



**Montgomery Township
Park and Recreation Board
Meeting Minutes for April 13, 2011**

The monthly meeting of the Montgomery Township Park and Recreation Board was held on April 13, 2011 in the Montgomery Township Municipal Building. The members of the Park and Recreation Board in attendance included: Tony Ruggieri, Mark Angelone, Mark Bates, Keith Johnson, Leesa Meade, and Dan Spinelli. Also in attendance were Michael Fox (BOS Liaison) Kevin Costello (Public Works Director), Lawrence Gregan (Township Manager) and Kate Grubb.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Tony Ruggieri called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Keith Johnson made a motion to approve the March 9, 2011 minutes and Mark Angelone seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0.

PARK COMP PLAN UPDATE

Tony Ruggieri distributed a Montgomery Township Park Assessment Analysis based on the member's observations and assessments during their respective park tour. He explained that his main concern was that most residents don't know that certain parks exist and that some of the older parks, like Fellowship Park, need maintenance. Supervisor Fox asked if the assessment addressed the condition of the park equipment and structures that needed to be replaced. Beth Pilling, with the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC), stated that the Board may want to link specialty parks, such as the Bark Park and neighborhood parks like Whispering Pines Park, within the park system. She continued that parks are synonymous with larger parks like William F. Maule Park at Windlestrae. She noted that there is a conversation, in general, coming to light regarding the balance between passive and active parks. In addition, she announced that the MCPC will come back with a synthesis of observations to the Park and Recreation Board at the May 11, 2011 meeting and it was requested that the other Township Boards and Committees be requested to send at least one representative to attend the meeting. The May 11th meeting will conclude with a wrap-up discussion and participants will have the opportunity for brainstorming.

PARK TOUR RESULTS

The Board discussed various methods to advertise Montgomery Township's parks to help residents become more aware of neighborhood parks. Mark Bates acknowledged that he was not aware there was a natural area on Pecan Drive and there were minimal signs to provide direction. Leesa Meade questioned if the Board could utilize the website to include information, photos and features of each park. Supervisor Fox responded that utilizing the website is always available to Board and all staff would need is the content to update.

Dan Spinelli asked how they could get information, like videos, on Channel 22. Larry Gregan responded that the Township needed to maintain a content-neutral policy and publish information that is only Township related. Should the Township go beyond that point, then the channel is open to anyone coming in to request information be placed on the channel.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tony Ruggieri opened public comment by discussing the approved Facilities and Field Use Policy. He stated that after speaking with a number of people he believes the policy should not have been adopted based on one or two isolated incidents. He continued that the goal of the policy tried to identify how the Township addressed the allowance of participants to be on the field and not destroy the fields and stated he felt that there should be a motion to re-address this policy.

Supervisor Fox clarified that the concept of the policy was to be used as a mechanism to close the fields as a fail-safe; when no one was around for making that call. He continued that the policy provided a standard in the absence of staff that the Township could use to close fields during inclement weather. Supervisor Fox stated that by adopting the policy, the Township was still in control of its fields. Tony Ruggieri noted that the perception by the public regarding the policy has been lost and is the complete opposite.

Larry Gregan stated that there was a practicality issue to the policy. The Township has 27 total fields between four and five different parks that would need to be evaluated during the week and on the weekend. He also commented that when this policy was discussed, the practicality of how the Township could assist with putting signs up and assessing the fields was also discussed in detail. The concept of having one standard of assessment was a deciding factor over practicality.

Dan Spinelli asked if the Board could look at two different policies, one for baseball/softball fields and one for soccer fields. Tony Ruggieri stated that the assessment and safety of play is different between the two sports and that should be evaluated. Kevin Costello stated that it is the nature of the sport that determines the wear and tear on the various fields. Leesa Meade asked if the Township has had any issues with any of these sports (baseball, soccer, lacrosse, rugby) other than the one or two isolated incidents.

Larry Gregan commented that there are two issues that need to be addressed: (1) has there been damage to the field and (2) is it safe for the fields to be used. Supervisor Fox explained that what the previous occurrences of damage did was expose the fact that the Township didn't have any policy in place. He continued that the Township relied on staff to make the calls on the weekends and when the Township said don't play, people played. Kevin Costello added that soccer did come in with its own contractor to reseed after an event but you can only grow grass until October. Kevin Johnson stated that for abusive sports the Township should look into turf fields at Windlestrae Park.

Bob Selheimer thanked Tony Ruggieri for discussing several matters with him. He indicated to the Board that MUSC will be meeting with several members of the Board of Supervisors regarding the possibility of turf fields. He continued that a company would be coming out to assess the fields, formulate a proposal and then present it to the Township. He also reported that he met with Ray Barndt about the lining of the Zehr soccer fields and his goal was to keep the fields pristine. He apologized for his past behavior to the Board and he would like to move forward in a positive and collaborative manner.

Lou Cohan with the Montgomery Baseball/Softball Association asked the Board how they would move forward from this point regarding the Field Use policy. He stated that some teams have only had 1 practice and Opening Day isn't going to happen. He continued that he was concerned about the backlash from the community. Tony Ruggieri advised Lou to send concerns, inquiries and residents to him and could give out his email address. Supervisor Fox asked Lou Cohan if he had assessed the fields

to determine if the fields could have been used when there was a “no play” in effect. Lou Cohan replied that there may have been roughly four times when the fields could have been used but were closed.

Chuck Ziegler suggested that the fields could be classified in accordance to drainage so that whoever is required to check them, they can go out to the best draining field and if that field is too saturated and then all fields would be closed.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Tony Ruggieri stated that the Whistlestop Project was awarded to the lowest responsible bidder and it came in under the \$260,000 budget at \$206,000. The Township has not yet received all the information back yet and there will be additional costs added to the bid price such as engineering expenses.

Kevin Costello stated that staff was trying to tackle some features that need to be upgraded at Spring Valley Park. He added that the Public Works department is receiving quotes to level and recoat the upper tennis courts to remove a low spot. Leesa Meade asked if the Township could make the “garden” that is at Spring Valley Park a little cleaner since it has become a receptacle for trash, bottles, etc. Tony Ruggieri mentioned maybe the Township could partner with the scouts, the Senior Committee and the Shade Tree Committee in late May or early June for a cleanup.

MUSC REQUESTS

Tony Ruggieri commented that he met with Bob Selheimer, MUSC, and went through his list of requests. Tony Ruggieri stated that any requests related to field use and maintenance is up to the Township and not MUSC. He recommended to Bob Selheimer that if MUSC wanted to send in a proposal regarding a snack stand at William F. Maule Park at Windlestrae then they should do so. He added that there were about 4 or 5 other requests that he sent to Kevin Costello. Most these requests were not cost prohibited except one request for stadium benches. Tony Ruggieri stated that other requests included field boxes, player benches, a fence and ground markers. If the field boxes were not in the way of maintenance, then they would be okay with the Board. Kevin Costello provided quotes regarding temporary and permanent player benches. Permanent benches were \$1,500 for 4 and temporary benches were \$1,600 for 4 benches. Tony Ruggieri stated that Bob Selheimer requested a fence along the access way to William F. Maule Park at Windlestrae. He added that the Township has a post and rail fence like the one at William F. Maule Park at Windlestrae field #3 which could have wire mesh installed to contain soccer balls. Tony Ruggieri also provided Bob Selheimer with a website for ground markers to line the field. The markers are flat enough to mow over them without causing damage.

NEW BUSINESS

Tony Ruggieri stated that Montgomery Basketball approached him about having a summer basketball program at Spring Valley Park. He continued that it would be similar to Summer Madness at Windlestrae - Rose Twig. Kevin Costello commented that the basketball association should go through the field and facility permitting process to secure the basketball courts.

Tony Ruggieri commented that he sent out a list of potential programs for the Park Board to research in order to start moving forward. For example, the Challenger Program is designed for kids with special needs. Tony Ruggieri asked for members to go to the soccer and baseball associations regarding this interest for a collaborative effort in making this program a reality. Mark Bates reported that he had

spoken with reps from Horsham Township and their special needs program is financed through their Rotary Club. The Horsham sports teams have the kids play a few baseball innings gives them a t-shirt, but it is not structured in a competitive environment.

OLD BUSINESS

Tony Ruggieri thanked members of the Board for attending the Mike Brooks basketball court dedication ceremony at Spring Valley Park.

Dan Spinelli inquired if there was any progress on Friendship Park regarding the improvements earmarked by the developer. Supervisor Fox stated that it would take a couple years for completion. Larry Gregan stated that there is a financial commitment for park improvements with every phase of development. The Township was waiting for an earth disturbance permit from the conservation district, which would authorize the developer to re-grade the site. After that is completed, the balance of the funds from the developer's contribution would dictate the types of improvement they could make. Larry Gregan concluded that progress has slowed up because of the economy.

Kevin Costello stated that regarding the dugouts he was waiting for everything to dry to bring in the equipment needed to perform the project and he would like to have the new dugout covers completed by June.

ADJOURNMENT

Leesa Meade made a motion for adjournment and Keith Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0 and the meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.