

## Monthly Parks Department update

Planning and registration for the upcoming basketball season is in full swing. There are the usual challenges associated with putting the season together, such as securing venues, scheduling, recruiting coaches, etc., but this year there will be the additional hurdle of working with a new program for our 5th-8th grade levels. Negotiations are underway with the TAP organization of Townsend, Pepperell and Ashby to merge with the Ayer-Shirley program to create a new league to replace the former NVYBL that became defunct with the departure of the Littleton program. There is a tentative agreement in place to create 5th-6th and 7th-8th grade divisions for both boys and girls, which is hoped to be finalized over the next few weeks.

This will create enough teams for all four divisions to give players a fun, competitive atmosphere to thrive in. Planning for the PreK-4th Grade levels is also underway, with recently appointed AYB Chairman Kevin Williams bringing new leadership in that department. Eric Hebert will continue to offer guidance over the course of this transition, and his vast experience in this role will be a great asset.

The bioretention cell, or "Rain Garden", that the DPW has been working on at Pirone Park has been completed. Once the redesign was shown to be fully functional and the perennials were planted, the final phase was to decorate the drainage cylinder and install the sign explaining its function. This has created a long sought solution to our washout problem following any heavy storm, and does so in a way that helps beautify the park. We are extremely grateful to Mark Wetzel, Dan Van Schalkwyk and the DPW for their efforts in making this happen.

Fall cleanup at the Park and Beach will be commencing soon, a little later than usual due to the extended warm weather and leaves still hanging on their limbs. Leaf removal is always a challenge at Pirone, especially during soccer season when it seems you get them all off a field and the wind blows another round of them to pick up. We are fortunate to have some volunteers to assist with this, as well as several of our seasonal employees back from school on weekends to assist as needed.

We received a nice gift of several new trees for Sandy Pond Beach from Tree Warden Mark Dixon this month. These were installed by Pinard's Landscaping and once grown, will add some much needed shade to parts of the park for patrons to escape the hot sun after swimming. We have also been doing our annual post swim season maintenance on the grounds, aerating and seeding the turf while the foot traffic is at a minimal. While the swim season is relatively short (four months), it has a tremendous impact on the turf and requires meticulous efforts each fall and spring to revive it, particularly with our commitment to organic practices along the waterfront. We have been fortunate this year to have had a good amount of rain through the summer and early fall, which has helped to keep the grass full and healthy. We hope to have an irrigation system installed within the next five years to assist in this effort.

Jeff Thomas  
Ayer Parks Director