

Town of Littleton, MA 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 Littleton. Excepting the Fee Structure contained herein, which is set by the Littleton Park Commission, this policy has been approved by the Board of Selectmen, Park Commission, School Committee, and the Youth Sports Organizations. The policy is administered by the Recreation Department.

History: In 2019, the Park Commission established the Sports Council. The Sports Council consists of representatives from the major user groups (Public Schools, Youth Baseball/Softball, Youth Soccer, Youth Lacrosse, Youth Football, Adult Sports Leagues, the Park Commission, the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee). The purpose of this Sports Council 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 Sports Council generally meets monthly. Voting privileges are limited to the board representatives as listed in the Playing Fields Sports Council charter. PRCE and Public Works Park Staff may vote when acting with appropriate board member proxy power.

Playing Field and Track Permits:

Organized or regular use of the Town's grass 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 fields for recreational use, then the residents shall have priority to use the fields. Use of the High School track or active playing fields requires a permit from the Recreation Department. Requests for permits by the Youth Leagues (Soccer, Little League/Softball, Lacrosse, Football) will be done on a seasonal basis and must be made by the following dates:

- March 15 – Spring
- May 15 – Summer
- July 15 – Fall

It is expected that the representatives from each league will meet with each other and coordinate with the School's 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. Jurisdictional boards (Park Commission, School Committee and the Board of Selectmen) will be given field status updates by the Parks, Recreation, and Community Education (PRCE) department 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 boards' policies, that board reserves the right to restrict or further condition issuance of permits. Jurisdictional boards are those boards that are considered landowners of the various Town parcels.

User Groups / Priority of Use:

Permits are issued based on the following priorities:

1) Town-Wide Special Events: This includes events such as Town-wide special events, memorial services, and community fairs. PRCE will issue permits for these events. The PRCE Assistant Director will communicate with the jurisdictional boards to determine if these events will impact previously scheduled athletic or permitted events.

2) School Use: The Littleton Public Schools have the priority use of the school owned grass fields over any other group, including the Youth Leagues. School Department use includes athletic games, practices, and other special events.

Coaches Clinics: Littleton 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 field conditions. Summer clinics must be booked by May 1.

3) Littleton Recreation Department Programs: Use of fields for camps, clinics and programs, which are run by the PRCE Department will have priority use of fields after the LPS. All attempts will be made to limit programs that run during youth sport seasons to the best of the ability of the PRCE department. The Recreation Department offers these programs in support of its general mission to provide affordable recreational activities for the community.

4.) Littleton 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 fields and try to make accommodations for each other in the event of unforeseen scheduling changes during the season. Littleton 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.

5) Littleton 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 Littleton team must be involved in the match. Leagues or clubs must give priority to Town residents when filling rosters. Littleton teams or clubs must be able to prove that 75% of the memberships are Littleton residents or are Town of Littleton employees. Team rosters must be turned in to the Recreation Director prior to the start of the season.

6) Littleton Resident – One-Time Use: The Town recognizes that residents may want to use grass fields for one time uses such as birthday parties, neighborhood activities, etc.

7) Charitable Groups: If field space is available, as determined by the Park Commission, groups who are hosting an event to raise money for charity will be given a permit for a field 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 80% Littleton residents or Town of Littleton employees. Use by non-residents will be limited to baseball, softball, soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse. Use of fields 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 use fees are collected by the PRCE Department and are then segregated into accounts that are then used by DPW for field maintenance. Seasonal fees are charged for each season of use (spring, summer, and fall). Any surplus Youth League activity fees will be directed into a field maintenance reserve fund to support emergency repairs for Highway. Field maintenance fees may be expended by Public Works Park Staff after consultation with the Recreation Director. Seasonal reports will be given to the Sports Council on the uses of the field maintenance fees. The Park Commission 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) Littleton Resident Youth Leagues: \$15 per youth participant per season per sport.
- 5) Littleton Resident Youth League Clinics: \$15 per participant,
- 6) Littleton Recreation Department Programs: No fee,
- 7) Multi-Purpose Field for Adult Sports: \$15 per participant per season.
- 9) Littleton Resident – One-Time Use: Grass field \$50
- 10) Charitable Groups: No fee,
- 11) Non-Resident (Adults and Youth): Grass field: \$150;
- 12) Non-Recreation Department Camps: Grass field: \$35 per participant;
- 13) All field rentals that are not charged per participant are figured in increments of 1.5 hours.

General Field Use Rules

Hours of Operation: Fields may be used until dusk. 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 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: www.littletonma.org/parks-recreation/recreation-programs/pages/field-status. 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 Littleton PRCE Department take precedence. Whenever possible, PRCE and/or DPW will email user groups and/or 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 PRCE department, in consultation with the DPW and the Sports Council, will recommend when fields should be closed in order to rest them to prevent significant damage from overuse or for maintenance reasons.

Weather: Because lightning can strike up to 10 miles from a storm, users should seek safe shelter as soon as they hear thunder or see lightning. They should wait for 30 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 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 practices 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 contact the Recreation Director at (978) 540-2491, 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 Littleton'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 any field should be addressed to the PRCE Director at aday@littletonma.org.