Recreation Department was able to provide safe, fun summer programs in a time of uncertainty.

*Swimming and Ice Skating* - In the fall, Weston Red Waves was brought back in a limited capacity and planned to compete in virtual swim meets. Swim lessons and lap swimming also returned under strict protocols. Ice skating, including men’s hockey, skate lessons, and family skate, returned after an earlier temporary closure of all rinks in the state.

*Theater – Weston Junior Broadway* - The Weston Junior Broadway program went through its second transition in two years. The Weston Friendly Society proposed operating the program under its 100-years

State House, making Weston’s one of the few to take place in person this year.

*Youth* - Youth programming was off to a great start in January 2020. Winter program numbers were near capacity and required two school buses to transport everyone to the Community Center, and spring registration showed as much promise with enthusiastic registration. After the shutdown, single-day workshops for karate, Super Sports, and STEAM programs were among the first to be offered again in person. It was a slow start but with time and trust from our participants, we were able to put forth a more robust fall session that complied with health safety regulations. A new procedure was established for instructors and parent drop-off/pick-up. Over time, it became normal and parents expressed their sincere gratitude for all our efforts. In the fall, popular activities such as Super Sports,

of experience. The Recreation Department provided access to spaces in the Community Center for rehearsals and performance training. Weston Friendly Society brought an extra level of enthusiasm and expertise, and the program went remarkably well except that the performances were among the first events canceled due to the shutdown. We look forward to continuing to work with Weston Friendly Society moving forward.

### Governance

This year was one of the more challenging ones from a governance perspective. Due to the sudden closure of all public buildings and the ceasing of in-person meetings, the Recreation Commission had to cancel its March meeting. In April, the Commission started meeting virtually along with every other government group in town, thanks to an emergency order from the Governor loosening Open Meeting Law conditions and allowing for meetings to take place through remote technology.



*Children on a hike during summer programming*

Three positions on the Recreation Commission were up for re-election. After 18-years of service, Elly Draper Pendergast chose not to seek re-election. She was deservedly recognized at Annual Town Meeting for her long-tenured service and many contributions to the Town. Xinsheng Zhu also chose not to seek re-election, completing five years of service, which was also greatly appreciated. Eric Rosenthal, occupying the third position, ran for re-election.

At the Town Caucus, which occurred a week before in-person gathering restrictions were enacted, Mr. Rosenthal was nominated as expected. A new resident, Maija Cirulis-Gooch, spontaneously nominated herself for one of the other two openings. Later, Mr. Zhu resigned from the Commission after learning the Town Election would be postponed to a date uncertain. Since the election ballot had not yet been printed and election deadlines were not established, Ms. Cirulis-Gooch was appointed by the remaining members of the Commission and the Select Board to complete the remainder of Mr. Zhu's term. In September, Mr. Rosenthal and Ms. Cirulis-Gooch were both elected, and another new resident, Adam King, was elected to the third seat after running a contested write-in campaign.

Recreation Commissioners also continued to fill positions on the Rail Trail Advisory Committee (Eric Rosenthal), Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee (Melissa Crocker), and Community Preservation Committee (Marcy Dorna).

*Memorial Pool Renovation* - The Recreation Commission continued to pursue a renovation project at Memorial Pool to replace the aging filters, expand concessions, improve accessibility, and add recreational amenities. The Community Preservation Committee supported the Commission's request for \$250,000 to be used toward the design of this project. Unfortunately, due to many other hold-ups and uncertainties surrounding Annual Town Meeting and other governmental processes, this request was not heard by Town Meeting in 2020. It is anticipated to come to the 2021 Annual Town Meeting for approval. Consequently, a Citizens' Committee has been formed to assist the Recreation Commission in garnering support for this project.

Regular Business

The Recreation Department staff consists of seven full-time employees who are assisted by many dedicated part-time and seasonal staff. Regular pieces of training are conducted with all staff members following the laws and codes for their jobs and also to ensure a positive environment for all Recreation Department participants.



*Intergenerational Tai Chi Class, hosted by Recreation and Council on Aging*

The operational budget for fiscal year 2020 was \$1,463,289 and was offset by \$474,361 in revenue. An additional \$575,727 came from the tax levy and revenues in the Town’s general funds, and \$30,000 was transferred from the Council on Aging to contribute to the Community Center’s building expenses. The difference of \$383,201 came from a combination of the retained earnings account and transfer from the Town’s emergency fund.

2020 Recreation Commission Members

<i>Elected by the Voters</i>	<i>Term expires</i>
Eric Rosenthal, Chair	2023
Melissa Crocker	2021
Marcy Dorna	2021
Julie Johnstone	2022
Trevor MacDonald	2022
Maija Cirulis Gooch	2023
Adam King	2023

**REPORT OF THE RECREATION MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**

This year, the Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee finalized the Master Plan update in March and worked to put it in action; however, upon the public health state of emergency, the Committee switched to meeting in a virtual format and focused its attention on finalizing and initiating the Master Plan. The new Master Plan can be found on the Town’s website on the Plans and Studies web page located within Town Services.

The primary purpose of the plan is to:

- Emphasize proper maintenance on new and existing facilities to maximize their useful life
- Plan capital maintenance items to ensure that investments from the previous plan and new initiatives from this plan meet their full potential
- Plan for the future recreational needs of Weston
- Consider the needs of indoor recreational spaces and pools

Initiatives included a planned schedule for capital rehabilitation projects that would ensure current facilities remain in good condition, continued emphasis on maintenance, rehabilitation work on Memorial Pool, adding pickleball courts, and improving accessibility to select facilities.

The first action item of the Committee was to support the Recreation Commission’s request for design

fees to renovate Memorial Pool. The facility's aging filters need replacing and additional recreational amenities are being considered, as well as upgrades to accessibility, concessions, and reception.

The Committee also unanimously supported a warrant article for Town Meeting that would fund a series of interconnected feasibility studies at the Middle School and High School Complex. This would support the Town and Facilities departments' need to plan for long term renovations of the High School and Middle School, address unsafe traffic and parking conditions at both schools, and explore other concepts generated by the Recreation Master Plan, all of which would need to consider limitations posed by an existing wastewater treatment plant and wetland areas that exist on location. Ultimately, this proposal was deferred as part of a compromise budget negotiated by the Select Board with the Finance Committee.



*Adult pickleball practice was a popular activity during the summer*

Other priorities identified within the Master Plan include:

- Improve parking and access to select outdoor facilities in Town
- Create pickleball courts to meet the growing demand for that sport
- Implement a scheduling system that can be accessed by the general public at any time
- Consider ways to protect the town against mosquito-borne illnesses and other health threats such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)

As the year progressed, the Committee stayed updated on the state guidelines detailing public health-related safety measures for the various sporting groups.

In the fall, Weston Little League approached the Town about turning over the management of maintenance of the Burchard Park recreation facility. Weston Little League has managed this since the facility was built in 2008, but budget challenges caused some treatments to be deferred, which led to poor drainage and safety issues with current field conditions. Utilizing the knowledge and abilities of the Field and Grounds Department will better guarantee proper treatments at the appropriate time.

The Committee also began looking into efforts that would prevent revelers from driving on recreation fields. An incident in the fall created minor damage on numerous School and Recreation fields. In 2021, the Committee will be working with Weston Little League on a minor rehabilitation at Burchard Park to improve those field conditions and discussing other priorities such as adding pickleball courts and accessible pathways.

### Membership

In September, Kristin Barbieri resigned from her position, citing the accomplishment of her goal to help shepherd the Master Plan to its conclusion, also the extensive volunteer work that she is involved with elsewhere in town. She was replaced in December by Shirley A. Small-Rougeau, a resident with extensive experience in Recreation Facility management.

Mark Ferris was named as the Youth Soccer Representative given his membership to the Weston Soccer Board of Directors. He previously served as the Youth Lacrosse Representative, who is now Pam Martin.

Town-Wide Field Maintenance Budget

The field Maintenance budget for fiscal year 2020 was \$176,260, which represented a 3.6 percent increase from fiscal 2019. No major renovation or rehabilitation projects took place.

2020 Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee Members

*At-large members jointly appointed by the Select Board and School Committee*

Trevor MacDonald	2023	At-large, Chair
Shirley Small-Rougeau	2022	At-large
Michelle Callanan	2021	At-large
Alex Cobb		School Committee
Melissa Crocker		Recreation Commission
Mark Ferris		Weston Youth Lacrosse
Charlie Hipwood		Weston Little League Baseball and Softball
John Power		Weston Youth Soccer
Peter Foley		Athletic Director (retired), ex officio
Ben Polimer		Field and Grounds Coordinator, ex officio
Michael McGrath		Athletic Director, ex officio
Chris Fitzgerald		Recreation Director, ex officio



*State Representative Alice Peisch joined in Weston's carefully planned 9/11 flag placement and observance, which was one of the few held in-person this year*