



Town of Acton Recreation Commission

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Karen Jarsky, Commission Chair

January 25, 2012

Mr. Walter Foster
Community Preservation Committee
c/o Roland Bartl, Planning Director
Acton Town Hall
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720
Re: Lower Fields Project

Dear Mr. Foster,

The Acton Recreation Commission heartily supports the development of the Lower Fields Recreation Complex on the ABRHS school campus.

The Acton-Boxborough youth sports community is looking for solutions to Acton's lack of field availability. These needs were documented to us one year ago when Acton Boxborough leagues were queried about their plans for the next five years. Their attached responses will be included in the forthcoming Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan. For your convenience, we have highlighted the relevant portions of each letter. The constraints are three-fold: limited number of fields to utilize; delayed season openings due to site issues (e.g., poor drainage, limited utility due to configuration) and poor weather conditions; and increased pressure when fields must be placed offline due to overuse and needed repairs.

With the advent of the Intermunicipal Agreement, school facilities have been leveraged in recent years to take some of the pressure off these needs. Leary Field and the lighting project for the varsity baseball field, both of which received CPA funding, are resounding successes. We believe that the new Recreation Complex can begin to address Town sports league needs in the near term, allowing for improved field allocation and the possibility of enrollment expansion.

The T. J. O'Grady Skate Park component of the proposal represents an opportunity to mobilize a long awaited design element of the skate park that has been deferred for seven years. This will improve a well-utilized facility that serves Acton's youth population.

The Acton Recreation Commission is seeking your assistance in providing strong support for this project that will mean so much to our community. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Karen Jarsky
Town of Acton Recreation Commission Chair

CC: David Wilson, FOLF
Catherine Fochtman, Recreation Director
Tom Tidman, Natural Resources Director

Hi Cathy,

I apologize for the delay, I did not note your deadline, thanks for the reminder.

From ABYS' perspective pressure on field use continues to increase unabated. Our program is still in the 1500 to 1700 range per season, however the practice and training programs our parent constituency is requesting have created new demands for field allocation. Pressure from adult and club leagues for field allocation also continues to grow, and AB's lacrosse programs are booming. Finding time and space for all within that which ABYS has been permitted is a large logistical job. ABYS is indeed fortunate to have capable leadership to manage this.

The loss of NARA Park for a season brought our field allocation situation into sharp focus. We were fortunate that the weather cooperated and our alternative sites withstood the increased wear. While Leary Field has given us a all-weather option, even our limited use of Leary is subject to loss from school activities and at the last minute. School Street and the School Street extension remain a quandary as never ending discussions with the state prevent a comprehensive plan to improve this facility. And Concord Rd. may revert to the Cemetery Commission in the not distant future. With no new source of fields in our near term future, proper resting of fields is not just a must, but also an additional strain on the then remaining fields.

ABYS continues to struggle with our needs for field space. We are at times forced to buy field time from private providers and are requesting ever more time in our AB school gymnasiums. The need for a comprehensive community plan to bring more athletic fields online has never been greater. ABYS is committed to developing a workable solution to this problem.

Best regards,

Seth Tower
President



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Ms. Catherine Fochtamn
Town of Acton
Department of Recreation
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

January 3, 2011

Dear Cathy,

The Acton Boxborough Youth Lacrosse program ("ABYL") is pleased to provide input for the town's next five-year plan. Your letter requested certain information about the program's accomplishments, priorities and some information on the how we see the program growing. Please find our responses below:

Accomplishments

1. We broadened the age range of our program by starting a U9 program for the town's 1st and 2nd graders. The U9 program started with one team and last year expanded to two teams.
2. ABYL also began offering a more competitive playing option for town lacrosse players by participating in the Middlesex Youth Select Lacrosse League.

Recreational Field Priorities

1. The most pressing issue we would like to see resolved is the lease of the School Street Fields. Without a long-term lease on that property, it is impossible to make a case for investing in irrigation and other infrastructure to make those fields consistently suitable for hosting athletic contests
2. The program would like to see a committee set up to oversee distribution of field space within the town. We currently must rely on another program for access to town fields.

Statement on Growth

Statistics reported by the media and sporting associations regularly report lacrosse as the fastest growing team sport in the United States, especially at the youth level. Growth in the AB program has leveled off and actually declined in the past few years so that on the boy's side, the program has slightly under 200 participants.

While it is difficult to pinpoint the reasons for declining enrollment, anecdotal feedback from families points to limited scrimmage and game count as factors in their child's decision to drop the sport. In recent years, we have been unable to schedule mid-week home games due to field constraints. This has added travel burdens to town families and made the AB program a less attractive partner for

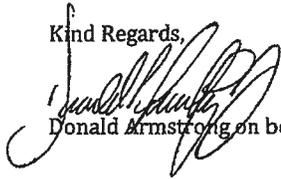
home and home series with neighboring towns. Because the program only plays one season a year, lacrosse participants might play in only 8-10 games in a given year.

We do expect growth in numbers and field requirements, as more families familiar with lacrosse raise children in town. We are starting to see this at the U9 level, which has doubled in size since we started it. There is also a move within the Massachusetts Bay Youth Lacrosse League towards smaller-sided games, which means more teams and more games to schedule on a given weekend.

ABYL is committed to providing residents of Acton and Boxborough with an economical opportunity to learn and compete in the sport of lacrosse that fosters a sense of community between residents of both towns.

Thank you for your time and we would be happy to participate in any further discussions concerning the town's plans for open space.

Kind Regards,



Donald Armstrong on behalf of Acton-Boxborough Youth Lacrosse

From: Jeffrey Sullivan [jsullivan@munder.com]
Sent: Monday, December 13, 2010 11:39 AM
To: Catherine Fochtman
Subject: RE: Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan

Hi Cathy,

Below I hope to address all the topics you requested from AB Pop Warner concerning fields and recreation.

Accomplishments: ABPW put up \$40,000 for the lights at Elm Street, a shed to house equipment at Elm and donations to the Friends of Leary Field.

Plans for next five years: As long as Elm Street stays as is we should be fine during the regular season. Also, the need to use Nara Park during pre-season (August) is a must as well. We will continue to use Leary Field once per week and four Sundays during the regular season for home games. Our cheerleaders need the jr high field/gym for their practices during the preseason and fall. Lastly, we will continue to need the high school lower field on weekends (Saturday morning). As long as we continue to have access to these fields we should be in great shape.

Outlook for participation: Our numbers have clearly come down over the past few years to the point where we struggled to field 6 teams this past season. That being said, we were still able to field all 6 teams across the 5 different levels. Our plan is to continue to field these 6 teams and hopefully get back to the glory years where we had seven teams; one each for the older three levels and two each for the younger two levels. Either way, our current field usage is fine for our numbers. In 2010, we had roughly 140 football players and 65 cheerleaders in our program.

Thanks and let me know if you need anything else.

All the best and happy holidays.

Jeff Sullivan

Open Space and Recreation Plan Input

Acton- Boxborough Youth Baseball - submitted by league president Sanjay Khosla.

Enrollment in A-B Youth Baseball has been steady for the past three years. Currently, Little League fields are overscheduled. With the current Little League fields in use, we foresee the need for one additional Little League diamond to satisfy our needs for the next 3-5 years. This would allow us to increase practice time and occasionally "rest" a field, something that is invaluable when a field is being rehabilitated and/or resodded. The addition of lighting at the high school varsity field has allowed ABYB to have some additional Babe Ruth field usage for players 13 and older, which is critical due to the consistent spring wetness at Jones field. It would be great if a solution was developed for Jones to reduce usage downtime.

One additional need has been surfacing in the past couple of years; the need for a "Pony field", which is an intermediate field with dimensions between Little League and Babe Ruth, and would improve the player's transition experience to the larger diamond. This could be accommodated with a new dual usage field; one that could be an incremental Babe Ruth diamond/new Pony diamond. Both the Little League and "dual field" need could be accomplished on the School Street land.

As far as plans for existing fields, ABYB would like spectator seating (tiered levels) at Vets Field, and simple dugout roofs at all fields offering sun protection for players.

Cathy,

Sorry for the delay - below is the input for ABYBSB. Please let us know if you have any questions or need more info. Also please note that I have stepped down as ABYBSB President, and Al Caruso (copied) is our new President for 2011. I will be coordinating field requests for 2011, but can you please include Al in the invites to the meetings and other field related emails? Please also include Brad Haigis (Summer Director - copied) as well.

Thanks,
Tom

Acton-Boxborough Youth Softball - submitted by league fields coordinator Tom Reuther (with review by league president Al Caruso)

The AB Youth Softball league utilizes five softball fields in the town of Acton: Gates 1, Gates 2, Elm St., NARA and the High School softball fields. We share the school fields with the various school softball teams (and field hockey teams in the Fall) and Elm St. and NARA with the Acton Adult Softball League (AASL). All five fields are utilized in the Spring, our largest season based on registration numbers. In the Summer we use Gates 1, Gates 2 and Elm St., while in the Fall we utilize Gates 1, Gates 2, and the High School field. Our Spring registration numbers have averaged approximately 200 players over the past 5 years (2006-2010), which is down about 20% from the previous 5 year period, but appears to be fairly constant at this point. Our Fall numbers have averaged approximately 130 players, which is down significantly from the previous 5 year period, but also appears to be holding relatively steady at this time. Summer registrations, and therefore field needs, vary considerably year to year.

Barring some unexpected registration increase, we feel that the current set of fields we utilize (across our three seasons) will do well to meet our needs over the next 5 years. Having a lit field (Elm St.) is extremely advantageous, providing us the ability to play night games in the Spring and Summer seasons. Over the past two years, we have contributed financially to projects coordinated by AASL and Acton Recreation to improve drainage and field conditions at Elm St. We expect that we will continue to contribute to improvements and maintenance of the fields as needed going forward. Our Board had also discussed the possibility of financing the installation of a combined batting/bullpen cage at one or two of the fields, and would be interested in pursuing this possibility going forward.

AB Youth Softball greatly appreciates the use of both the Acton Recreation and School softball fields, which allow hundreds of young girls between the ages of 5 and 15 to enjoy playing softball each year. We hope to continue this relationship, and the continued maintenance of these valuable assets.
