



MEMORANDUM

TO: Select Board, Park & Recreation Commission, Board of Health, School Committee, Finance Committee, and Community Preservation Committee

FROM: Katie King, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Operations; Carys Lustig, Director of Public Works; Timothy McDonald, Director of Health and Human Services; Stacey Mulroy, Director of Park & Recreation

CC: Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager; David Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Finance; Dan Gutekanst, Superintendent of Schools; Christopher Heep, Town Counsel

RE: Claxton Field Update

DATE: March 31, 2023

Board and Committee Members:

The Select Board is holding a special meeting on Tuesday, April 4th. We have added to the agenda a report on the status of the Claxton Field testing. The Board is meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the Rosemary Recreation Center, and the testing update will be the second item. This meeting will be available on Zoom.

This memo is aimed to provide updated information in advance of that meeting.

Background

Claxton Field at 1380 Central Avenue includes two softball fields with an overlapping multi-purpose field, trail access, picnic tables, restrooms, and a parking lot. It had a playground area, which was recently removed. This site served as a burn dump prior to the development of the Recycling and Transfer Station in the 1950s/1960s. Claxton was redeveloped as a recreational facility approximately 60 years ago, when additional soil fill was brought to the site and leveled to create the existing fields.

At the request of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) the Town of Needham engaged Weston & Sampson Inc (W & S) to provide sampling and analysis of the soil composition at Claxton Field. The Town's testing plan was submitted to MassDEP by W & S on February 9, 2023 and was approved on February 14, 2023.

A joint meeting of the Select Board, the Park and Recreation Commission, the Finance Committee, the Board of Health, the School Committee, and the Community Preservation Committee was held on February 15, 2023 to discuss the issue and provide public information about the potential risks at this property and provide contingency planning should the facility need to be closed.

Borings were conducted and completed on February 16, 2023 with samples sent out to a certified laboratory for the testing of:

- Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH);
- MCP 14 Metals;
- Asbestos; and
- Dioxins.

Summary of results

Final results from the soil analysis were received on March 29, 2023 and then discussed internally and with W & S on March 30, 2023.

The testing results are consistent with our anticipated outcome scenario #2, the testing finds some contamination¹ at Claxton in the subsurface material, but low levels of contamination² in the surficial soil³, allowing the surface to continue to be used. The results for soil⁴ did indicate that the Town will trigger the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (MCP) which is administered through a Licensed Site Professional (LSP). The Town will continue to engage W & S as an LSP on their behalf to work on potential follow-up testing and reporting requirements. The Town will be working with W & S to file with MassDEP within the 120 days of notification of test results as required.

Continued Usage of Claxton

The results of the testing are consistent with the assumed contamination that W & S and the Town discussed after boring samples were taken in January of 2022. The testing found that the topsoil on the field is clean fill⁵, and that usage as an athletic field would not carry any inherent risk. At this time the Town has no data to indicate that usage of the field is unsafe and will be keeping the fields open.

The Town will need to work with MassDEP and file information with them accordingly. The Town would work with W & S and MassDEP to ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place during the renovation project. Materials would be kept on site and appropriately capped.

The detailed drafted memo is attached with results.

Stockpiled Materials and Laydown Space

The material that was in this area is permissible to remain on site and can be placed back in the area of generation and is not required to be removed from the site. The Town will be coordinating with the contractor as this project is completed to ensure that these appropriate measures are taken during the closeout of the project in restoring this area.

Renovation & Reporting

In the next few weeks, the Town will be working with W & S and MassDEP to provide more clarity on the site conditions and any modifications that may be needed to the intended field improvements. At this time, the only major change to the design will include the expansion of the installation of the geotextile membrane to go beyond the field limits to areas that were identified through sampling as having contaminated materials in the subsurface soil. This may also trigger additional permitting requirements through the Conservation Commission.

¹ Concentrations that require reporting to MassDEP

² Concentrations similar to natural soils which do not reporting to MassDEP

³ Top 12 inches

⁴ Greater than 12 inches below surface

⁵ Contaminant concentrations similar to natural soils

Based on current information, the Town will be moving forward with the project as designed and with the modifications added to the geotextile membrane. The Town will be requesting that the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) review this project for funding in the Fall of 2023. Should this project be funded by the CPC and at Town Meeting this project would go out to bid in the Winter of 2024, with construction anticipated to start in the Spring of 2024.

Based on the data collected to date, W & S has indicated that the Town will be able to close this site under the MCP at the conclusion of the construction project until such a time as the Town decides to do more construction work on this site.

Conclusions

While there are still more unknowns on this site that will be investigated by the Town, W & S, and MassDEP in the upcoming weeks, the Town understands that this facility is safe for athletics and recreation activities. The Town will work proactively to make any necessary alterations to the design of the renovation project, with the goal of keeping this project on its original timeline. As in any location, there are always unknowns that could affect the use of this property, but the information available, along with the consultation of W & S, would indicate that the Claxton Field can continue to function as an athletic facility now and into the future.