

Members Present: Gary Maggiolino (Chairman), Tracy Cammarano, Sean Durkin, Mark Awdycki(arrived late), BOS liaison: Scott Rogers

Town Staff: Allie Lane, Scott Charpentier, Dave Robillard (Robo)

Others – See attached sign in sheet

Minutes - Tracy moved; Sean seconded; 3 in favor (*Mark was not present to vote on this)

Pickleball Court Discussion

Gary began by stating that the Commission received the information packet submitted by Mr. Entwistle, containing letters, emails, photos, and a request for next steps. He noted that this discussion was not to discuss everything that was contained in the packet. The discussion began with the DPW Director and Rec Director.

Scott:

- Reviewed construction of the courts
- Reached out to architect to ask if the courts could be used during the winter and the response was yes. However, when he asked what the acceptable snow/ice removal procedure was, the response was there were no proper snow/ice removal procedures.
- The DPW will not be going to go to the courts to remove snow during or after snow events
- Westborough is one town that does leave their courts open year-round, but they did have a major issue, which has been corrected at a cost.

Allie:

- It was never her intention to keep the courts open during winter. All nets are scheduled come down prior to the first snowfall.
- Polled Rec Depts in MA. 21 out of 30 responses received closed their courts

The Chairman asked committee members if they had any questions? Seeing as there were none, he entertained public comments, but requested that individuals please be mindful of the time to give everyone a chance to speak.

Susan Cox, 20 Warren Dr

Asked if they could look into 2 models:

1. Form committee similar to the Trails Committee, where volunteers maintain the trails and if there were a bigger issue they would request assistance from the DPW. This “Court Committee” could operate in the same manner where they would maintain the courts and have the ability to close the courts during winter if and when necessary. The Committee would report to Allie.
2. Charge a fee like they do at Chauncy Lake and use the fees to pay for maintenance.

Ms. Cox would be willing to write up a process for both models.

Bob Entwistle, 173 South St

Reviewed his request to the Town and discussed the information submitted in the packet (see attachment). Mr. Entwistle reiterated his opinion that the courts should remain open during the winter months and reviewed his reasons why.

Scott:

- Point of clarification – It is difficult to determine frost. Operationally, there is no way for the department to check for frost every morning to see if the weather will allow use of the courts. That is why there is a drop dead date for closing fields, courts, road work, etc. for the winter season, regardless if there is/is not snow.
- Also stressed the fact that property maintenance is critical. If the vendor said we can use in the winter but snow removal is a big issue and must be done right. We can't have just anyone use anything to remove snow/ice. Look what happened in Westborough.

Tracy:

- Would be interested in pursuing a committee, but how would they go about creating one?

Craig & Susan Cox - The trails Committee is set up as a volunteer committee. Members are not appointed like those on the Cultural Council. Mr. Cox noted that similar with Trails Committee, the volunteers would be responsible for maintaining the courts and would follow the procedure required by the Town. Ms. Cox said that it would be great if we could meet and have a work session to work out the details. Mr. Cox stated that as an engineer he is on the side of infrastructure. However, the community has such a passion for pickleball that opening the courts during the winter will allow the community to grow and the excitement for the sport to continue.

Sean:

- He is 100% in favor of any/all recreation activities however, his concern is maintenance. If the recommendation that the Town received from the vendor was to keep off the surface for winter because it will get damaged and be an expensive fix, if it was even repairable.
- Also stated that in the past, there was an ice rink that was installed on the baseball field that they ended up removing because it was damaged when someone tried to shovel snow but stopped part of the way and left it. This caused a problem because the rink was uneven and then no one could use it.
- Against charging any/all user fees. The Town appropriated money so that people could use.

Allie:

- Stressed that once you charge a fee, that activity is no longer covered under the open recreation act.

Tracy:

- Stated that as stewards of parks and rec, it is their job to maintain and protect all parks and rec facilities.

Bich Nguyen 15 Copley Dr

Facebook has many pickleball forums. Maybe someone can reach out using the forum to ask for help from those who live in cold weather climates for suggestions on court treatment.

Laurie Levigne, Shrewsbury

Stated that she is a resident of Shrewsbury but her family enjoys using the Northborough park facilities. Was there (at this meeting) for a Northborough resident who could not make it.

Said signs don't help because people don't read them.

Sees both sides. If nets are kept up and you have a low fence around courts, people will just hop over the fence. But if nets are kept up and you install a high fence, you could be able to lock and unlock it whenever you need to close due to weather.

Mark:

- Echoes what Sean said. He saw the enthusiasm for the sport. Thinks it is a good idea to put together a group to further discuss this. Because this it is so new, we can't have it open without a proper plan in place.

Scott:

- Will work on the logistics for creating such a committee. The one thing he doesn't want to do is open the door to multi-committee requests to take on the responsibility for maintaining other courts/fields/parks/buildings, etc. What is done for one is done for all.
- A. After public comments, Mark made a motion to keep the pickleball courts closed until March 1st or whichever occurs last. Next year we will keep the courts open for the winter on a trial basis. If anyone uses any materials or equipment that will cause damage to the courts, they will be closed immediately for the rest of the season. Sean seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor.

Recreation Report

Allie talked about Spring/Summer sign ups. Registration began on Feb. 2. The full day summer program filled very quickly and the other programs are doing well too. We learned that we should not have camp registration and pickleball registration on the same day. Lots of phone calls.

Allie talked about the BeWell Northborough program and all of the benefits to the community. She is hopeful that the Board of Selectmen will continue to fund this program through ARPA funds next year.

Scott Rogers (BOS liaison)

Discussed how important the BeWell Program is and we should try to continue the program for as long as we can.

DPW Report

Scott reported that 3 benches that were backordered for the new pickleball courts have come in. Also 3 addition gates for in between the courts have come in as well. 2 sponsor benches have been placed at Ellsworth McAfee Park. One for Bucky Rogers and the other for Paula Moore. Use of the Town Common is on the rise. A policy needs to be adopted on how to apply and which department will manage the applications.

7:40pm Sean votes to adjourn, Tracey 2nd. Meeting was adjourned.