

Virtual Meeting 6:33 pm

December 16, 2025

Commissioners: Mara Huston, Granger Atkenson, Ben Carmel, Laurie Eliason

Roll Call: Granger-here, Ben-here, Laurie-here, Mara-here

Public Comment: None

Chair Comments: Mara noted that the meeting is dedicated to capital planning prioritization. She presented the framework she created on results from the Field Needs Assessment. The plan is to review recreation properties and policies. Mara noted that Laurie would document any questions for future answers, as this meeting was expected to be the first of several in the process of capital planning for the next 5 years.

Capital Planning Prioritization based on Field Needs Assessment – The Commissioners discussed the structure and goals of and needs assessment for recreational properties. Mara shared her screen which with a framework on the Fields Needs Assessment survey she created. Mara edited the working document as the Commission discussed the various topics. The Commission agreed on four main goals: determining project order and interdependencies, identifying standalone projects, reaching field distribution counts and developing a 5-year capital plan. Granger suggested developing a policy framework that will dictate development and usage of properties. Laurie raised concerns about the condition of the school fields, particularly Curtis and the elementary schools and suggested developing a policy for usage of school fields. Ben pointed out that the needs assessment should include basketball and tennis courts.

Laurie informed that she and Bobby have been participating in interviews for the Haskell Master Plan. The Commission discussed field distribution and capacity issues, with Ben emphasizing that while the framework is helpful as a guideline, the Commission doesn't have to adhere strictly to it. Commission agreed that maintaining field quality and implementing rotation schedules was important. There was agreement that that school fields should not be counted in the total field capacity, as they are not available for general use and in poor condition. The Commission also noted that CPC funds have been used for school field improvements in the past, though can't be for turf fields anymore.

Commission continued discussion on field allocation and usage across Town properties, focusing on baseball diamonds, softball fields, and turf fields. Commissioners agreed on prioritizing projects, with Davis and the Feeley Phases identified as immediate "low-hanging" fruit. They also discussed the need to address the Haskell baseball fence removal to increase natural grass playing space. The group discussed private maintenance might be necessary for some fields due to scheduling constraints on Town maintenance.

Commission discussed the potential removal of the 90ft baseball diamond at Haskell and its implications for local youth sports. Usage data was examined, which showed the diamond is used for about 168 games annually by youth baseball. This represented a small fraction of their total games. The Commission explored alternative locations, including Feeley Field, but determined Feeley would not be a viable option for the high school JV team due to transportation challenges and existing field limitations. After discussion, no alternatives were identified that would allow for the removal of the Haskell diamond without significant disruption to the current sports programs.

Discussion continued on field renovation priorities, focusing on baseball and softball facilities. Commission agreed that Davis field improvements would help with rectangular fields, while Broadacre-Featherland baseball-softball complex renovations were considered valuable but would require additional parking. Mara noted that once Lower Feeley's drainage issues are resolved, the fields could be dual-purposed for both softball and baseball, though they still need a dedicated 90-ft baseball diamond somewhere in Town. Ben clarified that Haskell's baseball field would remain usable, but could be temporarily repurposed, and Mara suggested adding a question about youth baseball field usage patterns in Sudbury to their list.

Maintaining baseball and softball fields at Featherland and Feeley was discussed with the possibility of adding a playground at those locations in the future. It was agreed to keep rectangular fields at Davis, Parkinson and Haskell, with Parkinson identified as a future priority for development. Commission will ask the Lincoln Sudbury School Committee liaison to confirm if there are any other spaces at LSRHS that can accommodate additional fields. It was stated that Curtis Middle school fields are currently in poor condition and primarily used by school teams after school hours. The Commission agreed to separate school fields from their main focus which is recreational fields. After discussion, it was decided to focus on developing other properties such as Parkinson before considering significant improvements to Curtis Field and other school fields. Laurie noted her role as liaison would allow her to communicate field needs without implying Town responsibility for improvements. It was decided to focus on baseball diamonds at Feeley and Curtis, specifically prioritizing the renovation of the 90ft diamond at Feeley after the current Phase 2 renovations, which will address drainage issues, are completed. The Commissioners agreed to consult with Youth Baseball about their potential use of the improved Feeley Field. Granger will create a timeline for the capital improvement projects, which will span approximately 5 years. The group also noted the Featherland tennis courts were in good shape, while the Feeley tennis courts were in poor condition.

The Commissioners continued discussion on improving and expanding sports facilities in Town, focusing on tennis, pickleball, and basketball courts. New locations for courts were suggested at schools such as Curtis Middle School and Haynes, and additionally discussed the need for maintenance at the existing facilities. Granger proposed timing renovations at Feeley for the year after the current softball improvements are complete, aiming for the summer of 2027. Ben raised concerns about Haskell Field's capacity and suggested the possibility of adding a turf field to maximize usage.

Commissioners discussed the comparisons between synthetic and natural turf, with Mara presenting research on maintenance costs, environmental concerns, and health risks associated with synthetic turf. Commissioners considered the seasonal capacity advantage of synthetic turf, but expressed concerns on potential future changes to field configurations at Haskell and Davis with Granger suggesting the possibility of adding more rectangular fields. The discussion concluded with a plan to create a 5-year capital improvement timeline and to integrate discussions about the Haskell Master Plan into future meetings.

Mara stated she would take any questions/notes that Laurie recorded and start working on where to get the answers. She will add Granger's capital Improvement 5-year timeline to the January agenda. Laurie mentioned at some point the Commission will need to integrate the capital improvement discussions around the Haskell Master Plan discussions. Mara asked for additional discussion topics for the January meeting be sent to her attention.

Motion to adjourn made by Laurie. Second by Granger. Vote: Laure-yes, Granger-yes, Ben-yes, Mara-yes. Vote passed in favor 4-0.