

Monthly Parks Department update  
December 2018

The basketball program is fully underway. Ayer Youth Basketball (Grades PreK-4) and the shared program of Ayer/Shirley Youth Basketball (Grades 5-8) comprise the largest youth group activity under the direct prevue of the Parks Department, with around 350 total participants. Enrollment remains high, creating the annual challenge of finding enough gym space for all the teams. We have been fortunate to work in partnership with the ASRSD and their administration for many years to create as much gym time as possible without conflicting with school activities. Part of this partnership includes our assisting the school with various projects and grounds upkeep, as well as providing additional field space for their outdoor team activities. It is estimated we are able to save families around \$40 per player enrollment by having this system in place. Dr. Malone, Bill Plunkett, Bob Briggs, Fred Deppe, Steve Kendall, and a host of others have all been extremely helpful in working with us to everyone's best interest. The custodial staff have worked with our coaches, players and parents to ensure building security in a positive and friendly manner. We see the difficulties many surrounding communities have in this area, and are extremely grateful to have such good relations with the ASRSD.

Work on the Perimeter Path at Pirone Park is nearly complete! The prep work was done through November, and while it looked like the early snow might push the paving off until spring, A & J Construction was able to get the asphalt down in time. They will be doing some backfilling work through this month, and then it will be available for public use. We will still need to do some landscaping in the early spring to get the grounds back to where we want them, but for now the Parks Commission is excited to get the path paved and open for use.

It is budget planning season for all Town of Ayer departments, and Parks has been working on theirs for the upcoming FY20 cycle. We have been asked to level fund except where there are absolute needs for increases, and have identified those and made the appropriate adjustments. Increase requests include additional funding for seasonal employees due to the 2019 increase in minimum wage, and additions to line items to cover safety training and upgrades to equipment. These safety protocols are needed to ensure compliance with new OSHA/DLS requirements being introduced in 2019 to Massachusetts municipalities. This is an area Commissioner Jason Mayo has been working to improve in our department over the last couple years, so we have a good start on things. We will be developing a plan for more extensive safety training for all employees prior to our outdoor season start in April.

Jeff Thomas

Ayer Parks Director