

Middletown Township Parks and Recreation Board
Minutes from October 10, 2023

Present: Debbie Marchesani, Kris Belser, Dori Bower, Helene Ratner, Missy Kitzmiller, Bill Fuller, Joanne Morelli, Dan Giacomelli, and Paul Kopera
Absent: Patrick Graham
Guests: Frank Daghig, Bryan DiEnna, Adam Miller, Bill Everett (CTC), Mark Kervick, John P. Hughes, Cheryl Bellman, Victoria Hennessy, Patrice Marchesani, Joanna Cariola, Rob Cariola

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm by Debbie Marchesani. A motion was made by Dan Giacomelli to approve the minutes from the September meeting and was seconded by Missy Kitzmiller; the motion was approved and passed by all 7-0.

Public Comment: No public comment on non-agenda items.

Program Update: Joanne said another yoga class was added; exercise classes are going well. P&R has passed its budgeted revenue goal for 2023. Classes are vibrant to pre-pandemic size. For 2024, more Pickleball lessons will be added as will morning Zumba. Cooking classes are also scheduled with the Young Chefs Mini Cooking classes starting. On November 7th, P&R has three programs scheduled for the Election Day off from school 1) babysitting, 2) skateboarding, 3) Stem class.

Pickleball discussion: Eight people came to the meeting to discuss problems with the pickleball courts (2 came later during the meeting). Seven of the eight are part of a 380 person PB group called the Dinkin' Dynamos (DDs). The eighth was a more advanced player in conflict with the DDs. One of the complaints from the DDs was that we should follow the same guidelines as Warwick. (Which Middletown does but the DDs do not like our one major change of a 45-minute wait.) Many of those who were here were talking about how well Ventnor PB works with segregating one court for advanced; also mentioned Sea Isle has successful PB court operation. Cheryl of DDs suggested "2 on/2 off" as she likes this system and when crowded, "4 on/4 off". However, the major problem comes down to Wednesday nights where Adam Miller, the advanced player's group, feels that based on their Meet Up scheduling, the Dinkin Dynamos has most of the court time, and he plays with some of the best players around and they want to play with those at the same level. On Wednesday 9/6 there was an incident at the Senior Center PB Courts; 9/13 P&R Board Member went to observe – no issues; 9/20 another incident;

and 9/27 during a third incident that is when Missy Kitzmiller was observing. Ms. Kitzmiller made a valid field decision and told Mr. Miller's group could have the court to 6 PM. (Just a little longer than the 45 minutes stated in the P&R PB Rules and that caused some consternation with the DDs.) John Hughes, a concerned resident, felt the best way to share courts was by "paddle up" which was also the consensus of the DDs but not Adam Miller. The P&R Director provided the rules and regulations of Middletown, Warwick, and Lower Make to review. The question after hearing the long discussion is who controls the entire facility – the majority being one group. Patrick Graham will meet with key stakeholders* to develop Middletown's process. In the meantime, a year ago, we did not have any courts, today (or shortly) we will have 11 courts (8 lit) as we hope to have the PB courts at Firefighters' Park finished by Halloween. At 7:02 PM, Paul Kopera thanked the group for its input to help define its 2024 guidelines and the group of PBers left. They were thanked by the P&R Board for attending.

*Key stakeholders are Laurel Paris, MaryAnn McClure, Linda Lokes, Mark Kervick, and Adam Miller would provide a good cross section to meet with Patrick and Missy Kitzmiller, representing the P&R Dept and P&R Board, respectively.

After the Public left, Paul solicited feedback from the P&R Board about the PB discussion to get immediate feedback. In summary, the Board's majority (but not unanimous) was that paddle up makes sense but was concerned that a group of coordinated 40 PBers should not be allowed to take over a public facility at will. That's where the 45-minute rule then applies. The new software that P&R is looking into will help with scheduling and right now this conflict is over the only 3 courts that Middletown has. Maybe the issue settles itself when 11 PB courts are online. It's prudent to see how PB life evolves in MT when 11 courts are available (a 266% increase in courts). Perspective: One year ago, at this time, MT had zero PB courts.

Debriefing of past events/Upcoming events: Parklandfest was held on 9/30 from Noon to 4 at Firefighters' Park and the pickleball courts were not completed in time for the ribbon cutting event. Groovin' at the Gates is scheduled for October 14th from noon to 5:00 pm at Forsythia Park which will transition MT from the parade to a community day type festival. The Holiday Open House is scheduled for 12/7 from 5:30 to 8:30 pm and is all outdoors. Artists have been contacted to sell their items; Styers with the cider and donuts; Girl Scouts with their hot chocolate, NSD, inflatables, horse drawn carriage.

Reminder: The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 13th at 3 Municipal Way on the second floor at 6:00 pm

Kris Belser made the motion to adjourn; Dori Bower seconded; approved 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:58 PM.