



**Town of Swampscott**  
**Athletic Fields Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Tuesday, February 9, 2021 – 6:00 PM  
Virtual Meeting

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

Polly Titcomb, Neal Duffy, Ryan Joy, Adam Packer, Brendan Greco, Alice McDonald, Carrie Siefken, John Tripp, Mellisa Caplan, Al Pica, Alexandra Byrne, Gino Cresta

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

None

The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm.

**COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE**

Neal Duffy recommended the first order of business be to name a chair and identify someone to take meeting minutes.

Neal provided a description of the duties of the chair:

- Setting the agenda
- Posting the agenda
- Running the meetings
- Serve as the point of contact for the Select Board liaison and DPW.

After a brief discussion, on **MOTION** (Siefken) and **SECONDED** (Pica) it was **VOTED** to name Adam Packer chair of the committee.

Roll call: Joy (YES) Packer (YES) Siefken (YES) Tripp (YES) Caplan (YES) Pica (YES) Cresta (YES). McDonald and Greco did not vote as they were not sworn in yet at town hall.

Neal noted the group needed to set our meeting dates and make sure the agenda is created in time for our meetings (48 hours prior to meeting times). We need to post our agendas by Noon on Fridays before scheduled meetings (Tuesdays).

**FIELD SCHEDULING | FEES DISCUSSION**

Neal spoke with Linda O'Keefe today at the Athletic Dept's office at the high school. Neal asked her to find out more about outside user groups. She will email Neal a list of outside groups that have been using the fields and how much they have paid. Linda noted she does get a lot of requests from outside groups to use the turf field and often has to turn them away because the field is booked. The committee should consider this as we talk about ways to generate more revenue from the turf field. Neal suggested that eventually Linda should come to one of these meetings.

## **CURRENT STATE DISCUSSION**

Adam noted that the committee should try understand our goals and priorities. Gino noted the town has an operating budget for field maintenance. The last committee was able to get \$50k in the budget. The majority of that lately has been going to upper and lower Jackson. These fields have been treated with synthetics but there will be a plan to switch to organics for those fields.

There are two accounts: a maintenance account (\$50k) and a user fees account.

Alice suggested that the committee should try to prioritize which fields need the most work now and going forward. We also need to determine costs and what we would need to do to petition the town for more money to help fund projects.

As an example, Lower Jackson was at one point rated the worst field in Essex county and that's why we were able to do something to fix it. There was a discussion about town resources and some recalled there was talk about hiring two FTE's in lieu of hiring a landscaping company to cut the lawn.

We would need to do some research and benchmarking to understand what towns are doing and then come back to the committee. Neal noted the Open Space committee is dealing with the organics matter, but that someone from our committee should be the liaison to that committee.

Gino suggested a good place to start benchmarking would be Marblehead. They have 9 guys on their DPW/field crew. Swampscott has 1.

Al suggested we have Mike Chakoutis from Gino's team provide feedback to this committee about which fields need the most work and tie that into our thinking about the fees and how big projects and maintenance is funded.

Neal suggested there are two goals:

1. Fees/funding projects and;
2. Scheduling.

Adam mentioned it would be good to understand the financing flows and also to bring in Linda O'Keefe to educate the committee about scheduling matters and challenges. Alice agreed and suggested we should review the fee structure and figure out a recommendation on how they should be structured.

Neal mentioned that if the idea of the user fee is to partially pay for the turf field replacement, we should consider creating a stabilization fund for that expense. We would need to consider how that would be funded and what percentage of the cost of the project the fees should make up. Fundraising, schools, etc. This committee should provide feedback on this.

Adam mentioned we're bringing in \$25k/year right now on fees. We should be careful about raising fees on sports that don't use the turf field. It's a tax. It would be good to have this info in an easy to digest format. Gino chimed in to say he thought the turf field will need to be replaced in about 15 years.

Brendan raised some concern that the school teams/users don't contribute fees to fund maintenance and projects for the fields. Alice asked that we have someone explain to committee what the school fees go towards since they don't go towards field maintenance. Brendan noted High School football charges at the gate for games. The Athletic dept. keeps the fees for the gate. Those funds do not go towards the fields. Adam commented that it seems that there are some funds out there that could potentially be moved around to use towards athletic field needs. Neal cautioned the relationship between the town and the schools need to be considered when making recommendations to the town about fees and which groups are funding.

Alice steered the conversation back towards benchmarking and noted we need to better understand what our surrounding communities are doing so we can go back to the finance committee and school committee.

Adam suggested we have Linda O'Keefe come to a future meeting. Gino will have Mike C. provide feedback about his view on the current state of the fields and priorities.

**BENCHMARKING ACTIONS:**

Brendan: will send an email out to the youth football peer group.

John: Will work to get some info from flag football towns.

Al: talk to peers within the Little League community in D16 in eastern MA.

Neal: We should appoint someone to be the open space liaison. Ryan nominated Alice. Alice agreed to do this for our committee.

On **MOTION** (Pica) and **SECONDED** (Joy) it is **VOTED** by roll call to adjourn the meeting.  
Roll call: Joy (YES) Packer (YES) Siefken (YES) Tripp (YES) Caplan (YES) Pica (YES)

Meeting adjourned at 6:58 PM.

True Attest,

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Al Pica, Athletic Fields Advisory Committee Meeting Member