

**WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP  
PARK & RECREATION BOARD MEETING  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, AT 7:00 PM  
MILES PARK BUILDING**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Joanne Crawford, Tom Manley, Jim Convey, Meghan Hector.

**LIAISONS PRESENT:**

Laura Boyle Nester (BOS), Joy O'Brien (WAC).

**TWP. STAFF PRESENT:**

Tom Blomstrom (P&R Director), Nick Delaney (P&R – Minutes).

**PUBLIC:**

Jerome Robinson, Nick Verone, Joe Felici, Ron Cione, Andrew Tarry, Drew Cianfrani, Jason O'Neill, Michael Drossner.

**1) CALL TO ORDER**

- i. The Whitemarsh Township Park & Recreation Board Meeting was called to order on Tuesday, February 7, 2022, at 7:00 pm, by Joanne Crawford.

**2) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**3) ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**A. Reappointments**

- I. Megan O'Rourke – Decided not to seek reappointment.
- II. Kevin Kissling – Reappointed by BOS on January 12<sup>th</sup> with a term expiring on 12-31-26.
- III. There were two potential candidates in attendance at the meeting.
  - a. Jerome Robinson introduced himself as a Whitemarsh resident who owns a small personal training business with 2 children that go to St. Phillip Neri. He wants to be more active in the community and help make a positive impact for the community.
  - b. Andrew Tarry introduced himself as a Whitemarsh resident for the past 2 years who is a chiropractor and is part of the Whitemarsh Rotary club. Parks and Recreation are very important to his family, and he wants to take a more active role in the community. He enjoys helping with community events and helping in any way.

**4) RE-ORGANIZATION**

**A. Selection of a Chairperson**

- i. Tom Manley nominates Joanne Crawford and Jim Convey seconds the nomination. The group is all in favor of this nomination.

**B. Selection of a Vice-Chairperson**

- i. Tom Manley nominates Kevin Kissling and Jim Convey seconds the nomination. The group is all in favor of this nomination.

**C. List of 2023 Meeting Dates**

- i. Tuesday, February 7<sup>th</sup>
- ii. Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>
- iii. Tuesday, June 6<sup>th</sup>
- iv. Tuesday, August 1<sup>st</sup>
- v. Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>
- vi. Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>

**5) APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 6th, 2022, MEETING MINUTES**

- i. December 6th minutes were motioned for acceptance by Jim Convey and was seconded by Tom Manley. Motion passed unanimously.

**6) PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD LIAISON – COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**A. Open Space/PR/EAB Committee - Mutual Interest Communication Sub-Committee (Manley)**

- I. Tom Manley states the Board of Supervisors put in a match for the capital budget for the future update and combination of the strategic plans.
- II. Tom Manley: The subcommittee has met twice with a focus on the connectivity of trails.
- III. Tom Manley: On January 8<sup>th</sup> the committee met at Forbidden Drive and looked at the connections that went from Forbidden Drive to Stenton Avenue that would then connect back to the Wissahickon Creek section of the Fort Washington State Park.
- IV. Tom Manley: Saturday January 28<sup>th</sup>, met at Willow Lake Farm Preserve and looked at the possibility of trying to have a connection from that park to the Highland's Property. There were 2 possible connections. Ed Shinn has proposed this connection through the Open Space Committee.
- V. Tom Manley: Next meeting is March 12 with Sydelle Zove.
- VI. Tom Manley: 2 million dollars allocated to make bridges for pedestrians.
- VII. Laura Boyle: Has there been any conversation about Parking?
- VIII. Tom Manley: Willow Lake Preserve will have Parking for pedestrians.
- IX. Jim Convey motions to accept report and Megan Hector seconds. The rest are all in favor of Motion.

**7) WHITEMARSH ART CENTER REPORT**

- I. Joy O'Brien was in attendance to represent the Whitemarsh Art Center (WAC), Joy states: The Whitemarsh Art Center winter sessions have begun, and the registration numbers are very good.
- II. Joy O'Brien: The WAC efforts are now being focused towards improving the Corson Property at Abolition Hall. WAC has been looking into the funding and design of the architecture of the property.
- III. Tom Manley motions to accept and Meghan Hector seconds. The rest are all in favor of the Motion.

**8) PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**A. NEW BUSINESS**

- i. Whitemarsh Girls Softball League – Request for Placement of Temporary Seasonal Batting Cage by the Lower Girls Softball League at Miles Park – SEE BELOW
- ii. Whitemarsh Little League – Request for improvement to Batting Cages at Miles Park – SEE BELOW
- iii. Announcement of 2023 DCNR community conservation partnerships program – (C2P2) Grant Application – Miles Park – Phase III – Playground Renovation
- iv. Announcement of 2023 Winter-Spring- Summer Parks and Recreation “Recreator”
- v. 2023 Parks and Recreation Fee Schedule
- vi. 2023 Partnership and Sponsorship Packet
- vii. Announcement of Valentine's Day- Friday, February 17<sup>th</sup> at Cedar Grove Park
- viii. Announcement of Spring Shredding Day on Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup> at the Miles Park Lower Parking Lot.
- ix. Announcement of Teenie Shamrock – Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at Cedar Grove Barn
- x. Announcement of Spring Wells Street Open Space Clean-Up on Saturday April 1<sup>st</sup> at Wells Street Open Space
- xi. Announcement of Township Day on Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> at Colonial School District Plymouth-Whitemarsh High School Victory Fields.
- xii. Tom Blomstrom begins his report by mentioning the Whitemarsh Fun Club. It is now 5 days a week and registration went extremely well and sold out 4 of the 5 days.
- xiii. Tom Blomstrom: A new fall program for Whitemarsh Parks and Recreation Department is our cupcake decorating classes that have done very well with registration selling out of every session.

- xiv. Tom Blomstrom: Summer Camp registration is ahead of schedule Cedar Grove Summer Camp sold out in a few hours on Day 1 and Miles Park Summer Camp is up double from this time last year.
- xv. Tom Blomstrom: We will continue to work with our sports camp partners in i9 sports and Moore Brothers Basketball. This year we will be the first year we will be working with U.S. Sports Group multiple sport camp.
- xvi. Tom Blomstrom: Specialty camps that will be returning this year include Stardust Entertainment, Theater Horizon, and Shining Knights' Chess Camp.
- xvii. Tom Blomstrom: Light Up Whitemarsh Holiday contest had 28 entries.
- xviii. Tom Blomstrom: The Eat and Enjoy Social Series is sold out for Valentines Day: A Tribute to Elvis.
- xix. Tom Blomstrom: MLK Clothing Drive was a huge hit. We were able to take in 601 bags weighing 6,507 pounds and received a check for \$979.35 towards Township Day and Colonial Neighborhood Council.
- xx. Tom Blomstrom: Magic McSnowflake/Crystal Northfrost and Whitemarsh Will have been out in the parks for the residents to participate in a fun game of engagement. If residents brought it back, they would receive a prize from the Parks and Recreation Department.
- xxi. Tom Blomstrom: Miles Park Playground seesaw has been replaced.
- xxii. Tom Blomstrom: Special shout out to Franco Cappabianca for passing his Playground Safety Inspector Certification exam. National exam through NRPA.
- xxiii. Tom Manley: ask Tom Blomstrom do we still have our certification for Cedar Grove Camp?
- xxiv. Tom Blomstrom: We do have the certification and it was renewed in September and is good for a year.
- xxv. Tom Manley motions to accept and Jim Convey seconds the Park and Recreation Report and all are in favor.

## B. OLD BUSINESS

### 9) PUBLIC COMMENT

- i. **Whitemarsh Girls Softball League – Request for Placement of Temporary Seasonal Batting Cage by the Lower Girls Softball League at Miles Park**
- ii. Jason O'Neill who is the Vice President of Whitemarsh Girls Softball states that this is the most girls we have ever had sign up which is great. Since it is the most girls, we have ever had the biggest issue is practice space.
- iii. Jason O'Neill: We as Whitemarsh Girls Softball want to put a hitting tunnel at the Lower Miles Park softball field.
- iv. Jason O'Neill: It would be a temporary batting tunnel that could have multiple teams practice and get extra hitting work.
- v. Jason O'Neill: We would like to put the hitting tunnel up April 1<sup>st</sup> and remove right before Thanksgiving.
- vi. Jason O'Neill: We already have the budget approved and allocated money for the hitting tunnel.
- vii. Joanne Crawford: ask where will you be storing it after you remove?
- viii. Jason O'Neill: We have 4 different sheds around our fields or storage location at Miles Park.
- ix. Jerome Robinson: ask will this batting tunnel create more traffic?
- x. Jason O'Neill: responds that we will be done at dark no matter what. There may be more cars because it will give us the opportunity to have more teams at the field hitting.
- xi. Tom Blomstrom: Mentions it will be a lot safer for our young ladies playing softball. Will be much easier to keep and eye on them at that spot.
- xii. Tom Manley motions to pass and support the batting tunnel Joanne Crawford seconds the motion and the rest of the Board is all in favor.
- xiii. **Whitemarsh Little League – Request for improvement to Batting Cages at Miles Park**
- xiv. Drew Cianfrani: introduces himself as the new President of Whitemarsh Little League. He states Whitemarsh Little League has the highest number of participants it has ever had.
- xv. Drew Cianfrani: has a signed petition from some of the neighbors of the surrounding houses encouraging the batting cages.

- xvi. Nick Verone: I will admit I did sign the petition but to my defense I did not see plans on the new batting cage or how close it will be to my property.
- xvii. Joe Felici: introduces himself as a Whitemarsh Township resident and works in commercial real estate. That's how I got involved in this batting cage project.
- xviii. Joe Felici: The Batting cages are in disrepair. It is a safety issue that the cages are not long enough for the ages of the kids hitting in these cages.
- xix. Joe Felici: Another issue is the weather. When it rains, we cannot have practice and the children are suffering because of it. If we implement these new batting cages it will have a roof and the kids can practice when it is raining.
- xx. Joe Felici: I have had Bowler Engineering come out to do storm water runoff estimate.
- xxi. Joe Felici: currently having an architect figure out the best design possible for the project. Whitemarsh Little League will be 100% responsible for funding this project.
- xxii. Ron Cione: The batting cage design is a nice design, and the structure looks nice, but it is not intended for that area. Being only 80ft away from a resident's property line is unacceptable. My wife has lived in this house since 1956 and this is not a positive improvement to the park.
- xxiii. Ron Cione: Says that he is willing to compromise by having 3 full length cages but no roof and no lights.
- xxiv. Ron Cione: The lights and noise coming from the batting cage will create a nuisance and will keep residents up during the night.
- xxv. Ron Cione: Other Townships have their facilities 400-600 ft away from the closest residential house.
- xxvi. Ron Cione: ask was this Plan Run through planning commission? Was it run by the Zoning Board?
- xxvii. Ron Cione: states he is on the board of directors of Montgomery County Public Works Association.
- xxviii. Nick Verone: there will be too many kids hitting at one time and that is not only a safety issue but a noise disturbance.
- xxix. Ron Cione: The main concern is that my backyard will not be usable anymore. There will be nonstop balls being hit and kids running through my yard.
- xxx. Nick Verone: mentioned not to forget that batting cages are currently going east and west but with the proposed plan they are suggesting going North and South towards the houses.
- xxxi. Nick Verone: suggest that you put a batting cage behind each field so that there is no need for this big batting cage structure so close to residential homes.
- xxxii. Ron Cione: ask what are the proposed hours of operation for these batting cages?
- xxxiii. Drew Cianfrani: the hours would be 8am- 9pm shut off.
- xxxiv. Ron Cione: this is unacceptable to have balls being hit for 12 hours a day this close to resident's backyard "This is unacceptable"
- xxxv. Michael Drossner: it would not be limited to just township residents but anyone who wanted to use the facility.
- xxxvi. Michael Drossner: it is important to have cages to have well-rounded teams. This is why it is important to have the facility covered so that these kids can practice when it rains.
- xxxvii. Michael Drossner: personal trainers will not be allowed to use the cages.
- xxxviii. Michael Drossner: there would never be 90 kids or 6 teams at the cages.
- xxxix. Michael Drossner: the new facility takes up more space but that is a positive because it will be a safer structure for the kids.
- xl. Michael Drossner: my final comment is that whatever shrubs or trees we decided to move forward with for this project will be big enough to block the light that would enter residential properties.
- xli. Jim Convey: asked if we are voting on this batting cage proposal tonight?
- xl. Tom Blomstrom: states you do not have to vote on this proposal tonight.
- xl. Joanne Crawford: Will the kids be able to hit the lights inside the batting cage?
- xl. Joe Felici: No, the kids will not be able to hit the lights, they will be protected.

- xlv. Joanne Crawford: any vandalism or destruction to the batting cages who will be responsible for that?
- xlvi. Joe Felici: it would be 100% on Little League.
- xlvii. Joanne Crawford: who's insurance will be used to cover the batting cages?
- xlviii. Tom Blomstrom: Whitmarsh Little League provides the Township with insurance in order to use the facilities.
- xlix. Joanne Crawford: are you removing Trees?
  - I. Joe Felici: some trees will be cut down, but we will not be removing any big trees and also are adding trees with the facility.
  - ii. Joanne Crawford: will animals be affected by the noise of the balls hitting the bats?
  - iii. Joe Felici: I have a dog and he loves it when my boys are hitting the balls around.
  - liiii. Tom Manley: I believe vandalism would be a big issue with this huge structure.
  - liv. Tom Manley: will the LED lights be impact resistant?
  - lv. Joe Felici: yes, the LED lights will be impact resistant.
  - lvi. Tom Manley: will this be pressure treated wood?
  - lvii. Joe Felici: after talking to the architect, it would be a hard plastic that would not warp and be weather resistant.
- lviii. Joe Felici: we would put in giant arborvitae shrubs, that is the shrub that is permitted by the Township.
- lix. Ron Cione: I will call the police every night of the week if this batting cage structure is built.
- lx. Jim Convey: what is the biggest issue of this structure? Is it the Lights? Is it the noise?
- lxi. Nick Verone: It is the lights and the noise and the fact that it is so close to our properties.
- lxii. Ron Cione: has this been run by the planning committee?
- lxiii. Joanne Crawford: no, it has not been run by the planning committee.
- lxiv. Jerome Robinson: is there an option to have a baseball simulator in order to create a better solution?
  - lxv. Joe Felici: we have been down that avenue and it is not the same as real live batting practice.
- lxvi. Tom Manley: what is the Budget of this project?
- lxvii. Joe Felici: it would be roughly around \$400,000.
- lxviii. Tom Manley: my next question is what would the timeline be for this project?
- lxix. Joe Felici: if we can find enough funding it would be 6-12 months.
- lxx. Tom Manley: I would like to make a motion to table this at the current meeting and look more into the details of this project.
- lxxi. Jim Convey: I will second the motion to table this project. I would love to see a compromise between the Little League and the neighbors, but it seems as if we need to talk more about this and discuss further details.
- lxxii. Joanne Crawford: We are going to table this currently and the Board are all in favor.
- lxxiii. **Announcement of 2023 DCNR community conservation partnerships program – (C2P2) Grant Application – Miles Park – Phase III – Playground Renovation.**
- lxxiv. Tom Blomstrom: we are applying to redo the outdated playground equipment at Miles Park Playground. we will also be putting in a solar charging station with benches with ADA access.
- lxxv. Tom Blomstrom: the grant amount is a \$500,000 grant \$250,000 that has been put into the capital budget as a match and \$250,000 from the State.
- lxxvi. Tom Blomstrom: we will apply in April, and we would find out around January.
- lxxvii. Joanne Crawford: can we have a motion?
- lxxviii. Tom Manley: I will motion to support this grant as presented and Jim Convey seconds the motion the rest are all in favor.

**10) BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

- i. The board members' comments were mentioned in the public comments along with the project proposal discussion.

**11) ADJOURNMENT**

- i. Joanne Crawford motions to adjourn the meeting. Tom Manley motions and Megan Hector seconds the motion the rest are all in favor. The meeting ended at 8:57 PM.
- ii. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 7PM. On Zoom.