

Article 2. Grass Field at Loker Conservation & Recreation Area Design Fees
Proposed by: Board of Selectmen, Recreation Commission
Estimated Cost: \$125,000

To determine whether the Town will vote to:

- a) appropriate a sum of money, not to exceed \$125,000, to be expended under the direction of the Wayland Board of Selectmen for the design, permitting, and engineering for the development of a multi-purpose, rectangular, natural grass athletic field at the Loker Recreation site, including, but not limited to, lighting, drainage, landscaping, recreational amenities, irrigation system and any and all other costs incidental or related thereto; and
- b) determine whether said appropriation should be provided by taxation, transfer from un-appropriated funds, transfer from available funds already appropriated for other purposes, by borrowing under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44 or other enabling authority, or otherwise. (If borrowing, the article should include standard authorization language for Treasurer and to apply bond premium.)
- c) authorize the Town Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, to borrow up to said sum in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, section 7 and 8 and any other enabling authority, and issue bonds or notes of the Town therefor; and
- d) authorize any premium received by the Town upon the sale of any bonds or notes approved by this vote, less any such premium applied to the payment of the costs of issuance of such bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved hereunder in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, section 20, thereby reducing by a like amount the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs.

FINANCE COMMITTEE COMMENTS: The purpose of this article is to fund all costs associated with the design and permitting of a multi-purpose rectangular, natural grass athletic field at the Loker Recreation site, as defined above. The site is situated at the northeast corner of the intersection of Route 30 (Commonwealth Road) and Rice Road in Wayland (a map showing the location may be provided at Special Town Meeting). The article does not propose how the cost of \$125,000 will be funded. Similar articles to fund an athletic field at this site have been debated and voted at Wayland Town Meeting in previous years, with the major difference being that those requests were for the development of an artificial turf field and this article is for the development of a natural grass field. In April 2019, a debt exclusion question on the local election ballot asking whether Wayland residents would support additional taxes to fund an artificial turf field at the Loker recreation site passed. However, the proposed articles at Town Meeting to appropriate the funds to build the field failed to obtain the necessary 2/3 vote for passage. Voters at Town Meeting did not support those projects at that time

In the Warrant for Annual Town Meeting in 2021, it was noted that:

The field would be built on an area that the Town purchased for \$1.7 million in 2000. At a Special Town Meeting in November 2017, the Town approved design funds for this project, of which \$154,000 has been expended to date. The scope of this project includes a regulation-

sized field (measured at 195' by 330') and includes the playing surfaces, lighting, drainage, landscaping, amenities, access roads, and parking areas. Design and construction bid documents are complete.

While the article in 2021 defined the size of the field to be developed, such a definition is not stated in the present article, although the Finance Committee assumes it is likely to be similar. This article would fund a new design study, and therefore the defined size of the field may be an open question regarding the athletic field. The Article from the 2021 Town Warrant states that the Town has spent almost \$2.0 million in acquisition and design costs for this property since 2000 and that a portion of the property is specifically designated for recreational use.

The Recreation Commission has stated the need for additional athletic fields in Wayland for many years and several studies that have been undertaken since 2010 have documented this need. These studies have provided data regarding both the insufficiency in the number of fields and overuse of the existing fields (see the following: Wayland Town Master Plan from June 2010; report by Gale Associates, Inc., dated July 15, 2010 (the “Gale Report”); Town of Wayland Open Space & Recreation Plan from 2016; and Wayland Townwide Recreation Facilities Plan by Weston & Sampson in January 2018). All of these studies and the need for additional athletic fields was reiterated and reinforced during a public forum held on August 30, 2021 by the Board of Selectmen.

The Gale Report has often been cited over the past decade as a resource in the various proposals regarding recreational fields in Wayland. With regard to the Loker Recreation Area, it is noted that the Gale Report recommended that the site be developed recreationally for Little League baseball fields. Although this article does not specifically state the use of an athletic field at this site, all of the recent proposals voted at Annual Town Meetings have been for fields that would generally be used for soccer and perhaps lacrosse and not for Little League baseball.

Weston & Sampson has estimated the annual cost of maintenance to be in the range of \$10,000 to \$15,000 per annum, if a field is developed at this site, subject to a future vote of Town Meeting.

The Board of Selectmen recommends _____. Vote:

The Recreation Commission recommends _____. Vote:

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR:

- A vote in favor of this article will accelerate the addition of a new playing field in Wayland, which is a need that has been requested by the Recreation Commission and many residents and has been substantiated by the reports noted above.
- The Loker Recreation area has been studied and planned for many years and moving ahead with this project would be a step in the direction of putting to use an asset on which

the Town has spent significant monies over the past two decades and a use that is consistent with its designation as a recreation area.

- Planning a natural grass field at this location will provide a new field, which has been requested by many, and will satisfy many in Wayland who supported the development of the athletic field, but not one consisting of artificial turf.
- A new athletic field at this location will enhance the overall Loker Recreation area by making the facility more appealing to those using its fields and conservation aspects in addition to the athletic facility.

ARGUMENTS OPPOSED:

- Development of an athletic field at the Loker Recreation area is seen by some as an expensive place to develop a new athletic facility for the Town; rather, the Town should explore other areas that may be developed with similar or additional facilities before spending the funds to develop this site.
- Neighbors have stated concerns with an athletic field at this site due to increased traffic and the potential to add lights for evening athletic events.
- Funding for this planning exercise has not been defined and was not planned within the Fiscal Year 2022 budget as voted at the 2021 Annual Town Meeting; therefore, some might argue that this expenditure should be voted at the next Annual Town Meeting when voters can see it in the context of the overall budget for the next fiscal year and in the context of the 5-year capital plan.

RECOMMENDATION: The Finance Committee recommends _____. Vote

Quantum of Vote: 2/3 vote if borrowing funds under General Laws, Chapter 44, Sections 7 and 8. Majority vote to appropriate funds pursuant to General Laws Chapter 40, Section 5.

For more information about this article, contact Louise Miller, Town Administrator at lmiller@wayland.ma.us