

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT RECREATION BOARD OF THE VILLAGE OF OTTAWA HILLS, OHIO HELD ON AUGUST 5, 2009 AT 7:30 A.M.

The August 5, 2009 meeting of the Ottawa Hills Joint Recreation Board was called to order at 7:35 a.m. by Chair Lori Dixon. In attendance were board members Willis Day, Gretchen Rohm, Margaret Rodriguez, Norma King and Chair Lori Dixon.

Also in attendance were Paul Komisarek, Kim Lemieux, Jeff Deckebach, Jay Brewster, Brad Johnson, Cathy Heidelberg, Jeff Lohmeyer, Corey Hupp, Bev Gottlieb, Paul Lyon, Sue Brewster, Jeff Coil, and Marc Thompson.

Willis Day made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 22 meeting. Mrs. King seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Chairperson Lori Dixon thanked everyone for attending and reviewed the methods by which notice of this meeting was provided. Letters had been sent to everyone on a list of community athletic organizations, there was an article placed in the Village Voice and an email was sent to everyone on an extensive list of email addresses maintained by Shelly Jamieson. Mrs. Dixon continued by stating that an effort was made to provide notice to everyone who might be interested and also reminded everyone that the meetings of the Recreation Board are open and anyone is welcome to attend in the future. The meetings are generally at 7:30 a.m. on the first and third Wednesdays of the month. Those meetings are noted on the Village website.

After providing a brief history of the Recreation Board Ms. Dixon asked everyone to introduce themselves. The introductions started with members of the Recreation Board providing some background on their involvement followed by those present in the audience. Mrs. Dixon stated that today's purpose was to listen to comments, concerns, suggestions, etc. from visitors present. She said that everyone will be given at least one opportunity to speak and we would rotate through the room asking everyone to provide brief comments. She said the goal of the Recreation Board was to listen today, not to make decisions.

Attention then turned to comments from members of the audience.

Jay Brewster stated that he had lived in the Village for 26 years and has had three children who have been very involved in almost every sport. His primary concern was that the existing facilities be properly maintained with attention paid to maintenance that would improve safety. He volunteered to help develop guidelines for maintenance of the facilities. He stated that he is a certified landscape architect and has specific training and knowledge in this regard.

Sue Brewster thanked everyone for getting together and wanted to emphasize the concept of Village life. She hoped that the efforts of the board will be more broad based than youth athletics and recreational activities. She also stated that it would be important for there to be a fulltime staff person and a fee structure for participation. A strong organizational structure must be put in place with specifics regarding how facilities are prioritized.

Kim Lemieux said that she was very involved in high school girls' lacrosse which is a club sport. She has worked closely with Dorothy Figy scheduling indoor time and hopes to see that improved.

Corey Hupp suggested that he would pass in terms of opportunity for comments at this time.

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Tim Erickson , Junior/Senior High Athletic Director, entered the meeting at this time.

Jeff Lohmeyer said that access to facilities has been a significant problem. He stated the high school coaches block out large segments of time in the gymnasiums and then fail to use those times. The result is that the gymnasiums are sitting empty when there are interested community groups who would use the gym.

He has been told that safety of participants is a key issue, but indicated that he does not believe that safety is a major concern. There is adult supervision and he believes the discussions regarding safety are a reason to keep the facilities inaccessible. He also stated that improved accessibility should come with no additional taxes since he is already a taxpayer.

Mr. Lohmeyer continued expressing concern that the board should not dictate policy which would be contrary to the practices of adults supervising youth activities. He commented that if Ottawa Hills wants good sports teams it must start at lower levels. Therefore, access to facilities is critical.

Brad Johnson, a member of the Ottawa Hills Board of Education, stated that he came to the meeting to listen.

Cathy Heidelberg, Superintendent of Schools, stated that she also came to listen and that her goal is maximum use of facilities while holding down costs.

Bev Gottlieb stated that she was here to listen as well and did not have any specific comments from her position as Community Coordinator.

Dorothy Figy stated that she was involved with the scheduling of facilities and was hoping that the Recreation Board would develop direction and guidelines to make her operation function more smoothly.

Paul Komisarek stated that he had been the softball coach for several years and wants to help in any way he can.

Nasrin Afjeh stated that she typically takes her positions to court.

Jeff Deckebach stated that he was pleased with the idea of the creation of a Recreation Board but hoped that it would be broader based, in much the same way as Sue Brewster had commented previously. He liked the concept of an office of Village life that would encompass a variety of activities.

Mr. Deckebach emphasized the need for a broad mission statement and a vision for the community. He hoped that the board would not get immediately bogged down with rules and procedures but would “step back” and develop a vision. He emphasized the need to think through what we are trying to accomplish.

Mr. Deckebach recognized the balance between competitive athletics and an “everyone should play” approach was not being handled consistently currently, but hoped that it would be part of a vision.

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Mr. Deckebach also thought that the Recreation Board could be a great public relations tool for the Village, reinforcing a healthy image for both adults and children in the community. He thought there should be specific policies regarding inclusivity, skill development and coach training. Right now that is left up to the individual parents so there is substantial inconsistency. He said obviously, he did not come to listen.

Tim Erickson stated that he was here to listen to concerns that might be expressed.

Paul Lyon stated that he was involved with seventh and eighth grade soccer and was primarily concerned about facilities scheduling and access.

Jeff Coil indicated that he has been involved with youth basketball and is primarily concerned with better and consistent use of the facilities. His belief is that there is a substantial amount of gymnasium time that is not being used. He suggested that if a coach schedules a gymnasium and then fails to use it and fails to make it available to someone else there should be some type of penalty for that behavior. He commented that the emphasis on participation by everyone is both good and bad. It allows everyone to participate but the children who are most skilled have a tendency to get held back.

Kim Lemieux said that often coaches book indoor space and then fail to use that space which is a problem. That issue needs to be addressed.

Corey Hupp suggested that some facilities could be used more efficiently through use of a key card system. He also suggested that every organization could contribute financially to a security deposit to address any damage that might occur to either indoor or outdoor facilities. He said that his program has taken responsibility for field maintenance at the elementary school, which has been a large undertaking but necessary to get the fields in proper condition.

Mr. Hupp also asked about the roll of the board as it relates to coaching, perpetuation of existing programs, etc.

Mr. Lohmeyer said that the baseball program has insurance for liability issues but could also develop insurance for property damage issues and stated that he could not understand why the facilities were not open more readily.

Superintendent Heidelberg said that there is so much demand for facilities that they could be used 24 hours a day. She noted the responsibility of the Board of Education to be good stewards of the tax dollars, but also believed that the Board of Education wants to make the facilities available as much as reasonably possible.

Paul Komisarek stated that communication has got to be a key issue and that children can't be eliminated from participation at an early age. Children's ability and interest change so eliminating children from participation at an early age is counterproductive. He also thought that the various varsity coaches should be involved.

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Mr. Deckebach stated that he was not sure about all of the access issues but there needed to be a clear method by which facilities are scheduled and that access must be done in a reasonable and fair manner.

Jeff Coil stated that the biggest problems seem to come in winter time and emphasized that during basketball season the facilities should be available for basketball. He also expressed concern about the limited availability of the gymnasiums on long holiday weekends. He stated that when school is closed on Monday the gyms are not available on Saturday, Sunday or Monday.

Mrs. Heidelberg stated that one of the reasons for that is that the school can't always be assured that the facility will be cleaned and ready for school use the following day after a holiday weekend.

Jay Brewster said that there needs to be a good balance between the competitive and non-competitive participants.

Sue Brewster emphasized her preference for a broader approach than just recreation and youth athletics. She also said that safety training for coaches and volunteers is a must. Costs are important and communication is a key to a successful program.

Kim Lemieux said that the new turf on the field will help since it can be used regardless of weather. She commented that the in-season sports should have priority over facilities scheduling.

Mr. Lohmeyer asked if it was possible to get a schedule of when custodians are available over the weekend. That way, individuals wishing to use the facilities could try to accommodate the existing schedules. He emphasized the need to make the various coaches responsible for the facilities.

Corey Hupp asked if the School Board could lease the property to the Recreation Board to make the problem of custodians and union contract problems go away.

Brad Johnson stated that he wished to thank everyone involved for their efforts at improving life in the Village. He said he hoped that the Recreation Board can bring some organization and structure to the effort.

Lori Dixon read a letter from Joyce Stengle stating that the Recreation Board was a great idea and stating that lack of organization heretofore had been a bit of a problem.

Mr. Lohmeyer asked why the school would not allow information to be distributed through the elementary school related to a travel team tryout. He contended that it was all inclusive since the communication would go to everyone and everyone would have an equal opportunity.

Gretchen Rohm stated that the Board of Education struggles with this communication method related to athletics and other things.

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Corey Hupp emphasized the need to communicate with everyone. Mr. Lohmeyer asked why the Mothers Support Group is able to use that method of communication when other organizations are not. It was confirmed that the Mothers Support Group is a school affiliated activity.

Mrs. Heidelberg stated that the website will soon be used for improved communication.

Additional discussion followed. It was announced that the next meeting of the Recreation Board would be on August 19 at 7:30 a.m. Mrs. Dixon invited everyone who is interested to attend the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 a.m.

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Willis Day, Secretary