

**Montgomery Township
Park & Recreation Board
Meeting Minutes for January 9, 2008**



At 8:05p.m. Chairman Bill Maule called the meeting to order. David Keightly, Heather Berkey, Larry Fiel, Keith Johnson, Leesa Meade, Barry Weinstein, Kevin Costello (Public Works Director), Pam Gural-Bear (Assistant Township Manager) and Evelyn DiFeo (Recreation Coordinator) were present.

REORGANIZATION

At 8:06p.m., Ms. Gural-Bear called the reorganization meeting to order. She requested nominations for Chairman. Mr. Keightly nominated Bill Maule as Chairman. Barry Weinstein seconded the motion. The Board voted 6-0.

Chairman Maule requested nominations for the Vice-Chairman position. Mr. Keightly nominated Mr. Weinstein. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. The Board voted 6-0.

Chairman Maule requested nominations for the Secretary position. Mr. Weinstein nominated Mr. Fiel. Mr. Keightly seconded the motion. The Board voted 6-0.

At 8:15p.m., Chairman Maule adjourned the reorganization meeting. At 8:16p.m., Chairman Maule called the regular meeting to order.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The November Minutes were approved as submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chuck Vesay, Montgomery United Soccer Club

Chuck Vesay, Executive Director of Montgomery United Soccer Club, thanked the Park and Recreation Board and Mr. Costello for the parks department's efforts in maintaining the soccer fields. The MUSC teams had a great season. Mr. Vesay explained that a U - 9 team had played a tournament in Buffalo, New York and now have advanced to the finals, which will be held at Disneyland in Florida. Mr. Vesay said that the team would not have been successful if it was not for the efforts and care put into maintaining the fields.

Disc Golf at Windlestrae Park

John Blasko, 134 Mallard Drive, thanked the Park and Recreation Board and Mr. Costello for having the tree stumps that were cut on an angle removed; however, Mr. Blasko still has some safety concerns about the disc golf course. He continued to say that he would like holes 1 – 5 to remain closed and requested that other holes be closed as well. Mr. Blasko said he had been researching disc golf courses and noted that a recreational disc golf course is between 3600 – 4300 square feet, and a professional course is up to 6,000 square feet. The course at Windlestrae is 6400 square feet, which makes it professional size. He feels the fairways are too long and he would not send his children to play on the course for fear they would get lost. He also thinks the Township should not proceed until an environmental and wildlife study is done.

Dave Hansell, 130 Mallard Drive, does not think the environmental study was done by the DEP and feels that the studies that were conducted are bias. He also feels the Township Engineer was not objective when he gave an opinion regarding the disc golf course. Mr. Hansell thinks the Park and Recreation Board should have the course redesigned. Mr. Hansell asked if the Park and Recreation Board is familiar with the course and if they realized how many riparian cross ways go through the course. He said holes 11, 12, 13 & 15 look great, but at 16 there is a 7ft. cliff and a crossing with approx. 18" of water. He said in walking the course he has seen temporary logs used to create a crossing across the creek.

Chairman Maule asked Mr. Hansell if he had a better idea as to where the holes should go and Mr. Hansell said yes. Chairman Maule asked him to offer his suggestions, but Mr. Hansell said he is not a paid engineer to do something like that.

Ed Nowackio, of Rosewood Drive, said he played the course with his son and explained that disc golf people have a lot of respect for the course they play on. He and his son had enjoyed the course, but at first had a hard time finding it. He agreed with Mr. Hansell that the drop at hole 16 is hard to cross. Mr. Nowackio hopes the course will remain open and that more people realize how great a sport disc golf is.

James Roque, 103 Heron Court, said he is very displeased with the location of the disc golf course and feels that the trails and the disc golf do not mix very well. He said he and his children ride mountain bikes in that area and he is concerned that one of them will be hurt by a flying disc. He also said his daughter had created a petition for her friends to sign and he made a statement on her behalf. Mr. Roque asked Mr. Maule if the current course was what he anticipated it to be. Chairman Maule said it is a little bigger than he anticipated and that the Park and Recreation Board's intent on constructing the disc golf course was for recreational purposes and not for tournaments. Mr. Keightly then said to the residents that according to Dr. Deusler's letter dated April 11, the course will be able to be utilized by all skill levels.

Neil McDevitt said that he feels the discussion this evening is very well rounded and wanted to make two points: 1) The course is not a tournament course because a tournament course is typically 36 – 72 holes and that a tournament organizer would not consider this course, and 2) The Township has to spend a lot of time maintaining the soccer and baseball fields, but disc golf should require little maintenance.

Marianne Platt, 116 Mallard Drive, said she understands that there are several soccer fields and baseball fields, but they were originally open fields not a pristine natural area. It is one thing to create fields, but to add disc golf to a nature area is just not practical. She continued to say that if it was an amateur course the baskets would be made of wood rather than metal.

Marilyn Tontoni, 219 Mallard Drive, said she is not disputing that people like disc golf, but not in a natural area. She understands that the Township requires a permit for parties of 25 and over, but 50 or more people could use the course throughout the day. Ms. Tontoni presented a petition to Chairman Maule that had 150 signatures against disc golf being constructed at Windlestrae Park.

Dave Keightly Jr., 114 Heartwood Drive, said that Frisbee disc golf became popular because of the throwing aspect of the game. He continued to say that the Township has soccer and basketball courts for the younger children to participate in, but that disc golf is more for older children and adults. Mr. Keightly said that the course he has played in Fairmount Park in Philadelphia is kept clean and is in pristine condition. He said you will always have a few unsportsmanlike players who will not obey the rules, but that they are in the clear minority. Mr. Keightly said he has a friend who suggested that the constructing the bridges and cleaning up the area would be a great Eagle Scout project and that there are several Eagle Scouts in the Township that could perform these duties. Mr. Keightly said he does not feel that disc golf players are disruptive or destructive.

Mr. Roque read a statement that was written by Alice Lyons, one of his daughter's friends. The statement questioned the location of the course.

Barbara Vesay, , said that she and her husband played the course for the first time last week and found it to be fun and entertaining. She is also concerned that if the Township moved the course closer to the roadway, it would become a real safety concern.

Ron DePue, 128 Mallard Drive, said he is happy people enjoy the disc golf course, but it should be smaller than the 6,400 square feet that it is.

Ms. Tontoni said that people are objecting to the activity because the residents believe you can't put active recreation in a "natural" undisturbed wooded setting.

Chairman Maule said that in 1984, the Township purchased the 137-acre park with \$500,000 and it was paid off before the houses were constructed. The area where Mallard Pond is constructed is where camp Rose Twig used to be. Chairman Maule said that the original trails were put in for walking and riding horses. He said there is a natural area off of Pecan Drive that the Township cannot develop. He also said that there is a wooded area at Spring Valley Park. He is very worried because of encroachment on the parks, trees falling down, etc. He said people complained about the wild life because it would eat their gardens. He said that in the wooded area at Windlestrae he has seen a couple of foxes and a blue herring. He said that in the past when the Park and Recreation Board designed Rose Twig, they asked for the input from the neighbors as to where facilities should be located.

Chairman Maule then suggested forming a sub-committee that would consist of members from the Park and Recreation Board, neighbors of the parks and two staff members. Chairman Maule said that he mentioned to the Open Space Committee about constructing bridges in the wooded area of Windlestrae Park. He said when the sewer line was constructed; the sewer authority had removed several trees. Chairman Maule explained to the residents that the Township owns that property, but does not have access to it. He is hoping to obtain an easement in order to access that area. The Park and Recreation Board has proposed the construction of a senior park on this land, which could consist of cement tables with chess, checks and a bocce ball court. Chairman Maule said that the sub-committee can look at the holes in question and seek the opinions of Dr. Deusler's and the Township Engineer.

Chairman Maule said he would like to have Mr. Costello contact Penn State and have a representative come out to review the park areas. He said that the Township needs to clean out some of the underbrush at the park because it keeps trees from growing. He continued to say that the Park and Recreation Board will need to speak to the Shade Tree Commission and discuss the possibility of having trees planted in the fall. Chairman Maule said that since Windlestrae has been developed, the Township has installed over 200 trees there

Mr. Blasko asked why Chairman Maule keeps speaking about encroachment because some of the properties in Mallard Pond extend into the woods. Chairman Maule explained that about 15 years ago, people who lived behind Spring Valley Park used to park their trailers and boats on the property and were asked to move them. Chairman Maule also suggested installing a new trail and set up a “weekend clean-up” to have that area cleaned by the disc golf people.

Mr. Keightly said he spoke with Mr. Hansell during the Board of Supervisors meeting on December 17 and agreed that holes 1 and 3 should be moved closer to the parking lot. They should then be constructed to meet up with hole 6. Pending redesign, the Park and Recreation Board should make a recommendation to reinstall holes 2 thru 5. He feels the removal of holes 1 thru 5 was a huge mistake and agrees with Mr. Hansell that bridge work needs to be done. He continued to say that once the course is opened it should be watched carefully and if the residents fears are founded, then they should be addressed ... but if they are not, then there was nothing lost. Mr. Keightly made a recommendation to the Park and Recreation Board to reopen the course, re-install holes 2 thru 5 and see how it goes. The Park and Recreation Board members did not second motion.

Mr. Hansell said that according to the Master Plan, the course is in a wooded area. Chairman Maule said that the Master Plan is just a guideline and that it be changed at any time. Mr. Hansel then said that the sub committee is a great idea.

Ms. Meade asked the residents to stop thinking that the Park and Recreation Board has an ulterior motive about the disc golf course. She explained that the Board consists of volunteer residents who are just trying to make Montgomery Township a better place for *a//* residents.

Mr. Weinstein said that agrees that holes 1 – 3 should stay closed and that the steep drop at 15 and 16 should render that hole(s) closed too. Mr. Weinstein asked Dr. Deusler if the course could be redesigned. Dr. Deusler said yes and that it could possibly be re-opened by next spring.

Mr. Keightly said that everybody seems to have different concerns and not just one in particular.

Mr. Fiel asked the residents to reiterate their concerns and asked exactly what it would take to make them happy. He also said that there must be “common ground” and that a solution could be found that would please everyone. Mr. Fiel also said that the vast size of the existing course was somewhat daunting, and a scaled-down version may alleviate the residents’ concerns.

Mr. DePue said that when the residents and the Park and Recreation Board talked at the November meeting, they were told that it would be a recreational course and not a professional one. Dr. Deusler said that he never said it would be a recreational course; rather it would be a course for all skill levels to play on. Dr. Deusler continued to explain that most disc golf courses co-exist with mountain biking, walking, etc.

Mr. McDevitt said that the course is a recreational course and not a professional course. He continued to say that the course is laid out fine and he has played on courses that are very cramped for space. Mr. McDevitt said that if the Board changes everything now, they will continue to be second-guessed by residents and by themselves.

Steve Tierney said that he didn’t partake in active recreation before the course came to Windlestrae Park. He has played the course and enjoyed it very much. He feels the course is a good size and he especially enjoyed playing in nature-like setting.

Ms. Berkey asked the residents what makes them think that the course will be used for tournaments.

Ms. Tontoni said that it is advertised on Dr. Deusler's website and by word of mouth.

Tim McCarthy, said he feels the same as Mr. Tierney. He enjoyed the course very much and likes being out in nature.

Mr. Hansell said that the residents would like their nature area back and that the Park and Recreation Board needs to satisfy the request.

Mr. Keightly said that the December ruling by the Board of Supervisors to close holes 1-5 without consulting the Park and Recreation Board was an "ex parte" decision and made a motion to reinstall holes 2 thru 5 (but not hole 1) until the course can be reconfigured. Chairman Maule seconded the motion. The motion, however, did not pass when it was called for a vote.

Chairman Maule asked how far the course is from the houses. Mr. Ziegler said it is 97 feet from his house. Mr. Blasko said it was 100 feet from his house and that he wants it to be far enough away that he doesn't hear any noise.

Chairman Maule said that the Board of Supervisors had a chance to rectify the situation and threw it back to the Park and Recreation Board to solve. Mr. Johnson said he sees both sides of the situation, but feels the course should have been left open in order to see if there would be any concerns and issues. He said that his motivation to be on the Park and Recreation Board was to improve the parks.

The consensus of the Park and Recreation Board members was to leave the course the way it currently is - with holes 1-5 closed -- and form the sub-committee.

Chairman Maule volunteered to be on the sub-committee. He then asked Dave Keightly, who declined, saying that he could not be partial. Chairman Maule then asked Barry Weinstein and Keith Johnson. Representing the residents are Charles Ziegler, Neil McDevitt and Mr. DePue. Representing the Township are Ms. Gural-Bear and Mr. Costello.

Ms. Tontoni asked Chairman Maule if he would respond to the petition. He said not in writing, but he will make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Officer Rob Johnson asked if the sub-committee would be addressing the residents' questions and concerns. Chairman Maule said yes.

Mr. Costello added that before a conclusion is made the Township Engineer will be consulted.

There being no further discussion about disc golf, the Park and Recreation Board members moved onto the next agenda item, which was security options for the Spring Valley Park bathrooms.

OLD BUSINESS

Spring Valley Park Restrooms

Officer Johnson said that there were five vandalism reports since the last meeting in November and three were for the bathrooms and two for the electrical box. He said he and Dave Heiser went out to the bathrooms to look at the locks in order to get a price quote. Officer Johnson said the locks could be programmed to lock at a certain time at night and open up in the morning. He said that no one could inadvertently become locked inside.

Mr. Johnson asked if an alarm could be added to prevent the door from being intentionally left open. Officer Johnson said that could possibly be done. He said the police department has been checking other Townships to see how they have been handling it and they have been sending emails out to neighboring residents asking them to keep an eye out for vandals. Officer Johnson said he is also looking to get an estimate for installing a video camera that would be viewed by the police department.

Chairman Maule asked if he had a recommendation to have Mr. Costello research the matter and come back with a cost at February's meeting. He thinks the locking

doors should be installed at Spring Valley Park first and if successful, install them at the Windlestrae Park bathrooms as well.

The Park and Recreation Board members recommend that Mr. Costello research the cost and discuss said costs at February's meeting.

Ms. Meade asked if the Township should consider writing a letter to the surrounding residents regarding the vandalism. Chairman Maule asked Ms. Meade to draft a letter and bring it to the February meeting.

There being no further business, Chairman Maule adjourned the meeting at 11:25p.m.

The next Park and Recreation Board meeting will be on Wednesday, February 13 at 8 p.m. at the Township Building.