



**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28TH
7:00 PM
TANTASQUA HIGH SCHOOL**

**STURBRIDGE RECREATION COMMITTEE
ARTICLE 50
MULTIUSE RECREATIONAL FIELD DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CEDAR LAKE RECREATION AREA
(2/3 Vote Required)**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money to pay costs of designing, engineering, constructing, and equipping a multiuse field and accessory structures and improvements at the Cedar Lake Recreation Area and for the payment of any and all incidental and related costs; to determine whether this amount shall be raised by taxation, transfer from available funds, borrowing, or otherwise, and that any borrowing approved for this project shall be expressly contingent upon approval by the voters at an election of a debt exclusion question, in accordance with G.L. c. 59, §21C(k) (also known as Proposition 2½). The Board of Selectmen and any other appropriate officials of the Town are authorized to apply for federal, state, or private grants, enter into any agreements and execute all documents including contracts for a term in excess of three years as may be necessary to effectuate the purposes of this article, and to accept any gifts or grants provided to the Town for such purposes; or take any action relative thereto.

Sponsor: Board of Selectmen

Where is this project located?

The existing Sturbridge Recreation Area.

This location has Courts, Public Beach, Playground and Pavilions

Extremely limited parking; 6-8 spots

Field and adjacent parking will be developed across from existing Athletic Courts, Playground, and Town Beach.

What does this article fund?

This article will fund the finalized design, permitting and construction of improvements. Design and permitting will include a traffic study and other required elements for site plan review as well as conservation requirements such as storm water design. Improvements include but are not limited to an artificial turf multipurpose field, minimum of 50 parking spaces, and accessibility upgrades to the Town Playground, Beach and Athletic Courts. The 2007 Field Study, 2011 and 2018 Open Space and Recreation Plans all recommended additional fields in town for local youth leagues and this would be the first field constructed to meet the need for fields in town.

Cost: The estimated project cost is \$5,410,000.00. The total amount for this project will be borrowed and repaid over 15 years. Of this amount \$1,000,000 will be repaid with Community Preservation funds, and \$4,410,000 will be repaid by an increase to property taxes. This project will add approximately \$101.00 per year or \$8.42 per month to the property tax bill based on a medium home value of \$341,829. In order for this project to move forward the town will need to approve a debt exclusion.

It is important to note that these amounts are only if the Town is not able to secure additional funding prior to FY2025, when the increase would begin. This article will fund the finalized design, but the current project is not shovel-ready so we cannot apply to grants without the additional design and permitting work included in this article. The Committee and staff are dedicated to securing as much grant funding as possible and will welcome donations to reduce the burden on the voters.

Frequently Asked Questions about Cedar Lake Recreation Area Field Plans

1. Why is this plan proposed? With 139 teams totaling 1,703 child athletes, and an additional 185 adult participants, the current fields are not adequate to support our existing needs. There is no regulation sized multipurpose field in Town, requiring Soccer, Football, Cheer, and Lacrosse Leagues to outsource to other Towns for field space, or practice on the outfields of existing baseball fields. Our existing grass fields are not designed for the overuse and rough play of these sports, leaving the fields in poor condition for the Baseball and Softball leagues.

2. What amenities exist at this location currently? The Cedar Recreation Area hosts the Town Athletic Courts (Basketball, Tennis, Pickleball), Outdoor Pavilion, Playground, and Town Beach. There is minimal parking and no ADA compliant parking. These amenities hosts programs such as Summer Recreation Programs, Young Adults Basketball League, Sturbridge Pickleball, Tantasqua Youth Cheer, Girl Scouts, and private rentals.

3. Are there other fields or sport complexes in town? There is (1) Little League Field and (1) Girls Softball Field located at the Town Barn Athletic Fields. There is (1) Legion Baseball Field at Turner's. The outfield of the Girls Softball is used as a multipurpose field for practice for Football, Soccer, and Lacrosse. The outfield of Turners field is used for practice for Football, the grass area at Cedar Rec is used for Cheer. The fields at Burgess Elementary are available on a limited basis and are not controlled by the Town Recreation Department. The fields at THS/Jr. High are given first priority for school sport teams, these fields are in high demand for Sturbridge Youth Leagues and all five towns in the district.

4. Have you considered other locations? The history of field discussions in Sturbridge is extensive. This location was chosen after careful consideration and review. The Town has reviewed and denied multiple field proposals in the past. The Recreation Committee listened to the concerns of the Residents and provided a smaller scale project that enhances our existing Recreation Area. In addition to being a centrally located Town owned property with existing Recreation amenities, and no major developmental concerns, the Cedar Recreation Area is connected to the Burgess Elementary School by the new Discovery Trails. Continuing to develop this area is a great enhancement to the community.

5. What accessibility improvements are needed at this location? The Rec has no compliant parking or pathways on site. There are no sidewalks or crosswalks, including no ADA compliant accessibility to the Town Playground or Town Beach. The Town Playground requires an upgrade for ADA and safety measures. The 60 Cedar property is assessed at \$585,100 for FY2022. 521 CMR requires that improvements greater than 30% of the value of the Outdoor Facility in 3-years trigger the entire property for accessibility compliance. In this case, improvements in 3-years' time of over \$175,530 trigger full compliance under state law (commonly referred to as MAAB Requirements). Federal ADA has applied to the site for any work done since 1993, and we are generally obligated to remove barriers to accessibility whether there is a project or not. The proposal for Cedar Recreation Area will address these needs and provide full site accessibility.

6. If this passes at Special Town Meeting, what is the next step? Residents will be asked to vote on a debt exclusion, which is a ballot question that will be held within 90 days of the town meeting vote.

7. What is debt exclusion? A debt exclusion raises additional tax revenue to pay debt service costs to finance a capital project. Your property taxes will increase for a period of time; in the case of the recreation field project the debt exclusion would be for fifteen (15) years. When the debt for the project is paid, the additional amount of taxes being assessed for the project ends.