



# NEWTON PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE DEPARTMENT

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RUTHANNE FULLER  
MAYOR

## Memorandum

Date: May 13, 2021  
To: City of Newton Councilors  
From: Derek Mannion, Superintendent of Public Grounds Maintenance  
Cc: Commissioner Nicole Banks  
Subject: Proposal to Expand Pesticide Use on Public Property

Since 2003 the Department of Parks, Recreation & Culture has sparingly used pesticides on public property. All pesticide use is overseen by the IPM Advisory Committee and follows the City of Newton IPM Policy and Procedures. These policies were adopted by Mayor Cohen in September 1997. Newton's Parks, Recreation & Culture Department has been at the forefront of limiting the use of pesticides on public property for almost 20 years. During that time, we have tried a pilot organic turf program, contractual turf programs and departmental turf programs with very little pest control success. Every year for nearly two decades, thousands of Newton athletes have had to play on suboptimal fields due to weeds and insects in our athletic fields.

In December of 2018, field users began discussions with our Department about improving athletic fields. In the twenty-nine months that followed, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, along with the IPM Committee, have been working towards one common goal: to listen and act on field user concerns to improve athletic field safety and playability. This can be accomplished through our IPM Committee and with community engagement. The IPM Committee works to ensure the process of any pesticide application is thoroughly vetted. Our IPM Committee regularly meets and reviews any documents that are presented in the pesticide application process. Community engagement ensures we are cognizant of Newton residents' comments and concerns. Approved pesticide applications adhere to all federal, state and City of Newton regulations. Newton's regulations are the most stringent of all three. In June of 2020 the City of Newton IPM Advisory Committee approved a pilot pesticide application at three locations. After our 2020 pesticide pilot program was reviewed, we became acutely aware of two things. First, pesticides on athletic fields work. Our pilot program showed that weed levels were dramatically reduced, and some weeds were eliminated. Second, there are a high number of athletic fields that have surpassed our IPM pest threshold limit.

With the documented positive results and the cost benefit of our pilot program, the PRC Department has developed a three-year timeline to continue this valuable process to improve the City of Newton's irrigated athletic fields. In this timeframe, there will be a three-tiered approach to our program: increased monitoring of irrigated athletic fields, increased contractual turf work on irrigated athletic fields and increased pesticide applications to the irrigated athletic fields which exceed our IPM approved pest threshold limits. Our monitoring process will observe and document pest populations, our contractual turf work will focus on eleven irrigated sites for calendar year 2021 and our pesticide application locations will mirror three of the eleven contractual turf sites. These pesticide applications will only target weeds in our athletic fields and not the entire open space area. This approach over time will improve our athletic fields by reducing pest thresholds and creating a safer and more enjoyable playing surface. As athletic fields improve, the need for future pesticide applications should diminish. Year one of our expanded pesticide program will include five locations (Cabot Park, Forte Park, New Cold Springs, Warren House and Weeks Field), year two may include four locations (Lincoln Warren, Lower Falls Community Center, Nahanton Park and Newton North High School) and year three may include four locations (Albemarle Field, Burr Park, Newton Highlands and Newton South High School). Pesticide timelines and locations are determined by pest thresholds and the priority of athletic field user groups.

Our IPM timeline is as follows:

- \* IPM meeting Thursday May 27<sup>th</sup> 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
- \* Send abutter letter, map and faq's via USPS on Friday May 28<sup>th</sup>
- \* Informational zoom ipm meeting on Thursday June 3<sup>rd</sup> 6:00 pm
- \* Please join the ipm zoom meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85270798650?pwd=eksr3dVWXdHV2JqbUVXRy9Ja1B0QT09>
- \* Newton's ipm policy: <https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=48965>