

Recreation Commission Meeting

1/27/2021
Zoom Meeting

DATE: February 16, 2021
TIME: 9:11 AM

Commission Attendees:

- Officers: Anthony Ferrante (chair), David Kane (liaison to CPC), Marsha Semuels (vice chair), Cortney Eldridge (secretary)
- Members: Paul Cowing, Theresa O'Connor, Melissa Hart, Mary Bradley

Town Attendees: Jon Marshall, Brandon Fitts (Assistant Recreation Director)

Select Board Liaison: Adam Dash

6:30pm call to order

Winn Brook Tennis Court Addition: Jon Marshall

- Overview of Community Preservation Committee (CPC) request
- Review of the project, needs, why it came up; e.g., new HS layout did not include courts
- If any changes were to occur to the current HS layout/plan, it would impact multi-use fields, which have a knock-on effect
- Evaluated Grove, Pequossette (PQ), and Winn Brook to determine ability and feasibility to add courts; Winn Brook is where this made the most sense; no space in town to install five-six courts (net new)
- Inventory: total courts in 2010 = 16; 2015 total courts = 12; 2020 courts = 12
- Comparison of courts for Belmont vs surrounding communities and who has/how many HS courts; range is from six through 18 courts depending on town; Belmont currently has 12; two courts were removed from Chenery due to modulars but they should come back once modulars are no longer needed
- Discussed one- vs two-court configuration possible layouts (which provide five or six total courts, respectively)
- Discussed funding/costs – total request is \$269,750 for two courts, which includes design and engineering, construction, and contingency (for drainage, etc.)

Timeline

February 10th: Follow up meeting at 6:00 pm; Recreation Commission will provide recommendation

March: Community Preservation Act (CPA) votes in favor (or not)

April/May: CPA funds are approved (or not) at Town Meeting

Summer: Design and bids

Fall: Construction

Spring 2022: Courts open

Q&A and discussion amongst Commission

- How tall is tennis court fence? 10 feet
 - Anthony is opposed to two courts but amenable to one court. A decision was made in 2017 to remove the courts at the high school. The Town had multiple opportunities to plan to add courts. Adding two courts brings the fence too close to Joey's Park and is a significant problem aesthetically. The CPC should at least go through the normal two-stage process if they want an additional two courts.

- Cortney: What is the benefit (or purpose) of keeping the existing fence if we are adding only one court?
 - Least expensive option and not altering existing courts
- What is the standard gap between courts? You had mentioned nine feet between
 - The end court when it abuts the fence is 12 feet but otherwise, nine feet
- Does JV and Varsity play at the same time/together?
 - Matt Ruane is acting AD and is on the call; sometimes there is upwards of 40 kids in the tennis program so at times it'll be tricky to get 40 kids to practice; we'll make do with what we have
- Does construction in the fall impact the soccer season?
 - Only the one field (which will go away permanently)
- Theresa: they used to convert the existing ice rink to tennis courts in the summer, do they do this anymore?
 - No, this is no longer an option
- Marsha: can we get an architectural rendering of the drawings? (No, not yet)
- Marsha is in favor of six courts if we are going to make an investment

Open up to public Q&A and discussion

- Maria O.: Winn Brook Parent; moved to this area because of the new (lovely) tennis courts; is in favor of six courts here (and more courts in town)
- Elizabeth Dionne: chair of CPC; in general we (the CPC) favors a two-phase process, but also tries to balance the realities on the ground. The most pressing reality is the HS kids; in January we (CPC) approved funding for preliminary sketches; we are concerned about long-term costs and ADA compliance; tennis courts in town went from "not much use to very intense use"; will look into moving CPC meeting till after the Recreation Commission votes to make better use of the time
- Ellen Schreiber: Is in favor of six courts, but concerned about aesthetics of space/walkway between fencing and Joey's
 - Jon: there are treatments that can be done to make it look "less cement" and more natural
- Paul Sorkin: Resident on Munroe St; having six courts feels "very industrial" and the field space next to Joey's Park is used as "overflow" space for younger kids and is worried this will be lost
- David Kane: confirming that we could not hold Second Soccer games in this "in between" space even if we have only one new court [confirmed]
 - Melissa Hart: we can use the space we have (without the space between tennis and Joey's) for soccer
- Carolyn Bishop: Desires the new rink replaces the current structure and not 50% larger than it is and use that space for tennis courts; interested in as many courts as possible and tennis needs equal support as football and other contact sports
- Marsha Semuels: Desire to correct the impression of court usage – there are frequently open courts at PQ
- Michael Couture and Cathy: Abutting neighbor on Broad St and would like to support the tennis courts; use Joey's park with the grandkids and are still in favor of two courts
- Katherine Stievater: in favor of six courts
- Brett Stievater: a senior at BHS and is in favor of six courts; more kids will be able to play, JV kids will have more opportunity to play

- Heather Barr: a landscape architect can do amazing things; two courts would be good, and necessary
- Bob Singler: just pointing out that the tennis courts are not “single use” – they can be pickleball courts as well
- Heather Rubeski: TMM Pct 7 and tennis parent/spouse; lives within sight line of Grove St park; is in favor of two courts and encourages creative landscaping to overcome the space constraints; we are not “adding additional courts”, we are trying to replace courts that have been lost (at the HS and prior)
- Hannah Fischer: parent of HS tennis player and MS tennis player; would like to support two courts
- Maryann Scali: historically Belmont had 32 tennis courts and even 85-year-olds play tennis; would get more for our money if we install two courts; tennis is a life-long sport
- Tom Parent: Cross St resident; at Joey’s nearly every day with a 5-year-old; prefers the openness and breathing room, green space; reluctantly supports adding one but not two; feels needs of tennis are disproportionate burden vs other sports due to lack of flexibility (both in what they can be used for as well as number of people who can use them at once)
- Phoebe Gray: Senior on BHS Girls’ tennis team; JV and Varsity teams play together – practice together; for towns that have only four courts, we leave school at 2:30 and get home at 6:30 and it’s a big time commitment
- Margaret Velie: who uses the baseball diamond at Winn Brook?
 - Matt Ruane: girls’ softball team will be displaced when HS is under construction and temporarily will be using this field
 - Keith Lockwood: currently slated for some use for younger groups (2nd grade down)
 - Jon Marshall: cannot make this larger due to location of tennis courts, and would overlap with multi-use fields that are currently used by soccer
- Zubin Talavia: Sherman St resident – baseball diamond has been more heavily used this year than in years past; tennis courts are regularly in use
- Maria: question Belmont Day School – they have practice at Winn Brook courts; will they continue to play there?
 - Jon/Anthony: previously the Recreation Commission had approved permit for Belmont Day to play there but we will likely issue permits at other locations in the future; no current spring permits have been requested/granted
- Bob Singler: could we potentially have somebody monitor the courts during peak times (e.g., a HS student)?

Review and approve minutes from 1/13/2021

Approved unanimously: Cortney, Paul, Marsha, David, Mary, Theresa, Melissa, Anthony

Next meetings

- February 10th 6pm public meeting for tennis discussion CPC
- February 24th 5:30pm
- March 24th 5:30pm

Meeting adjourned 8:32pm.