



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
PARKS AND RECREATION
MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE

SUSAN YERKES
Director

Date: April 16, 2025
To: Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations Committee
From: Sue Yerkes, Director of Parks & Recreation
RE: Item 25-0117: That the Director of Parks and Recreation discuss in the Committee on Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations, the introduction of an ongoing middle school girls intramural hockey program.

Dear Members of the Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations Committee,

The following information from the Parks and Recreation department is being provided to the members of the Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations Committee in response to the item referenced above.

First and foremost, I would like to express my appreciation for the commitment and passion that Councilor Strezo, Annette and other parents have demonstrated in advocating for expanded opportunities in girls' hockey. We recognize the importance of increasing access to sports for all youth, including girls who wish to participate in hockey.

In August 2024, we responded to community interest by organizing a Girls Hockey Clinic. Fourteen girls, ages 9-14, participated, allowing us to gauge initial interest. Of the 14 girls, only 4 girls were on skates. This made for a huge learning curve for most participants. Following this, we extended our efforts by offering a Street Hockey program to further develop skills. Unfortunately, the Street Hockey program had only one female participant and two male participants, leading to its cancellation due to low enrollment.

One of our primary considerations in creating any new program is sustainability. We rely on a step-by-step process to ensure long-term success. While we understand and appreciate the enthusiasm of those advocating for a girls' hockey program, the current participation numbers do not indicate a sufficient demand for an intramural league for either girls or boys. Currently, we do not have the necessary level of interest to develop a viable and sustainable intramural girls' ice hockey program.

Our Parks and Recreation Department has over 100 years of collective programming experience, and we have a strong track record of building successful youth sports programs. To ensure sustainability, we must see a demonstrated need through consistent participation and growth over time. Based on our current data, we do not yet have that level of engagement for hockey.

That said, we remain committed to fostering opportunities for girls in sports. We have hosted a variety of successful girls' programs, including:



- Girls in Sports Day, which drew 95 participants
- LEAP Self Defense with 15 participants
- Multiple basketball clinics and leagues
- Girls Lacrosse, Indoor Soccer, Volleyball, and Flag Football
- Our annual Girls Hockey Clinic, which we plan to continue growing over time

Our approach has always been to nurture interest and allow participation levels to guide the development of full-scale programs. We will continue to offer the Girls Hockey Clinic each summer to cultivate interest and skills. If participation consistently increases, we can explore the next steps toward creating a broader hockey program.

We appreciate the work Annette, and her group are doing to reduce barriers such as equipment costs and ice time limitations. We encourage continued collaboration to increase awareness and participation in our existing clinics. If demand for girls' hockey rises, we will be ready to take the necessary steps toward expanding our offerings in a sustainable and equitable manner.

Thank you for your dedication to growing opportunities for girls in sports. We remain committed to working together to ensure the best possible recreational opportunities for all youth in our community.

Thank you,

Susan Yerkes
Director of Parks & Recreation