

Buckland Shelburne Youth Baseball

P.O. Box 102, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370

July 8, 2021

Board of Selectmen
Town of Buckland
17 State Street
Shelburne Falls, MA 01370

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you today in response to the recently approved changes to the Town Bylaws as they relate to dogs. I myself am a resident and dog owner, but today I am writing to you as the President of Buckland Shelburne Youth Baseball (BSYB). We are a privately organized and funded, volunteer lead youth baseball league, which primarily services the students of Buckland Shelburne Elementary (however any child is welcome to play for us). We currently have between 90-100 players, who compete at both recreational and tournament levels of play, under the larger parent organization of Mohawk Youth Baseball. This past season, BSYB had 9 recreational teams and 2 tournament teams calling Cricket Field home. Given our large numbers we also use the Buckland REC, the field behind BSE and the field on Little Mohawk Road (Shelburne) as practice fields. We hosted 56 games at Cricket Field this season along with countless practices at the other fields. Our players competed against other teams from Ashfield, Charlemont, Colrain, Hadley, Greenfield, Deerfield, Whately, Sunderland, Conway and Hatfield (Rowe, Chesterfield & Worthington did not have programs this year), having an estimated 350 players on Cricket Field just this past season.

Every spring, we organize a "Field Clean up Day" to prepare each of the fields before the start of our season. Teams and their families are assigned to different fields and asked to show up with rakes, shovels, leaf blowers, etc. to put in the hard work needed to make the fields ready for the season. Each year, the volume of dog waste we have to clean up seems to increase. I wish it stopped there. But throughout the season, residents continue to walk their dogs on these athletic fields. Some dog owners are responsible and clean up after themselves, but most do not. I am concerned about the health and welling of these approximately 350 players who are running, diving and sliding in dog waste. When a ball is hit, it rolls through the grass (and whatever may be in that grass), picked up by a player, perhaps put in a glove, thrown to another player, the spreading continues... The players are wiping their brows, rubbing their eyes, and getting drinks and snacks between innings. The ingestion of dog waste (or even just inadvertently getting it in your eyes) can lead to bacterial and/or parasitic infections. My concern is, that even when responsible dog owners clean up after their dogs, there is still a smear or some remains left for our kids to (unknowingly) come in contact with.

My reading of the newly passed dog bylaws suggests that dog owners are allowed to walk their dogs on town property, which includes the athletic fields previously named. Do the current dog

bylaws as written address any of the health and safety concerns I have identified? Can we have a discussion about how we can better protect our children using these fields?

Very truly yours,

Leah M. Phillips

Leah M. Phillips, President
Buckland Shelburne Youth Baseball