

Shelburne Recreation Committee Town Report 2022-2023

The Recreation Committee has the following members: Diana Hardina, Mary Lou Gallup, Norman Beebe, and Stefan Topolski. We currently have one vacancy on the committee. If you are interested in joining, please contact one of us; our contact information is available on the town website, or email us at cowellgymnasium@gmail.com. Bill Buck enters his fifth year as the Cowell Gym Director. Bill's background in both coaching and facility management continues to be an asset to the committee.

After two plus years of restrictions and closure, the town's major recreational facilities, the Cowell Gymnasium and the outdoor courts at the Cowell, were fully open this past year! The outdoor courts saw the return of basketball after over a year's absence. Tennis and pickleball continued through the pandemic but the latter took off in the fall. One reason is that over the summer we were finally able to get the long planned pickleball court lines painted. We had three courts lined on the tennis court - one on either side of the tennis net and one overlapping the net. The latter allows residents to play pickleball without having to set up a net. The lines are in yellow to offset them from tennis court lines, which are in white. Having the court lines painted certainly made it easier to play pickleball outdoors, but the real boom in pickleball usage came about thanks to recreation committee member, Mary Lou Gallup, and her husband Jay Readinger.

Starting in the fall they began offering pickleball demos at the outdoor courts and then regular three-hour sessions (including lessons) on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday. Once the weather got cold, they moved into the Cowell Gymnasium and offered sessions six days a week – four mornings and two evenings. In addition, they continue to offer play sessions for novice, intermediate and advanced players, as well as lessons for all levels, and they also added team/league play. To say pickleball was a success is an understatement! Many community members were introduced to the game and now play regularly, and many residents who already play pickleball have a place to play. Just to give folks an idea of how much the pickleball program was utilized, once the program moved into the Cowell Gym (where the Cowell user fees of \$5 per adult and \$3 per child apply) over \$5,000 was collected! These fees, along with the other fees collected, are used by the town to offset some of the expense of heating the gym as well as for recreation expenses, such as pickle ball equipment, basketballs, the lining of the pickle ball courts, liner for the outdoor skating rink, etc. If you have questions about pickleball, please email shelburnefallspickleball@gmail.com.

Pickleball was not the only thing going on in the gym. We saw the return of all of our usual programming: adult basketball three nights a week (both competitive and relaxed), volleyball one night a week, senior walk three mornings a week (during the winter), and the Cowell youth drop-in basketball program. The Cowell Youth Basketball Program ran four nights a week with coed sessions offered for kindergarten, grades 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6; unfortunately the latter group was disbanded due to low interest. We want to give a shout out to the volunteers who coached these groups. The senior walk and Cowell Youth Basketball Program are free, and the other activities have a \$3 per child or \$5 per adult session fee.

Rentals have also returned to the Cowell. Individuals have rented the gym for birthday parties, ping pong, end of season celebrations, and tai chi classes. We also have two schools, The

Academy at Charlemont and Four Rivers, that rent it on an ongoing basis for their basketball programs. The Draw-around, after a three-year absence, will return to the Cowell Gym this May! For information on a private rental, please contact Bill at cowellgymnasium@gmail.com.

For the fifth straight year, Shelburne Recreation Committee member Stefan Topolski provided public ice skating in his side yard, dubbed by Stefan as the “town rink,” at 111 Bridge Street. The “town rink” opened for skating on Christmas day! Sadly, the weather was not ideal for much of this past winter; still, Stefan still had close to 70 visits, and the opportunity to skate in town was greatly appreciated. Stefan has graciously agreed to continue to provide ice skating at the “town rink” next year. The recreation committee is looking for volunteers to assist Stefan next season in maintaining and clearing the ice. If you would like to help, please email us at cowellgymnasium@gmail.com.

The Recreation Committee is currently collaborating with the Shelburne Open Space Committee to update our Open Space and Recreation Plan. To this end, the committee wrote and received a grant for \$7,000 to help pay for assistance from FRCOG (Franklin Regional Council of Governments). FRCOG’s assistance has been invaluable. Thanks to Andrea Donlon of FRCOG, we were able to put together and administer the Shelburne Open Space and Recreation Survey, which residents were able to complete online or on paper. Andrea recently tabulated the results, and we look forward to sharing those with the town. There is still much more to do on the Shelburne Open Space and Recreation Plan, but we are off to a good start and are hoping to complete it this year.

The Recreation Committee also continued its collaboration with the Open Space Committee to expand hiking trails within the town of Shelburne. Of particular interest, is development of a hiking trail along the Deerfield River that would be accessible from town. This trail, as presently conceived, would start at the Deerfield Avenue parking lot and follow the Deerfield River for about six tenths of a mile. The town owns close to ten acres of land along the Deerfield River, and this trail would primarily be on that land.

The West County Emergency Food Pantry completed its eighth full year of operation in the basement of the Cowell Gym. This permanent presence allows the Food Pantry to be open every Wednesday from 11 am to 3:30 pm. The Food Pantry serves 25 to 30 individuals every Wednesday. This translates to support for roughly 70+ families each month in the Shelburne area. For more information, you can contact the Food Pantry at 413-773-5029. The Clothes Closet, run by Trinity Church and located in the Cowell Gym basement adjacent to the Food Pantry, has reopened. It is open the second and fourth Wednesday of each month from 11 am to 3:30 pm and generally sees 10 to 15 people each day it is open.

The Recreation Committee maintains a Facebook page and sends out programming updates via email. You can like us at <https://www.facebook.com/ShelburneRecreation>, and if you'd like to receive the updates, please email cowellgymnasium@gmail.com.

The Recreation Committee would like to thank the people of Shelburne, in particular the Selectboard, Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz, and Shelburne Highway Superintendent Mark Shippee for their ongoing support. We would also like to thank the Shelburne Falls Fire District and Chief Herb Guyette for providing water for the “town rink.”