

UPPER MERION PARKS & RECREATION VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 10th, 2020

7:30 PM

Attendees: Mike Trachtenberg, MaryAnn Ahearn, Paul Salamy, Neil Sardiñas, Deena Newman, Dana Augustine, Tina Garzillo, Jerry Recupido, Dan Russell

Guests: None

1. **The Pledge of Allegiance**
2. **Approval of the October 13th, 2020 Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 5-0.**
3. **Guests – Bob White Catalyst Discussion Attendees**
4. **Board of Supervisor’s Liaison Report- Tina Garzillo**
 - BOS in the middle of the annual budget for 20-21
 - Must be creative
5. **Park and Recreation Director’s Report- Dan Russell**
 - Crow Creek Trail Project
 - Solicitor is reviewing the contract to make sure it’s in order
 - Working on a pre-construction meeting
 - Project moving forward shortly
 - SRWT
 - PennDot submitted the agreement for the contractor to complete that work
 - Pending approval and should begin and end in the spring of next year
 - Park and Rec Programming
 - COVID making it hard but things are moving forward
 - Lining up several winter programs
 - Indoor winter basketball program will not be happening this year but alternatives will be offered
 - Large demand for young adult programming – looking at local businesses to partner on this
 - Dan met with the state for the grant reimbursement program – hoping to get that money soon
6. **Park Maintenance Report- Jerry Recupido**
 - Did a few things based on the park evaluations sent by the Park & Rec board members
 - Playground renovations continuing
 - Executive Estates done
 - Swedesburg 90% completed

- Had electrical issue at Bob White
 - Peco wire and a cracked transformer
 - Lights were out at the tennis courts and parking lot
- Electrical issue at Heuser Park that was repaired quickly

7. New Business

- None

8. Old Business

- Tina Garzillo – Township Supervisor
 - Excited that so many people are here
 - Still need another Parks & Rec member so please apply if interested
 - Lots of comments on Bob White proposal – some for and some opposed
 - Still not sure what the date the Catalyst proposal will be presented at a BOS meeting
 - Not all aspects are included tonight in the discussion
 - Four different locations being proposed
 - Tonight, we are only discussing the proposed amenities at Bob White Park
 - Recent History of the Park
 - Tennis courts resurfaced
 - 80 new trees planted
 - Goat project for two years
 - Volunteers helped with invasive vines
 - Proposal is for walking path, pavilion, restrooms, and LED lights for the tennis courts
 - Funding could go towards any parks, but decided to focus some on Bob White to enhance the area
 - Residents are worried about losing green space, but they will be adding more
- Catalyst Update – Thaddeus Bartkowski
 - Three goals from meetings with the township regarding Bob White
 - Increase resident utilization – only 37% used now
 - Make park more well rounded
 - Enhance experience at park
 - Proposal is to add a ¼ mile walking path, a pavilion with picnic tables, permanent restrooms, and energy efficient tennis court lighting
 - Total cost is \$800,000
- Resident feedback
 - Over 90 residents attended the meeting
 - A resident emailed Dan privately and is in favor of the renovations
 - Feels the improvements will not bring many more people to the park, but will allow the local residents to enjoy the park as they always have
 - Not worried about light pollution – people who chose to buy homes near a major highway should expect some disturbances, including billboards
 - Does not feel bathrooms would be a concern as it's more of a health hazard to not have proper facilities, especially with children

- Does not feel there will be more issues with night activity – can be a risk in any park and always has been
 - MaryAnn Ahearn – member of P&R and resident of Bob White – is excited about the walking path since it’s such an unusable space right now
 - Overall consensus is that residents do not want the enhancements or the sign
 - The park used to have a pavilion and it was taken down – never replaced and no one missed it
 - Afraid it will decrease the value of their homes
 - Do not want to add things that will attract more people from the township – like that it is a neighborhood park with no frills
 - Feel the undeveloped wooded areas are habitats not to be disturbed
 - a. Would not be opposed to some of the brush area being cleared
 - b. Some residents liked the idea of walking paths, just a concern for how much of the existing wooded area would be cleared to make them
 - Concern about storm water management
 - Concern about noise if wooded area is disturbed
 - Major concern about rezoning the area
 - Major concern about current parking problems
 - a. Lot is already full often and people sometimes park in the neighborhood
 - b. People speed on the streets leading into the park
 - Concern over safety of restrooms
 - a. Who is cleaning them?
 - b. How often?
 - c. Will they be locked at night?
 - Shade Tree Committee is concerned about how the landscaping will be done – would want to make sure it was done right
 - Residents are upset they were not given more information about the project or asked for feedback sooner
 - a. Would like to be more involved moving forward
 - ALL COMMENTS FROM THE WEBEX MEETING POSTED WITH MEETING MINUTES
- Catalyst Response to concerns
 - Catalyst is willing to make improvements that will make the community happy
 - Would not rezone all of the park
 - This is a one-time investment for the improvements but long-term revenue for the township with the sign
 - Nothing is set in stone
- Main takeaway – residents are not happy

9. Community Center Complex Advisory Board Report- Deena Newman

- March 2020 had 2859 passholders
 - 19.7% cancellations to date
 - 22& passholder freezes to date
 - 39 new passholders since reopening
- Number of visits to the community center since reopening – 88.3 during the weekday and 49.5 visits since the weekend

- A subcommittee was formed to begin planning for the 5th anniversary of the community center opening for September 2021
- The subcommittee continues to work on the free passholder program
- No plan to open the senior center yet

Adjournment: 9:42PM

Kindly Submitted
Dana Augustine