

Monthly Parks Department update

January

It is time of year for all the town departments to start working on their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year, and the Parks Department is no exception. We have been instructed by the Finance Committee that we should plan for a level funded budget, which would hold all line items at their FY17 levels. This would prove difficult for a variety of reasons, as operating costs are continually rising and we would like to offer our seasonal employees a COLA increase, usually in the range of 2%. We can usually find a way to get by as we have during other fiscally tight times, but it limits our ability to create and properly maintain programs and facilities. While understanding the desire to keep tax rates low (currently among the lowest in the state) and remain fiscally solvent, we hope that when revenue projections are more evident, we will be able to have an increase in our budget to match the needs of our department.

The Parks Department was able to meet with the Capitol Planning Committee this month and discuss our proposals for a new garage and funding for the Perimeter Path at Pirone Park. The Committee was very cordial and receptive to our proposal, offering some helpful suggestions to make these goals more attainable. We are hoping to get both projects on the warrant for this springs Town Meeting and being able to present them to the citizens of Ayer to discuss their merits. We will be meeting with the CPC Committee next month to discuss funding for the Path, and then hope to have a public hearing to discuss the benefits it would create for the town.

Registration has already begun for spring activities, such as baseball, softball and soccer. You can visit the Parks Department website for information on how to sign up for these and other spring activities. Some have early deadlines for registration, so it is best to check them out early to ensure you are able to get into a program.

Jeff Thomas

Ayer Parks Director