

**Lower Pottsgrove Township
Parks & Recreation Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 27, 2009**

In attendance: Patty Bleakley, Chair
Patty Abdalla, Vice Chair
Tom Troutman
Dennis Cimino (7:10pm)
Rich Wood

Alyson Elliott, Assistant Manager
Jennifer Corley

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Lower Pottsgrove Township Parks & Recreation Board was called to order by Patty Bleakley at 7:06 p.m.

Parks & Recreation Report

A motion was made by Tom Troutman, seconded by Rich Wood and unanimously approved by a vote of 4 – 0 to approve the April 2009 Parks & Recreation Report.

Mr. Cimino arrived at 7:10 p.m.

Old Business

2009 Event Planning – Ms. Corley reported that the upcoming Fishing Derby has been sponsored by Wells, Hoffman, Holloway & Stauffer with a generous donation of \$1500 that was received last week. These funds will fund the fish stock as well as the prizes. She also reported that the Fish & Boat Commission permit has been applied for and their representative will be at the Derby promoting a “First Time Anglers” program. A park Ranger will be on hand to assist children with identifying the species of fish they caught as well as offering a certificate to those that have caught their first fish that day.

Ms. Corley also reported the requests to rent the facilities have been increasing. The Sanatoga Pavilion has been rented out for a private affair on Father’s Day and verbal requests have come in for several graduation parties. This will be the first time we are instituting the key deposit with a personal rental vs. an organizational rental. Mr. Troutman asked if the parties renting the facility are responsible for any damages. Ms. Corley explained they are signing an agreement that they are and any damages will be charged to the individual/organization renting the facility. Each facility will be inspected the day after the event by Township Staff to ensure compliance with our policy.

Ms. Corley also reported that the balance due from St. Pius X High School invoice for damage to Field #3 was received Monday, April 27, 2009. Mr. Wood asked if St. Pius has requested use of the field for next fall. Ms. Corley reported that she has received no such request.

Girl Scout Volunteer Program – Ms. Elliott reported to the Board that the Girl Scout Troop #7354 from Ringing Rocks has begun their project of cleaning up Shaner’s Grove at Ringing Rocks Park. Ms. Elliott explained that she would like to give the Scout leader a final list of tasks to complete their project. The Scouts requested as part of their project to plant annual flowers. Ms. Elliott was unsure of if they wanted to make a flower bed or fill in native plantings. Mr. Wood expressed he would prefer the native plantings. A bed would require additional maintenance by Township staff in the future. Because the area is a relatively shady area, the plantings will have to be specific. Mr. Wood made a suggestion of one type of flower “Bachelor Buttons” and they could also plant meadow flowers that are seedlings, not from a mat or just seed.

The Board also decided that they did not want a trash/recycle can in the park. They would prefer the Troop construct a sign that instructs park visitors to carry out trash. Mr. Wood commented that the County is having success with this type of project in its parks. The County is using this project to promote environmental stewardship in the parks. Mr. Wood also commented that there was a former Boy Scout project done in the park that identified various species of trees. The tree indicators are missing or weathered. The Girl Scouts could replace or repair these as part of their project.

The Board instructed Ms. Elliott to contact the troop leader with the short list of suggested projects.

Park & Recreation Bylaws – Ms. Elliott explained the reason for the Board to establish Park & Recreation Bylaws. Mr. Wood commented that an advisory Board is not usually given the responsibility of a full Board. Ms. Elliott commented that the Park & Rec Board is unlike other advisory boards in that they have a separate budget to consider. They do not only draw from the General Fund. They report to the Board on expenditures. Mr. Wood suggested other municipalities have had success with a “Friends of...” group that can be established as a 501(c)3. If Lower Pottsgrove Township does this, donations will be tax deductible for the donor.

After discussion, Ms. Elliott commented she is aware of the Board’s position and will discuss the 501(c)3 with the Solicitor for his advice on how the Parks & Recreation Board should proceed. Ms. Elliott expressed her desire to assist the Park and Recreation Board in the growth process and indicated that she is allocating Ms. Corley’s time to assist as well. Ms. Corley has been attending workshops and seminars to further Township knowledge.

Mission Statement – Discussion was on whether or not the Board should proceed with the Mission Statement or postpone until Ms. Elliott returned with the Solicitor’s advice on the Bylaws. Ms. Elliott recommended the Board move forward with discussion on the mission statement so she may formulate a rough draft for their review at the next regularly scheduled meeting. Ms. Elliott previously sent an email to Board members to guide discussion on the mission statement. Three key questions were asked of them:

1. Who are our primary stakeholders?
2. What is our responsibility toward our stakeholders?
3. What products and services do we offer?

All Board members were in agreement on the response to question #1. They agree that the primary stakeholders are Lower Pottsgrove Township residents of all ages. Discussion then moved on to the responsibility the Board has toward these stakeholders. Several responses were put forth;

1. We would like to bring economic stimulus to the residents
2. Be a good steward to the Township stakeholders regarding their funds (tax dollars), access to parks, cleanliness of parks, safety in parks
3. Provide quality facilities for quality experiences versatile to age and ability utilizing the open space to provide active and passive recreational facilities.

The Board decided that products and services would be to provide the quality experience in an active or passive recreational facility.

Ms. Elliott will draft a mission statement for the Board to review at their next meeting.

Park Scheduling – Ms. Elliott presented the information she received from Pottsgrove Soccer Acting President, Rich Wood about an incident at Gerald Richard’s Park regarding the scheduling of a major event.

The Township received information that Pottsgrove Little League hosted their “Opening Day” ceremonies on Saturday, April 18th at Gerald Richard’s Park. Lower Pottsgrove Township and Pottsgrove Soccer were not aware of this event and parking was a problem at the park. Several volunteers from the Soccer Association were parking cars to attempt to alleviate the problem, but were still approached by aggravated parents from both Soccer and Baseball.

Ms. Corley presented a solution to the problem for the future. She will revise the “Field Use Request” to include a request for any special events and their dates and times. This will present the other organizations sharing the field use with the opportunity to schedule accordingly. Ms. Elliott commented that she is preliminarily working with a Developer to improve the parking at Gerald Richard’s Park. She would like to do a feasibility study first and then have a recommendation to the Board on the best solution. An estimate on the cost of the study is \$500 - \$600.

Patty Abdalla made a motion, seconded by Dennis Cimino to allow Ms. Elliott to spend up to \$600 for a feasibility study on the parking lot at Gerald Richard’s Park. The motion carried with a unanimous vote of 5 – 0.

Comments by Board Members

Rich Wood asked Ms. Elliott if there was any progress on the Sprogel’s Run Nature Trail. Ms. Elliott said she is reviewing bid specification documents at present and once the bid documents are completed the project can proceed.

Tom Troutman wanted to remind everyone of the upcoming events at Sunnybrook Ballroom.

Patty Bleakley asked Ms. Elliott if the Township has a tree inventory. Ms. Elliott said that we do not. Ms. Bleakley asked if the Parks & Recreation Boards needs to be more active in the area. Ms. Elliott responded that the Board may set their own agenda on this issue, but the Township follows the County landscape model. Mr. Wood asked if the Shade Tree Commission is responsible for area outside Park lands. Ms. Elliott responded that the Township ordinance is vague on this issue. Ms Bleakley asked if it should be included in the Mission statement. Mr. Troutman commented that he recalled the Shade Tree Commission being established in order to qualify for a grant in years past. Ms. Bleakley also asked if a sound system could be installed at Gerald Richard's Park. It may have alleviated some of the parking problems and would prove useful in such a large complex in the future. Ms. Elliott said it is normally frowned upon in a residential area, but it can be investigated.

Comments from Visitors

Mr. Tony Doyle commented that the tree requirements in Pottstown are more comprehensive than Lower Pottsgrove Township's. Ms. Elliott commented that Borough Code is stricter on this issue than First Class Township Code. Mr. Doyle also commented on the Public Works staff adding Aqua Shade to the pond at Ringing Hill to cut down on algae growth. Ms. Bleakley wanted to know if we could do that more than one time per year. Mr. Wood responded that with a permit, it can be done as much as the Board wants.

Mr. Doyle then inquired as to why the Township cannot unlock the gates at Sanatoga Park for residents who would like to walk the trails, but need to drive to the park. Mr. Doyle is in favor of opening at least one of the gates.

Ms. Abdalla also asked why the Park was still closed. Ms. Elliott responded that it is still locked because of the vandalism that occurred to the fields. Mr. Troutman inquired as to when the fields would be available for play. Ms. Elliott let the Board know that the baseball field may be ready by fall, but the soccer field is still under water and there is extensive work that must be done to correct this issue. Mr. Wood commented the field was never properly crowned. Ms. Elliott said the location of the field provides no room for the crowning and that John Fogel and the Public Works Department are going to take care of the water flow. Mr. Wood also commented that H&K does not know how to build athletic fields. They do not follow plans and have ruined fields in both Lower Pottsgrove Township and Skippack Township. The Board requested that they be able to put barriers up in the parking lot to discourage access to Sanatoga Road through the park and unlock the gates. Ms. Elliott responded that the Board can make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to have one gate unlocked.

Discussion continued on the problems and possible solutions for the Sanatoga Park ballfields to insure they are the quality fields the Parks & Recreation Board and the Township residents are expecting. The Board then directed Ms. Elliott to draft a letter to the Board of Commissioners expressing their concerns. Mr. Wood said he was going to speak to the Pottsgrove Soccer Association Board members to see if soccer can allocate some funds to hire a professional to take a look at the field and the conditions of the field and make recommendations on how best to bring it to playing condition.

Ms. Elliott then polled the Board members regarding the May meeting and if they wanted to take a tour of the parks. All Board members agreed the regularly scheduled meeting date was a good day. An email reminder will be sent to confirm date, time and place.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Rich Wood and seconded by Patty Bleakley. The motion carried with a unanimous vote of 5 – 0.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Tuesday, May 26, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer J. Corley