

Orford Parks and Playgrounds Committee
Approved Minutes of the Meeting
July 17, 2019
Orford Community Field
6:00

Present: JJ Hebb (Chair), Craig Pelletier, Lawrence Hibbard, David Smith, Robb Day (Secretary), Fred Kidder (Selectboard), and Chip Stevens (Diamond Turf and Trees).

JJ opened the meeting at 6:00 with an introduction to Chip Stevens from Diamond Turf and Trees. His company specializes in turf and playing fields maintenance and construction. The baseball and softball fields need attention. Chip first looked at the base lines and skinned areas of the baseball field. He noticed a lip where the line met the turf along the running lanes as well as the base areas. Chip felt that this could be mended while performing annual maintenance which would include weeding and conditioning of the baselines. Chip uses Pro Choice soil conditioner which retains proper soil moisture at the playing surface while enhancing soil drainage through the soil profile. While looking at the pitchers mound, Chip did notice a “Volcano Affect” that most pitchers mounds do get over time. This amounts to a pronounced lip around the mound at the turf line. He felt that this could be remedied by removing the sod and leveling the soil. These lips around the baselines and pitchers mound could affect player safety. Chip examined the mound and home plate and noticed that they would need additional material and some reshaping. He also recommended covering the mound and home plate after every game and practice as well as getting the coaches and players involved with routine maintenance of the mound and baselines to foster a sense of ownership and pride in the field. Chip suggested an annual maintenance plan that would remove the weeds and condition the skinned area. Robb asked if this was performed by chemical or mechanical means and Chip described machine that will pull the weeds and remove them from the site. No chemical herbicides are used. JJ asked Chip to include new tarps for the mound and home plate as well as an annual maintenance service to his quote.

Robb asked about grub control options. Chip recommended an aeration treatment of the turf as this provides some control of grubs. He has started to use this procedure on school playing fields where chemical controls are not allowed. He has achieved reasonable control of grubs using this method.

The softball field was then examined. Around the baseline there is a pronounced lip where the turf meets the baseline. Chip felt that this was a major safety concern and that this, as well as the holes near first and third bases, should be addressed before the next playing season. The pitchers area and the home plate needed attention. To repair the baselines, rolled turf can be brought in. Lawrence and JJ asked about growing the turf from seed. Chip replied that that will work but time is needed for the grass to grow. Lawrence asked that the softball field repairs and annual maintenance be included in Chip's quote. Robb asked that an aeration/grub treatment be included in the quote as well. The group discussed the size of the property and the different fields. Robb agreed to e-mail Chip a digital copy of the Community Field Map created by Emily Bryant to assist him in working up the quotes.

JJ asked about recommended mowing guidelines for playing fields. Chip agreed to send some information regarding this. His rule of thumb is to never mow more than 1/3 of the total length of the grass at any one mowing. This sometimes means mowing twice a week. Different sports require different lengths of grass. Soccer is usually about 2 inches but Chip agreed to send over information on this. The discussion moved to fertilization and Robb mentioned that we have had a soil test done at the end of last season. Robb agreed to send the results to Chip. He recommends twice a year applications, one in early May and the second just before soccer season. Lawrence asked about smoothing out the bumps and undulations in the playing surfaces and if rolling these areas would be wise. Chip replied that rolling is fine as long as you aerate after. The compaction caused by rolling is not good for the turf. Chip's aerator does have a roller as well and this can be accomplished at the same time. Chip thanked the Committee for inviting him to discuss the Community Field and agreed to work up a quote based on what is needed before the baseball/softball season for a safe level of play and what could also be worked on to enhance the quality of the surfaces.

The Committee discussed the two trees that Lawrence removed from the parking area of the Community Field. One of the trees will be replaced and one will not. The water line runs under one of the stumps and it was agreed that the stump should be ground down to remove the obstacle as it is near the walking path into the field.

Fred and JJ discussed the proposed signs for Indian Pond Beach and that they will be completed soon for installation. Fred built a gravel pad beneath the grill at the beach area for fire safety.

The discussion moved to mowing guidelines as JJ and Esther have been working on these for all Town properties. Lawrence voiced his displeasure with the quality of the mowing of the Community Field. Fred asked the group if the Town should take the mowing responsibilities back. Many agreed that it should be looked into. JJ felt that all bids should include site visits to ensure that the contractors would have a better understanding of what the Town requires with each site. Robb asked if the job done is not up to our standards, how will the Town correct the problem. Fred stated that that would amount to a breach of contract and actions may be taken.

JJ asked the group when they would like to fertilize the Common. The fertilizer is waiting to be delivered and that we need to determine a time to spread it. Lawrence agreed to ask Tom Thomson if we can store the pallet of fertilizer in his garage just north of the Orford Servicenter. Robb felt that after July 27th would be best for spreading as there is a Car Show that day as well as a concert. It was agreed to set a time the following week.

JJ informed the group that the ladies softball group has scheduled games after the permitted time period and that one game will not interfere with soccer but one would. It was agreed that the first game would be allowed but soccer takes precedence and the second game will not be allowed. Fred agreed to contact the group and let them know.

Robb and Lawrence agreed to start pruning trees along the Common and Mall Walk on July 18th. The group agreed to meet at 5:30.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:30.

Minutes were taken by Robb Day.