

Town of Sudbury

Park and Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

October 26th, 2015

Present: Commissioners - Bobby Beagan, Paul Griffin, Jim Marotta, Dick Williamson

Guests: Mike Walsh- Youth Baseball, Peter Elenbaas-LSRHS Athletic Director, Brittany McNamara, Town Crier

Jim Marotta opened the meeting stating that the Park and Recreation Commission was evaluating two proposals from Youth Baseball for the Featherland Field complex. He explained that the evaluation was in the preliminary phase and that town officials would also be looking at the proposals regarding parking and other town issues.

**Public Comment-**Over thirty residents attended the meeting to discuss their concerns regarding the proposal to replace the Featherland tennis courts with baseball fields and renovate the Upper Featherland field which would require the removal of 7 trees along Morse Road. Bob Stein, 7 Thompson Drive, asked the Commission to look at other alternatives. Wayne Thomas, 203 Marlboro Road, expressed concern over the loss of the tennis courts and requested that they be replaced. Jim Marotta explained that the Commission is reviewing all suggestions and the Gale report stated the school fields are substandard. Paul Griffin told the audience that the Commission has heard the comments of the residents and appreciated their concerns. He felt the Commission would be able to work the issues and please both parties. The attendees continued to ask why the school fields can't be renovated. Sue Brennen distributed a sheet with data on tennis courts and demographics at surrounding towns. She felt that Sudbury needed the courts at Featherland to be replaced. The tennis courts offer activity to many users of various age groups. Baseball fields would offer a more limited use for young players, predominately boys in the first and second grade. Art Krusinski questioned the need for the 50/70 ft. baseball field. He felt baseball may not need to make the change due to the overall changes in Youth Baseball. Paul suggested that concern was not for the Park and Recreation Commission but rather the Youth Baseball Committee.

Parking was also a concern of many of the attendees. They found it hard to believe that the additional baseball fields would not impact parking. They wanted the park to stay the same, and felt that replacing the tennis courts with baseball fields would change the character of Fetherland field.

Jim Cavanaugh expressed his concern for the trees that may come down and the 16ft fence that is planned for the site. He felt a fence that high would be very unattractive to the neighborhood and look like a prison.

Mark Waiting, 10 Codman Drive, was very upset about the removal of the tennis courts and the process of informing people and the fact that the Commission could make the decision without a Town vote.

Mary Hyer, 39 Tantamouse Trail, stated the LSRHS team is impacted by the loss of the tennis courts. The tennis teams used the courts for practice and some home matches. The Featherland courts are also more useful than Feeley due to their proximity. Transportation is an issue for the school.

Paul Griffin said he felt the process is working and the Commission is listening. He said it is good to hear all the comments and even though some might think the process is flawed, it is working. He also pointed out that there was never a secret plan to put baseball fields in at Featherland.

Peter Ellenbas, Athletic Director LSRHS, stated that the school would be in favor of adding two courts to the high school, but wanted to be clear that the LSRHS capital budget has no plans to put money in for the courts.

He said the tennis courts at the high school are used for wellness classes during the day and for tennis practice after school.

Dick Williamson suggested that the Melone Property could still be a site for recreation activity.

After over an hour of public comment discussion, Jim M. closed the public comment and continued on with the agenda. He stated the Commission felt it was important to let the comment go longer than usual to let the residents express their concerns.

**Featherland 50/70 Baseball Field Renovation** - Mike Walsh stated that the Youth Baseball organization voted to have all 6th graders play on a 60ft field. The renovated softball field can accommodate that field and they have proposed to the Park and Recreation Commission to renovate Upper Featherland to a 50/70foot field. Mike said he was open to taking down less trees and look at what would work best. He also said the fence does not have to be 16 feet high. Bobby Beagan asked if the new fence would be silver like the one on the softball field. Mike stated the plan was for the fence to be black vinyl.

Bob Stein asked about the Gale Study and the need for new fields when the number of kids are dropping. Mike said the fields proposed where the tennis courts used to be are not new but replacements for the school fields. The upper Featherland proposal is a renovation, not a new field.

At this time Mike Walsh informed the Commission and all attendees that Youth Baseball was withdrawing their proposal to put baseball fields where the tennis courts used to be at Featherland Field. Mike said he would be looking for support from the Town on other issues and finding new locations in town for first and second graders.

Mike Walsh made it clear that he was open to discuss the changes at Upper Featherland and the 50/70 foot proposal. He said he would be happy to meet with residents at Featherland on Thursday morning. Paul Griffin said he would also plan to attend.

**Turf Quality** - Bobby Beagan reached out to Bob Lee regarding the turf quality at Haskell field. Bobby has been in contact with Arbor-Turf and was told it would cost under 10k to do work at Haskell that would be similar to the work done at Featherland.

The Commissioners discussed the poor condition of Haskell field and why it has deteriorated over the years.

**YMCA** - Jim Marotta mentioned that the YMCA had requested an informal meeting with some Commission members. The thought was to meet and discuss shared needs, but not at a formal Commission meeting.

**CPC**- Paul asked if anyone knew the deadlines for CPC. Bobby said he thought it was the second week of November, but he will follow up and get the specific dates.

Jim M. said he is still waiting on the Parc Grant and is expecting to hear shortly.

**LS Girls Hockey** - sent requests to use the outdoor hockey rink at Haskell this winter. The Commission thought it would be possible, but need to be coordinated with Sudbury Youth Hockey.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.