

To: NRC  
From: PFTF  
Date: June 8, 2018  
Subject: Alternative softball fields to Lee Field for WHS varsity softball

This memo is being sent at the request of the NRC. The PFTF was asked to research alternative fields for the WHS girls softball games to be played instead of Lee Field. In short, the other fields at Hunnewell, Sprague, and nearby parks are either too small for an MIAA regulation sized field or will require the displacement of another WHS team forcing them to Lee Field. This memo includes 2 attachments: the field layout at the Hunnewell sports complex and Sprague complex and the field schedules for this past spring showing usage of each field by each team for games **only**.

As background, the MIAA is very specific on some minimum field requirements for a varsity softball field. Some of these requirements include MIAA softball fields must have sand/clay infields while MIAA baseball fields have sand/clay "base paths only" so a field for MIAA baseball cannot double with MIAA softball. MIAA rules require a "home run fence" for varsity games and playoff games with minimum distances to each of the fields including most importantly 185' along the foul lines. MIAA also specifies the minimum distance from the foul lines to the side fence protecting each dugout, backstop to home plate distance, pitching rubber to home plate distance and distance between bases, etc.

At the Hunnewell Field complex, there are 6 areas that can support "diamond sports" (WHS softball, WHS baseball, little league, men's softball):

1. Reidy Field (lit) is too small for varsity softball, has a sand/clay base paths only for baseball, and a longer distance from the rubber to home plate.
2. Field #1 (near the skating pond) is not a diamond field currently and is used for rectangular field sports such as lacrosse, field hockey, and soccer as well as track field events. This field is also frequently too wet for play in the early spring which would necessitate scheduling issues or needing to find another field until later into May. Adding an infield on Field #1 would make the field unusable for the rectangular field sports in the spring and fall and cause a new field shortage.
3. Field #2 could be used for WHS varsity softball but is set-up and used for the WHS Freshman baseball team which has longer base distances, longer rubber to home plate, elevated pitching mound, sand/clay base paths only, etc. This field is large enough to meet the softball requirements but would require putting in an outfield fence which restricts the use of field #3 and eliminates the use of field #2 for rectangular fields for lacrosse practices (creating a new field issue).
4. Field #3 is exactly like field #2 used for the WHS JV baseball team. Converting it to varsity softball would preclude its use for WHS JV baseball and eliminate the rectangular field use for practices.
5. The multi-purpose field (lit) is a field that could be used for the varsity softball team with some modifications including removing (or dramatically reshaping) of the beautiful large tree along the 1<sup>st</sup> baseline that interferes with hit balls and the installation of an outfield fence. Installing this outfield fence would eliminate the use of the field for the Wellesley mens and coed adult evening softball leagues since the 185' outfield fence is not very far for these sports as well as any use of this field for rectangular field users. Finally, this is the field that is currently used for the JV WHS softball team so they would need to find a new field and would likely mean flip-flopping the users of Lee and the multipurpose field.
6. Lee Field is the 5<sup>th</sup> field. Lee Field is a near perfect site for MIAA softball. The distance from

home plate to the edge of the Town property along the 1<sup>st</sup> baseline is just over 200' with a line of hemlocks situated at the current 180' fence. Along the 3<sup>rd</sup> baseline, the current fence is at 183' from home plate with a berm above the brook at slightly more than the minimum required 185'. There is more than adequate distance to the fences in the power alleys and center field. In addition, the location of the fence in front of the dugouts is 28' from the foul line vs. MIAA required 25' and the fence behind home plate is 25' vs. MIAA required 25'. Finally the recommended seating areas could fit perfectly in seating or a pavilion standing area behind home plate and some seating along the 1<sup>st</sup> base line beyond the dugout among the current pine trees (more spectators could be accommodated on those rare occasions when it is necessary along the 3<sup>rd</sup> baseline along the brook). Handicapped access would be accessible from the aqueduct path or potentially on a walking path from the Washington St tennis courts.

There are only two other fields that are within a short walk of the high school. Other softball fields exist in Wellesley but would require busing the players to and from games and practices which is expensive and not desirable. These walkable softball fields are Philips Park on Seaward Rd and the Sprague field complex near the middle school:

1. At Philips Park, the distance from home plate to the brook path along the 3<sup>rd</sup> baseline is well below 185' and therefore could not be used. There also almost no parking for the visitors buses or spectators.
2. At Sprague field, there is a softball field on field #1 (see attachment) that is used for middle school softball. The orientation of the field and the angle of the sun limits afternoon game usage. Also the distance along the 1<sup>st</sup> baseline is barely adequate and ends at the street used for cars entering and leaving Sprague Field posing a safety hazard. This field is excellent for youth softball. Also putting in the fence required for varsity softball would displace youth soccer and lacrosse after 5:30 M-F and on Saturday and Sunday creating new field issues.
3. There are also two baseball fields at Sprague which are used for the WHS varsity team and WMS team. Converting the WMS field to the varsity softball field with the required outfield fence would again displace HS lacrosse practices and youth soccer and lacrosse after 5:30 M-F and on Saturday and Sunday creating new field issues.

I hope this analysis makes clear why continuing to use an improved Lee Field for the varsity softball team is the most intelligent use of the Town's limited field assets.