

May 2016

Activities at Pirone Park are in full swing. Youth team sports such as soccer, baseball and softball are in mid-season and there are games (usually several) being played almost every afternoon and evening. Scheduling for these events as well as other group outings can be daunting, but groups for the most part have been very cooperative and understanding of each other's needs. There has also been an increase in general use of the park for picnics, walks and general recreation, particularly along the waterfront where we have been clearing over the last few years. This has been in cooperation with the Conservation Commission, who have taken time to come out and advise us on the best methods to clear waterfront brush without causing erosion or other ill effects. While we still have much to do, the benefits are already being realized by the number of people utilizing the waterfront. This benefit will be magnified even greater once the perimeter path is in place.

Along with our other ongoing projects, there have been a few recent additions to Pirone Park this month. There were two Eagle Scout projects completed, one by Jared Russell, who erected a decorative box for depositing worn flags that Boy Scout Troop 2 will properly dispose of, and one by Emmitt Woodward, who built four flower boxes along the entrance to the park.

We will also be putting in a third scoreboard, this one for the full sized baseball field, later this month. As is the case with most of the smaller capital projects done at the park, this was funded through the Sign Committee, a subcommittee of the Parks Commission that raises funds through sales of advertisement signs through the park. We have also added a few "Guard Dogs" through the park, black cutout dog silhouettes that we hope will discourage the geese from coming ashore and creating a mess. While this has not been fool proof, the number of geese has seemed to subside.

Hopefully they will not catch on too quickly how tame our dogs really are.

Oddly, the most affected creatures so far seem to be other dogs, many of whom bark loudly at them or seemed too spooked to go near them.

We will be opening Sandy Pond Beach later this month for swimming on weekends, expanding to daily swimming starting June 18. We will be implementing the new policies at that time regarding resident and non-resident use. We have been handing out stickers to residents to allow them to park in the lower lot, and pass cards to those who do not have a picture ID to validate their Ayer residence. We will be hiring several new seasonal employees to work as gate attendants to check people in and collect entry fees from non-residents. While we expect there to be some difficulties for this transition, we feel we have anticipated many of the potential issues and have a plan in place for making them work out. The Parks Commission had considered modifying the new policy to allow residents to bring in guests, but after reviewing potential issues with that, decided to stay with the original policy, at least for the initial season.

Jeff Thomas

Ayer Parks Director