

Delaware Township Recreation Commission Minutes – January 26, 2019

Chairperson Brian Sulewski called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

Notice Statement – The Notice Requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been satisfied by notification to the Hunterdon County Democrat and by posting with the Township Clerk and on the Delaware Township bulletin board on January 8, 2019.

Flag Salute – Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Present: Judy Allen, Tim Drew, Julie Luster-Roell, Steve Smotrich, Brian Sulewski, Linda Ubry, Joe Vocke

WELCOME

Recreation Commission Chairperson Brian Sulewski welcomed the members of the audience to this special meeting of the Recreation Commission. The purpose of this meeting is to solicit input from residents for updates to the Recreation Element of the Master Plan and obtain feedback about the Township's current and future recreational programs and facilities. Everyone present introduced themselves.

DILTS PARK DISCUSSION

Delaware Township Athletic Association (DTAA) President Tim Drew presented an overview of the existing recreational facilities at the Dilts Farm Park. All DTAA programs except for basketball are held at the Park. Despite a shrinking student population at Delaware Township School, good participation in DTAA sponsored activities means the needs are outgrowing the Park's facilities. Every field is used to its maximum, and none can be rested to restore the turf. One soccer field will be closed this spring because it is no longer playable. The Township Department of Public Works has assisted with maintenance, but DTAA volunteers perform much of the work repairing dugouts and the Snack Shack, lining fields, and maintaining the ball fields. DTAA has discussed use of the Senior Baseball field. It is rarely used, so it is recommending conversion of this field to Little League baseball and softball field use. There was a plan to repurpose the Makara Field for these uses, but the work required is significant. The field could still be adapted for the annual DTS Baseball tournament each May. He said DTAA could make good use of a big pole barn to use for indoor practices and events. The fields must be repaired and maintained. The bathrooms close in mid-November and do not re-open until mid-April. A longer bathroom season is needed to mirror the Park uses. He said the playground has a swampy area that needs repair. He said the Park is the most beautiful, peaceful park, and everyone including visitors compliments it.

Julie Luster-Roell asked about electricity at the fields. Tim said there is electricity at the Dilts Field and at the pavilion. DTAA plans a scoreboard at the Field of Dreams and will use a small generator to power it. He said DTAA keeps a defibrillator in the equipment shed which has a small solar array to power the tractor.

Members said the Dilts Park is the Township's only improved recreational facility. The Township owns land elsewhere including the Sergeantsville Green, vacant land in Rosemont, vacant land adjoining the Dilts Park, a vacant lot near Delaware Township School used for the

Great Crate Race, and additional vacant land adjoining the existing Park that is farmed by local farmers. PIE suggested the Township focus its improvements by expanding the Dilts Park.

Tim said the walking path at the Park is in disrepair. The Township's DPW has tried to maintain what is there, but there are serious repair issues that should be addressed. The path could possibly be expanded to extend into adjoining Township lands.

Township Committee member Charles Herman said repair and maintenance at the Park are Committee priorities this year. There is a meeting on Thursday to prioritize repairs. The trail is the first item on the list. Attendees will discuss whether to make these repairs in-house or to contract out the work.

Jean asked who pays to repair and maintain the dugouts. Tim said the Township gives DTAA an annual stipend through the Recreation Commission's budget for regular maintenance, but the repairs are made by DTAA volunteers with DTAA funds. DTAA fundraising and fees pay for much of the maintenance.

Jeannie Colalillo and Jane Roosa said they often walk the path at the Park, and it needs repairs to the gravel surface and the washouts. They asked whether the path could be expanded. They felt that paving the path would change the feeling of the Park. Charles said the Township Committee is currently discussing maintaining the existing trail, not an expanded trail at this time.

Jeannie said Eagle Scouts are looking for projects. It was agreed they should first approach the Township Committee with proposals. A list of possible projects could be developed.

Jes Stahl there are grants available for construction of rain gardens.

Jeannie asked about the possibility of a community swimming pool at the Park. Attendees discussed this idea at some length. Funding and ongoing operations are issues that would have to be addressed. Construction and leasing the pool to a management company might be evaluated. Charlie suggested an off-leash dog park for licensed dogs. Tim suggested improvements to the Snack Shack. Jeannie said the Township should give residents a reason to live in the Township. She felt Hunterdon County has failed to provide recreational facilities that would attract residents.

Brian said the Township budgets \$18,000 annually for the Commission. That includes funds for DTAA and the Summer Recreation Program as well as other activities.

Attendees discussed the Park operating schedule. It is currently closed according to posted signs. The gates are locked although some parking is available. All agreed the Park should be open year-round with unlocked gates except that the gates could remain locked during snow storms. The DPW does not plow the parking lots. Julie said the Commission should get a clear understanding of Park rules. All agreed to aim for year-round Park availability.

RECREATIONAL USES AT DELAWARE TOWNSHIP SCHOOL

DTS BOE President Linda Ubry said there are many recreational uses at the School. The Board of Education is very supportive of indoor sports and large public meetings for residents at its facilities. It requires completion of a Use of Facilities Request form and evidence of insurance coverage. Jeff Munsey is the Coordinator of Facilities. Julie said the BOE has been very accommodating approving requested uses. Tim said the School's athletic fields are not always available due to the School's use, and parents like having all activities consolidated at the Park.

CURRENT AND POSSIBLE RECREATIONAL EVENTS

Members summarized the usual annual events sponsored by the Recreation Commission including the Egg Hunt, Yard Sale, Great Crate Race on July 4th, the Summer Recreation Program, a Mini-Golf event in the summer, the Community Block Party scheduled for October 5th this year, and the winter holiday decorating contest.

Steve Smotrich described the Great Crate Race held each year on July 4th. The events run in the morning so people can follow holiday plans later in the day. He said there have been great community support and generous donations for this event. This year may include an opportunity to test run crates in advance of Race Day and swap crates.

Judy Allen talked about the Yard Sale. The weather has not cooperated for a few years, but changing to a rain date is problematic due to lack of notice. It may be that a Yard Sale weekend held the same weekend each year could help with that issue. More advertising is needed, and flyers at the Sergeantsville Volunteer Fire Company's annual Fishing Sale in March could help.

Brian described the 2018 celebration of the Great Crate Race's 30th Anniversary on June 30th. It was a great success. Residents brought picnics. Some refreshments were sold. There was a band. The prohibition on alcohol was waived to permit BYOB. There were fireworks. Last year the fireworks cost \$6,000. The Commission is discussing a budget request to fund fireworks in 2019.

Attendees discussed the Community Block Party held last year on October 5th at the Village Green. Jes suggested a greater variety of food for purchase and/or a chili cook-off. Julie said the health permitting fee required for food trucks is expensive unless the vendors know there will be a sizeable crowd to make the fee worthwhile. Brian said the Block Party is just for residents, not community group displays. The Commission is looking for ideas to expand this year's Party. PIE suggested people bring a carved or painted pumpkin for display and judging, and everyone liked this idea.

Brian described the Commission's annual Summer Recreation Program that runs for three weeks at Delaware Township School. Program Director Maegen Harrington plans a full schedule of activities, and feedback has been very positive. Julie said it is open to children who are five years old by the beginning of the program and allows grandchildren of residents to attend as well. She said the Commission has discussed expanding the program to all-day, but the program is not a "camp" – a use with many mandated requirements.

Jes suggested a Fishing Derby. Judy said the Commission sponsored fishing derbies in the past at private ponds. The cost for this one-day event including a State permit, fish stocking, food and prizes (though mostly donated) became an issue, especially when attendance declined. PIE suggested people fish on their own, time stamp the catch that day on their phones, and bring the fish to a weigh station.

Kathy Sulewski said better, wide-spread advertising is needed for all of the Commission's activities. Julie said the Commission has discussed use of more flyers and posters, not just web-based advertising. Judy said there is a problem posting events on the Township's website calendar that is reserved for meetings only. Notices are posted under "Announcements". Kathy said not all residents receive the Township's quarterly newsletter. She suggested putting a Calendar of Events on the back page for easy reference. Tim said there are services such as Nixel that provide reverse text, email and calls on matters of interest including emergencies and events to residents who request to be included on the list. All agreed improved communication is a goal. Charles thought more outreach should be made to the Township's senior citizens to see what might interest them. Jes suggested a plant swap or gardening event and offered to assist with planning such an event. Everyone liked this idea. Brian said the Commission is always open to suggestions for new activities and residents to assist with them. Residents would not have to become Commission members with a year-round commitment. They could help with the activities they suggest or interest them.

SURVEY OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, EVENTS AND OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION

Attendees reviewed a survey initiated by Hunterdon County for its facilities that asked people to consider activities and facilities. The survey asked the question: With \$5 increments being the smallest amount you might use, if you had an extra \$100 to spend on parks and open space facilities, services and/or programs, how would you allocate the \$100 across the following categories? Items can be left blank for no allocation, but the allocation should total \$100.

- \$ ___ Add aquatics facilities (pool, splash pads, etc.)
- \$ ___ Add outdoor athletic fields and courts
- \$ ___ Develop new parks on existing Township land
- \$ ___ Acquire and preserve additional open space
- \$ ___ Expand programs and activities (community events, summer camps, seniors activities, trips, etc.)
- \$ ___ Increase trail and pathway connectivity
- \$ ___ Make improvements and/or renovate existing amenities at parks and facilities (i.e. adapt existing fields for additional sports/activities, etc.)
- \$ ___ Other (Please specify) _____

\$100 TOTAL

Attendees completed this survey.

DELAWARE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN – RECREATION ELEMENT

Linda said most of today's discussion focused on current and future uses of the Dilts Park. She thought an architectural rendering of the Park showing current and conceptual additional uses

would be useful. Using information from today's discussion, the Recreation Commission will continue to discuss possible updates and revisions to the Recreation Element

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m.