



## Watertown City Council

Administration Building  
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Watertown, MA 02472  
Phone: 617-972-6470

### Committee on Parks and Recreation

**Councilor Palomba, Chair, Councilor Feltner, Vice Chair, Councilor Bays, Secretary**

**Committee Report**

**November 14, 2023**

The Committee convened on September 28, 2023 at 5:00 pm with remote participation. Present were Councilors Anthony Palomba, chair, Lisa Feltner, vice-chair, Caroline Bays, secretary, John Airasian, Vinnie Piccirilli, and Council President Mark Sideris. Also present were School Committee member David Stokes, City employees Steve Magoon, Assistant City Manager and the Director of the Department of Community Development and Planning, Greg St. Louis, Superintendent of Public Works, Peter Centola, Director of the Department of Recreation, as well as architects from CDM Smith Scott Landgren and Glenn Howard, and residents Elodia Thomas, Bill Furtado, Peter Schwartz, Annette Farrell, Greg Salvucci, Dawn Duff, and Dennis Duff.

Councilor Palomba called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm

#### Signage

Steve presented the proposed signs that will be posted on all parks. Councilor Feltner proposed adding a QR code that will take people to the City's website. Councilor Bays suggested minor wording changes. We agreed that the park name would be on a different sign. Elodia Thomas read her version of the park sign (see attachment). She said signage should be simple and positive and, given the issues in Casey Park, that loud and inappropriate language should be noted as inappropriate. After discussion we agreed to keep the language with the minor amendments from Councilor Bays, the inclusion of a QR code, and the addition of Be Safe, Have Fun at the bottom (see attachment). After a brief discussion we decided to include the city seal.

Councilor Feltner made a motion that we accept the sign with the recommended revisions, Councilor Bays seconded and the motion passed 3-0. Note: Attached please find the revised sign that was developed by the Administration following the Committee meeting.

#### Casey Park

Glenn Howard went through some of the changes to the park. This is Phase 2 for Casey Park renovations which was proposed in 2017 and included primarily additions and improvement to

the ballpark, which is the official field for Little League baseball. The changes were the addition of prefabricate dugouts, a batting tunnel, a new backstop, bleachers, and a renovated lightening system. There were also plans to repave of the 4-square play area behind the backstop. The only changes since this the plan was originally presented were resurfacing the playground, gate improvements around the basketball courts, and adding a restroom/storage space near the bleachers

There were only a few comments about the renovations that the Committee was charged to review. Resident Elodia Thomas expressed concern about the placement of the batting cage and its proximity to houses. Mr. Duff thought the bathroom/storage facility should be relocated to a more central location accessible by patrons throughout the park. Ms. Thomas and other residents also felt the bathroom should be relocated. Superintendent St. Louis said the necessary water and sewage infrastructure could be done if necessary. Council President Sideris also had concerns about the proposed bathroom. He wanted to know who would be responsible for maintaining it and suggested that patrons use Parker School as an alternative

The President of Watertown Baseball, Mr. Furtado, said they have been waiting for these improvements for a long time and they need these repairs both for the coaches, players and parents. Councilor Airasian also said that as a parent of three baseball players, he feels improvements to the baseball field are needed.

A good portion of the meeting, and the Committee Chair took responsibility for this, focused on the other side of the park, particularly the hockey rink, which was not on the agenda. There were no renovations in the 2017 plan for changes to this portion of the park other than the resurfacing of the playground and the replacing the portable toilets with a permanent bathroom and storage area.

The comments below reflect the focus on the noise from the hockey rink, patrons' behavior, and who is allowed to use the rink.

- 1) Annette Farrell from Union Street expressed concern about the changes that were made during the 2015 renovation which have resulted in loud noise from the hockey rink including abusive and disrespectful language from the players.
- 2) Ms. Thomas felt Watertown youth can't use the facility because it is rented to outside groups. She is concerned about the noise residents are enduring from the rink. She felt the park should be built for our residents and ensure their happiness.
- 3) Peter Schwarz from Union Street (see attached letter signed by Mr. Schwartz, Annette Farrell, and Shelby Farrell) expressed distress at the negative impact the changes to the park have made on his family's life including loud noise from the hockey rink and disrespectful and aggressive players.

4) Dennis Duff (see attachment) suggested removing the rink, which is used by out of town people, and thereby creating more open space.

5) Councilor Piccirilli also expressed concerned about the rink noise, the bathroom, as well as why adults are on our facilities. He also wanted to know why, given the bad behavior, we continue to rent to people abusing the facility and disturbing the neighbors.

In response to the concern about adults using the hockey rink, Mr. Centola explained that the only time an adult league uses the rink is on Wednesdays but acknowledged there are adults who use the rink without a permit despite a permit being required. He acknowledged the City needs to do a better job of enforcing permit requirements and addressing adult intrusive behavior.

Pursuing the concern about adult behavior, Councilor Bays asked why rude and disorderly people were not kicked out. Mr. Centola said he is happy to come down and talk to people anytime but he hasn't received calls. Councilor Bays also asked what could be done to dampening the noise from the hockey rink. Mr. Howard said that the original design did not call for this, unlike the design for the rink at Moxley Park. However the City could look into retrofitting the existing rink with sound dampening board.

Mr. Centola concluded this portion of the meeting by saying that the park is used and designed for children. He will look at addressing the issues residents have complained about and ensuring the changes will have minimal impact on residents.

A Comprehensive Look.

Council President Sideris suggested that no further action be taken at this time and that we should take a more comprehensive look at the design. Councilor Piccirilli agreed with this sentiment as did Councilor Feltner who thought a pause was necessary since there are too many complaints and no community consensus.

Councilor Palomba felt that there is some work that can be done. He felt that the issues with the rest of the park shouldn't prevent us from addressing the baseball field and moving forward with the batting cages, the dugouts, the bleachers, upgrading the lighting, and repaving the four-square play area.

Councilor Bays felt that given the scope of the problems we should not approach the park improvements in a piecemeal manner especially since it could be years before we get around to addressing the other issues at the park.

Councilor Feltner made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Bays:

**ACTION ITEM**

Committee on Parks and Recreation recommends that the full City Council ask the Administration to take a pause and reevaluate the design for Casey Park and its use

The motion passed 2 in favor and 1 opposed with Councilor Palomba voting no.

With a unanimous vote the meeting adjourned at 7:13 pm.

#### **ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Anthony Palomba,  
Chair

Lisa Feltner,  
Vice Chair

Caroline Bays,  
Secretary



# City of Watertown

## Welcome to Our Park

While enjoying the amenities, please be respectful of the recreational facility and the neighbors.

### Park Rules:

- ◆ Parks are open 8:00 am to dusk. If artificially lit, parks close at 10:00 pm.
- ◆ Please carry out what you carry in or find an appropriate receptacle for your trash.
- ◆ No dogs are allowed on fields, courts, or playgrounds unless they are on pathways or in designated dog parks.
- ◆ Loud or inappropriate language or music is not permitted. Groups must have prior approval from the Department of Recreation for amplified sound.
- ◆ All use of recreational facilities by groups is by permit only.  
Contact the Recreation Department, 617-972-6494

Be Safe. Have Fun.

QR

# Welcome to Victory Field

Please be considerate of your neighbors: amplified music, public disturbances, smoking/vaping, and the consumption of alcohol are prohibited.

Please carry out what you carry in and help keep our park trash free.

Leashed dogs are only allowed on the sidewalk and roadway.

Park Hours: 8:00 am to 10:00 pm

Please call 311 with any questions or concerns.

**Play Smart - Be Safe - Have Fun!**

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(QR code)

Be Safe - Have Fun!

## CASEY PARK Phase 2 Committee Meeting, Thursday September 28, 2023

Sorry this is so long, but because issues have not been dealt with in a timely manner, they have to be reiterated to understand the big picture situation.

### **Introduction:**

The hockey rink in Casey Park was forced into a residential corner, feet from our homes, changing the zoning of what was once all low-impact tennis courts to the high-impact hockey arena with loud and inappropriate noise, parking and safety issues. We need park signage, noise remediation, more frequent police presence, a reduction in the lighting hours to 9pm — not more development for more competitive sports instead of a peaceful, beautiful green space for all — especially our community — which Casey Park is no longer.

The hockey rink at Casey was never finished being built from 9 years ago, has never had the noise insulation installed or had the outer panels put on, or had the safety netting put on correctly. The new Moxley rink was built with these upgrades from day one, the way I have asked the town multiple times to fix the Casey rink due to the noise which exceeds the EPA and town's own noise regulations. I have recorded between 92 and 97dB for the booming pucks hitting wood and banging reverb of pucks hitting metal. When the puck/biscuit hits the single inner layer backboard a few feet from my property line, it makes a noise close to an M-80 with the accompanying reverberation repetitively echoing off the back of my house.

During a meeting at Casey Park, the aggressive hockey players that day began purposely aiming and shooting the pucks at us, including Peter Centola and Lisa Feltner, making loud acoustic bangs with the pucks hitting inches from our heads. We were standing where the Women's Bathroom was planned on going, again near our homes. Hopefully I have convinced the Committee that the bathroom should not go near the hockey rink because of inappropriate behavior leading to privacy and safety issues. These rinks should go into a dedicated skate park away from homes because of the nature of the sport.

Casey Park hockey rink was also built incorrectly, the rink has never held water to make ice in the winter, though the town has tried many times. There have never been signs displaying the hours and rules. Boomboxes are used almost daily, along with fights, injuries, flying pucks with glass and shingle damage. People begin using the park at around 6-7am and sometimes the party doesn't end until 11:30 pm after some games. It was eight years of pucks flying into my yard almost daily until I could convince the town to finally put up another one piece netting a few weeks ago (instead of two lateral pieces that funneled the puck directly into our yard). I'm not sure why it took that many years of asking, emailing, phoning and letters to the Committee and Parks Dept. The difference between the way we have been treated at Casey versus the quick construction with noise abatement measures at Moxley is striking.

Despite our calls for noise abatement and signs, pickle ball courts were added to to the tennis courts a few weeks ago as well, adding another layer of noise to the 8 abutting homes with small children and the many homes that can hear the noise in our Aldrich, Union, Capital streets neighborhood but do not know about these meetings. The most distressing aspect of this is the screamed swears when players miss a goal, a basket, or a point and the inappropriate lyrics that you can hear in my videos of the park. It has become ubiquitous. It is loud, angry and stressful, and has become persistent and daily.

“F” bombs, C bombs, MF bombs, P-bombs screamed when there are fights or injuries (documented in the audio). During an hour of hockey sometimes hundreds of times, next to a kid's playground and our homes with small children and the handicapped like my daughter who has autism, you can repeatedly hear “F\*CK!” screamed in anger. Last Sunday September 24th at 8am was particularly noteworthy. I am told I should call the police, but that would be impossible because of the frequency it now happens, plus retribution which has happened in the past against me for speaking out.

The able-bodied players use the handicapped parking space and ramp to park in because of the very limited parking situation. Police do not patrol or give tickets when called so there has been no deterrent to using these handicapped spaces. To his credit, Peter Centola did see this during the Casey Park meeting and asked the hockey players if they could move their cars. This is what started the angry attack on our group, including Peter and Lisa Feltner. I believe she was the only City Commissioner there that day and I hope she can explain what happened. This type of behavior

is not uncommon (though not all are disrespectful of others). Leagues are at the top of the list of those who do not care who they bother with bad behavior. Scheduling eight or ten teams in a league (ex: June 18, 2023) into a space built for two teams makes our lives unbearably loud, having garbage and things like vapes tossed into our yards. These seem to be people outside of Watertown, scheduling and paying the Parks Department for rink time at citizen's expense.

Please stop overdeveloping Casey Park. We, the abutters are asking that another batting tunnel or dugouts not be installed at this location which would cover the hopscotch pad and that little open green space that is used by girls and small children. Replacing the benches and small bleacher seating unit for baseball/softball would be fine if parents who are now using blankets and beach chairs require this, but we want green space as well for people who are not into competitive sports. Women and girls in particular are now told that if we want to use the parks, we need to join these (men's) sports teams. Please leave space for walking in the grass, picnicking, sunning, kite flying, sledding, flowers, trees, NOISE BUFFERS, because Casey Park was built in a pond basin which carries noise from one end of the park to the other, with echoes.

I have uploaded a number of recent video/audio to YouTube that highlights the loud noise and disruption that we deal with in our backyard. The bangs, clangs and booms from the pucks hitting metal and wood, the heavy doors which are not noise-insulated, the players kicking and hitting the wood panels over and over with their sticks and skates, and the excessive swearing needs to be addressed and I am begging for relief from this Commission.

When I grew up here as a child, I had direct access to the park from our yard. There were more tennis courts where the hockey rink is now, and the full area which was one big space with no fencing, just a small rounded bump-up at the edges, was flooded and made into an ice skating "pond". Girls in the winter were given half the area to ice skate and the other half for boys to play hockey, sharing respectfully. Now there is no space for girls skating, hockey has become too aggressive and dangerous to share a space, and the hopscotch pad, which could be a colorful and unique space for our communities' kids including a sensory park for our autism community, is being taken away again with no space earmarked for women and girls to replace the ones taken away.

### **Conclusion:**

Take the money earmarked for this new expansion, that would increase noise in an already overdeveloped and overused park, and use it for putting up signs to inform about the City Park rules, into finishing the exterior hockey rink walls with the noise insulation (done at Moxley) covered by noise-reduction outer panels that was never finished. Insulate the rink doors so they do not slam! every time they are opened and closed (hundreds of times a day). Put up padding behind the backboards (\*see footnotes) and padding on the metal poles (\*see footnotes), landscape the back portion of the rink with a wall of tall pine bushes that abuts our homes which would remediate noise and also beautify. There should also be noise buffers within the park because of the pond basin amplification of noise.

My understanding is that the public bathroom will be moved to the corner of the basketball court closer to Watertown St if the Port-a-Johns which have worked fine in the past are replaced with this expensive option. The hopscotch pad is used by kids despite being neglected by the town, it should be updated and maintained. We have other batting tunnels in town, we do not need another one here in our small park. I can think of other parks which have lots more room, parking and no residential abutters where this would be more appropriate.

Our community would like volleyball netting and open space, but keep sledding in the winter. Also please consider closing the parks at 9pm instead of 10pm, the same as Moxley Park has already done, with the Dark Skies compliant lighting. With increased population usage Casey Park has become too loud late into the nights. Play these videos on a loop from 8am to 10pm everyday in the background of your life and see what kind of impact a badly rezoned area makes to your family and neighbors.

Please calibrate your audio to my voice to match the Real Life level of noise, my cell phone mutes the audio so you have to turn it up; when you hear the puck hit the backboard, it should be at the 95dB range (recorded from my deck). Appreciated.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sKTIT1rSXc> Sat. June 18, 20203 (not May) later in the day

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/0oX2AgxTJrI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cx9iDlmAtgs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwkOJp9j0NY>

My YouTube channel with 10 currently uploaded videos: <https://www.youtube.com/@SqueakyWheel-hj2rb>

I implore you to turn up your volume and bass to hear the shock wave after the booms, to listen to the excessive swearing in the audio and honestly ask if you'd want this in your backyard every day for your daughter to listen to, your children to grow up with, these inappropriately screamed swears invading your every day, night and holiday even with the windows closed, and people climbing your fence and walking around your property to shag their balls that fly into your yard. It would be great if the town replaced the ugly chain link fence and black plastic tarp they put in my yard with a nice, tall, unclimbable, privacy wood fence.

Please do not approve the short-sighted and exclusionary Phase 2 plans for Casey Park as written before finishing the work that needs to be done — to make it a livable and beautiful park for all well into the future.

Annette Farrell

[annetteafarr@gmail.com](mailto:annetteafarr@gmail.com)

Hello City Councilors,

I have owned 68 Aldrich Road for over 40 years!  
For many years the park was peaceful and pleasant.

I just want to speak again to the unwarranted noise and poor behavior by out-of-town hooligans playing in the street hockey rink as being unacceptable, and why are we catering to out-of-town groups anyway?? Parks should be preserved for Local residents!

My suggestion for the best way to remedy this situation is to allow the street hockey for Watertown residents only; therefore REMOVE the street hockey rink at Casey Park, while allowing street hockey to continue at Moxley Field new hockey rink..,

The Casey Park should be used for Green Open Space !!!  
And not for dogs either !!! Many dog owners bring their dogs to the street hockey rink when not in use and the dogs are inside the rink.  
They allow the dogs to run unleashed inside the rink!!

The bathroom location suggested by the recreation dept, will be very poorly located. It should be centrally located within the park.  
A handicapped person using park facilities and coming from the former Parker school (end of the park) will have an extremely long and difficult journey to reach the facilities.

Please put these comments into your meeting tonight.  
I will be on Zoom.

Thank you very much, Dennis J. Duff