

Community Forum on Athletic Fields in Town - 12/9/24
Comments Shared in Advance

Hunnewell Track & Field:

From: Leigh AO Thomas <...>
Sent: Monday, December 9, 2024 11:25 AM
To: Schmitt, Brandon <bschmitt@wellesleyma.gov>
Subject: Hunnewell Track & Field complex

Hello, Mr. Schmitt,

My name is Leigh Thomas and I live with my family at 6 Fairbanks Ave. We have 2 kids in WPS who participate in school and town sports leagues: a 7th grade boy and 9th grade girl. I am writing to compliment the lighting of the fields as am unable to attend the meeting this evening. I think it adds to positive community building, gives our student athletes a fun opportunity to play at night and also gives our high schoolers safe, social, athletic events to attend.

As a family we were thrilled to attend some of the night games. Having grown up in an area where Friday night football games were very much part of the community social fabric, we look forward to attending more games, supporting athletes of both sexes of many sports (yeah! lots more in addition to boys varsity football). Sports generally are very positive and bring people together. I look forward to the expanded use of the Hunnewell fields becoming a greater focus of positive community growth.

Sincerely,
Leigh

From: Dan Thornton <...>
Sent: Monday, December 9, 2024 5:58 PM
To: Schmitt, Brandon <bschmitt@wellesleyma.gov>; NRC Members <nrcmembers@wellesleyma.gov>
Subject: WHS Field Lights Feedback

Thank you so much for the opportunity to comment. My daughter Avery is a senior at WHS and a member of the girls Division 1 State Champion soccer team. Having the opportunity to practice and play at home under the lights in October was, I believe, instrumental in their championship run. They were able to play in front of a large home crowd because, unlike in previous years, games didn't begin at 2:30 with no parents or students from throughout Wellesley able to attend. The semi finals and championship games were both played under lights at neutral fields and the team was familiar and prepared for this environment. In addition to the soccer team, I attended, for the first time, boys soccer games and field hockey playoff games at home. The community building and school and town pride was amazing! I am so grateful that I was able to go out and support my friends and neighbors and my kids' classmates this fall season. The games start at 6 or 6:30 and are over by 8 or 8:30 so there is no late-night noise or traffic to disrupt the neighborhood. I believe we should actually consider raising the cap on the number of games and practices available in the early evening.....I don't see a downside. Thanks so much for your consideration.

Dan Thornton
56 Madison Road

From: Nicholas Nardone <...>
Sent: Monday, December 9, 2024 6:08 PM
To: Schmitt, Brandon <bschmitt@wellesleyma.gov>
Subject: Wellesley Lights Feedback

I wanted to take a moment to provide my own personal experience and the experience I have heard from many other fellow Wellesley residents and kids.

I feel that adding the lights was an incredible thing for our town; it brought us together, as a community, far more than I have ever felt or seen before in Wellesley. The night games were so fun, where we shared great times with our friends, family and brought us new friendships as well. The kids had a blast and all were very well behaved and respectful of the facility/field and property around the field. Everyone I spoke with was raving about this new experience. I can't say it enough, this town has taken a huge step forward in adding the lights/sound and night games of all sports. This is truly the experience that every town should have, and we finally have it!

In addition to the enjoyment, the lights on the practice fields have added safety and utility to the practices that take place when it gets dark earlier in the Fall.

Thanks to everyone for the addition of this experience to our town. I am hopeful all Wellesley people can see this as such a positive and we can have some more of the youth sports teams play under the lights next year and for the years to come - these night games are a very special moments in their lives that they will talk about for the rest of their lives - this is what life this is all about!

Thanks for taking the time to accept feedback, best, Nick Nardone.

From: Brian O'Boyle <...>
Sent: Monday, December 9, 2024 6:25 PM
To: NRC Members <nrcmembers@wellesleyma.gov>
Subject: Feedback on the athletic fields

Hi,

Re the lights at Darcey field:

My son is a sophomore in high school and played soccer on the varsity team this year. He had the opportunity to play under the lights twice (although the first one was basically a day game). It was a fantastic experience for the boys - we had more fans at the games and it really felt like a big event. I know the boys would appreciate the opportunity to play more games under the lights in the coming years - hopefully more than just 2 games a season. We're also looking forward to having enhanced facilities at the fields for bathrooms - and the concession stand, which will be a nice way to help raise money for the programs.

I coached youth soccer for 7 years, and as a youth coach, we were up against it with the hours in the day and the field space. With the BAYS teams, we often would not get field space until 5:30 or 6 and would have at most an hour of field time once a week - and at times during the season only 30-40 minutes of workable daylight. If we can't find more fields to use, perhaps we could allow practices on Darcey under the lights on nights there are no games. This would free up field space for the youth practices - even if it's the youth program practicing under the lights it would be very helpful.

Best,
--Brian O'Boyle

Sprague Fields and Hunnewell Tennis Courts:

From: John Maccini <...>
Sent: Monday, December 9, 2024 11:58 AM
To: Schmitt, Brandon <bschmitt@wellesleyma.gov>; NRC Members <nrcmembers@wellesleyma.gov>
Subject:

Hello Brandon,

Would you please enter my comments below in the NRC meeting for Monday Dec 9, 2024.

NRC Attends Community Forum on Town Athletic Fields Dec 9, 2024.
Previous amended email to Recreation Commission, Dec 4, 2034.

The Town continues to search for, approve and fund new Pickleball Courts far enough away from homes to eliminate the Intrusive Impulse Noise that pickleball play creates. I assume the proposal to the Town for 4 new courts at the Morse's Pond parking lot will go before Town Meeting for approval in March. Depending on how successful the MoPo-Neighborhood.org group opposing the courts is, there is a good chance that Town Meeting will not approve pickleball at MoPo. If that is the case, why would any town official still permit pickleball at Sprague and Perrin Fields? The 2024 S&H Acoustics Pickleball Noise Study report clearly shows that the current court locations are too close to homes by a large margin. The decision on this has to be made by the School Committee and NRC not the Recreation Commission. The RC has no intention of banning pickleball from their current locations.

The pickleball nets at Sprague have not been locked against the fence after Saturdays permitted day to play. There has been no oversight or enforcement over these past months. Nets have been removed for now.

I understand that the latest R.C. meeting is proposing adding 4 pickleball courts to the Hunnewell tennis court re-surfacing. Whether or not this project is approved, please paint over the pickleball lines at Sprague and ban this noisy racket game from nearby homes. Please close pickleball and associated racketball games at Sprague before this Spring.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/pickleballnoiserelief/>.

Thank you, John Maccini, 5 Highland Road

General Comments about Parks and Fields:

I am writing in regard to the upcoming meeting 12/9 to discuss the future of Town Parks and Fields.

While I can appreciate what is perceived as a “need” for yet more athletic space I also cannot condone what looks like the conversion of our limited parks into playing fields. Especially when it seems this push is at the behest of “For Profit” youth sports groups. The “Playing Field Task Force” seems to be comprised of people representing sports groups, yet there are no representative residents who live near these lands involved in these discussions/decisions.

We all know Wellesley has limited Open Space. The Town also has made poor decisions regarding lands, whether it was selling off Town School properties in the 1970's(in lieu of Land Banking for Future Repurposing) or having Town Residents purchase St James Land on Route 9 for a Town Recreation Facility and then Leasing it to a commercial Recreation company for 50 Years(2 generations of Wellesley Residents who will not have access to a Rec Center). And, of course, the current problem of the proper location or even inclusion of PickleBall in Wellesley.

Our Neighborhood Parks have distinct similarities. They all have traditionally serviced the Residents living in close proximity for passive recreation. Some are former School Lands transitioned to parks where generational enjoyment of open space was close by. They are areas where people walk and chat informally. Older folks can sit on benches and enjoy the quiet. Young children can learn to ride bikes/roller blade/fly kites and generally learn to use their own resources and imaginations for play-too seldom in an age where so many are programmed. Additionally, there is the traffic and noise that use of these parks as sites for athletics will bring to very narrow streets in densely built areas where most of these neighborhood parks are located. The Parks I'm referring to are Brown/Phillips/Perrin/Oullette. These are all in Building Zones of 10,000 s.f. Building lots where “starter homes” for young families clustered near elementary schools. To transition these parks to dedicated athletic fields would be a change of use to the detriment of the spirit of the neighborhoods.

The Town should be exploring the land at the North 40 for expansion of playing fields with no buildings allowed. The Town should be exploring the repurposing of Upham School Land for playing fields. The Town should be interfacing with the many colleges in Wellesley who benefit from the Town Services, and give back sparingly to our Residents, for the purpose of sharing land or athletic facilities.

Please do not do the predictable...that is, target the existing flat, grassy parks that are easy to mark with lines and portable goals and convert them to established athletic fields. We have seen the expansion of the High School Field to include lights and sound systems and do not want that as a natural evolution to our neighborhood parks.

The Town of Wellesley has undergone major changes in the past 30 years and most of these do not enhance the original character of the Town or quality of life of it's residents. Please don't take the peace, quiet, and enjoyment of our parks away from the many people who enjoy them as they are.

Kerry E. Sullivan
21 Leewood Road
Town Resident for 48 Years