

**TOWN OF MINT HILL
PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MINUTES
December 8th, 2015**

The Park and Recreation Committee of the Town of Mint Hill met in regular session on December 8th, 2015 at 8:00 a.m. at the Mint Hill Town Hall.

ATTENDANCE

Chairman: Ron Freeman

Members: Sandy Barnett, Roger Bowden, Ray Thompson, and Bryan Burns

Absent: Michelle McDonald and Eddie Mobley

Deputy Town Manager: Lee Bailey

Town Engineer: Steve Frey

Program Support Assistant: Candice Everhart

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Freeman at 8:00 a.m., who declared a quorum and asked everyone to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and observe a moment of silence.

Approval of Minutes of June 9th, 2015: Mr. Thompson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Burns and unanimously agreed, to approve the minutes of June 9th, 2015 meeting as presented.

Reports from Staff: Mr. Bailey stated, we sent out a monthly Staff report to update you all on what has been occurring so far with the new park plans.

Mr. Frey said, we have a meeting today to see the first rough sketches from the Architect as far as what can fit in the area we have, along with parking lots, etc. From here we will start discussing having public input sessions.

Who was selected, asked Mr. Thompson. Wirth & Associates, answered Mr. Frey.

When will there be a public input meeting, asked Mrs. Barnett. We do not know yet, said Mr. Frey. Mr. Welch stated, that will be up to the Board of Commissioners and will be advertised once we know.

Old Business: *Do we know when the cell tower is going to come down, asked Mrs. Barnett.* March or April, answered Mr. Welch.

New Business:

- A. Discuss use of Soccer Fields at Veterans Park for Lacrosse:** Mrs. Barnett presented a powerpoint to the Committee regarding the Carolina Crush. We started late last year in April. We decided to offer Academies which is like a clinic and High School travel team, girls only, grades 2-12. We practice at Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church. Our summer and fall academies which is our beginners. This is who I would like to have at the Park

for clinics. It's basic such as catching and throwing. If you could take time to read the testimonials, it will give you a great example of what we can expand upon here in Mint Hill. There is no contact in a clinic. We would love to introduce the girls to the sport at a no cost for the clinic. The park would be easy access for the areas that we have reached out to. To go over what a clinic would involve, there would be the basics such as going over the history of how lacrosse started, basic catching, throwing, cradling the ball and playing games like sharks and minnows to keep it fun. They would be approximately an hour and a half to two hours long. That gives us enough time to go over the movements and break it down into groups and have the younger girls together as well as the older girls together. We have tennis balls for the younger girls so they aren't using a hard ball and mouth guards are required for the older girls. If we are allowed to use the soccer fields I have a temporary net that we can put up that is 10'x30'. We do have liability insurance and my coaches are certified according to NC High School Athletic Association. Do you have any questions for me? I would love to have clinics in January and February.

I think the reason lacrosse has been turned down at the park in the past is the safety concerns. If we were to say yes to this, does that open the doors to others coming in asking to use the fields for lacrosse, said Mr. Freeman. Keep in mind the difference between girls and boys lacrosse for one. Also, these would be clinics so they would not be like game situations because they are just learning, stated Mrs. Barnett.

Mr. Burns asked, will this be done with tennis balls? I would love to have lacrosse balls for the high school girls and tennis balls for the younger girls. There is not a lot of power on a beginner even if they are high school and they understand the safety concerns better than the younger girls do, stated Mrs. Barnett.

Mr. Thompson said, the Staff recommends softball fields versus the soccer fields. Do you have any issue with that? There isn't anything wrong per say, but the field just isn't as flat and there isn't as much space, stated Mrs. Barnett.

What about field wear and tear, asked Mr. Burns. It is a concern because there are sections that haven't recovered from all of the soccer traffic we've had. My question is, is this just for a clinic, asked Mr. Trussell? Yes, we use the church for games. I would love to be at the Brief Road park in the future, said Mrs. Barnett

What is the season of lacrosse, asked Mr. Trussell. The season for club is summer and fall and I would love to do a Saturday from 10-12, said Mrs. Barnett.

Mr. Freeman asked, are you asking for one to two sessions each in January, February and March? Not March. I would love to do January and February, stated Mrs. Barnett.

When does soccer season start for MHAA, asked Mr. Freeman. Usually in early spring around March, stated Mr. Trussell.

Mr. Burns asked, who uses the parks on Saturday mornings now? Nobody has anything reserved, it's just random people, said Mr. Trussell.

Mr. Burns asked, how do we handle when guys lacrosse tries to come in? Mr. Bailey said, the historic answer has been we don't allow it on the soccer fields. We would love to have a place for lacrosse. It's just not safe with the walking trails around there. That's why we suggested the softball field with the fence around it and away from the trails

Mr. Bowden said, I'm concerned about the general attitude about the use of the park. This is a valid organization. What comes next, I don't really care. We let a church softball group use the softball field without any charge because they agree to maintain the fields. When I said what happens when a group we don't agree with, a Wicken group wants to use the park for worship one night, what happens then? I was told by staff we will approach that when it comes up. I've voted against the church softball league the last two years on that premise. I don't understand why town leadership is against this sport. There are more kids injured in soccer than lacrosse. When you have certified coaches, it is no more inherently dangerous than a softball coming at you. Why do we let MHAA, which is, not unless I'm mistaken, part of the town structure, have priority. The town seems like they are playing favorites. They let MHAA have what they want, but not other organizations.

Mr. Freeman said, we are talking safety issues with citizens walking the trail. In the past we've been concerned with the hardness of the ball and it hitting someone walking the track. It was never us being against the sport, it's the fact our fields were not built to accommodate it.

I think we are taking an archaic view on this, stated Mr. Bowden.

Mr. Bailey said, I stated before we are not against lacrosse. As Town Manager and Deputy Town Manager we have to look at liability. Let's go back to the application. It said one or two clinics and we are fine with that and now we are talking three to four sessions. It's no problem at all. We suggested the softball field because it seemed safer with the fencing and the backstop.

Mr. Thompson said, it's a clinic so it's not the same thing as a game. Correct. It is a free lacrosse clinic, said Mrs. Barnett.

Mr. Welch said, I appreciate the sport; it's just a hard ball coming around the track.

Mr. Thompson made a motion to approve the Softball Field for the lacrosse clinics in January and February.

Mr. Burns continued the discussion. What's the liability if someone gets hit with one of those balls? We will get sued, said Mr. Welch.

Mr. Freeman seconded the motion Mr. Thompson made.

Mr. Bowden made a motion to amend the motion to approve the Soccer Fields for lacrosse clinics. Mr. Burns seconded the amendment. Mr. Bowden and Mr. Burns agreed and Mr. Thompson and Mr. Freeman voted against the amendment.

The amendment did not pass.

The committee voted on the original motion to approve lacrosse on the Softball Field. Mr. Thompson and Mr. Freeman voted in favor and Mr. Bowden and Mr. Burns voted against. The motion did not pass.

Mr. Bowden made the motion to approve the lacrosse clinics at the Mint Hill Veterans Park Softball fields. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion. Mr. Freeman asked if there was any more discussion. Mr. Bowden stated, he believes it is the wrong thing to do, but doesn't want them to walk away with nothing. The motion carried with a unanimous vote by the committee.

B. Consider amending the Committee meeting schedule: Mr. Bailey said, we haven't been meeting on a regular basis. It is a little bit more work to run through and cancel a meeting than it is to have one. Staff has committed to work up a monthly report to keep you all in the loop on anything that may be happening. Also, our doors are open 8:30-5:00 Monday through Friday for you guys to come in or call if you want any information. We wanted to ask if you all want to have these regularly scheduled meetings or change to an as needed basis and just have a called meeting if we need one. *Mr. Freeman said, we haven't had a meeting since June.*

Mr. Burns said, I don't have a problem with that, especially if we haven't had a meeting since June. I don't care one way or another if we have one a month or two a month. I think we could depend on Mr. Freeman to let staff know that we would like to have a meeting.

Mr. Freeman asked, do you anticipate the Park and Recreation committee having more involvement with the new park on Brief Road? If so, is this a bad time to be changing our meeting schedule? Mr. Bailey stated, we are open to advice and input all of the time. It just depends on where we are going to go with the designer. They will be evening meetings.

I was surprised that Mr. Thompson wasn't invited to the meeting that you're having tonight because he was selected as our Park and Recreation committee representative for the new park, stated Mr. Freeman. Mr. Bailey said, the nomination for him to do that was for the selection committee to make the decision about which company we were going to use and that has been completed.

Mr. Welch said, the Commissioners will decide the procedure going forward. They will decide public meetings, who will be on the stakeholder committee, etc. We will have a public workshop with the Board that will be open to exchange the information.

Mrs. Barnett said, I like the monthly meetings so that we can stay informed with the new park.

Mr. Bailey said, if we are going to keep with the regular schedule then you all need to have your request for what you would like to discuss into Mr. Freeman, or staff, in advance so that we can research everything and have a detailed update for you all.

Mrs. Barnett said, I think we should keep the schedule as is and if things change then we can revise it.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Bowden made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Thompson and the Committee unanimously agreed. Chairman Freeman adjourned the meeting at 9:36 a.m.

Candice Everhart
Program Support Assistant