

October 5th, 2015

Park and Recreation Commission Meeting

Attendees: Bobby Beagan, Jim Marotta, Mike Ensley, Dick Williamson (arrived after meeting began), Paul Griffin Nancy McShea

Guests: Mike Walsh, Sudbury Youth Baseball

Commission reviewed minutes from September 21st and August 24th. Minutes approved 4-0.

Summer Camp Refund Policy: Commissioners discussed the current refund policy which is to charge \$25 dollars per session for summer program cancellation up to a specified date in June and after that date there is no refund. Commissioners discussed policies in other towns and compared them to Sudbury. The Commissioners were in agreement with the current policy. They suggested that if the Director, Nancy McShea, felt that the cancellation fee should be increased she should bring the request up at a future Commission meeting.

Lane Cancellation Policy: Nancy McShea stated that the Atkinson Pool currently does not have a lane cancellation policy. Nancy is proposing a policy requiring vendors or individuals who rent lanes to give 48 hour notice in order to cancel the lane without a fee. Nancy distributed a written policy to the Commissioners. This policy, if approved, will be given to all lane renters.

A motion was made to approve a new lane rental policy at the Atkinson Pool. The motion passed 4-0.

Public Meeting - Baseball Proposal to build baseball fields at Featherland

Jim Marotta stated that Sudbury Youth Baseball came to the Park and Recreation Commission with a proposal to renovate the baseball field at Upper Featherland and to build two small baseball fields in place of tennis courts previously located at Featherland Park. He stated that the Commission would not vote on the proposal at this meeting. He also stated that there is a documented need for additional baseball fields and that tennis courts are located at the high school and Feeley Field. He said the Commission is considering the proposal which is why the Commission is holding the public hearing.

Mike Walsh, President of Sudbury Youth Baseball, presented the proposal and informed the audience that there were two parts to the proposed renovations at Featherland Field.

Part one is to take Upper Featherland Field and turn it into a 50ft-70ft baseball field. He stated the footprint of the field would not change, but they would plan to make the field longer so the fence would be taken down along with a number of trees along the road.

Part two is to take the current location of the tennis courts at Featherland Field and convert that location into two 100ft little league fields. The new fields would replace the current fields at the Noyes school and would be used for first and second graders. The new fields would allow the younger kids to see older kids play on the other fields at Featherland.

Mike stated that he understood that not everyone would be happy with the change, but there is a real need for new baseball fields.

He stated that parking would not be an issue and if there were times that more parking was needed there would be parking available at Nixon school and the Episcopal Church.

The funding for the renovation and new baseball fields would be fully funded by Sudbury Youth Baseball.

Mike also stated that in the past the Melone property was considered for new fields, but that is no longer seen as a future plan for new fields. The new fields do not add to the current inventory, they will just replace the field use at Noyes.

Mike also stated that he and the Commission spoke with the Athletic Director at the LSRHS and he was in agreement that he would rather see additional courts at the high school rather than Featherland Field.

Jim and Mike opened up the meeting to questions and comments:

Susannah Chinoy, 482 Concord Road, asked about the cost of the project and a breakdown of the costs. She asked if baseball was paying for just the construction or the ongoing maintenance costs.

Jim Marotta stated that the new fields at Featherland may be cheaper for baseball rather than continuing to spend money at the fields at Noyes.

Bob Stein, 7 Thompson Drive, questioned the need for the new fields due to the fact that the youth population has dropped and continues to drop. What is the real need? Mike Walsh responded with the comment that these would not be new fields, but replacements for the fields at Noyes.

Jim Marotta stated that the tennis courts were in bad shape and needed to be replaced anyway.

Joseph Tratnyek, 476 Concord Road, asked why the Commission doesn't just replace the tennis courts at the same location. It would be much cheaper than building new courts at the high school.

Percy Chinoy, 482 Concord Road, asked why new fields aren't just put at Noyes. Mike Walsh responded it was very difficult to keep the fields at Noyes in good shape due to the fact that they are on a playground. Mr. Chinoy was very upset due the fact the new fields at Featherland would be very close to his house and would increase the noise and activity.

Shirley (didn't get last name) stated that she didn't think first and second graders needed perfect fields to play on. She also questioned the timing of this new plan and asked how many girls are being served by this plan. It appears that only a small group of young boys will benefit by the new fields.

Ralph Tyler, 1 Deacon Lane, stated that this would be a radical change to the Featherland Field from a historic point. He also felt that Melone may be ready and the Commission should revisit the possible use of this property for recreation fields. Mr. Tyler also stated that since this would be fully funded by youth baseball, a memo from the previous Town Manager stated that all funds would have to be accepted by the Town Manager and the Selectmen. He felt approval would be required by others for this type of change before any decision could be made by the Commission.

Shioban Hulliger - asked who was going to build the new fields and stated she would rather see the tennis courts rebuilt. She also referred to the plan to rebuild courts at LSRHS. She asked if one plan could be contingent on the other.

Mara Huston, 578 Peakham Road, questioned why Nixon couldn't be used for new baseball fields. Mike Walsh stated youth baseball had already tried to use those fields but they are hard to use due the fact they are located at a school.

Many residents stated that the tennis courts were an asset to the town and offered the opportunity for use by all ages not just a select group.

Mike Ensley suggested that 2 or 4 tennis courts could be put at the Fairbank/Haskell field location. In the past there were courts at Haskell field.

Susannah Chinoy, 482 Concord Road, asked what the standard or what quality of field is required for little league fields. Mike Ensley responded a flat, smooth surface, preferably grass. He said that Noyes is not flat, home plate is exposed and there are rocks on the field. He said it is dangerous for the young kids to play.

Maxine Yarbrough, 468 Concord Road, would like to see the tennis courts rebuilt. She is very concerned about the noise level, and additional fields would make it just a baseball site. It should be a community recreation field not just for one sport.

Marianne Tratnyek, 476 Concord Road, asked about the spruce trees along Concord Road. Mike Walsh stated they would be staying, no need to take those trees down.

Mark Waiting, 10 Codman Drive, stated the tennis courts have always been used at Featherland. He wants the courts back. He asked if a parking study had been done or a feasibility study. Jim Marotta responded that a parking study was not done.

Liz Daryl - asked when the courts would be put at LSRHS? Where would they go at the high school? The high school JV teams use the courts and the high school uses them for practice.

Craig Thompson, 88 Blueberry Hill Lane, thought the courts were okay as they were and was very concerned about the lack of advance notice given for the public hearing on the new fields.

Ken Bettenhauser, 107 Pratts Mill Road, stated that tennis courts can always be found in town and that the baseball fields at Noyes are dangerous.

Art Krusinski, 39 Mossman Road, asked if there would be a portable mound on the renovated 50-70foot diamond. He doesn't want to see the trees cut down. He has looked at the plans and spent some time with the Town Engineer. He is concerned about the actual space requirements for the new fields and if they will really fit in the current footprint of the tennis courts. Jim Marotta asked that he put his concerns in writing and send them to him in time for the next Commission meeting.

Nadine Rutledge, 444 Concord Road, has concerns over the trees coming down, since they won't be there to block the balls that could be hit out into the street.

Jim Cavanaugh, 9 Codman Road, - hates to see the tennis courts go away since the high school teams do use the courts in addition to the many residents that use the courts daily.

Mr. Chinoy, 482 Concord Road, stated many of the comments heard tonight were about replacing the courts and the money had already been put in the capital budget. What is the next step? It seems like the entire board is in favor of the new fields. Will the subject be discussed again at the next meeting?

Jim Marotta thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and stated the Commission will make a decision within the next two meetings. He also stated that people were welcome to come to the future Commission meetings.

Camp Sewataro - Judy Mara, from Sewataro, attended to hear what the Commission had to say about the news that the Taylors were going to sell Camp Sewataro land. She stated the plan is preliminary and it would be up to 10 years before anything happens. Mark Taylor is just starting initial discussions to see if there is any interest from the town. The camp is a beautiful piece of property and could be a real asset for the town. Commission members toured the property and felt it had a great deal of potential for the town as a recreation piece of property. It could be used for many purposes, baseball fields, tennis courts, summer camp.

Jim M. was concerned about the pricing and how the town would handle it. Judy stated the Taylors wanted to bring the offer to the town early to see what the interest would be and how both parties might benefit from the sale.

The discussion centered on thinking outside the box as to how the facility and land could be used more than 39 days over the summer.

Judy pointed out that the Camp will still run and is not being sold immediately, but sometime in the future. The Taylors are looking for different ways for the space to be used throughout the year and wanted to bring it to the Town's attention early in the process. Mark Taylor would like to see the facility and land continue to be used as a camp.

The next meeting was scheduled for October 26th.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm