

# Orleans Recreation Department Organizational Study Report Town of Orleans, Massachusetts

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**EDWARD J. COLLINS, JR. CENTER FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT**  
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# Overview & Methodology

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- *The Collins Center was engaged by the Town of Orleans to review the organizational structure of the Recreation Department in light of residents' vision for the future of the department and its programming.*
- *The Project Team interviewed 25+ individuals, including department heads, members of various committees, service providers, and elected officials.*
- *The Project Team has gathered comparative information from 8 Cape Cod and Southeastern Massachusetts municipalities.*
- *The Collins Center held an open public forum on November 15, 2022, to gather information on public perceptions of the department and its mission.*
- *A Draft report was transmitted to the Town on January 13, 2023.*

# Recreation in Orleans

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- *The Orleans Recreation Department is part of the Department of Public Works.*
- *Until recently, the department had a part-time director with no support staff.*
- *Recreation operated with an annual budget of \$180,902, along with a limited revolving fund.*
- *Recreation fees are set by Town Meeting and do not necessarily reflect the actual cost of programs.*

# Recreation in Orleans

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- *The Recreation Advisory Committee (RAC) was created in 2019 to advise the Select Board and Town Administrator on ways to improve and/or expand Orleans recreation programming, facilities, and resources.*
- *There are several separate entities that also provide recreation-related programs, including the Council on Aging, Snow Library, Orleans Afterschool Activities Program, Orleans Natural Resources, Orleans Conservation Trust, and the Orleans Cultural District.*

# Comparative Analysis

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*The Collins Center, in consultation with Town Administration, selected 8 municipalities as comparable to Orleans based on the following criteria:*

- *Generally coastal*
- *Fairly modest DOR incomes per capita*
- *Higher than average EQV (equalized valuation) per capita*
- *Median ages higher than around 50 years/higher-than-average cohort of elder adults (65+ years)*
- *Lower than (state) average of persons per housing unit, which is a strong indicator of a seasonal community*

# Analysis of Comparable Municipalities

Municipality	2023 Population	FY2022 Single Family Tax Bill	FY2023 DOR Income Per Capita	FY2023 EQV Per Capita	CY2020 Population Aged 65 & Older	CY2020 Persons per Housing Unit
Brewster	10,318	5,091	42,062	424,544	33.70%	1.18
Chatham	6,594	5,164	70,190	1,198,690	46.65%	0.80
Dennis	14,674	3,242	39,307	542,155	35.18%	0.88
Eastham	5,752	4,920	37,872	565,047	42.89%	0.79
Harwich	13,440	5,162	41,696	475,922	33.71%	1.16
Marion	5,347	7,685	64,737	354,434	25.60%	2.14
Mashpee	15,060	5,151	41,620	397,779	29.69%	1.39
Mattapoisett	6,508	7,168	57,787	292,023	28.57%	1.81
Orleans	6,307	6,703	55,454	715,962	45.53%	1.02

# Themes emerging from our comparative analysis...

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- *Stand-alone Recreation Departments are most common.*
- *Fees vary widely, as does the share of overall costs that are fee-supported.*
- *Active collaboration with other departments, such as Councils On Aging and public schools, is a common attribute in other towns.*
- *Outside vendors and nonprofit organizations provide programming where recreation departments lack staff or expertise.*
- *Comprehensive afterschool programming is provided by most comparable towns, but not necessarily by the recreation department.*
- *Fewer than half of the comparable municipalities have a substantial community center or similar space dedicated to recreation programs.*
- *Staffing levels in Orleans are below most comparable departments.*





# Themes emerging from the interviews and public forum...

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- A robust interest in creating an *exceptional recreation community* with a broad definition of recreation that includes accessible, affordable, and multigenerational leisure and fitness activities
- An involved community with *dedicated residents and volunteers*, including the Recreation Advisory Committee, local boards and organizations, and committed volunteers
- A desire for *increased programming*, particularly after-school, school vacations, late summer, and pickleball
- *Failures or delays in communicating* program offerings, fees, and scheduling changes
- Perceived *unwillingness to collaborate* or develop partnerships with other agencies
- Limited understanding of the *financial aspects* of delivering recreational services
- A *lack of confidence* in departmental leadership

# Recommendations Overview

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*12 findings and 16 recommendations, falling into 4 categories, are discussed in the draft report.*

- *Staffing*
- *Organizational Structure*
- *Communication and Collaboration*
- *Finance*

*The following slides present a brief overview.*

# Staffing—Key Findings

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- *The 8 comparable municipalities spend an average of \$334,808 on staff, not including seasonal employees, while Orleans spends \$180,902. 6 have full-time Directors.*
- *Department leadership has had little **time** for program or financial planning, communication, and training.*
- *Support staff has not been sufficient to provide “**hands on**” assistance.*

# Comparative Analysis

Town	Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Employees	FY2023 Budget
Brewster*	2	\$232,235
Chatham	6	\$891,122
Dennis	3**	\$144,874***
Eastham	3	\$498,592
Harwich	3.5	\$647,996
Marion	1	\$134,987
Mashpee****	4.5	\$348,308
Mattapoissett	1.0125	\$57,500
Orleans	1.3625	\$180,902

\*FY2021 data utilized in lieu of most up-to-date figures – full or part-time status could not be confirmed.

\*\*The Project Team could not confirm the hours of the Dennis Recreation team, although it is known the Director is a full-time employee.

\*\*\*This figure represents direct funding to Recreation. In FY2021, Beaches were funded at approximately \$940,233, significantly higher than Recreation.

\*\*\*\*This excludes the Mashpee Daycare Enterprise Fund.

# Staffing—Key Recommendations

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- *Recruit a full-time Recreation Director with administrative, planning, and communication skills.*
- *Fund sufficient support staff.*

# Organization—Key Findings

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- The current structure provides **no benefit** to Recreation or the DPW.
- **Stand-alone** Recreation Departments are the norm, and many communities are having success with **different combinations** of traditional departments.
- A Department of **Community Life** could lead the coordination of programs and services across Recreation and Council on Aging while partnering with other departments and organizations, including regionally.
- A Community Life **Working Group** that meets regularly to coordinate programs and share resources and ideas would help meet the needs of the community.

# Organization—Key Recommendations

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- **Separate** Recreation from Public Works and Natural Resources
- Consider creating a new department of **Community Life** to include Recreation, Council on Aging, and potentially others.
- Form a **permanent working group** for Community Life to collaborate on service delivery and share ideas and resources.

# Collaboration and Communication

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# Key Findings-Collaboration and Communication

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- Unlike recreation operations in comparable municipalities, Orleans does not **prioritize collaboration** or partnership with other municipal departments, nonprofits, or other such organizations.
- **Communication** and **transparency** have been issues for participants in Recreation programming.
- There is a strong desire in the community for a more **expansive definition** of recreation that includes a range of leisure activities.

# Key Recommendations--Collaboration and Communication

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- Develop and implement a **communication plan**, making use of Community Life collaboration and software to create consistent communication channels.
- The Town should inventory **programs, resources, and facilities** to determine how to best fill the gaps in recreation opportunities for certain demographics.
- The Recreation Department and other 'Community Life' departments should consider a more **expansive definition** of recreation that includes a range of leisure activities.

# Key Findings--Finance

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- MyRec **software is underutilized** as a financial tool.
- Individual Recreation program **costs and revenues** should be tracked.
- **Additional** sources of funding ought to be pursued wherever possible.
- Stronger **relationships** with the community will foster opportunities to increase **volunteerism and fundraising**.

# Key Recommendations--Finance

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- **Prioritize training** on software to utilize its full potential
- **Identify the cost** of providing each program and make funding decisions accordingly.
- Pursue methods of generating **new revenue**.
- **Explore** the pros and cons of operating a fully fee-supported suite of programs.

# Conclusion

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- *Departmental structure does not provide any **measurable benefit** to programming needs.*
- *There is significant **public support** for recreation, and volunteers at many levels have worked to envision recreation programming that is **inclusive, affordable, and multigenerational**.*
- *Implementation of a **communication plan** with standard procedures would improve programming, scheduling, safety, and interdepartmental coordination.*

# Conclusion

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- *A fully developed **recreation plan with measurable goals** would improve accountability and create metrics for success.*
- ***Staffing** and **technological literacy** are areas in need of strengthening.*
- *Fostering greater **collaboration** and transparency would benefit recreation programming.*
- ***Financing** of recreation programming needs to be better understood by all branches of Town government and residents.*

Please contact with any questions:

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