

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
PARK & RECREATION BOARD
MINUTES – NOVEMBER 9, 2010

The regular meeting of the Park & Recreation Board of the Township of Lower Makefield was held in the Municipal Building on November 9, 2010. Chairman Fritchey called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Those present:

Park & Recreation Board: David Fritchey, Chairman
Patricia Bunn, Secretary
Fran McDonald, Member
Andrew Newbon, Member

Others: Donna Liney, Park & Recreation Director
Matt Maloney, Supervisor Liaison (joined meeting in progress)

Absent: Henry Carpenter, Park & Rec Vice Chairman
Dave Gordon, Park & Rec Member
Dennis Wysocki, Park & Rec Member

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. McDonald moved, Ms. Bunn seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of September 14, 2010 as written.

DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS OF DISABLED PERSONS ADVISORY BOARD

Ms. Lisa Huchler-Smith and Ms. Trish O'Donnell were present from the Disabled Persons Advisory Board. Ms. Smith stated they are interested in doing proper planning when considering the Township Budgets so that the Board of Supervisors are aware of the needs. Ms. Smith stated she is concerned with the conditions of the bike paths particularly near Memorial Park where she is aware of an individual in a wheelchair who makes use of this path which has deteriorated to such a degree that she was concerned that the wheelchair could tip over. Ms. Smith stated she contacted Ms. Liney this past year because the cracks had become overgrown with grass, and it was so bad it was a concern for bicyclists and pedestrians. She stated Ms. Liney did remove the grass. Ms. Smith stated she is concerned that they are doing only stop-gap measures and there is no planning. She stated she does not understand why they do not have in the Budget a rolling amount of \$50,000 to \$100,000 to do bike paths each year.

Ms. Smith stated she would also like to discuss how much is going to be budgeted for Parks this year. She stated the Garden of Reflection is now ten years old, and nothing has been done by the Township to that area. She stated she recently attended an event there, and she had to contact Ms. Liney because there was a problem with the restrooms. She stated the restrooms were installed for free by Toll Bros, and they are not up to the standard they should be for a large Park. She stated the Township is constantly depending on fundraising and donations to do things that are the Township's responsibility.

Mr. Maloney joined the meeting at this time.

Ms. Smith stated there is a plan for a playground at the Garden of Reflection, but there is no commitment from Lower Makefield to do anything. She stated the Disabled Persons Advisory Board would like to become involved in this to get this project started. She stated when they bring items to the Board of Supervisors, the Supervisors tell them to go out and get Grants and do fundraising; and while she is willing to do this, she stated she is "tapped out" as her Church needs more money and the Schools are doing a lot of fundraising. She stated the Veteran's groups also needs another \$100,000; and they are always asking the same people for funds. She stated this was also true for Community Pride Day and the Veteran's Day Parade. She stated everything they do that is great in the Township is coming from the same fundraising efforts. She stated she questions how much more they can ask from their sponsors and the same people.

Ms. Smith asked if the Park & Rec Board will be going to the Supervisors and asking for things; adding, if they are, the Disabled Persons Advisory Board would join with them. Mr. Newbon stated they have discussed plans for improvements to many of the Parks for many years, and have also prepared a prioritized list. Mr. Fritchey stated the Park & Rec Board is a recommending body to the Board of Supervisors advising them what they feel should be done in terms of Park & Rec which they regularly do, and it is the prerogative of the Board of Supervisors to accept some, all, or none of their recommendations.

Mr. Maloney stated there was discussion about the Park projects last year, and it was determined that it would cost on average \$30 a household per year. He stated with regard to Memorial Park, he has heard that there is not a good park for disabled children, and they may be able to present this to the Supervisors requesting that they construct something they do not currently have as opposed to constructing more of something they already have. Ms. O'Donnell stated the playground they are proposing would benefit all children, not just children who are disabled; and they are not building it to the exclusion of non-disabled children. Mr. Maloney stated there is a plan for a playground in that area of the Township; and he feels it will be better if there is shared interest for this type of playground by the Park & Rec Board and the Disabled Persons Advisory Board.

Mr. Fritchey stated the ultimate decisions are made by the Board of Supervisors and a number of the Supervisors are more concerned about not raising taxes; and based on the Budget passed last year, it shows that the Supervisors do not place a high value on recreation.

Ms. Bunn stated she does not want her taxes raised, and she knows that many people in the Township are struggling. She stated there are not only requests for increases for Park & Recreation, but also from the School District, sewers, and roads. She stated she feels they need to maintain their infrastructure. She also noted that Toll Bros. did not construct the restrooms for free, and it was Fee-In-Lieu money which was allocated for that purpose. Ms. Bunn stated there are Grants available. Ms. Smith stated they did try to get two Grants, but they were turned down because the community is too affluent.

Mr. McDonald stated many Grants require matching funds, and he asked where the matching funds would come from; and Ms. Bunn stated if the Township does not have money to even match a Grant, they would not have the money to construct the infrastructure itself. She stated it is a balancing act, and she feels the Supervisors have a very difficult task since many people in the Township do not want their taxes raised, and the Township needs to maintain what they do have. She stated the Supervisors need to consider the priorities. She stated the Township does not have a funding source such as a landfill paying fees to the Township. She stated homes sales are down, and transfer taxes had been a big revenue source for the Township in the past.

Ms. Smith stated it appears that the Board of Supervisors may do nothing until the economy turns around. Mr. Newbon stated the Park & Rec can still tell the Board how they feel and continue to drum up support for the projects. Mr. Maloney stated for almost fifteen years parts of the Park project had already been planned. He stated during that time there were two “boom” periods when something could have been done. He stated if they were to borrow funds, it would be paid out over a twenty year period during which there will be good and bad economic times. Mr. Maloney stated with regard to Memorial Park, they could augment the existing Plan for something that will accommodate more people; and if there are more people in support of the Plan, it will result in an outcome that everyone will be happy with. Mr. Fritchey stated he does not feel there is a shortage of vision, but rather there is a shortage of political will on the part of the people who have the power to make the decisions, and currently they are not in favor of imposing additional taxes.

Ms. Smith asked if the Park & Rec Board will go before the Board of Supervisors with a specific Plan, and Mr. McDonald stated there are Plans for all of the properties.

Ms. Smith asked what the Park & Rec Board will be asking of the Board of Supervisors when they go to the Budget meeting, and Mr. Maloney stated they are asking for funds to engineer Samost. Mr. Maloney stated the Park & Rec Board and the Disabled Persons Advisory Board could make a joint recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to provide engineering funds for Memorial Park including an inclusive playground.

Ms. Bunn stated there is a space set aside, and the manufacturer would lay out the playground with pieces chosen by the Township. She stated they may need to put in an accessible path. She stated money would need to be allocated to purchase and build the playground.

Ms. O'Donnell stated she agrees that they do not want to raise taxes, but she asked if they could have a one-time assessment on all households, and Ms Bunn stated she feels this may have been done in the past. Ms. O'Donnell stated she feels a one-time assessment may be viewed more favorably since once taxes are raised, they never go back down. Mr. Maloney stated this would be a different way they could present this. Mr. McDonald stated he feels some residents will still advise the Board of Supervisors that even if it is called an assessment, it is still a tax. He stated he agrees with Ms. Bunn that this is a bad economic time, and people in the Township are hurting.

Ms. Smith stated they would still like to get the dialog started even if they cannot put anything in the Budget this year. She stated the Disabled Persons Advisory Board is considering this as their project for the next year and will continue to look into Grants. She asked the estimated cost of such a playground, and Ms. Liney stated it is estimated that it could be between \$250,000 and \$300,000.

Mr. Maloney stated there have been discussions about donated labor, and organized labor which had attempted to gain good will in the Township had indicated they are a voluntary entity for these types of projects, and talking to those organizations should be pursued. He encouraged the Disabled Persons Advisory Board to continue to press this matter before the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Bunn suggested that the Disabled Persons Advisory Board contact the Garden of Reflection Committee about their Plans as well. Ms. Smith stated she feels they need more since they do not have signs and there are maintenance needs. She assumes they are struggling to raise money as well. Mr. Maloney stated they are currently about \$800,000 to \$900,000 "in the hole" since they need to develop an endowment to fund the Garden of Reflection permanently, since the Agreement from the beginning was that it would be paid for by an endowment; and they have approximately \$100,000 a year in on-going costs. Mr. Maloney stated it would still be good to have multiple groups in support of this proposed playground.

Mr. Fritchey encouraged Ms. Smith to keep bringing this up with the Board of Supervisors.

REVIEW PROPOSED DRAFT 2011 OPERATING BUDGET FOR PARK AND RECREATION

Ms. Liney stated the Park and Recreation Operating Budget continues with the mandate of balancing revenues and expenditures. With the absorption of the Five Mile Woods Preserve's operations into the Park and Recreation Budget, expenditures are approximately 95% covered by revenues for 2011.

Ms. Liney stated Park and Recreation is committed to the ongoing challenge of doing more with less, despite the continued growth in the community, pressure for expansion of facilities, and increase in use by the organizations.

Ms. Liney stated the Park and Recreation manpower remains unchanged, and they are mindful of minimizing necessary overtime.

Ms. Liney stated they are sensitive to balancing the needs and raising the standards without raising costs. She stated they are being creative accomplishing more projects with in-house labor, repairing their own equipment, continuing to seek out competitive pricing for all purchases, and making the tough decisions on spending.

Ms. Liney stated in these difficult economic circumstances, faced with the reality of a continuing recession, the 2011 Operating Budget does not allow for the desired capital expansion or completion of the Park system. She stated they will continue to search for ways to accomplish this objective, and look forward to the opportunity to fulfill the approved long-range plans for the completion of the Township's Park system for the community.

Ms. Liney stated the Budget session for Park & Recreation with the Board of Supervisors is scheduled for Thursday, November 11 at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Liney stated they are projecting revenues for this year of \$862,000, and she is projecting more revenue for next year. She stated the expenditures are down, with projected this year of \$922,000 and next year \$920,000. Ms. Liney stated she discussed with the Finance Director whether they would get a little bit of a break from some of the refinancing with the Debt Service, but it does not appear that this will happen in the 2011 Budget.

Mr. Newbon noted the hand-out showing the historic millage for the last decade, and Ms. Liney stated in 2000 the average assessment for Park & Recreation was \$54; and in 2011 it is \$51. Mr. Fritchey stated the average Township tax bill is \$620, of which \$51 goes to Park & Rec.

Mr. McDonald asked about the Debt Service that was refinanced; and Mr. Maloney stated they did refinance quite a bit of the debt, and based on these numbers, it appears that the debt that was refinanced was not any of the Park & Rec debt so it will not pass through as savings to Park & Rec. He stated they are all General Obligation Bonds so it is all internal financing that keeps track of what that debt is for. He stated there was also some question about this similarly on the Golf Course Budget, and he will make sure that this is brought up at the Budget Work Session and make sure that they can confirm that none of the debt that was refinanced effects the Park & Rec Budget.

POOL BUDGET

Mr. Liney stated the Community Pool was dedicated in 1981 with 800 families. She stated entering the 30th year of operation, the Township takes great pride in this outstanding recreational facility which has experienced over 100% growth in membership.

Ms. Liney stated the Pool Budget is a user-based Budget, and no tax dollars support the Pool. She stated Pool revenues need to keep pace with expenditures.

Ms. Liney stated with the ongoing economic recession, she does not anticipate that they will see a significant increase of residents joining the Pool membership in 2011. The proposed 2011 Pool Operating Budget is challenged to address the requirement to maintain an aging facility and also provide for capital improvements with a base of revenue that remains generally fixed.

Ms. Liney stated as they look for ways to increase this revenue base, one option may be an inter-governmental agreement with a surrounding Municipality as we have had with Yardley Borough. She stated another possibility which may be considered would be opening a limited number of family memberships such as 150, to outside community members with the requirement that they would need to be sponsored by a family who is already an active member of the Community Pool.

Ms. Liney stated the Pool Operating Budget will be discussed at the Board of Supervisors Work Session on Thursday, November 11 at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Fritchey asked the status of the Morrisville Borough Pool, and Ms. Liney stated it closed because it did not meet the Federal mandate for the drain covers because it was too costly. Ms. Liney stated Upper Makefield and Newtown also do not have Municipal Pools. She stated they could also keep it within the Pool membership and the first 150 families could sponsor someone from outside of the Township. Ms. Bunn questions if they should open up the Pool to those outside of the Township. Mr. Maloney asked if they feel there is capacity at the Pool that is not being used because they are not getting

enough members. Ms. Liney stated the Pool does have a large capacity for water space, and they can handle 3,200 per day. Ms. Liney stated she feels the current members would prefer not to have additional members. Mr. Fritchey stated he feels it appears that there are a reasonable number of people at the Pool; but if they take in more people, they could make more money and do the maintenance they need to do. Ms. Bunn asked if they add more people, would they have to add more resources. Mr. Newbon stated adding more people could take away from the experience of the current members. Mr. Maloney stated they need to consider if by adding people, are they detracting from the value of the Pool to the extent that the existing members may be less happy with their experience, and less likely to renew their memberships. Mr. McDonald stated this was the argument with the proposal to have Swim Teams coming in early in the morning. Mr. Newbon stated they may bring more people in, and then the long-time members from the community may not renew their membership; and the membership may be people that are not residents of the community.

Ms. Liney stated she is drawing down from cash balances. She stated Mr. Fedorchak was going to look at the inter-fund transfer which is \$100,000. Mr. Maloney stated this is a problem for all of the Enterprise Funds as this is an arbitrary means to pass overhead costs back out to the “businesses,” which are the Golf Course, the Sewer Fund, and the Pool. He stated Park & Rec also has an overhead charge-back. He stated they are trying to adopt a very rigorous formula for this. Mr. Maloney stated he feels they need to have a tracking system so that the people who are doing support functions need to submit a list of their hours for these functions.

SUPERVISOR LIAISON REPORT

Mr. Maloney stated the Golf Course has been in litigation for a decade, and there was recently an adverse ruling at the Appeals level indicating that the Township owes more to the original owner of the land in the amount of \$3 million including interest. He stated this matter has been Appealed to the State Supreme Court. Mr. Maloney reviewed the history of the litigation. Mr. Maloney stated the Golf Course is a phenomenal business, and runs at a 40% profit margin. He stated the new management team has done an excellent job.

Mr. Maloney stated there is a possibility that they may add engineering for the Samost Tract into the 2011 Budget. Mr. Maloney stated there was a discussion about the PAA indoor facility, and they are looking to see if they could take out a loan in the Township’s name to help expedite the financing, and Mr. Menard from the Citizens Budget

Commission, is working on this. Ms. Bunn asked if the Township was taking out the loan, would they not have to pay prevailing wage; and Mr. Maloney stated this is what Mr. Menard is working on. He stated the Township would only be making a loan to PAA and would not be building the facility. Mr. Maloney stated if they find out they have to pay prevailing wage, he does not feel they would go this route. Mr. Maloney stated Mr. Birkhead appeared before the Board of Supervisors and was given approval by the Board to proceed to the next step.

REVIEW CAPITAL PROJECTS

Ms. Liney stated she had provided a summation of the LMT 2015 Vision. She stated she did an update on the bike paths which they are working on getting current information.

RECREATION DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Liney stated the Township enjoyed the best turnout ever this past Sunday for the Fourth Annual Veterans Day parade, and stated the Township would like to express our appreciation to all the Veterans, Committee members, volunteers, Scouts, PAA, Lower Makefield Seniors, Shriners, the Fire Company, and all members of the community who worked together to recognize those who have served. The Masonic Hall opened its restrooms facilities for the parade goers, and Woodside Presbyterian shared its parking lot. McCaffreys, Giant, and Super Fresh all made donations, and the Township particularly appreciates the fact that there was virtually no impact on the Budget, as we received outstanding support from area businesses in the way of sponsorships.

Ms. Liney noted that there was some significant damage caused by vandalism at the Memorial Park restrooms. She stated they are disappointed with this act, and the Police are looking into it and will take appropriate action with those responsible. She stated due to the hard work of the Park crew, repairs were completed within 24 hours for a scheduled special event the next day.

Ms. Liney stated the Park crew is working with the area user groups on some improvements to facilities. She stated in the next few weeks they should have completed the sanitizing and grooming of the turf field at Macclesfield, some pitching mound and home plate repairs on various fields, and completion of the roof on the press box at Stoddart 2. These efforts are a win win for the community as well as the Township.

Ms. Liney stated Armour Electric is scheduled to begin electric repairs at the Garden of Reflection around November 18, following their completion of the Township lighting project.

Ms. Liney stated Phase I of the Pool sandblasting project has been completed on schedule and the Park crew is filling the pools for the winter. Overall project completion will be Spring, 2011.

Ms. Liney stated the Township Park crew will begin winterizing facilities next week, starting with the Stoddart and Roelofs complexes, and include the fountain at the Garden of Reflection. Portable facilities will be located at Kids Kingdom and Macclesfield.

Ms. Liney stated the Park and Recreation and Pool Budgets are scheduled for the Board of Supervisors Work Session this Thursday, November 11 at 7:00 p.m. and all Park Board members are welcome.

Mr. Fritchey asked about the damage at the Garden of Reflection, and Ms. Liney noted the damage which occurred both inside and outside of the restroom which resulted in over \$5,000 worth of damage.

LEAGUE REPORTS

Mr. McDonald stated the YMS Columbus Day Tournament went very well with 324 teams participating. Mr. Newbon stated he will provide a report on the Football program at the next meeting.

There being no further business, Ms. Bunn moved, Mr. Newbon seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Bunn, Secretary