

Middletown Township Parks and Recreation Board
Minutes from October 12, 2021 (Virtual 6:00 start, Tue to avoid Columbus conflict)

Present: Debbie Marchesani, Bill Fuller, Dan Giacomelli, Missy Kitzmiller, Patrick Graham, and Paul Kopera
Absent: Kris Belser, Helene Ratner, Dori Bower
Guests: 12 Members of the Public (from LAA Soccer parents and pickleball enthusiasts).

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm by Chair, Debbie Marchesani. Due to a typo on the email stating a 6:30 PM start, Public Comment started at 6:30 PM when the 12 members of the public joined. Prior to the start of the meeting, the Board acknowledged the passing of Doris Bower and her long-time service to our Community and sends it condolences to current member Dori Bower and her family on their loss.

Public Comment: Public comment started at 6:37 PM and ended at 7:36 PM after the other P&R Agenda items were discussed. The Chairperson, Deb Marchesani welcomed the 12 members of the public. The one-hour of public comment consisted of two issues: LAA Soccer about the use of the soccer fields at Middletown Community Park by Hulmeville Soccer Club (HSC) and Pickleball enthusiasts interested in the P&R Department's (PRD) plan for adding pickleball courts. It was roughly a 40/20-minute split of Soccer/Pickleball, respectively. Below is a summary of each side of public comment.

LAA Soccer (7) Background - There was an incident at Community Park on Friday night, 9/24. HSC had a valid field permit, issued by PRD, to use the 90' Baseball field on Wed & Fri nights this Fall'21. Fri, 9/24 was also opening night for the Township's adult kickball league run by the PRD. CP2 had excessive water on the 3rd base line making it unplayable for kickball. PRD made an error by closing CP2 entirely and moving kickball to the 90' where HSC was practicing. The adult kickball team displaced a HSC team who, in turn, then started playing on Soccer 3. Unbeknownst to PRD or HSC, LAA had closed Soccer 3 & 4 earlier in the day to its LAA teams due to excessive water and the sight of HSC players on Soccer #3 infuriated LAA Soccer folks leading to some conflict. That led to a week of correspondence among LAA and Patrick Graham of PRD. At this point, Paul Kopera summarized the 9/24 issue by saying that PRD made an error by moving the adult kickball team from CP2, that in turn displaced HSC. HSC should have never been displaced from the 90' field where it had settled in to play. Paul also acknowledged the inherit mistrust and animosity between the two clubs.

Chris Reed, LAA Board Member, spoke first and expressed his concerns that LAA puts a lot of time, money & sweat equity into the maintenance of the soccer fields. The LAA Board was concerned that any group, including HSC, could just use the fields at Community Park, and be permitted use by the PRD. The other six residents chimed in to support Chris Reed's stance on this issue.

Paul Kopera explained that the 90' Baseball field was not being permitted until LAA VP President told PRD that the 90' field would neither be used by LAA Baseball nor renovated this fall. At this point, the entire 90' field was not going to be used this fall. It was an underutilized patch of lit grass that could be put to good use especially during a pandemic where outdoor play is vital to everyone's good health. As had been the practice during the pandemic and in an effort to get kids playing safely outdoors in the Fall'20, the empty 90' field was then allocated according to the PRD Field Usage Policy. It was allocated equitable based on the percentage of members that are residents from the organizations that submitted field use requests. In summary for Fall'21, Cairn University's baseball team is permitted M-F 3-6 PM; Monday night is Pennel Wildcats Football, Tue/Thu nights is LAA Soccer, Wed/Fri nights is HSC. This allocation on the 90' field had no impact of LAA Soccer getting permitted 95% of the M-F hours on Soccer's 1-4 and 100% of the weekend hours of Soccer's 1-4.

Paul Kopera also spoke to issue that brought up that HSC are not residents of Middletown. LAA Field Usage Request form for Fall'21 state that LAA has 600 members with 80% residency in Middletown (480 resident members) and HSC's form has 1,200 members with 58% residency in Middletown (700 resident members). Paul mentioned that his now 30-year-old daughter, during her eleven-year youth soccer stint, played for LAA, Pearls, MAA and finished with HSC, acknowledging that each club has its home base of operation and that the benefit of youth sports is its variety available to residents so they can play with their group of friends.

Other LAA members mentioned the pending field squeeze that may occur when Pearl S Buck is relocated to the Maple Point Campus. This issue was noted as a possible subtraction of field space in a few years. In the master plan, Neshaminy School District is planning turf field(s) at the HS campus so maybe the Maple Point campus will get some of that field upgrade?

In summary, Chris Reed and Paul Kopera exchanged email addresses to continue the dialogue. Jonathan Lippy, LAA President, did attend several P&R Board meetings early in 2021. LAA was encouraged by the PRB to attend PRB meetings regularly, normally on the 2nd Monday of the month starting at 6:00 PM.

Pickleball (5): Laurell Parris and a group of pickleball enthusiasts wanted to encourage the Township and the PRD to build more pickleball courts. It is a popular game and Laurell's group alone has 90 followers. Laurell started with the current condition of Firefighters' Park lit pickleball courts, asked about adding pickleball lines at Core Creek Park tennis courts, and asked about indoor space anywhere in the Township. Patrick Graham fielded this question and acknowledged that pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports. Patrick acknowledged the growing split (calling it a fissure is accurate too) in the 4" thick asphalt. This crack has occurred since the significant resurfacing completed in August, 2016. PRD, DPW & Twp engineer RVE met on the court Tue 10/5. The Consensus was that a proper long-term repair would require removing the entire 17,000 sq ft pad of asphalt, securing the sub-surface with more stone, compressed, and visually inspecting the cause of the sub-surface disruption (is it age or something shifting underneath). If the sub-surface continues to break, no amount of filling a crack will work. Properly repaved, the current area could be designed with 12 pickleball courts: 8 permanent courts, 4 lined and usable with portable nets, and proper fencing for safety. (This leaves the utility court feature for roller & street hockey, foos ball, and skate boarding.) RVE, the Township engineer, is pricing the project. RVE is currently involved in building new pickleball courts at Lower Make's Memorial Park and has current price points.

In the meantime, Laurell asked if the current area can be redesigned to become four pickleball courts. Patrick & Paul will look into that possibility. A safe pickleball court dimension requires 24'x54'. Two courts stacked safely is 108' but the fence line is only 100' in that area.

Patrick explained that Core Creek and Frosty Hollow Tennis Facilities are owned & operated by BC P&R Department so they would have to contact them directly about pickleball courts. Paul mentioned that the complimentary nature of amenities allows Core Creek to offer and maintain tennis courts, while Middletown can offer possibly up to 12 pickleball courts in a few years. Patrick also mentioned that PRD is requesting \$100k in 2022 capital budget in order to add to add a new pickleball court at the Senior Center.

A discussion about indoor facilities began. The Twp. does not and will not have indoor pickleball facilities any time soon. Paul said that he will revisit previous conversations with both NSD and BCIU about potentially renting space so pickleball can be played either at night or weekends. Previous outreach made for other programs like winter basketball was not viable. **7:34 PM End of Public Comment.**

The Minutes from the September 13 meeting were addressed and a motion was made by Dan Giacomelli and seconded by Deb Marchesani to approve the minutes; approved 5-0, Belser approved earlier in the day via email.

Park and Rec update: Patrick Graham updated Board: P&R Dept (PRD) is transitioning to fall programs. PRD is offering some indoor yoga, tai chi and zumba classes. Outdoor adult programs like kickball, golf and pickleball have solid registration numbers. Indoor classes are 50-75% of 2019 (pre-covid averages) sizes but Fall'2021 represents solid registration numbers. The P&R email template sent through Constant Contact has a new look - new logo and shorter format meant for better mobile view. P&R is planning to mail three paper guides like in the pre-covid days starting in January'2022.

Recap on Recent Events & News: Patrick Graham updated Board that Shredding 9/25 (68 cars - low numbers thought to be Tina Davis' shred event and NHS had homecoming activities all morning); Vietnam Monument Dedication 9/26 (500) was poignant and meaningful; Beer Garden at Firefighters' Park 10/2 (850/50) great weather and fun; 178 trees/shrubs planted between Cobalt & Quincy 9/24 - replacing urban riparian buffer in Twp. Paul Kopera updated the Board on BOS passed the Climate Action Plan 9/20 - MT is the first Twp in Lower Bucks region to pass a Climate Action Plan. The purpose of CAP is to act as a road map to reduce carbon emissions and put up more Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS), plant more trees and make it more viable for homeowners to add solar panels and possibly geothermal, among other initiatives. The Manager's office worked many hours with the Twp's EAC and Wilkes Univ. to develop the CAP. Paul Kopera updated PRB on 1.94 acre Comcast Property adjoining Firefighters' Park, Twp is looking to purchase and clean up this parcel.

Discussion of Future events: Pfizer Booster Shots 10/15; 10-Noon 215.945.2920 Lydia, Senior Center; Senior Community Garden Cleanup 11/13 9:30 am - 11:00 am (volunteers needed); "The Day that Everything Happens" Saturday 11/20: Trees, Trash & Humanity Served; Holiday Open House - Thu 12/9 @ 5:30 to 8:30 PM and Volunteers Needed - Paul Kopera mentioned that the entire event will be outside aside from the NHS Orchestra playing in the Public Hall; Parade Committee - virtual Nov. Meeting planned to confirm parade path for 2022.

Budget and Capital Projects Update: a) Twin Oaks Park LED Lights could be on by Friday 10/15 if PECO hooks up meter on 10/13; b) New roof on Barn at Community Park - Kopera working through bid documents for BOS to award 10/25. BOS Budget Workshops 10/18 and 10/25 @ 6:00 PM. Public Welcome to attend Budget Meetings in person. Big ticket item for 2022 is new playground at Cobalt Ridge in the low \$200's, new Pickleball court at Senior Center for \$100k, new Comp & Trail Plan, new EV if available.

Adjournment 7:39 PM: Our next meeting is **Mon, November 8th at 6 pm via zoom**. The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 pm with a motion by Deb Marchesani and seconded by Dan Giacomelli. (Attendance on zoom screen shot.)

