

Warren Township Recreation Advisory Committee
Minutes of April 21, 2021 Meeting

The meeting of the Warren Township Recreation Advisory Committee convened at 6:01 pm on Wednesday, April 21, 2021, virtually via Zoom due to the pandemic and keeping consistent with the social distance order.

In attendance were: Linda Bosco-Devine, David Cole (arrived at 7:00pm), Aparna Virmani, Daniel Croson (left at 6:30pm), Zachary Drozd, Heather Silver (left at 7:00pm), Recreation Director Joe Passaro, Township Committee Person Jolanta Maziarz and Township Committee Person Gary DiNardo; Absent: Joe Filo.

Open Public Meeting Statement - Adequate notice of this meeting was given by posting a copy on the Township Bulletin Board and sending a copy to the Township Clerk, Courier News, and Echoes Sentinel as required by the Open Public Meeting Act.

Daniel Croson motioned to approve the regular meeting minutes from February 3, 2021 and Aparna Virmani 2nd.

DIRECTORS REPORT- Joe Passaro reviewed key points from the Directors Report.

- See attached

DISCUSSION

Zach Drozd commented that it was great that the Fishing Derby has been postponed to September instead of being canceled. Daniel Croson asked what number we are looking for the Governor to lift the restrictions to in order to have the event. Joe Passaro stated that we had about 400-500 attendees in the past and it is hard to social distance at the pond so that is why September should be better. Currently the Governor is only allowing 200 people at outdoor events.

Joe Passaro discussed capital projects for the Municipal Complex including a new playground and two new basketball courts. Amanda Altavilla shared her screen to show the plan on a map of the Municipal area. He discussed that there will be a fence that will run between the new playground and old playground so that residents can utilize one playground during our camp season. There will be a gate in the fence so when there is no camp residents can move between each playground. Joe stated how the basketball courts see a lot of usage especially with COVID and with affordable housing coming adding courts will help with the high usage. Dan Croson asked about what the approximate cost would be for this project. Joe stated about \$500,000, with the playground and the fence at about \$130,000. Joe does not have an exact number yet for the basketball courts since the two existing courts will need to be re-surfaced in addition to creating two new courts. Dan asked about how this project will be funded and Jolanta responded that about 20 years ago Warren Township passed a referendum that about 2 cents of every tax dollar goes to the Open Space Trust Fund. The Open Space Trust fund can be used for construction of recreation projects, maintenance, acquisition of land and even use on historical sites. Jolanta received a spreadsheet from the Township Administrator, Mark Krane and stated that we currently have about \$3 million dollars in the Open Space Trust Fund and we receive about \$900,000 per year in tax dollars for this fund. Jolanta stated that the projects are funded between the open space fund and grants, which Joe is currently working towards acquiring. It was also stated that for some projects such as drainage issues with the baseball fields and replacement of the turf fields that we even have our Youth Organizations contributing towards the costs of the projects.

Jolanta stated that she will be meeting with Mark Krane, the Warren Middle School Principal and Board of Ed employees to talk about the maintenance of Pop Warner Field. The Middle School utilizes the field more than any sport organization and a deal will be re-worked to make it fairer to all organizations that utilize the field in regards to costs of maintenance. Linda stated to be careful in the conversation with the schools in case they try to raise the fees for use of their fields for the sport organizations. Zach asked how in-town youth organizations get priority over the fields and asked if it is they have agreements. Joe and Jolanta answered that recognized sports get priority and some sports do have written agreements since they contributed to the construction of the fields in town. Warren Recreation will work towards getting official agreements written for the sport organizations.

The 501c3 was discussed about trying to revitalize it with a new Board of Trustees. The 501c3 already has by-laws established and it only needs members to fill the board. The 501c3 would help to raise funds for recreation projects in town. Aparna stated that she would like to get involved with it and Jolanta asked Aparna to reach out to her about the next steps. Linda asked if the person who was in charge of the 501c3 was still filing tax returns and Jolanta responded that she believes that it was still being filed.

The Summer Playground Program interest survey results was sent to committee members before the meeting. Joe discussed that the camp size will be reduced to 50 campers instead of 165 and that the department is working on hiring staff the ages of 18 years or older that way the can be vetted. If our camp ever wants to have state accreditation it will be a lot easier with the accreditation paperwork if all staff member are 18 years or older. Zach asked how many staff we will be hiring and Joe answered that there will be 8 staff plus he will be down at the camp as well.

Zach asked approximate fixed costs on maintenance from Open Space each year and Jolanta responded that it depends on each year but in 2020, approximately \$300,000 was spent which includes various items such as cutting grass and towards DPW salaries for manpower used to maintain those properties. Revitalizing the Adopt-a-Trail program was discussed since it was put to a pause due to COVID and that will also help bring our costs down since organizations will be in charge of the maintenance of the trail head area from May-November in a year.

ADJOURNMENT 7:09 PM Next meeting, Wednesday, June 2, 7 pm – via Zoom

Submitted by: Amanda Altavilla, Recreation Advisory Committee Secretary

Director's Report 4.21.21 for April Meeting of the Recreation Advisory Committee

This note will contain updates in the projects, events and programs ongoing in recreation to this point. Please reserve any questions, thoughts and or concerns for our meeting on Wednesday. Thank you.

1. Spring Tennis is up and running and very well attended. Mike Watson, our head Instructor has a new staff working with him and we have great feedback on the program.
2. Pavilion project is moving along, we are now waiting for our Architect to shore up final Designs specs and provide the Construction documents so we can move to the Bidding Process. We have started our first fundraiser, a continuation of the personalized bricks to make up a garden adjacent to the new pavilion. We continue to look for corporate sponsors for the project.
3. Annual Fishing Derby will be moved to a September event, as the Governor's restriction would not allow an event of this size at this point in time.
4. Spring sports are all up and running with all COVID protocols in place.
5. We are in the planning stages for upgrades to the Warren Municipal recreation area, Municipal Baseball Complex and the Greenwood Meadows Park. Also, in the works a plan for the replacement of the Duderstadt Turf field.
6. The Summer Concert Series is set for the month of July. This year has had its challenges as the Somerset county stage is out of commission. We will be using the stage from Morris County and the sound equipment from Somerset. Those concerts are on Wednesday nights and we will have a Friday night concert in the Town hall courtyard with Bob Marino and Barbara Lawson on July 16th.
7. The Adopt – A – trail program that I put in place almost 2 years ago will again be on hold as we secure work needed on the Trail heads to then offer them to sponsors.
8. We just had another successful CITO event at the Glenhurst Trails. CITO, Cache In Trash Out events have been a great way for Geo-cachers to recreate on our trails and help police the trash off the Trails. The latest event had 36 Cachers from three states and one cacher from Australia.
9. Last, but not least we will be holding a Playground Summer Camp, grades 1-5...modified in all aspects. As in reduced number of campers, reduced hours, all COVID Protocols. Warren Recreation surveyed the modified camp and result showed a great demand for a camp in any form.