

## **Town of Wellesley**

### **Playing Fields Policy**

**Purpose:** This policy is intended to be the framework for managing the priority and usage of active playing fields in the Town of Wellesley. Excepting the Fee Structure contained herein, which is set by the Playing Fields Task Force (“PFTF”), this policy has been approved by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Public Works, Natural Resources Commission, School Committee, and the Recreation Commission. The policy is administered by the Recreation Department under the guidance of the PFTF.

**History:** In 1997, the Natural Resources Commission established the PFTF. The PFTF consists of representatives from the major user groups (Youth Baseball/Softball, Youth Soccer, Youth Lacrosse, Youth Football, Youth Field Hockey, Adult Softball) and landowners (Recreation Commission, Natural Resources Commission, Board of Selectmen, School Committee, and Board of Public Works) as well as a citizen at-large. The purpose of this Task Force is to identify strategies for field maintenance (including methods for funding) and to work together to identify ways to meet field use demands while recognizing scarce resources. The PFTF generally meets monthly. In 2004, the Recreation Commission took over sponsorship of the PFTF. Voting privileges are limited to the elected officials from the five responsible boards and one representative each from the major user groups, as well as the citizen at-large, consistent with the PFTF Charter. Staff from the five boards may vote when acting with appropriate board member proxy power.

#### **Playing Field and Track Permits:**

Organized or regular use of the Town’s track or playing fields by groups shall require a permit. Regular meetings of a group or individuals are considered organized use and similarly require a permit. If any such group does not have a permit and there are residents who want to use the High School track or any fields for recreational use, then the residents shall have priority to use the track or fields.

Use of the High School track or active playing fields requires a permit from the Recreation Department. Use of passive land and Town-wide special events requires a permit from the Natural Resources Commission.

Requests for permits by the Youth Leagues (Soccer, Baseball/Softball, Lacrosse, Football, Field Hockey) will be done on a seasonal basis and must be made by the following dates:

April 1 – Spring  
June 1 – Summer

August 1 – Fall

It is expected that the representatives from each league will meet with each other and coordinate with the School Department Athletic Director, to agree on field use availability and needs prior to submitting permit requests to the Recreation Director. The Youth Leagues will work together to submit a master schedule to the Recreation Department. In the event that disputes cannot be resolved, the Recreation Director will be responsible for making a final decision. Blanket seasonal permits are issued to the Youth Leagues for both practice times and game times. Coaches are not assigned to specific practice times. Permits are not transferable and are only valid for the permit holder. A permit may not be sub-let to a different organization without the authorization of the PFTF.

PFTF members from the responsible boards will be given field status updates by DPW and will be consulted in order to ensure that fields under their control are not adversely impacted by overuse. If any board determines that an overuse condition exists or any field is being used in a manner inconsistent with such board's policies, the board reserves the right to restrict or further condition issuance of permits.

**User Groups / Priority of Use:**

Permits are issued based on the following priorities:

- 1) Town-Wide Special Events: This includes events such as “town days,” memorial services, and fairs. The NRC will issue permits for these events. The NRC will coordinate with the Recreation Director and the Athletic Director to determine if these events will impact previously scheduled athletic or permitted events.
- 2) School Use: The School Department has the next priority use of fields and the High School track over any other group, including the Youth Leagues. School Department use includes athletic games, practices, and other special events.

Coaches Clinics: School Department coaches who wish to run clinics must present a letter of support from the Athletic Director to the Recreation Director. Spring (April) vacation clinics must be booked by March 1. Coaches understand that spring clinics may be cancelled due to track or field conditions. Summer clinics must be booked by June 1. A fee will be charged.

- 3) Wellesley Resident Youth Leagues: Youth Leagues will be allotted hours based on season and participant numbers. It is expected that these groups will work together to ensure equitable use of all fields, coordinate with any resident youth sport group utilizing the High School track, and try to make

accommodations for each other in the event of unforeseen scheduling changes during the season. Wellesley Youth Leagues may also run in-house clinics for their members. Clinic times are limited to the days and times listed on their permit or a new permit must be issued.

- 4) Wellesley Recreation Department Programs: Use of fields or the High School track for camps, clinics and programs, which are run by the Recreation Department, will not preempt the Youth Leagues. When these programs are run during youth sport seasons, all attempts will be made to limit them to using the field area at the Warren Recreation building. Recreation may use other fields during the summer, as long as the fields are not adversely impacted by overuse. The Recreation Department offers these programs in support of its general mission to provide affordable recreational activities.
- 5) Wellesley Resident Adult Groups: Adult leagues or clubs (e.g. soccer clubs, running clubs, etc.) must be organized with the primary intention of supporting Town residents. Leagues or clubs may compete with teams from other towns, but one Wellesley team must be involved in the match. Leagues or clubs must give priority to Town residents when filling rosters. Wellesley teams or clubs must be able to prove that 75% of the memberships are Wellesley residents or are Town of Wellesley employees. Team rosters must be turned in to the Recreation Director prior to the start of the season.
- 6) Wellesley Resident – One-Time Use: The Town recognizes that residents may want to use fields or the High School track for one time uses such as birthday parties, neighborhood activities, etc. No fee is charged for children's birthday parties. A fee is required for other events.
- 7) Charitable Groups: If field space is available, as determined by the Recreation Director, groups who are hosting an event to raise money for charity will be given a permit for a field or the High School track for no fee.
- 8) Non-Resident Groups / Non-Recreation Department Camps and Clinics: A non-resident group is defined as one whose membership is less than 75% Wellesley residents or Town of Wellesley employees. Use by non-residents will be limited to baseball, softball, soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, and track. Use of fields or the High School track by non-resident groups will be dependent on conditions and availability. The Recreation Department may arrange for field use by outside camps during the summer months.

### **Fee Structure:**

Field and track use fees are collected by the Recreation Department and are then segregated into account(s) dedicated to playing fields maintenance and PFTF administrative costs, consistent with Article 55 of the Town Bylaws. The PFTF shall advise the DPW on the use of funds in said accounts. How fees are credited between the

two funds shall be determined by the PFTF considering future field needs. Annual reports will be given to the PFTF and the responsible boards on the funds collected and the uses of the fees. The PFTF sets the following as the fees to be collected:

- 1) Town-wide Special Events: No fee,
- 2) School Use: No fee,
- 3) School Coach(es) Clinics: \$15 per participant,
- 4) Wellesley Resident Youth Leagues: \$30 per participant per season (\$15 to Turf Field Fund),
- 5) Wellesley Resident Youth League Clinics: \$15 per participant,
- 6) Wellesley Recreation Department Programs: No fee,
- 7) Organized Use of the High School Track: \$15 per participant per season; if not a seasonal rental: \$150,
- 8) Multi-Purpose Field (at Hunnewell) for Adult Softball: \$40 per participant per season (\$25 to Recreation lighting account),
- 9) Wellesley Resident – One-Time Use: \$50 for a grass field, including the Multi-Purpose Field (at Hunnewell), but \$75 if using lights (incremental \$25 to Recreation lighting account); \$75 for a turf field,
- 10) Charitable Groups: No fee,
- 11) Non-Resident (Adults and Youth): Grass field and Sprague turf field: \$150; High School turf field: \$375 (fee is for field use only; utilization of scoreboard and sound system is not allowed), and
- 12) Non-Recreation Department Camps: \$35 per participant on a grass field; \$50 per participant on a turf field. (Camps catering to participants over the age of twelve years shall, whenever available, be assigned to turf fields).
- 13) All track and field rentals that are not charged per participant are figured in increments of 1.5 hours.

Fees collected shall be deposited into the DPW Field Use Fund, unless otherwise noted or a rental of a turf field; revenue from turf field rentals shall be deposited into the Turf Field Fund.

**General Field Use Rules:**

Hours of Operation: Fields may be used until dusk with the exception of the lighted Multi-Purpose Field (at Hunnewell). Lights may remain on until 9:30 pm,

except for Reidy Field, where lights may remain on until 9:45 pm. No play before 8:00 am on Sunday at any field that abuts homeowners.

Prohibited Activities: Any prohibited activities posted on signage at the High School track or at any fields, consumption/possession of drugs or alcoholic beverages, use of fields beyond permitted dates or times, use of grass fields during wet field conditions or before they are declared available for use, and any activity that may cause field damage. Users must show good judgment when using fields and must stop play if the field shows damage during activity. Any group who causes damage to any field will be responsible for repair costs.

Field Closures: Check [wellesleyma.gov/1049/Playing-Fields-OpenClosed-Status](http://wellesleyma.gov/1049/Playing-Fields-OpenClosed-Status) or call (781) 235-2370 for the latest field closures. If a field is closed, no use is permitted at all. The field status webpage are for informational purposes only; field signage and/or direct communication from the Wellesley DPW Park and Tree Division (DPW) take precedence. Whenever possible, the DPW will email user groups and post signs when fields are closed.

Please note that grass fields can be closed even when the weather appears good at the time because of standing water, previous damage, or other field condition issues. The DPW, in consultation with the PFTF, will recommend when fields should be closed in order to rest them to prevent significant damage from overuse and/or for maintenance reasons.

Weather: Because lightning can strike up to ten miles from a storm, users should seek safe shelter as soon as they hear thunder or see lightning. They should wait for thirty minutes without hearing thunder or seeing lightning before returning to the field.

Maintenance of Baseball/Softball Infields: Baseball/softball players and coaches are expected to groom the infields after each game and practice. Equipment for grooming is supplied and coaches are responsible for knowing the storage box combinations.

Litter, Trash, and Recycling: All users are responsible for picking up any trash and/or litter on the field at the completion of their practice or game session, regardless of whether this trash was there when they first got on the field or not. **Pick up trash when you leave the field, even if it is not yours.** Consider naming team captains at each practice or game to oversee litter collection and recycling.

Users are expected to use trash and recycling receptacles located on or near the fields or to take their waste home for disposal. If the group expects to generate excess trash, they must provide a means for removing trash themselves. Bring a trash bag with you to games and practices. Please pick up and recycle all plastic bottles. Inform coaches, players, players' families, and attendees at games and

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practices that there are water fountains at the majority of the active playing fields and that **participants are strongly encouraged to utilize reusable and refillable water bottles for all practices and games.**

The last group to use a field for the day is responsible for leaving a clean, litter-free field.

If you consistently find trash when you arrive at the field please notify the Recreation Department at [recreation@wellesleyma.gov](mailto:recreation@wellesleyma.gov) or (781) 235-2370, who will attempt to identify the users who might be leaving the field in such condition.

**Users are urged to support the preservation and sustainability of Wellesley's playing fields through responsible use of the fields and respect for those who neighbor the fields. It is the responsibility of all coaches, managers, referees, and parents to lead by example by educating our children on the proper use of field space and emphasizing the importance of caring for our community assets and maintaining a clean environment.**

Concerns related to the maintenance/condition of the High School track or any field should be addressed to the Assistant Superintendent/Deputy Tree Warden of the Park Division at [dpw@wellesleyma.gov](mailto:dpw@wellesleyma.gov).