

Parks Department Updates

March 2020

Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, we are in a holding pattern for an unforeseeable time with reopening the facilities and planning for our recreational programs. Even the Commission itself has not been able to convene due to meeting law restrictions. There has been discussions about the possibility of setting up online meetings from remote locations. The trick to these is allowing public access to them to meet MGL open meeting law requirements, which town officials are currently working on. On March 22 the BOS restricted use of Pirone Park and Sandy Pond Beach until at least May 4. The town has also put restrictions on allowing Parks Maintenance employees to work until further notice, which will hinder our ability to do much of the prep work required to get the fields for outdoor spring programs ready. Still, we should at least keep on top of things as much as we can while we wait out the storm. Below is an update (chronologically listed) on the upcoming activities we would normally be preparing for, what we are able to do for them now, and what their potential status is for this season.

Little Diggers Volleyball (Start date April 3-Postponed)

The program's coordinator, Andrea Tavares, and I have been in touch and will discuss the potential status for this season early next week. I will be reaching out to those already registered to let them know we will keep in touch and let them know once we have an idea when/if we will start the season. Obviously, we will not start on April 3, but could be ready to go once we get clearance any time after that. Update: Andrea and I will be making a decision this week on whether to try to salvage the spring season or try to move it to the fall.

Pirone Egg Hunt (Projected date April 4-Postponed)

Last year's inaugural egg hunt was a big success, so it would be a shame to not have one this year. I will be working with Sarah Gibbons to see if an alternative date can be found later in the spring to do so. We had not begun to advertise this event before the COVID-19 concerns flared up, so we do not need to announce a postponement.

ASRSD Baseball/Softball (Start date April 8-Pending)

ASRSD AD Steve Kendall is in the unenviable position of trying to sort through a spring sports schedule thrown into havoc. The problems are exacerbated by the normal restriction on getting all HS regular season games played by June 1. The need for field use at Pirone for the MS team was pending due to field work that was hoped to be complete at the ASMS to allow games to be played there, but if Pirone is needed for MS games, we should have them ready. We will also be working with Steve and the school's maintenance department to help get the HS fields ready, though mandated work restrictions may limit that. Work done in the late fall should help them be ready when needed. Update: We just got in a few truckloads of clay delivered and will begin work on the HS fields this week. The best case scenario is to start the season in early May.

IHM Baseball (Start date April-Pending)

I will be in touch with Brother Anthony to see when the team will want access to the Pirone field. As of now, the earliest it could be available would be April 7, and it is anticipated that the field could be made game ready around that time if restrictions were lifted. Update: The earliest the fields can now be used is May 4. Work has begun to get fields groomed. Br. Anthony has said IHM will not be playing their baseball season this year.

U4-U8 Soccer (Start date April 25-Pending)

Sarah had anticipated a large turnout for this spring, including the likely expansion to six teams at U8. Assuming the restrictions are lifted by April 7, it is likely we would be able to start the program on time. If not, Sarah will communicate the status of the program to registered players/parents. Update: The earliest the fields can now be used is May 4.

Ayer Youth Baseball/Softball (Start date April 25 (?)-Pending)

This program is overseen by the AYBS Board, and they are going to make decisions on their season as they get more information from the state and town. While we are limited on staff for performing maintenance on fields, we did a lot of work on them in the late fall due to mild weather and they should be able to be opened up with less effort than a normal year. If the AYBS Board decides to go forward with their current opening date, we should be able to have fields ready on time. We will work with their board to see if we can still put together a volunteer work day if restrictions are lifted. Update: The earliest the fields can now be used is May 4. The Annual Ernst Family Softball Tournament scheduled for June has been cancelled.

Sandy Pond (Opening Day May 23-Pending)

We hope to still be able to open the beach up for our normal Memorial Day start. One potential hinderance is getting all of our lifeguards recertified because courses that are normally running now are not able to do so due to social distancing restrictions. About half of our returning guards will need recertifying. Heidi is working on this currently and is in touch with the guards to work out a plan to get everyone properly certified in time for our opening. I will be discussing the ACP plans with Sarah and Heidi once the school is able to find out its status for the spring/summer. Beach parking and access cards are currently available, though there is not a way for residents to get them until Town Hall reopens.

APD Camps (First start date June 29-Pending)

We have most camps ready to be open for registration, but have been holding back in case there ends up being a change in the school calendar and we lose our gym time for the basketball and football camps. We should have a better idea as to what the school situation is within a week, and then we can begin advertising and open up registration with dates currently set up. If there is a need to move dates, I will be working with the respective coaches of each camp to select a different date if possible.

Swim Lessons (Start date July 6-Pending)

Swim lesson registrations will be opened within the next week, with the anticipation of being able to hold them on the normal dates planned. In the event that the school needs to alter their schedule to extend into the summer, we may need to alter them, but for now will go with the assumption that the

dates will be available. Heidi will be monitoring the situation and we will keep registrants informed through the spring of any status changes.

Jeff Thomas

Ayer Parks Director