

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
PARK & RECREATION BOARD
MINUTES - MARCH 12, 2013

The regular meeting of the Park & Recreation Board of the Township of Lower Makefield was held in the Municipal Building on March 12, 2013. Vice Chairman McDonald called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Those present:

Park & Recreation Board: Fran McDonald, Vice Chairman
Dave Gordon, Member (joined and left meeting
in progress)
Andrew Newbon, Member
Dennis Wysocki, Member

Others: Donna Liney, Park & Recreation Director
Kristin Tyler, Supervisor Liaison

Absent: David Fritchey, Chairman Park & Rec Board
Patricia Bunn, Secretary Park & Rec Board
Dave Malinowski, Member Park & Rec Board

TABLING OF MINUTES

Due to lack of a quorum, Minutes were tabled at this time.

PRESENTATION IN SUPPORT OF NO SMOKING IN TOWNSHIP PARKS

Ms. Kathy Kraeck stated she is the Community Mobilizer for Pennsbury LYFT which is a prevention coalition group, and their purpose is to help students especially those in Sixth through Twelfth Grade to make good choices to not drink, not smoke, not do drugs and to get involved and give back to their community. She stated they are a program of the United Way of Bucks County, and their particular program is funded by a Grant and they have both an adult coalition and a youth coalition. She stated anyone is welcome to join their adult coalition, and they have members from the School Administration, School Board, parents, civic and business groups, and the Police Force; and they meet bi-monthly usually the third Tuesday at Pennsbury High School West in the Staff Development Room. She invited the Park Board members to attend their meetings.

Mr. Gordon joined the meeting at this time.

Ms. Kraeck stated they are very fortunate to have an active and bright youth group made up primarily of High School students although this year, they are adding more Middle School students. She stated the youth group meets once a month on the second Monday of the month, and they meet at the United Way Offices on Hood Boulevard. She stated they are also very active all month long doing community service and other activities. She stated currently they are involved in helping put together a Social Media Campaign. She stated they are working on a PSA which will air in the Oxford Valley Movie Theatre and will then be on the Pennsbury Website. She stated they would also like to have it run in the various Township Websites as well. She stated the Pennsbury High School Video Department has also made a series of PSAs for them.

Ms. Kraeck introduced members of the Youth Group who were present this evening – Sara Elwell, Josh Booker, Brandon Heinz, and Melanie Nolan.

Ms. Kraeck stated they were pleased to learn that there is a Non-Smoking Ordinance in Lower Makefield for the Parks and playing fields. She showed a sign, copies of which will be made free of charge to the Township, which has been provided by the Southeast Council of Pennsylvania and Bucks County; and you must have an Ordinance in place in order to post this sign. She stated the sign noting “Young Lungs at Play” is perfect for the playgrounds and playing fields. She stated in December Falls Township passed a Non-Smoking Ordinance for their Parks and playing fields, and they will be approaching Yardley Borough and Tullytown Borough as well.

Mr. Booker stated it is important that smoking not be permitted in Parks because it is very dangerous to the environment, and cigarette butts thrown could be ingested by a young child or an animal. He stated tobacco-free environments promote positive community role modeling and protect the health, safety, and welfare of community members. He stated discarded butts are not biodegradable so they are in the environment for twenty years before they actually break down.

Mr. Gordon asked about chewing tobacco, and Mr. Heinz stated they are more concerned about second-hand smoke which is a health risk to young children. He stated the 2006 Surgeon General’s report concluded that secondhand smoke is a human carcinogen for which there is no safe level of exposure. He stated exposure to secondhand smoke has immediate health consequences on the cardiovascular and respiratory systems. He stated it can be harmful in outdoor settings since it is still in the air and is inhaled. He stated that according to Repace Associates, secondhand smoke levels in outdoor public places can reach levels as high as those found in indoor facilities where smoking is permitted. He stated the sign they are providing is a nice reminder about protecting children’s’ lungs.

Ms. Elwell stated parks are established to promote healthy activities especially in this area where children are playing soccer, football, and other sports. She stated the purpose of the park area is to promote community wellness, and tobacco-free policies fit with this idea. She stated policies provide consistency among community athletic facilities and groups. She stated the majority of community sporting events are held at either city or school athletic facilities, and nearly all school districts prohibit tobacco use on their entire grounds. She stated many community athletic associations have tobacco-free policies but use city recreation facilities and would benefit from a city-wide policy. She stated in Lower Makefield they are trying to enforce what they already have. She stated if they can enforce this, it will be very important since children imitate what they see adults doing; and if they see that it is not right in the community setting when they are playing soccer or watching their siblings play a sport, they will understand that it is not a good habit.

Mr. McDonald asked what else they would like the Township to do since they already have a no-smoking Ordinance. Ms. Kraeck stated by placing the signs, they are visual reminders. She stated they will attach to the existing sign posts so they do not need another sign post installed. She stated they feel it will be important to place these in all the playgrounds and near the playing fields and pavilions. She stated Ms. Liney has already determined where she feels they can be placed, and she has requested a certain number of signs. She stated she feels this is a nice way to reinforce that the Ordinance is in place.

Mr. Newbon stated he felt this was a very good presentation. He asked how they would feel if there was a designated area for people to smoke. He stated this may also help the problem of discarding cigarette butts and litter. Ms. Kraeck stated the Ordinance is already in place that smoking in Township parks and playgrounds is prohibited. Mr. Newbon stated one of the articles in the Ordinance indicates that “smoking shall be permitted in specific areas at facilities as posted by the Township.” Ms. Kraeck asked if there are any areas that are posted now; and Ms. Tyler stated she is concerned that if they put these signs up, they would then be obligated to designate a smoking area and they may have to consider this further. Mr. McDonald stated he felt that there already No Smoking signs posted, and Ms. Liney stated that several years ago the LYFT Program did have different No Smoking signs which were posted at Macclesfield and some other spots.

Ms. Tyler asked Ms. Liney how many signs she had requested, and Ms. Liney stated she requested twelve which she feels would do the whole Park system. Ms. Kraeck stated she has these available this evening.

Ms. Tyler commended the young people present this evening for encouraging others that smoking is not as acceptable as it was previously; and hopefully the younger generation will be smarter than the generation that preceded them and avoid tobacco products. She thanked them for volunteering to work for such a good cause. She stated she feels this will set a good example not only for children but for adults in the Township as well about proper public conduct.

Ms. Kraeck discussed a number of other programs that the young people are involved with including prescription drug take back day where boxes are available in the Police Department. She stated the next day for this will be April 27, and they are working with Chief Coluzzi to see if they could install a permanent drug box at the Township. She stated they have approximately fifty members in their youth program, and they are all quite active.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Wysocki moved, Mr. Newbon seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of February 12, 2013 as written.

PRESENTATION OF FIVE MILE WOODS ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. John Heilferty, Naturalist, was present with Friends of the Five Mile Woods, John Lloyd and Jan McFarlan. Mr. Heilferty thanked Ms. Liney and her staff for their help. Mr. Heilferty stated the Friends of the Woods are key Township assets in their volunteer capacity in terms of keeping the Woods maintained and accessible to the public.

Mr. Heilferty stated they had some damage in the Woods from Hurricane Sandy and fortunately nothing structural although the house did take on water in the basement recognizing that this is not unusual. He stated tons of trees came down in the Woods, and there were a fair number which he felt represented safety problems; and a number of Friends of the Woods went out with hand tools alone and took care of a lot of the trees.

Mr. Heilferty stated he does have some remaining issues and Gene Corcoran, who is an arborist, has volunteered to take down one tree that Mr. Heilferty felt was beyond the capabilities of his volunteers. He stated he feels once this is down he feels all of the post-Sandy maintenance issues will have been addressed and all done completely with volunteer work. He stated this is primarily due to the Friends and what they bring to the Township in terms of volunteer efforts and man hours. He stated thanks to their collective efforts they spared the Township from having to hire a tree crew to come to the Woods to take care of these safety issues.

Mr. Heilferty stated there are some long-term maintenance issues that they have put off, and it is getting to the point that some need to be addressed. He stated there are windows in the office that need to be replaced as well as an indoor/outdoor rug in the office. He stated they had some issues with the parking light which Mr. Liney took care of this week, and she is suggesting some remedies for other issues they have had with that light. He stated the restrooms are also dated and some updates may be needed in the future. Mr. Heilferty stated the house is old. He stated it has a stone and mortar basement and the floor joists are rough hewn timbers. He stated the renters do care for the house and have spent some of their own money to fix things at the house, and Ms. Liney's crew also work on the house when necessary. He stated the boiler was recently replaced.

Mr. Heilferty stated one of the big changes this year is that the Roving Nature Center which has run a camp in the Township for many years, will no longer be hosting that Camp. He stated there has been a slow decline in attendance for that program. Ms. Liney stated they have withdrawn this program throughout Pennsylvania. Mr. Heilferty stated he and Ms. Liney were looking for alternatives, and Ms. Liney stated Pennsbury School District will be running a one-week nature program out of the Five Mile Woods this year as opposed to it being run out of Edgewood School which is what they had done in the past.

Mr. Heilferty stated they already had the maple syrup demonstration which was well attended and is always a successful event. He stated that this Friday night he will have the Frog and Salamander Walk at 7:30 p.m. He stated they will have two Open Houses – one in the spring, and one in the fall. He also stated the Friends assist them with their monthly work days.

Mr. Lloyd stated they have monthly work days from March through November on the second Saturday of every month, and they get a fair number of people coming out to do maintenance in the Woods. He stated while they did have a lot of trees down from Hurricane Sandy, fortunately most of them were not on the trails. He stated they have a relationship with Pennsbury High School and their National Honor Society students come out to the Woods helping the Friends on the work days as they are required to do service hours. Mr. Lloyd stated they also host the Open House events, and the spring Open House will be coordinated with Earth Day and will be held on April 21 from Noon to 3 p.m.. He stated they offer guided walks. He stated the fall Open House is held after Harvest Day.

Mr. Wysocki asked about the deer. Mr. Heilferty stated it is still difficult to say if they are getting the upper hand or not. He stated the hunters took out eleven deer from the Woods this season. He stated he is seeing some locations where there are new sprouts. He stated they will need to put up more exclosures. He stated he does struggle with having to close the Preserve so that they can hunt, but he does want the hunt to be successful so they can take out deer.

Mr. Heilferty again reiterated the amount of work done by the Friends of the Five Mile Woods and how appreciative he is of the work they do for the Township.

Ms. Tyler asked the size of the tree the volunteer has agreed to take down, and Mr. Heilferty stated he feels it is about 18” and it is being held up over one of the trails. Mr. Heilferty stated Mr. Corcoran is an arborist/landscaper, and he has offered to cut the tree down. Ms. Tyler stated she is concerned about having a volunteer do this; however, Mr. Heilferty stated Mr. Corcoran is the kind of individual you would hire to do this, but he has offered to look at it for the Township.

Mr. Heilferty stated he also has a local Girl Scout doing a sign project in the Woods as part of her Silver Award.

SUPERVISOR LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Tyler stated they will be opening Bids on Friday, and hopefully they will be able to discuss awarding the Bid at the Supervisors’ April meeting. She stated they want to have both of the baseball fields completed so that they can turn their full attention to the Community Center. She stated they may have to move some mulch out of the area so that they can get underway quickly.

Mr. Newbon stated he saw a sign about the Township delivering mulch; and Ms. Tyler stated Kevin Kall has found himself with an excess of mulch this year, and he has implemented a program using the Public Works employees providing delivery of the free mulch to Township residents for \$10 a yard. She stated he is also charging contractors to bring materials to the Township.

RECREATION DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Ms. Liney stated she included in the Board’s packet a letter from a resident requesting the Pool either pro-rate her daughter’s \$200 individual Pool membership or allow for a credit for the following season due to her daughter being scheduled for surgery around July 22 so that she will not be able to use the Pool from then until the summer. Ms. Liney stated consistent with long-standing Pool policy, refunds are not issued once the Pool is open. She stated it is not administratively feasible to pro-rate payments. She also stated the Pool has lighter attendance in the second half of the season, which is why the August membership is offered. This issue has been considered in the past, and it is clearly spelled out in the membership registration information. Ms. Liney stated while the Pool is sympathetic to the situation, it does need to draw the line as far as issuing refunds or credits. Ms. Liney stated the resident requested that the Park Board consider her appeal.

Ms. Liney stated she did offer to roll the membership from July 22 to the end of the Season for 2014. The Park Board members felt that the compromise offer was fair, and Ms. Tyler stated she would back Ms. Liney's position as well

Mr. McDonald moved, Mr. Newbon seconded and it was unanimously carried to support the rolling offer as described by Ms. Liney.

Ms. Liney stated she will contact the resident following the meeting and advise her of the Board's decision.

Ms. Tyler stated the Pool membership numbers are down particularly in the 12 – 17 year old age group, and she has been trying to think of ways to draw those teenagers back in. She stated she knows of a band that they could have play on a Friday evening to see if they could try to draw the teenagers back to the Pool recognizing that it will not have an impact this season but it might help next year. She stated she is not sure how the residents who live in the area near the Pool would react to this. Mr. Newbon also noted the possibility of an outdoor movie night, and Ms. Tyler stated she has a contact for this as well. Mr. Gordon stated he feels this would be better than concerts. Ms. Tyler stated they need to consider if they would guests for these activities. Ms. Liney stated there is a reduced rate after 4 p.m. Ms. Liney suggested that they try to do one special night each month.

Mr. McDonald asked if other Pools are finding this issue with this same age group, but it was not known. Ms. Tyler stated the Township Pool is a place for mothers with their children during the day and parents come in the evening with their children, but they lose them once they turn thirteen.

Ms. Liney stated the Community Pool Budget is a proprietary budget. She stated no tax dollars go into the Pool, and the Pool is funded by membership fees. She stated as can be seen from the spreadsheet that was in the packet, the Pool has experienced a steady decline in enrollment the past five years. As of the end of this year's discount period, families registered for the Pool stands at 852, as opposed to 979 at discount in 2012 and 1016 at discount in 2011.

Ms. Liney stated during the fall Budget sessions, the Board of Supervisors discussed that if the Pool membership was not rebounding from the drops experienced in the last few seasons in this difficult economy, and in an effort to insure the ongoing sustainability of the Pool, it may be prudent for the Township to consider opening the Pool to a limited number of non-resident families. Ms. Liney stated she had been speaking to the Sandy Borowsky, representing the Swim Team whose numbers are also down, that this may spur those who had not registered to come forward and register; however, it may be the 13-17 year old age group that is not registering where she is seeing her drop.

Mr. Gordon noted there have been some changes made to the Swim Team which may be having an impact as well. Ms. Liney stated the Swim Team is 10% of the overall Pool enrollment.

Mr. Gordon asked if they feel the NAC is having an impact since those who have a NAC membership now have a Pool membership there. Ms. Tyler stated the NAC was to open May 30, and she feels the Township Pool will experience a fall-out from those people who already belong to the NAC who are not going to give up their membership since it is a forced pay for the new amenities. She stated she knows of two families involved who do an August membership at the Township Pool and will continue with this because their friends are at the Township Pool. She stated she also feels there is a chance that they will not open by May 30 which could spur a last minute increase in those joining the Township Pool. Ms. Tyler stated she also feels possibly the lower membership numbers are due to the fact that School is in session until the very end of June; and those who do not do the Discount Period may still intend to sign up. Ms. Tyler stated there may also be an influx of members next year when Newtown Swim Club closes. She stated the NAC has indicated that their Phase II Plan includes construction of a competitive pool.

Mr. Gordon left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Newbon stated he feels part of the problem is that people are required to have a badge to enter the Pool which he feels is inconvenient, and he added the technology is available so that the members would not have to have a badge to enter. He stated a different technology would also stop members from slipping their card through the fence so that a non-member can come in. Ms. Liney stated that you do not have to have your card, and they can also show who is in the complex the new cards so it lessens the likelihood of a non-member using a member's card. Ms. Tyler stated the gate guards need to be trained not to turn away anyone from the gate if they do not have their card and to make sure they look up a member on their lap tops. Ms. Liney stated they do not turn them away, they just tell them to go to the Office where the Manager will address it. Mr. Wysocki stated he does feel that when they are ready to retire the current system they should consider newer technology. Ms. Liney stated people may rather see Pool renovations than newer card technology. Ms. Tyler stated she feels the technology they currently have at the Pool is better than she has seen at other Pools. Mr. Wysocki stated in order to be customer-friendly, he feels they should consider if the entrance system is something that should be included on a priority list. Mr. Newbon stated he feels the Township Pool should be on the front-edge of customer service so they can keep and improve their customer base; and if there is technology that is available and reasonably priced, he feels they should look into it.

There was further discussion about opening up the Pool Membership to non-residents. Mr. Newbon stated if the Pool members are not in favor of opening it up, maybe they are willing to pay more money. Ms. Tyler stated she does not feel a fee increase would be able to bridge the gap that they have experienced since 2007. Ms. Tyler stated there is a demographic decline as the School District is down as well. She stated Lynn Bush from Bucks County is working with the Township on their Master Plan, and she indicated that Lower Makefield is losing the middle population. Ms. Tyler stated the idea with opening up the Pool Membership was to open it up to non-residents provided they have a Member family sponsor them. Mr. Wysocki asked if there could be capacity concerns, and Ms. Tyler stated they would have to put a cap on how many non-residents members they would allow. Mr. Wysocki asked if the non-residents would automatically be able to join again next year, if they were a member this year; and Ms. Tyler stated this would be a pilot program, and they would not be guaranteed membership next year. Ms. Tyler stated they already have the software capability on the existing Pool software to distinguish between residents and non-residents. She stated the non residents would also pay slightly more than a resident although they would have full benefits. She stated if they find next year that they are full, they would not offer these Associate Memberships. She stated they have not reached capacity in the foreseeable past; and Ms. Liney stated the bather capacity is approximately 3,200 daily for the water space, and on their busiest day it is approximately 2,200. She stated adding 100 families with five people to a family, it would only be 500 more people so they would still be within capacity. She stated they could do it so that it is a sub-category like the Caregivers where it is a Family registering and instead of registering a Caregiver, you are going to register another Family.

Ms. Liney stated Park & Recreation is preparing the Township facilities for spring use by the community. The artificial turf at Macclesfield has been demagnetized, groomed, dragged, and sanitized. Light timers have been activated. Infield mix is being delivered to the complexes, field machinery is operational, and water at Macclesfield, Stoddart, and Roelofs will be turned on this Friday. The Park crew will be moving to the Pool the end of the month. She stated the Board can review their monthly Park Summary Report provided in their packet for a complete activity report.

Ms. Tyler asked if there is something that the Park & Recreation Board members would like passed along to the Board of Supervisors about the Associate Memberships. Mr. McDonald stated he has heard from residents in the past expressing concerns about opening it up to non-residents. He stated what is proposed with the requirement to be sponsored by a Member Family, may make it more palatable. Mr. Wysocki stated they should determine if the existing members are willing to pay more to keep membership to Township residents only. Ms. Tyler stated the amount of the increase may result in fewer members since they currently pay \$445 now; and if they increase it to \$650,

she feels they will lose more members. Mr. Wysocki stated he feels like the Associate Membership is a reasonable, practical option given the existing conditions. Mr. Newbon stated he would agree, but they need to make sure they establish that this is a pilot program and does not automatically mean they will be eligible for membership in the future. Ms. Tyler stated if they ever get the numbers back up where they need to be, they would not continue the program; and they would never displace a resident for an Associate Membership. Ms. Tyler stated they are down approximately 10% over a five year period. Ms. Tyler stated there is also an aging infrastructure of the Pool which eventually will need major capital investment.

Mr. Wysocki asked how changes to the Pool policies such as this are memorialized, and Ms. Liney stated the Supervisors would have the final approval on this change, and the Park & Recreation Board could recommend to the Board of Supervisors that they open up a limited number of Memberships to Associate Families. Mr. Wysocki asked Ms. Tyler to advise the Board of Supervisors that the Park & Recreation Board feel that this is a reasonable, practical program; but they should make sure that they have the ability to withdraw it and that it does not mean it is a perpetual program at this point. Ms. Tyler stated they also have to see what the impacts are from the NAC and the closing of the Newtown Swim Club. Mr. McDonald stated while this is the recommendation the Park & Recreation Board would like to make, it should be noted that there is not a quorum present at this time, so no Motion is being made.

Mr. Wysocki asked what they feel this kind of program could bring in, and Ms. Liney stated if they were to get one hundred families at \$495, it would help self sustain the complex.

There being no further business Mr. Newbon moved, Mr. Wysocki seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fran McDonald, Vice Chairman

