

**Upper Merion Township
Park and Recreation Board Minutes
October 11, 2011**

Attendees: Dan Russell, Barb Schafer, John Tallman, Eileen Connelly, Mary Ann Ahearn, Mike Trachtenberg, Dave Burns, Neil Sardinas

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes for September 2011 meetings were approved.

Directors Report:

1. Volunteer of the Year Award will be presented to the Farmers Market Committee at October 13 BOS meeting.
2. Community Center Study - the Board of Supervisors asked that the Community Center Subcommittee begin meeting again to discuss the results of the final presentation of the Community Center Feasibility Study. We met as a committee on Wednesday 9-28 with representatives from Kimmel Bogrette and our library staff.
 - a. The committee endorsed the study with the following exceptions/inclusions:
 - That the senior center space will be defined on the design
 - The library needs will be included on all discussions moving forward
 - To continue the relationship with Kimmel Bogrette to keep costs controlled
 - b. Heuser Park is the preferred location due to it being the "Recreational Destination" currently and for future trails projects for connectivity. Utilities are already there. A traffic study will need to be done at some point for this location.
 - c. The committee feels that a referendum should be considered for this project and recommends November 2012 as a potential voting date. They feel this way due to value that the Community Center adds to the township much like the Open Space referendum.
 - d. The Committee will be dedicated to the following roles throughout the process:
 - Corporate Sponsorship and commitments from membership sales from the large businesses in the township
 - Exploration of Grant possibilities
 - The possibility of partnering with a Public Relations firm in conjunction with Kimmel Bogrette to educate the residents on the referendum.
 - e. The committee asks that we begin to advertise for the 2 vacancies that currently exist. The group is composed of 2 members of the P&R Board, 2 members of the ECDC and 4 members of the general public. The group also asks that the selection be made as in the past with the chair of both the P&R Board and the ECDC making the recommendation.
 - f. BOS want Kimmel Bogrette to make a proposal for the Community Center design to keep moving forward. The cost of \$67,500 is included in the overall cost of the CC and will be included in next year's P&R capital budget.
3. Operating Budget of \$160,000 was presented to the township manager and financial director, which is a 2.2% increase over last year. Since there has been no capital money in the budget in the past few years and there is no longer any carryover, Dan can put some in the next budget. The budget will be presented to the BOS on Oct 27th, after which it will be posted and adopted at the first meeting in 2012.
4. Revenues by the end of Sept (over \$710,000) have exceeded all of last year (\$690,000).
5. Parenting Center has been eliminated by the school district after 30 years, and has been taken over by Park & Rec at the request of Janet Main, its director. 30-40 residents have signed up for fall programs which have begun in the Belmont School, after moving the program to a different classroom.

6. Bad News – UMASD voted to implement its new policy governing community use of school facilities, and Park & Rec will be now be charged facilities rental fees and impact fees per participant in addition to the custodial fees we've paid in the past. It's estimated that P & R will have to pay the school district about \$100,000 per year. This will increase the cost of the programs we offer, for instance, swim lessons lasting 6 weeks which cost \$50 currently will need to be raised to \$79. Multi child discounts and free camp may not survive. Dan met with the BOS who will reach out to the School Board, regarding provisions of the Middle School grant and savings to the School District from the township waving permit fees and other charges, amounting to \$600,000 over the years. There is a clause in the policy which allows some negotiation in this reciprocal case.
7. Jay's Report – Dan distributed Jay Kowall's report of this month's park maintenance, and we'll have Jay attend our meetings periodically.

Old Business

1. Schuylkill River Trail – Neil attended a presentation on Sept 13th by Bob Folwell, of the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area about the current state of the Schuylkill River Trail. A total of 120 miles of trail are planned and 60 miles have been completed. Currently a \$17 million TIGER grant is available to complete portions of the Schuylkill River Trail within Philadelphia. The Patriot's Path trail has been proposed to connect Chesterbrook to VFNHP along Wilson Road. Phoenixville and Pottstown are planning connecting trails to the Schuylkill River Trail. For a Trail to be successful it must have:
 1. Willing community and political support
 2. Trail sponsors to push the project
 3. A string of properties available for the right of way
 4. Money to build and maintain the trails
 5. Permits and approvals
 6. Contractors and inspectors
 7. Ongoing trail management
2. Heuser to VF Trail – the \$1M grant is awaiting Gov. Corbett's signature. Dan has been trying to get to talk with people from Norfolk Southern about allowing an easement and while they are difficult to get a hold of, it looks promising.
3. Heuser fields – Dan does not yet have a report on the status of new fields.
4. Sprout Fest – dates were offered to Finding Shelter for their pet adoption fair but we have not heard back from them.
5. Park rules & regulations – Dan's staff is working on a lending policy for P&R equipment. Park permit rules need to be revamped to include long term park use policy, damage to parks after permitted use, possible security deposits, etc. We will discuss this at next meeting.
6. Goats for weed control in BWP – we will reach out to Yvonne to see what's possible at this time.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Ahearn
Secretary