



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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Polly Titcomb, Neal Duffy, Adam Packer, Brendan Greco, Alice McDonald, Carrie Siefken, Mellisa Caplan, Al Pica, Gino Cresta

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ryan Joy, Alexandra Byrne, John Tripp

The meeting was called to order at 6:06pm.

MISSION DISCUSSION

Adam was able to connect with Neal in between meetings to discuss the direction and mission of the committee. We're narrowing it down to three main topics

1. Scheduling
2. Maintenance
3. Fees/Finances

Alice asked if we knew what we are trying to fund this year. What are the priorities? We can probably roll this into the maintenance/fees areas. Adam suggested we start with scheduling and we should use data to drive decision making. We will invite Linda O'Keefe to a future meeting.

SCHEDULING DISCUSSION

Open questions:

1. Do we keep records of who uses the fields and when?
2. Which groups use the fields the most?

Neal responded that Linda O'Keefe is the person responsible of maintaining those records. There may be some differences between the permits/reservations and what is actually used. If we're meeting monthly, someone should be talking to her in between the meetings. Gino volunteered to be the point person from the committee to Linda. There is a spring meeting and a fall meeting to look at fields and use requests. Adam thinks we should attempt to understand how often the fields are often being used when they are reserved.

Polly added the rec department should probably be part of the conversation as well due to some conflicts. Is there a google doc or some kind of a cloud-based tool that we can use? Neal noted there are really two different matters relating to scheduling... in-season scheduling and communication and the booking/actual/proper usage of the fields.

Al asked if the right groups are using the right fields so we are creating revenue opportunities. Adam agreed with Polly that we should considering look into tools that can help us with scheduling efficiencies. Polly suggested a future meeting with all of the stakeholders could help tie all the pieces together.

Mel feels strongly that the DPW should have ownership over scheduling of the fields. The high school is often unavailable in the moment when a response is needed off-hours/weekends. Alice and Polly concurred. There seemed to be a consensus that it would make more sense for the responsibility of scheduling to shift but there are several factors that the group would need to think through and investigate.

Polly noted that ultimately, we'll need to formalize and centralize the scheduling and communication process, regardless of where the responsibility lives. Neal reminded the group that we need to benchmark what other towns are doing in between our meetings so we're not trying to reinvent the wheel.

Adam: Before the next meeting let's:

1. Request data from Linda about past field usage
2. Research what are other towns doing in the area for scheduling.
3. Come up with a job description for what the committee thinks should be in scope of the field scheduling role(s)

Mel added something we need to consider is the over use and under use of certain fields.

MAINTENANCE DISCUSSION

Adam asked simply, what is the current state of our grass fields? What fields are in good shape, what fields are in bad shape, and what should our priorities be?

Gino replied that the town has 1 person who works on the fields. As mentioned in the previous meeting, we have \$50k per year to maintain the fields. In the past we've used some of that funding to treat the fields.

Al reiterated that we should try to prioritize the fields in town that need to be worked on. We'd then need to come up with a plan to maintain the fields that have a lot of work to be done. Gino noted that in the last three years a lot of money and resources have been spent on the Jackson fields and those fields are in great shape.

Alice asked if there might be grants available to help us with the grass fields. Neal thought this is something that could be explored and that Open Space and Rec might have some ideas and that Marzie might be able to assist as well. Polly noted that Sarah Koch was working on the transition to organics to treat the fields. It could be an opportunity to find funding to help with the overall field maintenance situation.

Gino added that Mike Chakoutis does not get taken off of fields during “field season” but it’s almost all year around.

Adam posed the following core questions:

1. What is the inventory of the grass fields in town?
2. What condition are they in?
3. What would it take to get all of the fields into great condition?
4. How much would it cost?

Gino is getting together a proposal from Turf Sports Specialists to switch over to organics from pesticides/herbicides. We should set expectations with the user population that the fields might not look as good in the future. We could invite them in to do a needs assessment for the fields and provide a timeline and cost estimates.

Neal mentioned that Chip Osbourne in Marblehead could be someone to share best practices on resources/maintenance, etc. Polly mentioned that if we need to close down a field for a season, we could be flexible.

Gino noted that the field usage fees are going into a fund now that is basically not touched. It’s in the DPW, not the rec. Part of it goes towards the \$5k stipend for the schedulers. It’s reserved for capital projects.

Al offered to take ownership of working with Mike in DPW to do a field needs assessment and help to come up with a list of priorities.

Adam is offering to take a look at the current state of finances... can do some benchmarking for other towns. Al will send info gathered from Lynn.

Neal mentioned we need to define what an outside group is and determine how to handle those fee structures.

Our next meeting is second Tuesday April 13th at 6:00pm.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Gino will reach out to Marblehead to see what they’re doing about field maintenance, resources and funding
2. Brendan will reach out to his football contacts in other towns to do the same.
3. Al will meet with Mike Chakoutis to inventory all of the grass athletic fields in town and rate their current condition. This will help prioritize budget and resources.
4. Adam is going to take a look at the current state of finances related to field maintenance. What do we have in the field usage fee account? Adam will also try to benchmark what other towns have in place for fees and scheduling.

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:58 PM.

True Attest,

Al Pica, Athletic Fields Advisory Committee Meeting Member