

Recreation and Parks Technical Assistance Program (RecTAP) Final Report

**CHIP- (Citizens Helping to Improve Parks) in Pottstown**

Funded in part by the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society and a grant from the Environmental Stewardship Fund under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation

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## **Park Watch Program – Pottstown Parks and Recreation and Pottstown Police Departments**

**February 2018**

**Prepared by: Sue Landes, RecTAP Consultant**

Concept: Pilot the program at Spruce Street Park (Spruce St. & Gay St.). The idea is to concentrate efforts on one location and get enough people participating to evaluate the program and make necessary changes before expansion to other parks.

### **Join CHIP- (Citizens Helping to Improve Parks) in Pottstown!**

Keeping your neighborhood parks clean and safe is our priority – but we need your help. Pottstown Borough is asking you to CHIP-in!

**CHIP-in Pottstown** is a partnership between the Pottstown Police Department, Parks and Recreation Department, park neighbors (Borough residents, businesses, community agencies, churches, and schools) and park visitors, working together to:

- Help prevent crime and vandalism and alleviate suspicious activity in our parks and playgrounds
- Assist in the enforcement of park rules
- Assist in park care and maintenance by alerting staff of maintenance needs or other concerns
- Promote community involvement in and awareness of neighborhood parks and recreation facilities and activities

**CHIP-in Pottstown** brings park neighbors, visitors, and the Pottstown Borough Police and Parks and Recreation Departments together to ensure a quality system of recreation facilities for all to enjoy. Park users and neighbors watch over park property and report any problems they see. CHIP-in provides guidelines to follow when reporting suspicious activity or maintenance issues, helping to keep parks and playgrounds safe, clean and enjoyable year-round.

As a neighbor to a park or park visitor, you are in a unique position to both enjoy and protect our parks. Although the Pottstown Police Department and Parks and Recreation Department patrol in and near the parks on a regular basis, they may not see everything you see or see it as quickly as you do. As a CHIP-in volunteer, we simply ask you to report suspicious or illegal activity and vandalism to the Pottstown Police, and maintenance needs or other issues to the Pottstown Parks and Recreation Department.

### **Mission Statement**

CHIP-in Pottstown is an active, citizen-powered effort to reduce vandalism to playground and park equipment, to alleviate suspicious activities in the parks, and to promote public awareness for parks, recreation and conservation.

## **Neighborhood Cooperation**

CHIP-in Pottstown is a cooperative effort among park neighbors, park visitors, schools, businesses, community organizations, churches, and the Pottstown Police and Parks and Recreation Departments.

## **Neighborhood Control**

The concept is easy. People assume more responsibility for the activities that take place in their own neighborhood park. With CHIP-in Pottstown, neighborhood eyes and ears are focused on close-to-home parks and recreation facilities.

## **Neighborhood Involvement**

To make CHIP-in Pottstown work, it takes participation from all residents who live close by or use the neighborhood park, and businesses, agencies, churches and schools located near the park. With everyone watching, vandals and criminals won't stand a chance. People caring about their neighborhood park by reporting safety concerns and maintenance issues helps to get problems addressed faster.

CHIP-in Pottstown is designed to ultimately save money. Dollars spent on cleaning up litter, repairing vandalism and catching criminals can really add up.

## **CHIP- (Citizens Helping to Improve Parks) in Pottstown**

CHIP-in Pottstown provides you, your organization, business, church, school or family with the opportunity to make a difference in the safety of your neighborhood park.

We love our parks! Help us to keep them clean and safe! Feel a sense of ownership and pride in your neighborhood park when you CHIP-in Pottstown!

### **CHIP-in Pottstown goals are to:**

- Develop a sense of neighborhood ownership and community pride as everyone works together to ensure safe, clean and enjoyable parks.
- Empower citizens who live near or use parks and recreation facilities to help keep them safe havens for children and adults to play and learn.
- Decrease and prevent incidents of vandalism, crime, and misuse of park property.
- Reduce repair and restoration costs for park equipment and facilities.
- Instill strong park, recreation and conservation values in our children and teach them to be observant and responsible park patrons.
- Bring awareness to activities taking place in our parks and playgrounds.
- Increase communication and cooperation between police, parks and recreation staff, community organizations, businesses, schools and neighbors on behalf of the parks.

We are piloting CHIP-in Pottstown at Spruce Street Park so that we can fine-tune the program. Our eventual goal is that every Borough neighborhood park is part of CHIP-in Pottstown.

### **How to Report What You See and Hear at Your Neighborhood Park**

When visiting or passing by your neighborhood park, you are asked to be on the alert for all incidents of vandalism, unruliness or other wrongful activities, as well as park maintenance issues. You are encouraged to observe and report on:

- Illegal or suspicious activity
- Vandalism and defacement of park property
- Misuse of playground equipment
- Alcohol or substance abuse in the park
- Fighting or harassment
- Littering or trash dumping
- Destruction of natural resources
- Broken or unsafe equipment or other hazardous conditions
- Park rule violations

**If this is an emergency or you are observing a crime in progress, please call 911.**

**To report a suspicious person, vehicle or activity that concerns you, vandalism in the park, or a crime that has already been committed, please call 911.**

When calling 911:

- Stay on the line and answer any questions from the dispatcher
- Provide as much detail about the activity, individuals or vehicles involved if they can be safely determined, including height and weight, clothing and direction of travel, as well as any other identifying information, and license plate numbers or description of suspicious vehicle
- Snap a photo with your cell phone, if possible to do safely
- Note time and date
- Provide the name and address of the park you are calling from. Provide a detailed description of where the problem is located within the park using landmarks.

To report park maintenance issues, litter, equipment failure (such as lights not working), facility vandalism, or broken or unsafe equipment, call the Pottstown Parks and Recreation Department at 610-970-6608 or email them at [pottsparksp@pottstown.org](mailto:pottsparksp@pottstown.org). Provide the name of the park and a detailed description of the issue and where it is located within the park. The Parks and Recreation Department staff answering incoming telephone calls will utilize report forms to document the information you share with them.

CHIP-in volunteers should report only! If you observe someone breaking park rules, committing a crime or engaging in other illegal activities, **DO NOT** take matters into your own hands! **DO NOT** take any action to intervene or correct a problem yourself. This is the responsibility of the Pottstown Borough Police or Pottstown Parks and Recreation Department.

Thank you for helping to keep our parks safe for everyone by reporting information. Remember – avoid confrontations with the public at all times.

**The following information would be used only if an online reporting tool were to be created:**

Please use the online reporting tool below to report a safety issue. Your information will be helpful in making us aware of safety issues so that we can address them quickly.

**If this is an emergency or you are observing a crime in progress, please call 911.**

Please make a selection from the drop-down list:

**Issue you are reporting:**

Alcohol use

Basketball court hazard

Car break-in

Dead animal

Destruction of natural resources

Disorderly behavior (not in progress)

Dog feces

Dogs not on leash

Drug deals or drug use (not in progress)

Evidence of unauthorized fires

Fence problem

Fixture problem (picnic table, bench, kiosk, bike rack, water fountain, etc.)

Graffiti

Grass needing mowed

Hazard tree

Littering

Loitering  
Overnight stays in park  
Panhandling  
Pathway hazard  
Picnic pavilion problem  
Playground equipment problem  
Property theft  
Public drunkenness  
Public urination or defecation  
Restroom problem  
Sign damage  
Trash, garbage, debris  
Trash cans overflowing  
Vandalism  
Weeds  
Other park issue

**Affected park:**

(drop down list of parks)

**Description of location in park:**

(map to pinpoint the location of problem – or space to type in location details)

**Your name:**

**Your phone:**

**Your email:**

Request is private and confidential \_\_\_\_

Please contact me \_\_\_\_

*The following form may not be used due to the need to call 911 for all police-related issues:*

**CHIP-in Pottstown**

**Park Suspicious Activity Report Form**

Name of Person Reporting Activity: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Information (if given): \_\_\_\_\_

Report Form Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Neighborhood Park: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Frequent Event? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Activity Type: \_\_\_\_\_ (Graffiti, Substance Abuse, Property Damage, Property Theft, Other)

Detailed Account of Activity:

Offender's Name & Address (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Offender Description 1:

Offender Description 1:

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Descriptors: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Descriptors: \_\_\_\_\_

Mode of Transportation: \_\_\_\_\_ (Foot, Vehicle, Bike)

License Plate # (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

CHIP-in Pottstown

Park Maintenance Issue Report Form

Name of Person Reporting Issue: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Information (if given): \_\_\_\_\_

Report Form Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Park Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Witnessed: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Witnessed: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Issue in Park: \_\_\_\_\_ Frequent Event? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Detailed Description:

\_\_\_ Basketball court hazard

\_\_\_ Dead animal

\_\_\_ Destruction of natural resources

\_\_\_ Dog feces

\_\_\_ Evidence of unauthorized fires

\_\_\_ Fence problem

\_\_\_ Fixture problem (picnic table, bench, kiosk, bike rack, water fountain, etc.)

\_\_\_ Graffiti

\_\_\_ Grass needing mowed

\_\_\_ Hazard tree

\_\_\_ Littering, debris, garbage, trash strewn about

\_\_\_ Pathway hazard

\_\_\_ Picnic pavilion problem

\_\_\_ Playground equipment problem

\_\_\_ Restroom problem

\_\_\_ Sign damage

\_\_\_ Trash cans overflowing

\_\_\_ Vandalism

\_\_\_ Weeds

\_\_\_ Other park issue



## CHIP-in Pottstown Volunteer Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood Park: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

As a CHIP-in Pottstown volunteer, I:

\_\_\_ Have attended a training session

\_\_\_ Have received and understand park rules and regulations

\_\_\_ Agree to report suspicious or illegal activity to the Pottstown Police

\_\_\_ Agree to report vandalism, maintenance needs or other issues to Pottstown Parks and Recreation

\_\_\_ Understand how to report

\_\_\_ Will not take any action to intervene in a situation or correct a problem myself

\_\_\_ Will ask neighbors, family, and friends to join me

\_\_\_ Will be a good observer and use my eyes and ears to help keep my park safe

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pottstown Park System Rules & Regulations

Pottstown Parks are open from dawn to dusk, year-round.

**The following are not permitted, anytime:**

- Unauthorized activity in the park after sundown.
- Use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages and illegal substances, including entering a park in an intoxicated condition.
- Use of fireworks.
- Driving or parking any motor vehicle upon any part of the park except designated roads and parking areas.
- Overnight parking.
- Gambling.
- Littering or dumping trash, debris or any other materials.
- Damage, defacement, removal, or destruction of any park equipment, facilities or property, including but not limited to trees, shrubs, plants, rocks, benches, picnic tables, water fountains, buildings, and playground equipment.
- Starting fires on any property.
- Trapping of animals.
- Sleeping and/or camping out.
- Golf and golf-related activities.
- Allowing a dog in any park unless the person having control of the dog has it on a leash. All persons in control of a dog are responsible for removal of dog feces.

## **Implementation Steps**

### Program Review and Approval Process – January-February 2018

*Review of program mission, goals, reporting process, etc. plus selection of the pilot park*

1. Parks and Recreation review and comments on draft – revisions made - approval to send to Police Department – sent by Parks and Recreation to Police Department
2. Police Department review and comments on draft – revisions made – approval to submit to Borough Manager
3. Borough Manager review and comments on revised draft – revisions made – approval to submit to Borough Council for approval

### Organize Kick-Off Meeting for Sign-Up and Training – February-March 2018

*Attend to all details to hold the Kick-Off Meeting*

1. Set date/time – late April/early May
2. Find location – should be in the park neighborhood and indoors, possibly church or school
3. Develop a logo for CHIP-in Pottstown to use on signs and flyers
4. Create promotional flyer
5. Set up agenda – welcome, why this program is needed, program description and goals, what to report, how to report, park rules, etc.
6. Contact speakers – Borough Manager, Mayor, Council President, Chief of Police, Parks and Recreation Director
7. Finalize training materials and copy them
8. Provide refreshments
9. Create sign-in sheet
10. Begin general promotion
11. Create invites to send to targeted people – Borough Council, Parks and Recreation Staff, Police Staff, other Borough Staff, etc.
12. Create signs that park is supported by CHIP-in
13. Finalize agreement for individuals to sign that they follow CHIP-in rules

### Promotion Process – March-April 2018

*Ways to promote Kick-Off Meeting for volunteer sign-up and training – goal is to get as many people to the meeting as possible*

1. Door-to-door flyers to neighbors surrounding the park – use high school service group or other volunteer group
2. Door-to-door contact of businesses, churches and community agencies in the park neighborhood
3. Flyers on windshields of cars in park neighborhood

4. Set up Facebook event page for all meeting details – continually promote the page asking for people to share it
5. Note in church bulletins of neighborhood churches
6. Flyers home to school students at school(s) closest to park
7. Note in school newsletters
8. Digital billboards at Borough entrances
9. Flyers at Borough Hall
10. Flyers at Public Library
11. Newspaper article
12. Borough Council meeting
13. Citizens Leadership Academy
14. Ask Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, Chamber of Commerce, Pottstown Cares, United Way to share with their constituents
15. Emails sent to Parks and Recreation program participants and facility users
16. Parks and Recreation Facebook, Twitter and Website
17. Parks and Recreation Newsletter
18. Signs at the park