

New Bedford Celebrates Official Reopening of Buttonwood Park Basketball Courts

The community celebrated today the replacement of three heavily used but seriously deteriorated basketball courts in Buttonwood Park with two new state-of the-art high school-size courts and a college-size court. The refurbished basketball courts are the end result of a campaign to overhaul them launched by the Friends of Buttonwood Park, an all volunteer organization dedicated to supporting Buttonwood Park.

Mayor Jon Mitchell joined with the Friends in cutting the ribbon on the new court and threw a jump ball to start the New Bedford High School Whalers Boys Basketball Team in playing the first game on the new court. "This project is a prime example of what the New Bedford community can achieve when resident, government, business and non-profit sectors come together and are committed to making a positive change," said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

"Many people in this community have fond memories of playing pick-up and tournament games on this court, myself included. I applaud the Friends of Buttonwood Park for taking on this challenge and inspiring others to support the project. Many organizations and individuals contributed to the fundraising campaign and I want to thank them for making this transformation a reality," Mitchell continued.

The need to rebuild the Park's three basketball courts was identified by the Friends of Buttonwood Park as a top priority project of its "Buttonwood on the Move" campaign, designed to improve recreational facilities and encourage exercise in the

park. The Friends appreciate how important physical activity is to the health and well-being of the people of New Bedford.

“As someone who has played on the Buttonwood Park courts since being a teenager back in the 60’s, I can attest to how important they have been to myself and to countless young people, certainly as a tremendous resource for physical play, but also for personal growth, for learning sportsmanship and teamwork, and for meeting people of all races, colors and creeds whom they might otherwise have never met. The Friends cannot thank enough all those who helped to build these wonderful new courts,” said Richard Leary, Board Member of the Friends of Buttonwood Park and Project Design Committee Chair.

The scope of the restoration project includes upgraded basketball courts with aprons, new asphalt playing surfaces, new hoops, backboards and poles, new lighting benches and landscaping. Some of these items have yet to be completed, and the Friends will continue their fundraising efforts until the entire project is done.

The Friends worked closely with the City of New Bedford on the project to restore the courts. Through the Department of Public Infrastructure, Parks, Recreation & Beaches and the Office of Housing and Community Development, the City of New Bedford provided \$40,000 in paving materials and donated an estimated \$60,000 in in-kind support in the form of labor, project management and technical assistance.

In addition, P.A. Landers, one of the largest contractors in the Northeast completed all of the paving work and supplied the equipment and labor to complete it. The value of P.A. Landers contribution to the project is estimated at \$7,500. In addition, paving contractor P.J. Keating supplied the hot mix asphalt at a discounted rate which contributed an estimated \$3,500 to the project.

