

## Parks Department Updates

June 2020

We received devastating news this month, the passing of beloved Commissioner Richard “Dude” Durand due to complications of cancer. Rich was an outstanding individual who devoted much of his time to volunteering with youth groups, particularly BSA, where he was scoutmaster of Troop 2 in Ayer for decades. He joined the Parks Commission in 2014 and was a major contributor to much of the efforts to enhance our facilities and programs. Due to his limitations while fighting for his health, he chose not to run for reelection this year but continued to serve as long as he could. He will be greatly missed.

The election brought the Parks Commission three new members: Jason Leone, Scott Copeland and Gerry Amenta. All three have been sworn in as elected town officials and have been briefed on various Parks Department policies and procedures. All three have been very active in youth activities and bring a great deal of experience to our department.

COVID-19 continues to be a hinderance to the programs and facility use the Parks Department takes pride in offering, particularly this time of year. In a typical June, we would be having exciting playoff games and end of season events for soccer, baseball, softball and Unlimited programs, as well as hosting various tournaments and group activities to finish out the spring and kick off the summer season. Unfortunately, all of those activities were cancelled for the spring, and with the limitations in place for the reopening of state municipal facilities, there are only limited activities we can allow. This included closing Sandy Pond Beach for swimming, which of course also eliminated swim lessons and other water related activities. We have been trying to optimize this situation as much as possible by doing various projects at Sandy Pond Beach and Pirone, and hope to be able to reopen activities as soon as possible.

The construction of the new office/storage building at Pirone was completed, and plans will be forthcoming to move in over the next month once the final permitting and checklists are complete. Until then, the Parks Department will be planning the best ways to utilize the new storage space, office and meeting area. One of the best features of the new building is its four season capability, which will allow maintenance work to continue during the times we would normally have to shut things down between mid November and mid April.

Jeff Thomas

Ayer Parks Director