

## Monthly Parks Department Update September/October

The soccer program is in full swing for all levels, and it has been a good fall season with no cancellations so far due to weather or coldness. The upcoming final few weeks can sometimes be a bit more challenging with chillier conditions, particularly for the younger players, but that's part of the "fun" of playing outdoor sports in New England! Three Ayer U8 competed in the annual Columbus Day Patch Tournament in Pepperell. Patch tournaments are particularly enjoyable for this age because part of the fun is exchanging team patches with your opponents. All three teams represented our town with pride!

Weekends at Pirone Park continue to be busy with various activities. Birthday parties have been particularly popular recently, with both large and small groups and a variety of themes. It is encouraged for those who want to have an event at Pirone to contact the Parks Department office ahead of time if they would like to reserve fields, tables or equipment. This ensures you will have a space for what you are planning and that there are not other groups already scheduled to be there. Residents may do so at no cost for non-profit events.

The Parks Department is currently in negotiations with the school department regarding a shared facilities use agreement. The school and Parks Department had previously had an ongoing agreement to share services and use of facilities at no charge to each other, but with regionalization and the building of a new High School, the School Committee wanted to review how outside groups use their facilities. There is concern that any new agreement may include charges to our programs using school facility on weekends when custodians are not normally scheduled, which would require raising registrations fees significantly. We are confident the schools will recognize the contribution of services the Parks Department and other town entities annually offer to the schools as viable compensation for the time our programs use the school gyms, and that our programs can continue to be offered to families at the lowest costs possible.

The new roof was completed on the maintenance building at Pirone, as well as a new paint job and several other updates to the bathrooms and outside areas. We also were able to erect a new backstop behind the lower softball field, part of an ongoing project to replace worn out fencing throughout the park. The addition of a new canopy should be particularly beneficial for preventing foul balls from getting lost in the swamp. We will be doing final fall maintenance on the ballfields around Pirone as well as the High School fields over the next month. This is critical in order to make sure they are ready to go come springtime once the snow clears, and those with memories of last spring can attest that can extend right into the start of spring sports...gotta love that NE weather!

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Ayer Parks Department