

Via Email

November 15, 2021

City of Amesbury
Mayor Cassandra Gove
govek@amesburyma.gov



Greetings Mayor Gove.

Congratulations on your re-election. With both the election and the fall soccer season completed, Amesbury Soccer Association would like to re-connect with you regarding athletic fields in Amesbury.

As a start, we would like to share a summary of successes of ASA's Fall 2021 soccer season.

- **More than 300 players participated in ASA programs for players 3 to 14 years.**
- Our Kickin' It program for players ages 3 to 7 had more than 180 participants, and we are excited as this program is the future of ASA for players, coaches, and volunteers.
- ASA fielded 7 travel teams for players in Grades 3 to 8.
- The Grade 7/8 Boys Shamrocks (boys + 1 girl) finished the season 7-0.
- Supporting the high school teams, 17 ASA Grade 8 players played on the boys or girls junior varsity soccer teams, and without this influx there would not have been enough players for junior varsity teams for boys or girls at AHS.
- Two 7th grade ASA players (one boy and one girl) are playing for Seacoast United Academy teams, with these players competing against the best players in their age group in the entire northeast region.

In addition, we at ASA have been excited to watch the success of the girls' and boys' soccer teams at AHS and both making the playoffs and winning playoff games. Most of the AHS players are ASA players (including children of several current and former board members).

Fields continue to be a concern and objective of ASA. ASA continues hold practices at Woodsom Farm, and there were at least 3 teams practicing at Woodsom Farm every weeknight. The younger players practice near the shed and parking lot, and the older teams practice down the path in the field closer to the former Cashman baseball fields. The ground surface for both of these field areas is unlevel and rolling, which poses safety risks as well as does not allow portions of the field to be played on. I am including a photo of the field down the path from October

2021. This is where ASA used to have a full-size game field, and the photograph clearly shows the highs and lows on the field. The dips and holes prevent ASA from using 30-40% of



the field area for practice, and therefore our Grade 8 and older teams do not have a full-size field to practice on. These rolls are beyond the scope of what a volunteer organization can maintain or fix (ASA's lease with the City of Amesbury prohibits the use of machinery). With all the rain in 2021, there was more grass growth at Woodsom Farm fields, in contrast to past years where the grass thins and dies during the fall (see photo to the right of the Woodsom Farm field near the shed and parking lot from October 2019).



Soccer fields to be used for games in Fall 2021 was a challenge.

- The Grade 3&4 Travel Teams Fields (2 boys and 1 girls) play in the MVP League of surrounding towns (Groveland, Merrimac, Newburyport, West Newbury) and **played all of their games at away fields (12 total home games were played outside of Amesbury)**. At the end of the season the league administrator commented to an ASA board member of the additional stress of having the Amesbury teams play additional games on fields in other towns.
- The Grade 5&6 and Grade 7&8 travel teams initially scheduled all of the home games at the Cashman School field as we discussed at our meeting in July 2021 (16 games between 4 teams in the Essex County league). However, this soccer field deteriorated rather quickly this fall as shown in the picture taken the first week of October 2021. At that point in the season, ASA teams had only played 4 of our scheduled 16 home games. The wear and tear was primarily from the AHS teams and from the poor quality of this field.
- ASA made the decision to move the Grade 5&6 games to a make-shift field created at Woodsom Farm to reduce additional overuse of the soccer field at Cashman School.
- Overuse of the Cashman School field was a concern raised by ASA when we met in your office in July. Further, ASA played several games on the field at the Cashman field in early November; with overnight frosts portions of the field in the shade remained frozen into early afternoon and was dangerous to play on with players sliding on the frozen ground. An opposing player was injured after an awkward fall onto the frozen ground.



The fall soccer season just ended last week, but we are already planning for the spring. Registration is open, and we anticipate at least 3 more travel teams in Spring 2022 than Fall 2021 (approximately 50 additional players). Two of these teams will need full-size soccer

fields. The additional teams will result in 10 more home games in Amesbury in the spring, including some games on Sundays for our high school aged players. In addition, the additional teams will require 8 to 12 more practice hours during the week. During spring, field space is at a premium with lacrosse also using rectangular field space, including the Cashman School field which deteriorated by early October in Fall 2021 that will not have any further improvement this winter before April. Below is a current assessment of available fields for games in the spring.

- Woodsom Farm
 - Not an option for full sized fields
 - Possible option for younger ages: up to 6-7 travel teams (Grade 3&4 and 5&6) and 4-5 Grade 1&2 teams would be competing for the same field space by the shed on Saturdays.
- Cashman School field
 - Possible option but may not be reliable based on current conditions and lacrosse use.
 - ASA acknowledges the need to limit field use to prevent overuse.
- Amesbury Middle School will not be an option due to softball field layout.
- Amesbury Sports Park/Maples Crossing –may be available for rent, but we understand there are permitting delays with the City.
- Landry Stadium was discussed as an option. Need to determine what other sports use Landry Stadium in the spring, and additional staffing would be required from the school system.

Our program is thriving and growing, and we want to provide safe fields to play on in Amesbury. Your email from August noted that the plan for Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 was to “utilize existing fields” and that “overuse is a risk and will be monitored.” Overuse occurred this past fall and will only be worse this spring. Your email in August also mentioned “additional private fields brought online” that would be available to ASA to “alleviate any pressure on schedules and the need to play out of town.” We at ASA are eager to assist in any way we can, but we need support from the City for soccer fields for near-term and longer-term field space. Coordination will be needed between Amesbury High School teams and the various youth sports organizations.

Over the summer it was stated that the City was hiring additional DPW staff and that one would be focused on City-owned fields. Was this position filled? Please let us know if ASA should start interacting directly with DPW about fields.

We look forward to further dialogue with you and the City of Amesbury in being part of the planning for athletic fields in Amesbury.

Thank you
Amesbury Soccer Association Board of Directors