



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

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For immediate release

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Play Ball! Wellesley Girls' Softball Headed for Improved Fields

Funding for design phase receives approval from Community Preservation Committee

WELLESLEY, MA - Feb. 14, 2018 - Wellesley softball athletes are closer to getting long-awaited -- and much needed -- improvements to their fields next to the tennis courts along Washington Street. A proposal for improvements has been under discussion by the Community Preservation Committee, Natural Resources Commission, and Playing Fields Task Force for some months. Last night, the proposal took a big step forward with the unanimous approval of \$100,000 by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for a design phase that will include detailed plans for the project.

CPC chair Barbara McMahon said, "We've learned from experience that this design phase is an important part of the process in Wellesley and allows all the stakeholders -- including neighbors -- to weigh in on a project and be heard."

Wellesley NRC chair Raina McManus, who represents the NRC on the CPC, commented, "The NRC is unanimous in our support for this project and I was proud to be able to make the motion to approve these design funds. We are looking forward to collaborating with the softball athletes and coaches, the Department of Public Works, Wetlands Protection Committee, and all stakeholders to ensure that we create a facility that works for everyone and fits the environment in this corner of Hunnewell Field."

The project has been spearheaded by Wellesley resident Jill Creevy and has broad support among many in town who feel that the improvements are overdue. The proposal currently calls for improvements to drainage, new bleachers, dugouts, and access on the two fields on either side of the public tennis courts at Hunnewell Field. The proposal does not include provisions for additional lights or a sound system.



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In 2013, Wellesley sixth grader Emily Willrich spoke up about the inequity of facilities for girls' softball and boys' Little League baseball in an editorial in the Wellesley Townsman that got the attention of renown feminist Gloria Steinem and other female leaders. At the time, town officials on the Playing Fields Task Force noted that there were no funds for field improvements and that the improvements to the Little League field at Reidy were funded with a massive private fund-raising effort over several years, starting in about 2005.

Now that the CPC has committed to funding the design phase, the next step will be approval for the allocation at Annual Town Meeting in April. Assuming it is approved, the design phase will proceed and private fundraising efforts for construction are likely to begin in earnest. More funds from the town will also be sought.

NRC chair Raina McManus commented, "We are thrilled to see this project moving ahead and we are confident that a strong collaborative effort will get us to a successful outcome -- just as it did with the recent improvements to the football and track facility on the other side of this property."

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