

The Facilities Subcommittee met on Monday, April 14, 2025, in a Virtual Zoom Meeting. Present were Jennifer Cullum, Andre King, Sara Ahern, Chris Dwelley, Doug Boulanger, Katri Mulally, and David Anthony.

Ms. Cullum called the meeting to order at 4:00PM.

Meeting Summary

The Facility Subcommittee meeting discussed the historical context and current situation regarding field maintenance in Barnstable, with a focus on the challenges of managing school fields and the need for different field setups for various programs. The team also explored the potential for partnerships and collaborations to address maintenance needs, and the need for better management and policies around community programs. The conversation ended with a discussion on the challenges of managing school facilities, particularly the issue of overtime work, and the need for more analysis and potential contracting out of services.

Approve Meeting Minutes

- Motion by Mr. King, seconded by Dr. Ahern, and the Committee voted, unanimously, to approve the Meeting Minutes of January 27, 2025.
- Motion by Mr. King, seconded by Dr. Ahern, and the Committee voted, unanimously, to approve the Meeting Minutes of February 10, 2025.

Initial Discussion on School Fields

- Mr. Anthony explained the historical context and current situation regarding field maintenance in Barnstable. He outlined that the town charter assigns responsibility for all town facilities to the town manager, except those under the School Committee and Airport Commission. Mr. Anthony noted that while there have been efforts to consolidate some functions between the town and schools since 2006, attempts to combine school maintenance and structures and grounds were unsuccessful due to differences in needs. He also mentions that the closure and sale of several schools in 2009 resulted in a reduction of school-owned fields, leading to a better balance of maintenance staff for remaining facilities.
- Mr. Anthony discussed the challenges of managing school fields, particularly those used for youth soccer programs. He highlighted the need for different field setups for various programs and the difficulty in maintaining certain fields, such as the one at the Barnstable United Elementary School, which was originally designed for middle school use. Mr. Anthony also raised the issue of shared use of assets, particularly after school hours, and the lack of a clear provision in the charter regarding this. He used the example of the ball field behind West Villages Elementary School to illustrate the issue of field maintenance and usage.
- Mr. Anthony discussed the challenges and opportunities related to the maintenance of school properties, particularly fields used for recreation. He highlighted the issue of unionized workers and the potential for conflicts when maintenance is required. Mr. Anthony also explained the process of transferring properties back to the town when they are no longer actively used by the schools. He mentioned a specific case involving the transfer of a 3,000 square feet area at Osterville Elementary School for a pump station. Mr. Anthony also touched on the topic of liability and insurance, using the example of pickleball courts at West Village's school. He concluded by emphasizing the need to identify the maintenance needs of each property, particularly those used for recreation, and explore potential collaborations to address these needs.
- Ms. Cullum expressed concerns about the maintenance of fields, particularly the Babe Ruth field, which she described as a disaster. She suggested that the town should consider co-facilitating maintenance with vendors. Mr. Anthony agreed, citing the example of McKeon Field, where a deal was made for a particular user group to do maintenance in exchange for the field's use. Both Ms. Cullum and Mr. Anthony highlighted the high costs and year-round maintenance required for Cape fields, and the potential for partnerships to come at the expense of ownership.
- Mr. Anthony discussed the challenges of managing multiple use fields, including the need to ensure proper use and maintenance. He noted that the town has spent significant funds on certain fields and that there are still unmet needs for additional rectangular use fields. Ms. Cullum asked about the need for all the existing outlets, and Mr. Anthony suggested that the town may not need as many baseball field diamonds as they once did, but

rather more soccer fields and open play areas. Ms. Cullum also inquired about the management of vendors and partners for the fields, and Mr. Anthony clarified that this falls under the recreation department.

- Mr. Anthony and Ms. Cullum discussed the maintenance and control of various school fields. He estimated that the school controls around 60% of the fields, with the remaining 40% under the town's control. They also discussed the need for off-season nourishment and the potential for changing job descriptions and moving union employees. Mr. Boulanger mentioned the need for a pump for the irrigation system at one of the fields and the maintenance of other fields, including those at the high school and middle school complexes.
- The team discussed the maintenance and upkeep of their fields, particularly the high school field. They acknowledged the need for aeration, nutrient boosting, and organic weed control, which are costly and time-consuming. The team also considered the possibility of sharing community assets like the Performing Arts Center. They discussed the need for a field study to assess the condition of their fields and prioritize maintenance. The team also discussed the potential for the town to take over the maintenance of certain fields.
- The team discussed the maintenance and usage of community sports fields, including McKeon Field and Babe Ruth. They considered the possibility of contracting maintenance to a third party to save costs. The team also discussed partnerships with organizations like the Silver Bullets, who contribute significantly to field maintenance. Mr. King suggested exploring cost-saving arrangements with these organizations, while Dr. Ahern emphasized the need for clear documentation and committee approval for any special arrangements.
- Dr. Ahern expressed her preference for having control over maintenance and renter fees. Ms. Cullum and Mr. Anthony discussed the inconsistency in charging entities for field maintenance, with Mr. Anthony explaining that it's a delicate balance between affordability and maintenance costs. Mr. Anthony also highlighted the challenge of accommodating different user groups, such as school programs and recreation programs, while maintaining control over the fields. Mr. Boulanger expressed concerns about the increasing liberties taken by some groups, emphasizing the need for control. Ms. Cullum suggested having conversations about better deals for town-affiliated uses, while Mr. Anthony pointed out the need to account for budget priorities and potential subsidies for recreation fees.
- Ms. Cullum, Mr. Anthony, and Dr. Ahern discussed the need for a combined committee between Town Council and School Committee to work on complex issues related to town youth and field maintenance. They highlighted the importance of prioritizing the town youth and the potential for more oversight in these matters. Mr. Anthony shared an experience from the past where a field reconstruction team was established, but it was discontinued due to a lack of a champion. The team agreed to start having these conversations again and to explore the possibility of a consolidated facilities department between the town and schools.
- The team discussed the need for better management and policies around community programs, particularly those involving sports and field maintenance. They acknowledged the importance of these programs in providing opportunities for children and the need to modernize and structure them. The team agreed to gather more data on the number of fields, revenue, and costs associated with these programs. They also recognized the seasonal nature of the work and the need to account for this in their calculations. The next steps include deciding on the scope of work and scheduling another meeting to continue the discussion.
- The team discussed the challenges of managing school facilities, particularly the issue of overtime work. Mr. Anthony shared his experience of the field work being done on overtime 15 years ago, and how it has affected the staff. Mr. Boulanger mentioned that they have reeled in the overtime, but it could come back. Mr. Anthony also highlighted the issue of people working six days a week, putting in 50 hours a week, which can lead to injuries and sick days. The team agreed to work on bringing together data to better understand the situation. Ms. Cullum suggested that they might need to contract out some services to save costs. The team also discussed the possibility of having stronger community partners and the need for more analysis.

Next Steps

- Mr. Anthony will compile a list of fields on school property and town property, including their current uses and who permits them out.
- Mr. Anthony and Mr. Boulanger will work with town finance to determine revenue generated from field rentals.
- Mr. Anthony and Mr. Boulanger will estimate expenses related to field maintenance, including staff time and overtime.
- Mr. Anthony will discuss with John Gleason the costs of contracted mowing for certain fields like Cotuit and

McKeon.

- Dr. Ahern will review the current arrangement with the Silver Bullets regarding field usage and fees.
- The Facilities Subcommittee will schedule a follow-up meeting to review the compiled data and discuss next steps.

Motion by Mr. King, seconded by Dr. Ahern, and the Subcommittee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:06PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jen Kruczek
Executive Assistant