

# Harrington Park Recreation Commission

## Minutes of Meeting

April 18, 2012

### **Commission**

Chris Apostle	Present
Jerry Esposito	Present
Jennifer Brackenbury	Present
Mickey Franklin	Absent
Tom Gleason	Present
Steve Marotta	Present
Steve Pacicco	Present

Michelle Ryan	(Juniors – President)	Present
John Roth		Present
Chris Wood	(baseball)	Present
Scott Litchfield	(Sports Booster rep.)	Present
Mitch Helfman	(soccer)	Present
Gary Capazzi	(softball commissioner)	Present

Town Council Liaison: Glenn Quantmeyer Absent

Secretary: Michael Amdur

Meeting called to order at 8:09 PM

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Call to order. In compliance with the Sunshine Act of 1975, adequate notice of this meeting was made.

### **HANDOUT**

Steve P. referred to a 12-page printout of PowerPoint slides (several copies available at the meeting for review), as he detailed the difficulties that the Commission has had in maintaining the fields at an adequate level of quality over the past few years. The

PowerPoint printout is titled, "HP Recreation Commission Field Maintenance & Funding Plan."

#### A SUMMARY OF THE PRINTOUT – AS REFERRED TO IN THE MEETING:

- The condition of the HP fields have deteriorated over the past few years.
- The "return on the investment" in the fields has not been realized as on-going remediation, rather than maintenance, has resulted in more scarce dollars needing to be invested to get fields in playing shape.
- Sources of the problem are:
  - Lack of a realistic and achievable on-going maintenance plan
    - Steve added that the Rec. Commission is trying to work with Tri-State and some other firms to come up with a realistic maintenance plan
    - Steve also added that chemicals need to be part of that plan or else the whole situation can get away from the Commission's control. For example, Highland Field 3, has bugs that should be killed.
- The School soccer field became unplayable three years ago.
- Highland 3 was unplayable last summer and is barely playable this year.
- Poorly maintained fields represent a meaningful safety risk.
- Investments have not yielded returns:
  - Rec. Commission has spent over \$30,000 on remediation in the last 4 years.
    - Steve added that we have a \$11,350 maintenance budget.
  - The Commission spent \$7,500 to repair Hackensack Woods field 5 years ago. Since then, the Commission has invested another \$7,500 to remediate.
  - At Highland 3, the Commission replaced the infield 7 years ago. With routine maintenance, the Commission anticipated a 12-year life. However, this past year, the Commission has had to replace the infield.
    - Steve M. added that – concerning Highland 3 – the Commission tried to remediate the field in a way that was not actually replacing like the Commission did 7 years ago...more aggressive scraping and seeding and covering for the winter – for the purpose of creating a field that looked close to new. Perhaps because of the mild, dry winter the process appears to have failed. So, rather than replace the three infields with new sod (very expensive), the Commission took a more conservative and less expensive approach by spending the money to improve the grass, and it didn't work out.
- Steve P. mentioned that the Rec. Commission gets a budget allocated across 4 areas: maintenance, Town Day, Sports Programs and Special Programs.
- The main additional expense has been taking over the Hut bathroom cleaning from Sports. In 2012, this cost the Rec. budget \$4,606.

#### **COMMISSION MEMBER DIALOGUE**

-- Chris A. suggested to the Commission that a different approach could be taken by using the money that is available for field maintenance and let the town see the deterioration and try to force an increase in the budget.

-- Steve P. suggested that the total proposed budget would be somewhere between \$33,000-\$39,000 (with a chemical program). Currently, the amount is \$11,350 – the amount received from the Town.

- Steve P. emphasized that there have been a couple of field maintenance organizations that the Rec. Commission has done and they have come back to the Commission and suggested that if a multi-year commitment could be made, a better price could be offered. Thus, if the Rec. Commission could be flexible when some of the work is done, a lot of the work could be done in the Fall, when field maintenance organizations are less busy (affecting the price). Steve added that looking long-term could only be done if the Rec. Commission had assurances of the funding.
- John Roth mentioned that he is a firm believer that the fields need to be in the best condition possible. He supports the essence of the printouts and believes that the Commission should continue to push for further funding, though he doesn't know where it is necessarily going to come from – given the negative financial ramifications that the Town has been going through lately. John added that the Town is operating with a pretty low surplus, though he did not mention the exact amount. Also, he does not believe in continuing to increase the fees to each of the families in sports activities.
- Steve P. said that the Commission cannot make progress without certainty on the maintenance budget. He asked whether there are organizations in town (such as men's basketball) that can make a contribution.
- Mitch H. asked if there is any way that different sports can volunteer to do some of the field maintenance – in a uniform, organized way. He claims that, perhaps this could cut costs on maintenance, as well as be a good supporting argument to the Town (during funding requests) that parents are contributing and are actually pushing spreaders, raking fields - in addition to being volunteer coaches and Rec. Commission members.
- Steve P. would like to see a detailed maintenance plan that involves:
  - In the Spring, cleaning up baselines, batters boxes and around the bases and replacing clay (where it needs to be replaced), along with other basic maintenance.
  - At the end of the season, the plan would be fertilizing and aerating the soccer and the infields.
  - In-between the seasons, the Commission would like to add a chemical program.
- Chris W. would like to have an issue of safety discussed: what if a son or daughter is playing sports and steps in a rut and needs pins in his/her ankle – despite a waiver being signed originally? Potentially, parents could take the additional step of challenging the waiver and finding an attorney to prove the Town is negligent about the fields.
- Tom G. believes that it is very important that parents should not be thinking that simply because they paid their \$25 (or respective amount), they should not be lulled into thinking that the respective amount will adequately pay for good field conditions. That respective amount should, according to Tom, cover the “big stuff and some prep at the end,” but he would like to see coaches and field volunteers get onto the fields and rake properly and clean the water off the fields, etc.

### **BOOSTERS/FUNDRAISING**

- Gary C. claimed that, when he tried to raise money a year ago, Boosters gave him a hard time, claiming that he couldn't raise money for his sports, can't put signs on the fence, etc. In particular, he would like to know why he cannot put a sign up for fundraising.
- Scott L. responded that Boosters has received very limited proposals.
- Steve P. added that Boosters has some money and are looking for proposals.
- Scott L. confirmed Steve's assertion.

-- Jerry E. suggested Boosters needs to “move up the food chain” and give some money out, otherwise why is Boosters raising money just to hold it?

-- Scott L. responded that Boosters has had heated discussions about this topic and wonder if they need to take a step back and weigh whether giving to maintenance programs is a foregone conclusion every year.

-- Steve M. suggest that, although he isn't challenging Sports Boosters mission, he thinks it is a good idea to reconsider the mission – given the Rec. Commission's limited resources. However, the Rec. Commission's primary funding should be Sports and not Boosters; Boosters should be a supplement.

-- Steve P. would like the Commission to make a foundational commitment to the plan/proposal outlined on the printouts.

### **ISSUES AND ACTIVE DIALOGUE CONCERNING SPORTS BOOSTERS:**

-- Scott L. outlined to the Commission how the Boosters was giving back to the community. They set up two \$1,500 scholarships for high school students graduating from H.P. They also donated \$5,500 to Boys and Girls Club of Lodi so they can help rebuild their facility.

- John R. asked Scott if 100 percent of the money raised from signs go back to H.P.?
- Scott responded that it does...all 100 percent.
- Steve M. asked about the possibility of Boosters setting up a field maintenance fund this year, then taking 50 percent of the sign money and put that into the fund, could Boosters make a larger contribution at that point?
- Scott said that, although he could not speak for the entire committee, he thought the \$2,000 seemed very reasonable to donate.
- Steve P. asked if Scott could carry the interests of the Rec. Commission to the Thursday night meeting (Apr. 19) of the Boosters?
- Scott said, “definitely.” He added that he thought that between \$15,000-\$18,000 is raised from the signs.
- Jen B. asked members of the Commission whether it was possible to take that fundraising job back from Boosters, since the Rec. Commission presumably gave it to them.
- Scott wished to clarify a point about Sports Boosters: the \$5,500 that went out for the 5K was the only money (in all the years that Sports Boosters has been around) that went outside the town. Partly, that went out because of H.P. Sports Boosters taking it over from community parks. It is notable, he said, that (in one year) 100 percent of the proceeds went for Katrina victims. Scott tried to reassure Commission members that if signs are put up in the outfield, the funds are going to stay within the Town.

### **DISCUSSION ABOUT CORE SOURCES OF FUNDING**

- Steve M. would like to see agreement on the **core** sources of funding and what those amounts will be. Then, other sources (Boosters, Juniors) could be supplementary sources. If the Commission agreed on the core sources, the budget of \$11,350 is a core source, baseball is \$7,500 (might wind up being closer to \$9,000), soccer for \$5,000 – all core sources!

- Tom asked Steve M. what kind of commitment he is asking for (from the above statement). For example, in asking \$5,000 from soccer, Tom noted that – in two years – kindergarten classes will be 45 children! Thus, registration will be down, softball's smaller, baseball will be smaller.
- Steve M. responded that amounts should be reconsidered every year.

### **DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CARNIVAL**

- Chris A. expressed his concerns about a multi-day carnival in the size and scope of what is being discussed. His experiences have taught him that any surface that you do this on that is not concrete will have extensive damage.
- Michelle emphasized the importance of having the carnival (that was raised at last month's meeting) to raise monies. Michelle was told that, for a first-time carnival of 4-5 days, a group can expect to raise/net \$25,000 on the rides plus \$15,000 on the games. According to Michelle, there would be no anticipated cost from DPW because the ride company would clean up, though the Rec Commission/Juniors would have to rent a dumpster and borrow some traffic horses and garbage cans from DPW. Porta Potties would have to be rented. Michelle preferred the June 1<sup>st</sup> weekend for the carnival.
- Also, Juniors could have an Appleby's fundraiser – no work involved – \$3,000 could be raised easily.
- In discussing alternate dates and activities, Juniors would find September to be a bad month for their availability to contribute help to Town Day.

**A vote is proposed and taken on granting Juniors' request for (Highland) field use application to support the carnival. The result was unanimously "no".**

### **RETURNING TO FIELD MAINTENANCE ISSUES**

-- Jerry E. spoke to the grant lady and Poliniak and feels that the next best step (the week of May 1) is to walk with Poliniak on Highland after 5 PM to go over the proposals and what makes sense.

### **TO DO:**

**-- Jerry will set up a time with Poliniak to walk the fields and assess the situation with them.**

-- Steve M. detailed his idea of "The Pondsides Highland". "Just go in and try to find half-million dollars, rip the whole thing up, resuscitate the diamonds, do something with the lights, put all new grass in, put new backstops in...and perhaps set some money aside for maintenance as part of that."

-- Steve P. revealed that the Town has \$364,000 in Penny Tax...with another \$100,000 coming this year. Steve suggested that the Commission make major improvements every few years via the Penny Tax. The Commission would take 1-2 years of Penny Tax and rebuild all of the infields, do some turf work – as part of that, institute a 3-5 year maintenance program – then, at the end of that period, do it again! Then, the Commission would leverage the Penny Tax funds into maintaining the fields at a high level and building in maintenance.

### **TO DO:**

- Now that Steve P. has brought the Penny Tax issue up with the Commission, he plans to calculate/propose numbers for the Penny Tax plan to fund maintenance.

NOTE: Penny Tax cannot be directly used for Maintenance. The Rec. Commission in the past, however, has used the pot for improvement.

- Jen B. reminded the Commission that her friend Barbara still has the \$40,000 to use for a meaningful project/something she believes in.
- Tom expressed concern that, if the Commission goes forward with the grant, the Commission should not spend too much money writing it up. Tom believes that the Commission spent a lot more money at Pondsides than the Commission should have and the results are not what the Commission expected – because two fields cannot be used simultaneously. Tom would not be in favor of a Highland project if the Commission **only obtained part** of their goals.

### **SEVERAL TO-DO'S/ACTIONS TO KEEP TRACK OF:**

#### **INVOICES:**

- Mitch (soccer) is going to have Steve reconfirm where the invoices go.

#### **FIELD USAGE:**

- Soccer camps are held over the summer and contracts go through the mayor and council; thus, Tom mentioned he is going to put them in. He has no other requests for summer usage.

#### **BLEACHERS:**

- Tom informed the Commission that the bleachers got ordered; the P.O. was sent in. The only thing left to decide is whether the Commission prefers the aisle on the left or right side. Tom proposed the aisle away from home plate.
- For basketball, Tom suggested that the bleachers would go on the exterior and then (there are three sets of bleachers) one in the middle.
- The order was faxed in April 16 and Tom just received the request for the location of the aisles.

#### **BERGEN COUNTY CHARITY CLASSIC:**

- Steve M. mentioned that the charity was looking for a spillover field for games and – since they are a charity, they don't expect to pay to the towns. However, towns do get to keep what they make as far as concession stand revenues. The contact with the charity contacted Steve M. and asked Steve to get a one-day turnaround decision in granting the charity access to Pondsides over the Memorial Day weekend for 2-3 days usage.
- Steve M. agreed to communicate to the charity contact that – if the charity will not cover Porta Potty costs – that baseball will.
- Motion to vote to allow field use on those days for the charity. The result was unanimously “yes”.