

## Parks Department Updates

December 2021

December marks the holiday season, and we were once again able to offer the snowman/Christmas tree decorating activity for families, businesses, and individuals. We had about 50 participants requesting cutouts of trees/snowmen and returning them decorated in holiday festive cheer. As was the case last year, there were many very creative designs that delighted those who walked along the Pirone Park perimeter path. Unfortunately we did not end up with a white Christmas, so we are hoping to keep them up a little longer so they can be enjoyed in a more wintery setting. We were also able to decorate the beach house at Sandy Pond, and will keep it lit up through the season.

The basketball program is fully underway, with the travel levels finishing up their first half prior to the holiday break. So far the reboot of the program has been mostly successful, though it has been a challenge to ensure enough players and coaches can be present at each game or practice. We are following the same protocols as the school regarding masking, distancing and quarantining if needed. Most players and parents have been understanding and cooperative of this, with a few exceptions finding it too restrictive or not restrictive enough. There has only been one notable case of some one resisting the mask mandate that had the potential of needing extra intervention, but ASYB Chairman Chris Taveras was able to deescalate the situation and ensure safety standards were being followed.

After getting the test results from BETA showing elevated (but not necessarily dangerous) levels of arsenic in the soil, we received notice from the MassDEP that the playground would need to be fenced off and shut down until the site was remediated. A fence has been erected and we are continuing to work out a plan to both remediate the site and rebuild a new playground. Several grants and funding opportunities have been identified, and we will be pursuing them and others through the next year.

Jeff Thomas

Ayer Parks Director