

Remote Phone Meeting – 7:00pm

March 31, 2020

Bobby Beagan, Mara Huston, Dick Williamson, Jim Marotta, Ben Carmel

Dennis Mannone, Dir. Park and Recreation/Pool

Guests: Bill Murphy (Board of Health)

Public Comment: None

Discuss Park and Recreation Commission Policy on Facilities/Fields as related to COVID-19 –

Bobby stated he received an email from Bill Murphy, Board of Health (BoH) regarding their stance on use of recreation facilities in Town. Dennis read the email which referred to a meeting the BoH held, with 2 Selectmen in attendance, that they are looking for more restrictions on the use of basketball and tennis courts in Town and Cutting field through May 4th. This could include removing the nets at Featherland and Haskell, locking tennis courts at Featherland and Feeley and locking the gates at Cutting Field.

Dennis stated he put signs out last week encouraging social distancing at the field and courts. He said many Town officials have received calls from residents concerned about the use of the tennis courts and basketball courts at Featherland, Haskell and Feeley. People are concerned due to the lack of social distancing being practiced and concern of spreading COVID-19.

Dennis stated he has also seen groups practicing on Cutting Field., in addition to private lessons being taught at the tennis courts.

Mara suggested removing every other net at Feeley and one net at Featherland. She also suggested removing the nets at two of the basketball courts at Haskell to prohibit full court play, and two nets at Fetherland basketball/tennis courts to keep players further apart.

Ben Carmel read a statement where Scott Nix, Chief of Police, stated concern regarding what will happen with outside activities once the weather gets nicer,

Bill Murphy restated the BoH concerns and stated the next few weeks will be critical as the COVID-19 cases are expected to peak. He stated the BoH recommendations to further restrict the use of basketball, tennis and Cutting field at this time. He stated the BoH will defer to the Park and Recreation Commission at this time, but if the situation changes more restrictions may need to be put in place.

Mara suggested sending an email to Bosse and Longfellow reminding that our courts are not to be used for private lessons at this time and without a permit.

Dennis felt the basketball and tennis courts should be shut down. Cutting is more difficult to close because the fence on one side is only 4 ft high.

Jim Marotta asked for better signage at the fields and thought that should be the first approach to give residents fair warning rather than locking the gates. He felt stronger signage is an interim approach, so that people could still get fresh air while they are being asked to social distance.

The Commission discussed what other Towns have done and many have closed field and courts already.

They also discussed possible interim steps such as only two nets at Feeley and keeping the fence entrances open, so people would not have to touch the gates to open and close them.

Dennis was not in agreement with any plan to keep a few courts open and some basketball courts open. He felt the Town had given the interim notice last Friday and it is clear social distancing isn't being followed. He said he posted information on the Park and Recreation website He felt the recommendations of the Board of Health should be followed.

Jim Marotta asked what the next step would be if we lock down the tennis and basketball courts. It was felt the next step would be to close all fields and recreation locations.

After discussion Bobby Beagan made a motion which was seconded by Jim Marotta.

Motion: The Park and Recreation Commission will lock down Feeley and Featherland tennis courts. Haskell and Featherland basketball courts will be closed and nets will be zip tied. Cutting field will be left open at this time, but soccer/lacrosse nets will be moved and tied to the fence so they will not be able to be used. Improved signage will be placed at the locations and on Town websites with clear and concise instructions to all residents to use social distancing and avoid large group interaction and if rules are not followed more restrictions will be put in place. Batting cages will also be closed and locked or taken down.

Vote as follows: In favor: Mara Huston – yes, Jim Marotta – yes, Ben Carmel – yes, Dick Williamson – yes, Bobby Beagan – yes.

Motion passed 5-0 in favor.

Commission asked Dennis to get this done as soon as possible, working with the Park and Grounds Department.

Bobby will work with Dennis to craft a statement from the Park and Recreation Commission to explain why these measures need to be taken and will work with the Board of Health to get the message out to the Town. The expectation is to work to get this message out to the Town by tomorrow.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm

Vote to adjourn 5-0 in favor Mara Huston – yes, Jim Marotta – yes, Ben Carmel – yes, Dick Williamson – yes, Bobby Beagan – yes.

