

M e m o r a n d u m

TO: BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE **CC:** JIM DAVIS, ATHLETIC DIRECTOR
FROM: BELMONT YOUTH BASEBALL
LITTLE LEAGUE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
DATE: SEPTEMBER 29, 2011
RE: YOUTH TRAVEL BASEBALL PROGRAM

Belmont Youth Baseball requests approval to make some minor improvements to the baseball/softball fields located at the Middle School and at Concord Ave. We are presenting this submission at the recommendation and suggestion of High School Athletic Director, Jim Davis, with whom we have shared our proposal and have copied on this correspondence.

Belmont Youth Baseball is an organization dedicated to teaching the town's kids teamwork, sportsmanship, and baseball. It is made up of Belmont boys and girls ages 7-15 with varying levels of baseball skill. It is run entirely by adult area volunteers whose focus is on the kids, the game, and creating an environment where the players can learn and have fun with their friends and neighbors in Belmont.

In recent years we have seen a significant number of our local players join out of town Amateur Athletic Union ("AAU") baseball. AAU baseball is designed to provide a higher level of competition for those players that are passionate about the game and want to devote more time and energy to the game than a town program typically offers. The problem with the AAU model is that the programs are run for profit with many of the programs in the area charging between

\$1,600.00 to \$2,800.00 per season to participate. This puts a financial burden on the parents or precludes some kids from playing. The AAU model also undermines the ability of our children to play with their Belmont friends and neighbors. Some programs also actively discourage their players from playing other sports or on other teams or from engaging in other activities that might conflict with the AAU team's emphasis on winning.

In order to reverse this trend of local kids choosing to play AAU baseball or being excluded altogether due to cost, we would like to establish a travel youth baseball program for Belmont residents that would allow these players to stay in Belmont and compete at the highest level against area AAU teams. Since the program would be under the umbrella of Belmont Youth Baseball, the coaches would be unpaid volunteers and we would not operate the program as a for-profit business. Accordingly, we hope to be able to reduce the cost of participation such that it would be 50-75% less than what AAU teams in the area are charging. Our goal is to initially offer a travel program beginning in 2012 for the U-11 and U-12 age groups with games being played between April and June. Our primary focus will be on developing skills in an environment of teamwork, community and positive reinforcement, with winning as a secondary goal. Kids will be encouraged to pursue interests beyond just baseball.

While much of the infrastructure is in place to move forward effectively with the travel program, we are seeking approval to make certain minor improvements to the fields at the Middle School and at Concord Ave. in order for them to comply with the requirements of the league in which the teams would participate. This is because travel teams at the U-11 and U-12 age group play on a field with a longer distance between home plate and the pitcher's mound as well as slightly longer base paths. In particular, standard Little League diamonds use 45 foot pitching distances and 60 foot base paths (referred to as a 45/60 field), while travel teams at the

U-11 and U-12 age groups play on a slightly bigger 50/70 diamond. The increased distance for U-11 and U-12 players improves the safety for the players and also helps ease the transition kids face when they move to a full size (60/90) baseball diamond at age 13 and beyond.

The specific proposed changes to the fields which we are seeking School Committee approval for are the following:

Concord Ave.- We propose cutting 3-4 feet away from the grass where the outfield grass meets the infield so as to allow for slightly longer base paths. The overall field dimensions would not change. We used the Concord Ave. field last summer for a summer baseball pilot program that used 70-foot base paths and it worked out very well except for the need for this adjustment in where the outfield grass and infield meet.

Middle School- We would propose cutting 5-7 feet cut away from where the outfield grass meets the infield for the same reasons articulated above. Again, there would be no change in the overall dimensions of the field.

The cost of the upgrades to the fields would be paid for entirely by Belmont Youth Baseball, with no money required from the town. The work would be done by certified contractors in the Fall of 2011. A bid process would take place and the selected contractor would do the work with oversight from Joe Urciullo to make sure the work is done appropriately and consistent with the town's high standards. The upgrades will have no adverse or detrimental effect on any of the other current uses of these fields, but merely allow them to be used by more kids during times in which the fields are currently unused. We have spoken with Joe Urciullo, the Athletic Director, and the Recreation Department and, to our understanding, they all support our use of the fields as described herein.

We hope that you will support us in providing this opportunity to our local kids. Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns. If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact Peter Noone at 617-489-5300 or at pnoone@averydooley.com.

Motion for November 2 School Committee:

The Belmont School Committee accepts the proposal from the Belmont Youth Baseball Little League Board of Directors as outlined in the Memorandum of September 29, 2011, to undertake at the League's own expense enhancements to the baseball playing field on Concord Avenue with the following provisions: 1) that the pitcher's mound to be used will be a temporary structure; 2) that the League understands the property is under consideration as one potential site for a possible new Belmont Public Library.