

UPPER MERION PARKS & RECREATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 9th, 2021

7:30 PM

Attendees: Mike Trachtenberg, Mary Ann Ahearn, Paul Salamy, Deena Newman, Neil Sardiñas, Dan Russell & Tina Garzillo

Guest: Upper Merion Lacrosse Club: Jose Almonte, Stacie Reinhardt, Jason Jones, Jeff Mann, Justin Kravitz- Eagle Scout Project, Dave Craig, Susan Shelton, Regina

1. Approval of the February 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 5-0.

2. Guests

- Jason Jones from lacrosse wants to be proactive regarding a protocol for returning to play and ways to implement and follow guidelines. They looked at Prussian's protocol and keeping it the same.
 - Game day protocol is that everyone involved is made aware of the rules.
 - Girl lacrosse is wearing masks during all practices and games.
 - When boys lacrosse are not playing, they have to wear masks. During play they have helmets and mouth pieces on. Adults always have masks on and off the field. Participants and adults need to be social distancing. Parents are asked to stay in cars during practices. Coaches wear masks all the time.
 - New state guidelines were just sent out and Dan Russel will be comparing the requirements to what the clubs are submitting for their safety protocol.
 - Dan still needs to see the plan for the Gumball Tournament. Township will allow it if there is a well written and thought-out plan as long as it follows all necessary recommendations.
- Eagle Scout Project: Justin- Wants to build a shed to hold infield soil for baseball use.
 - The shed plans to be 10x10x5, closed in on all 4 sides. Shed will be painted red to match tack house.
 - This will be utilized by both UMBA and the high school.
 - Plans are to place shed near the current tack house. Will be easy to open one side to receive deliveries for dirt.
 - Prevents having to ask parents to bring in dirt and remove dirt for each game.
 - Board motioned to approve the shed if it is approved by Jerry Recupido and UMBA is in agreement to take care of the shed in the future.
 - Motion to approve-Deena Newman, seconded by Paul Salamy.
Approved 4-1
- Dave Craig wants to check on status on the 15 trees for the Crow Creek Trail.
 - Tina noted that Shade Tree Commission is working on identifying ways to get more trees in addition to the 3 Cypress Trees close to Covered Bridge where erosion issues exist.

- He suggests have a tree farm in the future for more projects.
- Susan Shelton was interested in the final drawing for the bridge. Tina will send an email to Tony to follow-up on this tonight.
- Mr. Shelton wants to know how he can be helpful to facilitate this process. He would like to be more involved in what trees are going to be planted. Susan noted that he has saved many trees over the past 20 years living there and that he takes care of the trees as if they are his own.
- Dave wants to know if additional funding for trees was made. Tina noted that this summer she will request it for the new budget. Dave would like this request to be made sooner.
- Dave would like to follow-up on ordinances to allow residents to object to building and when Parks and Rec does a project and implement a standard 5% budget for greenery.
 - Tina noted the change to notify residents by certified mail has already been made. She will bring up the budget for greenery in the next Board of Supervisor's meeting and will put it on the agenda.
- Dan met with Gilmore & Associates and there is a contingency plan in place and some of the money that might come back from this as well as from the grant may be able to go towards planting.

3. Board of Supervisor's Report-Tina Garzillo

- With the level of vaccinations nationwide, family households are allowed to hangout with other families who are fully vaccinated without masks.
- For dining, an increase of 50% capacity has been made. No alcohol can be served after 11pm.
- Two projects coming up in front of zoning committee.
 - 1. Belmont tennis courts.
 - They are allowed at this site. The school district is there to get a variance of impervious surfaces. What is to be decided is how many will be permitted. This decision will be made on 3/17/21.
 - 2. An athletic facility is being proposed in Swedeland by GSK near Steelyard Sports.
 - They are proposing soccer fields, indoor and outdoor ice skating, and possible party rentals. The outdoor skating rink will be converted to other athletic uses in warmer months.
- Neil is concerned regarding why the tennis courts are not closer to the high school and losing another softball field.
 - Parks and Rec is now scrambling to find a new field due to construction scheduled to start there in June. Unfortunately, this may result in lost revenue for Parks and Rec if we have to limit the number of teams that can sign up to play.
- Schuylkill River Trail was voted as one of the top 10 trails in the nation by US Today.
- Meetings are being transferred to Zoom instead of WebEx.
- Trampoline Center was closed.
- New diner is scheduled to open before May 31st. The new name is The Wild Rooster.
- The 2021 BCA application is now open and due by April 15th. Thus far one million dollars has been giving out. Make high school seniors aware.

4. Park & Recreation Director's Report-Dan Russell

- Staff has been looking at new Covid guidelines set by state for all activities and camps. He hopes to have camp information released to the public in the next couple of weeks. Looks promising to use school facilities for summer programs.
- Pool registrations have been picking up.
 - Swim team should be approved with meets but the meets may be virtual with swimmers at their own pool and having their own timers.
- The Swedeland Civic Association is being resurrected. Last very active about 15-20 years ago. Dan has met with them and there have already had some events scheduled including a park cleanup and some fundraising events such as kickball. They are interested on connecting Swedeland to West Conshohocken. Perhaps a future trail to consider.
- Dan is back working full-time.

5. New Business

- "Tar" Button passed away. He was involved with UMBA for 40 years. UMBA will likely come to us in the future with plans for a dedication for him.
- Discussion of Sub-Committee RE: Programming/Events
 - Deena offered to work with planning and implementation of ways to get the community involved this summer since COVID restrictions are lessening.
- BCA Grant Submission Ideas
 - One idea is a sign and information board for the Crow Creek Trail.
 - Some benches along the trail and mile markers.
 - Some signs explaining the history along the river. Perhaps pictures of what it used to look like 100 years ago when you are standing in this spot.
 - Maybe historical association or another group would be interested in this. Maybe EAC would be interested in doing signs about wildlife.
 - Where do we want signs and/or benches?
 - Paul willing to do some research on cost of signs. However, first we need to know what type of information we want there.
 - Mike and Neil will work on finding information.
 - There was a small area where it could be considered a scenic spot for camps close to the community center by the pool that could be considered for a picnic area in the future.
 - Paul has the idea of having families sponsor a tree/shrub to increase privacy with the pool. He would like to work with Shade Tree Commission and see what ideas they have.
- Joint Mtg with BOS 5/20/21 7pm
 - At the next meeting we should have a discussion about who wants to report what information.
- Future Outdoor Meetings/Locations
 - Senior Center has a nice terrace. Try to do an outdoor meeting in May.
 - Dan will check with Township regarding if this is permissible.

6. Old Business

- Resume Park Inspections
- Schuylkill West Trail connection should be done by July.

7. Community Center Complex Advisory Board Report- Paul Salamy

- 1933 members, 20 more than last month.
- 1024 cancellations, 611 freezes.
- Daily average was 113 during the week and 85 on the weekends but now 137 folks per day and 98 on the weekend.
- Pickleball is busier and the hoop shooting is popular. Spin classes are filling up.
- Some kids still not wearing masks correctly.
- Dan is applying new regulations and considering allowing daily passes again and possibly shower usage.

8. Additional comments

- Neil is feeling discouraged by the board having ideas and working on things but the ideas go nowhere.
 - Specifically upset about a drainage issue with the one trail in which he had pointed out the drainage issue a long time ago as well as other trail issues that he has pointed out numerous times but his comments don't seem to be heard.
 - AASHTO guidelines have not been met. There needs to be a minimum 0.6 meter shoulder and rocks should not be used for a shoulder.
 - How do we know who is in charge of different projects and who is responsible for making sure recommendations are made and received?
- Tina noted that our ideas and progress have made a bigger impact than we realize. We need to change old habits. There needs to be more hiring and there needs to be some evaluation regarding what changes need to be made. Tina is hopeful for these changes in the future.
- Maryanne suggested to make a way to get more feedback from the board of supervisors to know if our ideas and concerns are being heard and how they are received.
- Dan hears our frustration and has also been frustrated with similar issues. Other township boards share our frustrations.
- Its important to keep talking about this and try to fix the problem.

Adjournment: 10:39 PM

Kindly Submitted
Deena Newman