

## Sudbury Park & Recreation Commission Athletic Field Q&A – June 23, 2015

- What are the Park and Recreation Commission's plans in regards to athletic playing fields?

At its June 9, 2015 meeting the Park & Recreation Commission voted 4-0 in favor of the following motion:

*“The Commission will continue in efforts to address the Town’s playing field shortage. In doing so the Commission will continue to pursue a flat level playing surface at Davis Field as well as construction of a suitable parking lot, but has decided to remove the Little League baseball fields from its plans at Davis Field. In order to address the Little League field shortage the Commission will seek a suitable location for the construction and/or renovation of approximately four usable Little League fields. In the interim the Commission supports all reasonable efforts to maintain playing fields, particularly Little League fields, in playable condition, or better. The Commission looks to address Town’s playing field needs as soon as possible.”*

- What is the Park and Recreation Commission proposing to do at Davis Field how is this different from the project rejected at Town Meeting?

As stated above, the Commission is pursuing a flat level playing surface at Davis Field. The size of the level surface area will likely be smaller than that proposed at Town Meeting as the baseball component has been removed. In addition, the Commission is pursuing a paved parking lot with approximately 150 parking spaces. Ultimately the size of the field and parking area will be dictated by the permitting process.

The adjacent 37.38 acre Davis Farm Conservation Land will remain as Open Space under the purview of the Conservation Commission while Davis Field recreational space under the purview of the Park and Recreation Commission. These are two separate parcels purchased separately in 1970's by the Town with both deeds having restrictions dictating use and purview.

- Who says there is an athletic field shortage?

The Park & Recreation Commission, an elected body, has indicated this for the past 10 years or more. This shortage has been documented by third party experts, first in 2003 and most recently in the 2012 Athletic Fields Needs Assessment & Master Plan Update prepared by Gale Associates. Also, these sentiments are echoed by athletic field user groups such as baseball, soccer and lacrosse. In addition, the Director of the Sudbury Park & Recreation Department has also expressed such concerns, especially since continuing to operate the fields as they have been over the past several years will cause irreparable damage and result in existing fields, primarily at Haskell, to undergo costly renovation. A portion of Haskell Field is currently closed for the spring and fall seasons to avoid such renovations further exacerbating the shortage.

The 2012 Athletic Fields Needs Assessment concluded need and substandard field conditions with 28 percent of Sudbury playing fields below acceptable standards with fields scheduled at 118 percent of sustainable capacity.

## Sudbury Park & Recreation Commission Athletic Field Q&A – June 23, 2015

- Why do we need this at all? Population is declining.

Although school age population is declining, recreational demand continue to increase as does the propensity to play. Recreational opportunities specifically for women are increasing through such programs as growth in girls' lacrosse and softball. In addition, non-traditional sports such as Rugby are growing, with LSRHS making Rugby a varsity sport. Sudbury Youth Soccer Association has experienced growth in high school programs. In recent years LSRHS has had upwards of 120 kids tryout for the boys' soccer team, with about half of those kids getting cut. There is also a group of boys and girls who do not tryout for the LS soccer teams realizing it's highly unlikely they'll make the team, but would like to continue to play the sport. Adult recreation continues to grow, but there are limited opportunities to accommodate this growth or provide suitable practice time for existing teams.

- How much of Sudbury's athletic field needs are met by LSRHS?

A substantial amount of field is supplied by LSRHS, particularly multipurpose rectangular fields (MPR). There are three MPR fields at LS. The town is afforded equal use of the Community Field (the football stadium field) via the L-S Community Field Agreement. However, the Town has no right of use or control over the balance of the fields which in in turn could be problematic if such use was not continued to be allowed. Currently, both boys and girls lacrosse teams rely almost exclusively on LS fields, particularly the side-by-side turf fields. In addition youth football exclusively uses LS. However, LS is experiencing growth in its programing, particularly club and girls programs. As such, this could reduce field availability for Sudbury recreational programing.

- Dog walkers are against the Davis Field proposal.

There is an active group of dog walkers that use Davis Field for walking their dogs. This activity can continue at Davis Field as it currently does at other Town recreational facilities and parks. As required by Town Bylaws, dogs need to be under control on a leash.

- Who else benefits from this proposal?

Davis Field is a vast open field area that currently is and will continue to be used by Sudbury residents for a variety of uses – dog walking, nature walking, active recreation, radio flyers – everyone who currently uses this area will be able to continue to use it, as well as hopefully new users. P&R envisions the creation of a walking trail around the perimeter of the field that will make it easier to explore the property. When this project is completed, it will have adequate parking to accommodate all these uses, as well as accommodate parking for the proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, which is located less than 500' from the Davis Field parking area.

## Sudbury Park & Recreation Commission Athletic Field Q&A – June 23, 2015

- Why disturb Davis - use Melone instead?

As stated on its deed Davis Field was sold to the town “for park and recreation purposes, under management of its Park and Recreation Commission”. Davis Field is an existing recreational field that could better serve the recreational needs of the Town by leveling the field area to provide more space. Doing so would be the most cost effective solution to addressing multi-purpose rectangular field needs in Town. To date, the town has spent considerable monies on engineering and permitting for Davis Field renovations. In total Davis Field is 29.48 acres and currently there is approximately five acres of field space at Davis. The new proposal would increase the playable area to extent allowed via permitting to a maximum of approximately 11 acres. As a comparison, Haskell Field has 20 acres of level playing space.

On the other hand, the Park & Recreation Commission has no jurisdiction over Melone, and the utility of Melone for such a use, although promising, lacks any planning effort beyond theoretical sketches. There are substantial grade changes within the Melone property, and roughly a 70-foot elevation change to the portion of Melone located in Concord. The site also has wetlands and substantial portions of the site fall within wetlands jurisdiction, particularly the Concord portion of the site. Access to the site is also in question given the current location of access on Route 117, particularly in terms of traffic site lines.

The Park and Recreation Commission will be active in discussions on Melone when the Board of Selectmen determines its use.

- Concern for Town doing the work?

Bill Place has planned for years to complete renovations at Davis Field. In doing so he has stockpiled fill at Melone and can utilize Town resources to complete renovations at a substantial cost savings to the town.

- Concern for having Davis off-line for 2 years?

During renovations playing field surfaces will be unavailable for several months, and several months thereafter as grass begins to grow. Thus, for instance, if work commenced in the spring, use of the fields for non-athletic uses should be available, at least in sections, by the fall of that year.

- Concern for traffic. Need a traffic demand study to review impacts during rush hour.

If a traffic study is needed, one will be done as part of the Site Plan approval. However, the traffic issue is one that is likely overstated. Use of Davis Field as athletic fields will occur in the 10 week fall and spring seasons. However, because of the shorten length of daylight hours in the fall the fields would be used substantially less in the Fall. As for rush hour impacts, traffic is heading west with most if not all Davis Field traffic heading east from various Sudbury locations to an athletic event. In addition, some if not most of the vehicles may stay at the field and leaving after peak rush hours, particularly if younger teams are scheduled to practice at these times as parents of younger children tend to stay or be more involved. Thus, there’s about a 10 week window in the spring when existing traffic back-up along Route 117 could be exacerbated, but with prudent scheduling much of the negative effect of traffic exiting Davis Field could be minimized.

## Sudbury Park & Recreation Commission Athletic Field Q&A – June 23, 2015

- The Town should fix existing fields before creating new .....can't we improve the school baseball fields instead of building new?

The Park & Recreation Department and LS Youth Baseball have spent a considerable amount of time and money in attempting to improve school baseball fields. However, most if not all of these fields serve as playgrounds and are overused to the point where on some fields grass doesn't grow. In recent years LS Youth Baseball has spent \$10's of thousands of dollars only see those monies go down the drain a few weeks later as a result of school use after a day of rain or just continued overuse. In addition, some of the school fields have dimensional constraints as well. All of this was documented in the Athletic Fields Needs Assessment & Master Plan Update prepared by Gale Associates.

- Too many unanswered questions?

The Park & Recreation Commission, Park & Recreation Department, the Department of Public Works, the Community Preservation Committee and the Planning Department, among others have spent a considerable amount of time and resources in planning as well as addressing issues raised. Plans have been altered to address issues and the plan current in place, with the exception of perhaps traffic and permitting, has been thoroughly vetted.

- What issues are outstanding?

Outstanding issues that remain are germane to permitting and funding. As has been discussed, the Conservation Commission will likely require some type of mitigation with the Parkinson Land being placed under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission as suitable mitigation. The Parkinson Land is located behind the Ti-Sales field.

- What is the rush to do this?

We have the opportunity to apply for a \$400,000 state Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant, with the application due by July 15, 2015. We had discussed this prior to Town Meeting; however the timing of the grant and the planned date for the work did not coincide. However now the timing works to submit the grant application in the summer and begin the work next spring.

If we are awarded the grant (decision is made in October 2015), the funding needs to be secured by the end of the calendar year. This would necessitate a Special Town Meeting prior to the end of the year. The Park & Rec Commission expects to re-apply to the CPC for funds to complete this project. The PARC grant is a reimbursable grant and the Town needs to fund the entire project before grant funds are issued.