

Parks Department Updates
July 2022

We have been experiencing one of the driest summers in recent memory, which has led to a water ban for municipal properties and the inability to use our irrigation systems at Sandy Pond Beach or Pirone Park. This has had a significant affect on both the turf for sporting events and recreational activities, and the clay surfaces of the diamonds for baseball and softball. Most people do not realize how vital it is to have water available to maintain clay properly so it doesn't get too hard or dusty. We were able to get through the camps and summer season without too much trouble, but some of the game conditions were difficult for the players due to the blowing dust and hard surfaces. The current state of the turf is pretty dire, and it is likely we will need to do some major overhauls in the fall and next spring to get them back to full health. It is fortunate that we use organic practices for the most part in maintaining the turf, as it creates a stronger root system for the grass that allow it to hold up better in desperate conditions like this. Still, without water soon, we may have vast patches of barren soil that will require even more costly repairs.

The annual Summer Clinic and Camp series has come to a close and was quite successful. This year we had over 250 participants in the eight programs offered. One of the more enjoyable aspects of these camps is the use of teen and young adult volunteers to help run them. These are mostly individuals who have played that particular sport in high school or college and want to give back to the community the same way young volunteers had helped them when they were that age. This has been an ongoing cycle for players running through our programs for many years, and we hope it will always continue to be the case.

Swim lessons have concluded, and it was one of the highest enrollments we have ever seen. Part of this is due to families wanting to get back to outdoor activities after the long wait through the COVID closures, but it is also likely a product of our commitment to offering swim lessons at a reasonable price so families can afford it. With drownings in Massachusetts and nationally reaching increasingly disturbing levels, we feel an obligation to encourage as many children (and adults) as possible to learn to swim for the safety aspect as much as the recreational one. We have been trying to promote our learn to swim programs as much as possible over the last few years, including making sure we have highly qualified and enthusiastic instructors available for as many students as needed. Our current certified WSI instructors Molly Cadogan and Lorelei Folger are remarkable beyond words in their ability to make swim lessons both fun and educational. They have had assistance from Bella Russell and Tanya Charosia, who are both highly trained and excellent at getting the most out of young students. We are very fortunate to have such an incredible team.

Jeff Thomas
Ayer Parks Director