

Delaware Township Recreation Commission Minutes – July 5, 2021  
Chairperson Brian Sulewski called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.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 12, 2021.

Flag Salute – Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Present: Judy Allen, Charles Herman Tyler Kadezabek,  
Steve Smotrich Tim Soltis, Brian Sulewski, Linda Ubry  
Absent: Joe Benincasa, Rebecca Burns, Tim Drew, Julie Luster-Roell,  
Heather Opdyke,

Approval of Minutes from the Meeting of June 7, 2021 – Linda moved to approve the minutes from the meeting of June 7, 2021, and Tim seconded motion, and members present approved the minutes.

REIMER WALKING TRAIL

Brian explained the concept behind the Reimer Walking Trail. The Dilts Park was being more heavily used during the Covid pandemic, so the Commission decided to add an additional walking trail on the Reimer tract. Since then some neighbors have expressed some concerns with the proximity of the trail to their property lines. Some neighbors walked the trail with Linda and Brian. They suggested that the trail section that borders their properties be moved to an area halfway across the tract and include an extension to Lambertville Headquarters Road, and they presented a sketch with this proposed route. Some of their issues include loss of privacy and walkers with dogs off leash which cause their dogs to bark. The Trail has changed the use of their property.

Steve Wilbur and Diana Garbaldi said their back yard is wide open with no trees or shrubs to screen it from the trail. Bruce Katsiff said the proposed new route that would cross the farm field would give walkers a sense of wonder of the field. The farmer could farm on both sides of the new route.

Brian said Kathy Klink who walked the Trail with the neighbors offered to help navigate a new route or assist the Department of Public Works with a new route. Charlie said the neighbors' suggested addition to connect to Lambertville Headquarters Road shifts the Trail to other properties. Brian said substantially sized signs are needed to remind walkers to be respectful of private property, to keep dogs leashed at all times, and to clean up after them. Neighbors could also place signs on their property lines alerting walkers. Tim said the Reimer tract is part of the Dilts Park. The field will be harvested. The Commission seeks a balance of passive uses of the Park including areas bordering private properties.

Brian said the Commission's big goal is for the Township Committee to hire a Park Planner to review all open spaces in the Township. The Park is the most used recreational space. A Park Plan would review all concerns and needs including those of neighbors. He did not think the Trail can be moved until the Township hires a planner.

Bruce Katsiff suggested that the DPW stop mowing the Trail. Tim thought it should continue until the Park Master Plan is developed. Steve said it is a property the Township owns, and it should be offered to residents. Bruce asked why the Commission did not contact the neighbors before creating the Trail.

Linda said she walks the Park daily. She originally walked the new Trail with Ms. Klink to review the location to promote passive recreation. They had a concern that it followed close to neighbors. They liked the perimeter route because it includes trees and shady areas, and it provides visual interest. It is a five mile route providing great exercise. She said the DPW could try a different mowing pattern. She knew that not all walkers follow the Park rules that require dogs to be leashed at all times.

Joanne Katsiff said she thought all who walked the Trail before tonight's meeting had agreed to a compromise route. Diana Wilbur thought mowing should stop until a planner develops a Park plan.

Deborah King asked what are the setbacks from property lines. Judy said there is no setback requirement for non-structures like paths or trails or driveways. House setbacks can be fifty, seventy-five, or one hundred feet.

Brian thought there are three options: stop mowing and let the trail grow, continue mowing, or move the Trail close to the middle of the field. In addition, signage is needed. Judy suggested placing "End of the Trail – Turn Around" signs as the path approaches private properties. Linda said that would not allow full enjoyment of a continuous loop trail. Donna DiMatteo said people break the Park rules. Signs do nothing.

Charlie said Mayor James Walton asked the Police Department to increase its enforcement of the Park's leash ordinance. Several yard-type signs will be posted reminding walkers of the ordinance that requires them to keep their dogs leashed at all times. Steve thought there should also be trail boundary signs.

Donna said when one dog barks, others do too. The noise damages the calm atmosphere.

Deborah suggested creating a dog park. Brian said the Commission could suggest that to the Planner.

Ravenna Taylor said she was happy to hear that a planner will be hired. She is happy to contribute to the needs of the Park even though she does not use it. She objects to use of a portion of the Open Space Tax for Park uses.

Charlie thought the Township should check the farming lease agreement and speak with the farmer to see if there is any issue preventing mowing across the field. It should also speak with the DPW to see whether there is any obstacle to mowing across the field.

Chuck Taylor said the farmer would certainly prefer that there be no mowing across the field until after he harvests it. Bruce Katsiff said the Township could mow there after the field is harvested.

Diana said the Park rules required a maximum leash length of six feet. There are people who use twenty or thirty foot leashes. The rules also state that horses are only permitted on designated areas. She sees horses on the Trail now. Judy said she did not think a horse trail has even been officially designated.

Members agreed to make a decision after the Township reviews the farming lease agreement, speaks to the farmer, and asks the DPW whether it could cut a new path. There should be answers by the next meeting.

## REPORTS

### Teen Report

Tyler suggested new Teen events for this fall: renting the Frenchtown Roller Rink and another hike – possibly to Round Valley. Brian asked him to call the rink about pricing. Once Tyler has information about the rink and the hike, he should contact Brian with the information and prepare flyers for distribution through the DTS List Serve, the Township website, and social media. Members thanked him for coordinating the White Oak Trail hike in May.

### Board of Education

Brian said Rebecca reported that the School Summer Academy begins tomorrow. New Principal Scott Lipson started July 1<sup>st</sup>. The Board next meets in August.

Judy said she submitted a Use of Facilities request for adult and teen recreation beginning in October.

### DTAA

Brian said closing ceremonies were held on June 18<sup>th</sup> at the Dilts Park. It was well attended by baseball, softball and soccer players and families. Activities will resume in the fall to run as closely to normal as possible.

### Open Space

Steve reported that the Township is moving to a decision on a new Open Space Coordinator. A Coordinator is needed quickly to begin work on grant applications and conduct follow ups with property owners.

## APPROVAL OF DILTS FARM PARK APPLICATIONS

### Dilts Park Facility Use Application

Donna DiMatteo asked whether all Park uses of the pavilion and fields require Township approval, and Brian replied yes. She thought there may be groups using the Park facilities without pre-approval, and they often leave a mess. This occurred after the DTAA closing ceremony. Tim suggested there be “walk-throughs” after scheduled events to ensure proper clean-up.

Brant Switzler said he sent an email with information about his proposal to conduct tennis clinics/lessons on the tennis courts at the Dilts Farm. Judy apologized for not checking the recreation gmail account to receive and distribute this information.

Brian said the Township needs a planner for a Dilts Park overall plan. He said better traffic control is needed. Charlie had previously reported that the tennis courts will be repaired soon.

After discussion Linda moved to make a recommendation to the Township Committee to hire a professional planner to prepare a plan for the Dilts Park and Sergeantsville Green. Tim seconded the motion, and members approved the motion with an abstention by Charlie.

Members discussed a grant that may be available through RWJ Foundation to construct an accessible playground addition at the Dilts Park. Brian will speak with Julie Luster-Rosell.

COMMITTEES:

Fishing Derby – Tim reported that the Fishing Derby is scheduled for July 18<sup>th</sup> (Rain Date July 19<sup>th</sup>) at the Copeland Farm from 8 to 11 a.m. The pond will be stocked with \$1,000 of fish (bass and bluegills). The Copelands have indicated a continuing commitment to this event, hence the investment in fish stocking. Shop Rite is donating a breakfast bag to participants. Skip's Outdoor is donating prizes. The Derby is open to Township residents up to 17 years old. The Derby is being funded with previously unexpended Recreation funds.

Donna DiMatteo asked how residents can find information on money spent. Charlie said there is a Recreation Commission budget within the Township's budget, and that information is available in a "user friendly" budget document. She asked why residents do not pay for these events. Charlie said these are community building events.

Fall Fun Fireworks – This event will be held on September 11<sup>th</sup> (Rain Date September 12<sup>th</sup>) at the Dilts Park. (Please note: This date was later changed to September 18<sup>th</sup> (Rain Date September 19<sup>th</sup>.) Brian said the fireworks company is available on that date. The cost will be \$6,600 plus the State firework permit of \$40 for an 18-20 minute show. He asked whether the Commission would like to increase that amount for a longer show. Donna DeMateo asked why the Township does not join with Flemington for a display. There is a lot of debris left over from the expended fireworks. They must leave their home with their dogs during the fireworks. Brian said it is the most popular event in the Township. Diana Wilbur said she lives right behind the Park. She objected to the noise and air pollution. She said they are a health hazard. She asked the Commission to plan a community event with less environmental impact. Ravenna Taylor asked why the Commission does not use silent fireworks. Brian asked her to bring information about them to the Commission. Charlie said the Sergeantsville Volunteer Fire Company and Stockton Fire Company asked that the display be held September 10<sup>th</sup> instead of on the 11<sup>th</sup> due to September 11<sup>th</sup> memorial services. Members agreed to keep the display on the 11<sup>th</sup> for now. There will be a solemn ceremony that evening to remember those lost on 9/11.

Yard Sale – Judy said she will advertise for this event on September 18<sup>th</sup> (rain date 9/19) in the newspaper (cost about \$100 for two ads) and by signage.

Plant Swap – Jes Stahl runs this event that will be sometime in October.

Community Day – This event will be held October 2<sup>nd</sup> on the Sergeantsville Green. Brian will arrange to close Rt. 604 and obtain signs from Hunterdon County. He will arrange for the port-a-potties. There will be a band. There may be a water ice truck. The Fire Company may want to offer food. Brian will call Chief Greg Bunting. There may be face painting. The Girl Scouts may want to run children activities.

Adult and Teen Recreation at DTS – These uses will be requested for this fall/winter/spring, 2021-2022.

Halloween Activity – Will be discussed at the next meeting

Holiday Decorating Contest – Will be discussed at a future meeting

Scavenger Hunt – May be held next summer.

Request to Use the Dilts Farm Tennis Courts for Lessons - Brant Switzler sent the Commission a letter outlining his proposal to conduct tennis lessons on the tennis courts at the Dilts Park. He would like to run a recreational program two or three times weekly for children learning to play tennis and adults looking for a local, affordable program. He said there was a Township recreational youth program in the past. Participants paid a fee. He would also like to rent court time to offer private adult lessons. On other tennis courts that he uses, the recreation program is sponsored by the municipality, and he rents court time for private lessons.

Brian asked how a recreational program would differ from a private soccer camp. Steve said the recreational program would be Township sponsored for Township residents for a fee. Brant said he would set a cap on the numbers of participants, and residents can still use the second court. If there is a lot of interest, his parents could run classes on the second court.

Tim noted the cracked tennis courts.

Members agreed to consider a recreational program on Saturday mornings with blocks of time at 8 to 9:30 and 9:30 to 11 on one court for Township residents for a fee. There will be no court rental fee. Brant will provide the tennis balls, although the Township could buy more balls. Members agreed to finalize details at the September 8<sup>th</sup> meeting with a program potentially running from September 18<sup>th</sup> to mid-October.

September Newsletter – Members reviewed proposed articles for the upcoming September issue of “The Bridge”.

OLD BUSINESS – none

NEW BUSINESS – Members discussed a proposed referendum on the November ballot to re-allocate one cent of six cents funds from the Open Space Tax for Recreational projects. Members discussed repair/improvement projects needed at the Park including ADA bathrooms and a possible new septic system. Charlie said the Open Space Committee would recommend the expenditure of the funds for various projects.

Ravenna Taylor asked why the Township does not first wait for a review and recommendations by a professional planner. Chuck Taylor asked why the Township Committee can not budget for projects at the Dilts Park. Charlie said the Township budget is tight. Brian thought a list of projects provided by the Commission would help to make a case to hire a planner. Brian thought there could be another open public session to get feedback on the Park. Charlie read from a proposed list of projects including both short and long term goals. Brian said the Commission can recommend projects. The Township Committee decides what will be done at the Park.

Diana Wilbur suggested a dog park at Dilts. Charlie said the Township Committee decided there would be no dog park. Deborah King suggested fundraising for the Park. Brian said a “Friends of the Dilts Park” group would be great. Pledges could be earmarked for Park use.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, September 8, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. IN PERSON