

Shelburne Recreation Committee Town Report 2024-2025

The Recreation Committee has the following members: Diana Hardina, Norman Beebe, and Stefan Topolski. We currently have two vacancies on the committee. If you are interested in joining, please email us at cowellgymnasium@gmail.com. John Walsh, who came on board as the Cowell Gym Director on an interim basis in January of 2023, will be wrapping up his tenure on June 30th. John has been invaluable to both the committee and the town in his role as Cowell Gym Director, and we will miss him.

The town's major recreational facilities – the Cowell Gymnasium and the outdoor courts at the Cowell – completed their third year of being fully open after two plus years of COVID restrictions and closure. The outdoor courts can be used at any time during daylight hours. People drop in to play basketball, pickleball, and tennis. The pickleball courts, lined in 2022, have allowed pickleball using the tennis net, or with a personal net, using one of the permanently lined courts. In addition, there are times set aside for pickleball. Pickleball continues to thrive both outdoors and indoors thanks to the efforts of Mary Lou Gallup and Jay Readinger. Generally, pickleball moves outdoors in April and heads back indoors in late November. If you have questions about pickleball, please email shelburnefallspickleball@gmail.com. For information on sessions available, please go to Shelburne Falls Pickleball at <https://bit.ly/3N3HgNb>.

In the Cowell Gym this past year, in addition to offering pickleball five (and sometimes six) days a week, we offered basketball two (and sometimes three) nights a week (both competitive and relaxed), senior walk three mornings a week (during the winter), and the Cowell Youth Winter Program (formerly the Cowell Youth Basketball Program) five nights a week. This past winter the, Cowell Youth Winter Program offered coed basketball for kindergarten, grades 1-2, and grades 3-4 on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday; coed indoor soccer for grades 5-6 on Wednesday (unfortunately this evening was not well attended and was discontinued); and Family Pizza Night on Friday. We want to give a shout out to the volunteers who coached these groups, as well as recreation committee member Diana Hardina. Diana creates the schedule, publicizes it, makes posters, identifies coaches for each evening, and provides coaching manuals. Thanks to recreation committee member Stefan Topolski, we were able to offer open gym for children grade 6 and younger during Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School's February break for the second year in a row. All of these programs are open to the public on a drop-in basis, except for pickleball, which requires preregistration. The gym use rates for these programs are as follows: Children under 16 are free; Shelburne residents 16 and over pay \$2; and non-Shelburne residents 16 and over pay \$5. The senior walk is free. One final note: you'll notice volleyball did not happen again this past year ☹️. If you would like to help bring volleyball back to the Cowell, please contact us at cowellgymnasium@gmail.com.

The Cowell Gym can also be rented by members of the community (\$65 for a two-hour block). This past year, the gym was rented for birthday parties, end of season celebrations, and volleyball. We also have two schools, The Academy at Charlemont and Four Rivers, that rent it on an ongoing basis for their basketball programs. To rent the gym, please contact Cowell Gym Director John Walsh at (413) 775-3274. By the way, the Art Garden's popular Draw-around returned to the Cowell Gym this past April, after a four-year absence! They will be back again this April.

For the seventh straight year, recreation committee member Stefan Topolski has provided public ice skating in his side yard at 111 Bridge Street. This past winter, 66 people took advantage of this

opportunity. Stefan has graciously agreed to continue to provide ice skating in his side yard next year. The recreation committee is looking for volunteers to assist Stefan next season in maintaining and clearing the ice. If you can help, email us at cowellgymnasium@gmail.com.

Improvements were made to both Arms Field and the Cowell Gym. At Arms Field, the infield was reclaimed and, in the outfield, low spots were filled in and seeded. This work was paid for by money from a Mohawk Woodland Partnership Grant. At the Cowell Gym, John Walsh has overseen and will oversee these projects. The exterior was painted; the ADA accessible bleachers were repaired; and by May 30th all the windows, except for those in the gym, will be replaced and motorized shades will be installed on the gym windows. The latter will be funded through a Green Communities Grant.

Additionally, we had two groups of volunteers do significant work for town recreation. Committee member Diana Hardina enlisted volunteers from Workaway International to assist with her vision of creating a ping pong parlour. Diana and her volunteers have transformed the large room in the Cowell basement (former home of the Back Door) for this purpose. We are now actively looking for people to help proctor drop-in ping pong times. If you can help, please email Diana at dianahardina@gmail.com. The other group to do significant volunteer work for the town were participants from Shelburne Falls Pickleball, under the guidance of Mary Lou Gallup and Jay Readinger. They repaired many of the cracks in the Cowell outdoor court. This is only a stopgap measure as the court needs additional patching and clear coating to stop further deterioration.

Projects we hope to carry out in the coming year include expansion and renewal of the Cowell outdoor court, and in the Cowell Gym a retrofit of the gym storage area (TAB Room), gym floor repair, and upgrade to LED light fixtures in the basement.

The Recreation Committee also continued its collaboration with the Open Space Committee to expand hiking trails within the town of Shelburne. A hiking trail along the Deerfield River that would be accessible from town remains our top priority. 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 tenth 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 4 pm. The Food Pantry serves over 20 individuals each Wednesday. This translates to support for over 100 households, more than 50 in Buckland and Shelburne alone. The Food Pantry can be reached at 413-773-5029. The Clothes Closet, run by Trinity Church, is located in the Cowell Gym basement adjacent to the Food Pantry. It is open the second and fourth Wednesday of each month from 11 am to 3:30 pm and the second and fourth Saturday from 10am to 12 noon. They generally see 10 or more people each day they are 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 Jeff Johnston for their ongoing support.