

Parks Department Updates

May 2020

The closures and restrictions due to the COVID-19 health crisis has had a major impact on the Parks Department programs and those who utilize the Parks facilities. Plans have been formulated to try to get facilities and programs open when the state and local officials allow them to, but without more information it is difficult to assess what we will be able to offer or when that might start. While the spring programs have been almost entirely cancelled or postponed, decisions are still being made about summer activities. The primary concern is swimming at Sandy Pond Beach, which has the greatest potential health and liability issues involved for both patrons and staff members. Enforcing social distancing in such a closed setting would be a daunting task, but the Parks Department is researching state recommendations and regulations to come up with ways to safely open the facility for swimming. Currently the Board of Health has asked us to hold off on opening until they can meet and discuss whether to issue a permit for swimming. We expect a decision on that in early June.

While the parks are only able to be open on a limited basis, the Parks Department has been able to move forward with a few projects this spring. Lighting and landscaping were added to the Sandy Pond Beach flag pole and other areas, and new flower beds were installed as well. Ball fields were edged and groomed for when they can finally be opened for use, and employees have been cleaning and painting facility buildings and structures. New lighting and fixtures were installed at the Sandy Pond Beach house, and other updates are planned through the summer.

The Parks Commission will be having a significant turnover at the upcoming election. Commissioners Kevin William, Jeff Testa and Richard Durant will be stepping down, while Jason Mayo and Sarah Gibbons will remain. The election was postponed in April and will take place June 2. Town Meeting will take place June 15, where the Parks Department will have three Capital requests on the warrant: Purchase of a pickup truck with dump and plow, purchase of a landscape trailer, and funds for a study of remediating Kiddie Junction playground. The annual budget will also be reviewed and approved for FY21.

Jeff Thomas

Ayer Parks Director