

Belmont Middle and High School Site Layout

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2020

The Challenge:

- To create a campus layout that supports Belmont High School athletic programs and minimizes negative impact on a particular program
- and
- Which serves as the athletic spaces for Town, school and community use

Context and Timeline

- ▶ The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee (BMHSBC) proposed many building configurations to the community starting in 2017.
- ▶ The options for the project included a design that had:
 - ▶ A total renovation of the current school,
 - ▶ A new building with renovation to the existing school building and
 - ▶ An entirely new building.
- ▶ The project was further challenged by the discussion and decision of how many grades the school would serve: **A. 9-12**, **B. 8-12**, **C. 7-12**.

Context and Timeline

- ▶ Each of those options were discussed and decided at various public meetings held by the BMHSBC.
- ▶ Each of those building configurations impacted the project, as the footprint of the new building, combined with restrictions of the available site, were limiting factors.

Site Decisions

- ▶ When the footprint and size of the school was determined, the goal of the school department was to keep all athletic spaces intact on the new campus.
- ▶ From the start this was a challenge as we had a much larger building on the site, thus reducing the available space for athletics.
- ▶ When we reviewed the multiple versions of how to best use the space, it became evident that some athletic programming (courts or fields) needed to be placed off campus.
- ▶ Each version had compromises in program access and the functional use of the spaces during each season.

Site Decisions

- ▶ There were two determining factors during the review process:
 - ▶ What was the most universal and efficient use of the space over the course of all seasons, given they are utilized by many different sports and user groups.
 - ▶ Keeping our Title IX mandate in mind.

Original Decision – West of Harris Field

- ▶ The decision made on the available area west of Harris Field was based on the space utilization that provided maximum use by as many possible user types across the different sport seasons.
- ▶ The decision for softball and baseball diamonds with a rectangular multi-sport space in the middle was based on the increasing needs of all athletic programs at BHS, Town Youth programs and community use.
- ▶ This decision left no tennis courts on the site.
- ▶ Given this decision, the goal of the school department and recreation department was to pursue Community Preservation Act funding to add two courts to the Winn Brook site in order to support BHS tennis.

Request for Decision to be Reviewed

During the Fall of 2019 ...

- ▶ Several meetings with the tennis advocates
- ▶ Meeting with youth baseball and softball representative
- ▶ Meeting with youth boys and girls soccer representative
- ▶ This process included discussion and collaboration with our Athletic Director and our Town partners in the Belmont Recreation Department

Facts: Tennis Court Comparison

Community	Town Courts Total (incl HS)	Courts at HS	HS Courts	DLS 2015 Population
Belmont	** 12	0	no	25,500
Burlington	8	0	no	25,900
Lexington	17	10	yes	33,400
Melrose	8	0	no	28,000
Reading *	12	0	no	25,700
Stoneham	8	8	yes	22,000
Wakefield	9	6	yes	26,900
Watertown	15	0	no	34,300
Wilmington	7	4	yes	23,500
Winchester	18	0	no	22,400
Woburn	6	4	yes	39,500
* Location within 500 ft. from school				
** Belmont would increase to 16 courts when adding two at Winn Brook and replacing the two courts at CMS when modular units are removed.				

Facts: High School Number of Teams and Participants

Three year average participation over the years 2016, 2017 & 2018:

- Fall 467 participants
- Winter 386 participants
- Spring 406 participants

Numbers of Varsity & Sub Varsity Programs:

- Fall (10) varsity & (14) sub varsity
- Winter (11) varsity & (12) sub varsity
- Spring (10) varsity & (11) sub varsity
- Total (31) varsity & (37) sub varsity

Facts: Youth Program Impact

Additional Town use of recreational and athletic spaces:

- Belmont Youth Soccer serves over 1,500 children in the fall and spring.
- Belmont Youth Softball and Baseball serves roughly 500 children in the spring, summer and fall.
- Tennis does not have a formal youth program.
- We did not seek the amount of children who participate in youth programs for lacrosse or field hockey.

Partnering on Efficient Use of Town Funds

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- ▶ The School Department in partnership with the Town is looking to be thoughtful stewards of the tax dollar.
- ▶ This includes use of the area west of Harris Field as these fields are used by the entire Town and paid for with taxpayer dollars.
- ▶ This includes attempting to engage a public / private partnership for the rink with the goal of saving taxpayer dollars.
- ▶ The BMHSBC has proactively engaged in discussions with Town groups that support the Community Path and the Intergenerational Path to provide efficiencies in design and expense to the Town.

Thought Process

- There is less space on the site due to the increase in building footprint.
- Some program or field space needs to be reduced and moved.
- The goal of having all current athletic space in the new site is not feasible.
- Supporting all varsity programs, including tennis on the site is challenged by demand for optimal utilization of our limited space for school and Town use.
- Moving baseball to Winn Brook would limit the access of other programs (soccer, baseball, lacrosse) throughout the Town.
- The addition of courts at Winn Brook would make the BHS Tennis program whole and be the least disruptive the universal use of Town of Belmont space.

Review and Decision

- It is my recommendation that we stay with our original decision to utilize the area west of Harris Field in a manner which is the most universal and efficient given all the competing interests and uses across the Town.
- The BMHSBC project is an incredible once in a lifetime opportunity for the Town of Belmont. This decision should be what is in the best interest of the long term-needs of the entire Town.
- The recommendation of the School Department comes with support from our Athletic Director and the Assistant Town Administrator and Recreation Director.
- This decision will be coupled with a pursuit of additional courts at the Winn Brook in order to support more courts in the Town and have a place where our BHS tennis team can host home matches.