
Lower Saucon Township
Parks & Recreation Board

Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2012

1. **Meeting Called To Order** – The meeting was called to order by Dave Spirk at 7:10 PM.

2. **Roll Call**

Present – Dave Spirk, Chair; Tom Butera, Vice Chair; Sheri Herman and Scott Schanzenbach members; Jack Cahalan, Staff Liaison

3. **Nomination of Officers:**

- Chair
 - Scott moved to nominate Dave Spirk as Chair. Sheri seconded the motion. All in favor.
- Vice Chair
 - Scott moved to nominate Tom Butera as Vice Chair. Sheri seconded the motion. All in favor.

4. **Approval of November Meeting Minutes** – Motion by Scott, second by Sheri for approval of the December 5, 2011 minutes. All in favor.

5. **Citizen Non-Agenda Items**

Mark Smith and Ed Sinko from Hellertown-Lower Saucon Little League Baseball were present. Dave said we are going to ask the contractor to aerate and slit seed the inside diamond of the infield and Mark Smith, who is in charge of the fields for the Hellertown-Lower Saucon Little League will get us the ingredients. Once he has that, he will email Jack and we'll see what the contractor says about doing that.

Dave said Mark and Ed are here for the Easton Road Fields. He thinks one of the things they want to talk about is timing. Ed said you know the history there. The Little League did put those fields in originally at the church and over the years, they have become unplayable for games and are rough for practices. They were excited early on that the Township came and talked about the plans for the parking lots and the parking lot on top and being able to refurbish. Here we are two years later, and it's in worse condition now than before. They want to take steps towards making to the fields useable for practice and ultimate games because the teams have increased, especially this coming season. Just with the use of Dimmick Park alone, there are entirely too many teams. That's a resource there, it just needs some attention.

Jack said we have the engineer working on a plan for the parking lot off of Mockingbird Hill Road. Originally, what they were thinking of doing was putting in some parking at the bottom of the field off of Easton Road. What that would have caused was another entrance from Easton Road, which PennDOT would have had to approve. There was also some trees at the bottom and they would have had to be cleared. There were issues about that parking lot. We kind of abandoned that and said everything had to be up on Mockingbird Hill Road. To get from Mockingbird Hill Road in to the area of the plateau where we want to put the parking area in, we had to design the entrance through some very large trees and there's also a water crossing that comes down from under Route 78. We're actually going to get a permit from DEP in order to put that in and as soon as we have that, he's been pushing the engineer to get us a plan to get that parking lot in here. As soon as we have that, we can do it in-house. It's just a matter of cutting the driveway in and putting the gravel parking in. That was needed in order to access the top field, the one that's been abandoned for so long. There is going to be pathways to get

to the parking lot to that field. They are going to be ADA. They are going to be paved. If someone comes in a wheelchair, they can come to that park. They are going to fix it up so it's in playable condition. Whatever it takes, they will get it in shape. They promised the people who live on Chapel Lane that they would look into some netting as they said the foul balls were bouncing off the cars. They have the port-a-john there. That's ready to go as soon as they get the plan. In the meantime, the lower field people can continue to pull off of Easton Road and park where they have been for years. That's on the list for the contractor for the mowing and the field treatments. He's not sure what kind of condition it is in and what it needs extra.

Ed said in the current state, they could park in that lower parking lot? Jack said it's kind of an unofficial parking lot. They didn't want to get into actually delineating a driveway and a parking lot as they would have had problems with PennDOT. You can pull in and park there. No one is going to give anyone any problems, and use the lower field. Ed said to really address the lower field, Mark was there recently and has an assessment and to get it in reasonable condition, it's not a whole lot. Mark said he was there today and the port-a-john is not in place at this time. It's gone so it must have been picked up. Jack said it's at the end of the drive. Mark said he was wondering what that spot was, now it makes sense. Jack said they scheduled the port-a-johns for April 1st. If the league is out there earlier, he'll have them out there for that time. Mark said the teams just come together now, so it's based on the outside practices. Jack said if you are there now, he'll have them delivered this week.

Ed asked if anyone has given the league the go-ahead to start practicing yet? Mark said Hellertown's policy is the big field, which is up on top, and that field is the only field they only officially use. That's later in March. All the other fields we are free to use them whenever.

Dave said how long would it take the Easton field to get ready? Would you envision the league getting it ready? Jack said they have a contractor going up there. Mark said the grass is cut obviously, and there was definitely an aeration. The bases are in the field right now and he doesn't know why they are there right now. Someone must have left them there. The lock box is vandalized. It's unlocked and full of trash at this point. The drip edge on the third base side dugout is all pulled off and thrown on top. He doesn't know if it was vandalized or if it was hanging down and someone just took it down. The fence directly behind the catcher, the bottom fence is peeled out and it's a safety issue. It's a chain fence and it was pulled back. The problem with the field is really the dirt. He doesn't know what implements the Township has to care for the dirt or if you have that machine. They have an infield groomer, but he can't move it over to the Easton Fields. Jack said what type of treatment? Mark said there is grass growing in and starting to invade, and what has to happen is that the diamond has to be inspected. The dirt has to be run with a machine. The grass needs to be pulled out of it. When that's all done, you have to evaluate it as it needs soil. There's a pile behind where the port-a-john would be and then there's a pile up on top and they are all grassed over. Dave said it's infield mix. Mark said he would assume, but it's a big assumption. He thinks it needs some infield mix and some field conditioner. The grass is in great shape. It needs a little help around the mound. Then it would have to be edged. One of the things he'd like to propose to some of the juniors which is the league which would play there, 13 or 14 year olds, they come out and provide a little bit of labor so they have an understanding and care and that they are not the next guys vandalizing the fields. They then realize they have to wheel barrow a load of dirt in, they have to rake the dirt. It would be good if the Township could get their groomer over there.

Dave said he assumes that Southeastern has it on their yearly schedule. Jack said it's the same thing. It's treated and it's in good shape. Dave said put the Easton Fields on the schedule as well. Jack said he'll see that all these things are taken care of. As far as the dirt, Mark can email Jack and tell him what needs to be done. Jack will tell him how we are going to do that. Mark said he's already out trying to get the fields in shape. As the weather breaks earlier, the coaches want to go. There are safety issues on some of these fields. The drag is still there, but there's no truck. Dave said he's sure the league has put everything there. Jack said the Township hasn't done anything other than cut the grass. Mark said he

was just talking with someone and they are taking the 13 year old teams and would like to use that as a practice field and would like to teach the boys how to maintain it like sweep the dug outs, empty the trash cans, etc. Dave said he's sure Jack will get right on it and they will put it on rotation. Southeastern is nice all the time, so obviously they know what they are doing. Mark said someone mentioned there's a dimension at one of the base pads. Usually when a dimension get off, the plate gets stolen and lost and then someone goes back in and drops it and it looks good, but when you line it up, first base is 3' shorter and everyone thinks the mound is crooked. When he did the softball field over at Dimmick, he found the pitcher's mound at second base and second base at third base. It's amazing how things are missing like plates, mounds, etc. He will send Jack information and answer any questions anyone may have.

Dave said the bottom line is it would be nice to get them done soon as practice will start the 3rd or 4th week in March. Ed said as the weather allows, they are going to start practicing. Mark said even though the fields are wet right now, they are going to start throwing in the outfield. It's almost too cold to bat right now with aluminum bats.

Dave said more than likely, official little league will start on March 19th. That's two weeks from now. Equipment is going out next week. Jack said he will be out there with Roger this week and take a look at it and make a list up for the contractor to do. If they have to deliver dirt, they will deliver it. Mark said he talked to some coaches and members of the board, and he's not asking the 13 and 14 year olds for hard labor, just move a little dirt, learn to rake the field the proper way so that when they are done playing, they know how to respect it and take care of it, and then it's less labor for all of us. If they spend 15 minutes after their last practice, the field is in great shape and it stays that way and they learn. Dave said the bottom line is you'd rather see a grass diamond. Ed said there's a discussion at Easton Road maybe they skin that as there's different transformation as how the fields are being used. If Easton Road is a skinned infield, with various base posts, you can adapt the field to several different leagues for the lower field. The upper field is another discussion because the outfield and right field has that wall that is limited and it's not a regulation sized field. That could actually become a full practice field or you do the same thing and skin the upper field and the smaller leagues could be there. It could also be a practice field.

Dave said do you want Public Works to make it all dirt on both those fields? They aren't going to do the upper field now. Mark said not this year. They want to get it in practice-ready condition. If they make it useable this year, and then further discuss what the future is down the road. The league has to make a commitment to the size variances. That's for the future and it starts to say and give flexibility for use of fields as those teams arise and we have those specifications, we don't have to build anymore fields and we use what we already have and maximize the use what's already there. Ed said you use artificial mound and you actually put posts in and put a cap over them and pop the posts and put the mound in place and you clamp it down and play ball. Dave said he's pretty sure Flemington has that as they played there last summer. That would be great. Then you'd have all dirt infields. They are a multi-use fields then and you can put three or four age brackets on that field. Dave asked if there was water up on those fields? Jack said there is water at the building by the cemetery. Dave said you may need water to put on the fields. Mark said that's part of the planning process as well.

6. Projects:

- **Town Hall Park** – Jack said no update.
- **Southeastern Park** – Jack said no update.
- **Steel City Park** – Jack said he indicated by an email that we had a meeting at the end of the year with the staff and consultants about doing the Steel City Park improvements in 2012.

Based on issues, they decided they were going to hold up on the work until 2013. There are a couple of different things that have to be done. The first issue is the right-of-way on Riverside Drive is about 33'. There's a distance from that right-of-way to the actual park property. Apparently, it's owned by PennDOT. They have to look into whether or not we can utilize that property. He doesn't think PennDOT is going to make any claim on it, but we have to go through some verification of that as we want to put some of the rain gardens in that area. They have to do some field testing for storm water facilities. They have to do the design. In addition to the Riverside Drive, there is a paper street called Lewis Avenue that runs up the eastern side of the park, and it runs between Schwab and Riverside. It was in the original Steel City subdivision, but never was made into a street. The property owner that's on the east side is occupying part of it and the park is going to occupy a part of that. We need to take that over officially plus there's also a stub street that we discovered on the subdivision plan that actually goes into the park on the plan to have the lawyer look at that and make sure there's no problem. That is work that needs to be done - the design of the facilities, the landscaping design, and then the permitting that has to be done through DEP. We have to get an NPDES permit. All of that work we decided there's no way we were going to get that done in 2012 because the improvements are going to require that we shut the park down for a whole year, go in there, and Public Works is going to do a lot of earthmoving, put in the improvements and then the park will be ready in 2014. Based on that, we had talked about having a meeting there and we originally talked about having it at this time. It was also due to the vandalism that came up. Based on the fact that we're not going to do this in 2012, we thought we could put this off until the summer time. We plan on having our June, July or August meeting at Steel City Park like we normally do and we'll set it up that we'll have the Planner come up and do a show and tell for the residents. He'll send notices out and let them know about it. We can do it outside and if it's raining, we can go in the firehouse. We can run through the whole plan and at that point we can discuss the vandalism. The legal work has started and the field testing will begin in April.

- **Heller Homestead** – Jack said no update.
- **Polk Valley Park** – Jack said Public Works had started last fall to do the connector trail between the park and school campus. The Halloween snowstorm happened and they've been out there cleaning up from that storm. They will be out back working on paving the connector trail and that will be all finished except for up by the school campus. They did fix the curbing up there, so we can run that on the school campus across Campus Way and end it in the parking lot. It will be finished probably within the next two or three weeks.
- **Kingston Park** – Jack said after Public Works is done with the connector trail, they will move up to Kingston Park. They are going to finalize the trails and the parking lot and the paving that has to be done.
- **Easton Road Fields** – Jack said as soon as he has the plans from the Engineer, he'll share it with everyone. That's another project that will be done by Public Works. What he mentioned to them about the parking lot off of Easton Road was it would be a big hassle with PennDOT getting a driveway permit. We didn't believe they would give it to us if we asked for it officially, plus there were some trees that would need to be taken down, so they said we will only get about ten parking spaces down there. The conclusion was leave it the way it is and if we put it down there, we can't get ADA access from the lower field, either from parking at Easton Road or parking off of Mockingbird Hill Road. The topography is such that you just cannot get an ADA trail to that. Basically, the bottom field is going to be the same. The top field if there is a game there, a person can come out on a wheelchair and go to the top field. That's the best they could do. That will be done and they will be work on it as soon as they get the plan.

- **Saucon Rail Trail** – Jack said we’re getting ready for a first good year. Everything has been working out real good. It went through the winter pretty well. We did have some trees that were down. They are scheduling a community clean-up on March 24th. There’s a lot of people who are interested in coming out and doing that. We’ll have Public Works involved. They will be doing the heavy stuff like the big trees that went down and they will be doing some chipping and mowing, cutting some of the vines, so it should be in good shape when the nice weather comes along. Last year the Saucon Rail Trail Oversight Commission was formed. We have two representatives from each of the municipalities. They have a Chair person, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. They have selected a logo and they are moving ahead with getting a designer for a website. That should be out there in the next couple of weeks. They have a treasury and each municipality puts in \$1,000.00 a year so they have money to pay for some of the administrative things.
- **Grants** – Jack said no update.
- **Volunteer/Scout Projects** – Jack said he received today from Roy Young, Boy Scout Troop 319, a request to have a campout over the weekend of Friday, March 23rd at 6 pm through Sunday, March 25th at the Heller Homestead Park. There will be 12 people participating. They set up tents and they do campfires. They have them do the stones and they clean up everything afterwards. They’ve done this several times before. Dave said do you generally talk to the Historic Society. Jack said this is up on the park property, so technically if parking is not an issue, it’s okay and the Saucon Valley Conservancy has no problem with it. Motion by Dave for a recommendation to allow Boy Scout Troop 319 to have their campout the weekend of March 23 – March 25, 2012. Second by Tom. All in favor.

7. **Old Business:**

- **Saucon Valley Recreation Partnership – Update** - Jack said he and Dave have been attending the Saucon Valley Recreation Partnership meetings. He has an agreement that Samantha, the Recreation Consultant put together. It’s an agreement between the Borough of Hellertown, Lower Saucon Township and the Saucon Valley School District to basically continue to meet on a regular basis. They will meet and discuss ways to coordinate recreational types of activities on the fields and in the different venues at the school district and the two municipalities. It doesn’t commit the municipalities to anything. It doesn’t commit us to spend any more money than we are. It’s basically to work together and come up with solutions to some of the issues. One of the big ones is scheduling and we’re still trying to come up with some way to do that, either on website or some type of software. The other one is the maintenance issue which we mentioned here before. We wanted to have an equal standard for maintenance of all the fields. What the Little League was talking about doing at the Hellertown Park and the Easton Fields would be done similar at the Township and the school district. The fields would be treated the same way. That’s a money issue because the things we are doing in the Township with the contractor is a little too expensive for Hellertown Borough. They don’t even want to do the mowing contract because of the cost. They hire kids in the summer to do the grass cutting. That’s something right now they couldn’t get into. Their arrangement right now is to have the Leagues, football, baseball, take care of the fields. That works for them and that’s the way it will be left. This will be approved by the Township Council on March 7th. It’s already been approved by Hellertown Borough and Saucon Valley School District.
- **Connector Trail Status – Update** – This was discussed earlier.
- **Steel City Park Improvements – Update** – This was discussed earlier.

8. New Business

- **Special Amusements at Township Parks & Historical Sites** - Jack said he got a request from two of the historic groups and they hold events at the Lutz-Franklin Schoolhouse. At the Heller Homestead, they hold events that are on the Heller Homestead property and the park property. Both asked if they could have pony rides at events they are holding up there in the spring. They are historical type of events. What he put together is under our Special Events Policy, these things are not really discussed. Most of the special events we are talking about are soccer events, tournaments, things like that. He was going to ask the Council if they wanted to approve this type of activity – pony rides, petting zoo, inflatable amusements, dunking booths, climbing walls. We have those kind of events in Hellertown at Dimmick Park on Community Day. This is a type of thing if they are going to allow it, what he would say is they would specify the area and would have to pin down where that would be. There will have to be insurance and all kinds of things if there was damage. He wants to ask Council what they think about it. If the Parks and Recreation Board are okay with it, he'll bring it back. Dave said do all the Special Events have a component if the fields are closed because of weather? Let's say the re-enactors at the Heller Homestead, and it's going to be extremely bad weather, can Roger say it's not a good idea to be there? Jack said normally there are days that dress up, are sitting in tents, and there's water coming down and they are smoking their pipes. They've had days like that. Dave said what about the ponies and petting zoo? Jack said Roger would look at something like that if the weather was bad. The Civil War re-enactors just basically sit under tents. They don't really damage anything. He hasn't heard any complaints. Jack said the Cyclo-cross has done some damage, but they repair it. Sheri said what if it was a real heavy torrential rain? Jack said they've had it before with rain, and it wasn't that bad. They've had a Cyclo-cross event where it was local and it was just mud and they had to hose down the bike.
- **SRT Special Event Registration Form** – Jack said there's no action required, but they've been getting request for events on the Rail Trail so he came up with a registration form. It's kind of a variation of the one we just looked at for the Scouts at the Heller Homestead. He put together a special event application for organizations to complete if they wanted an event or a fund-raising event on the Rail Trail. Since it goes through four municipalities, it is difficult to go before each of those bodies and request approval of the use of the Rail Trail. What the intergovernmental agreement permits is the Rail Trail Oversight Commission to review the events and give their approval. He will ask Council if they concur with that on Wednesday night. If someone wanted to run a bike or foot race and it was through Upper Saucon, Lower Saucon and Hellertown, they would fill this out and it would go to the Oversight Commission. They'd review it and basically what they are interested in is where they are going to park, where they will start and end, the time, and whether you need any people at the road crossings. It's not going to interfere with any of the parks. If you do an event and are going to have 1,000 people, then you may have to close the trail. Most of the things they are having now are smaller events. They were going to do a one mile race at Upper Saucon. Eventually there may be some organizations that may want to use it for a 5K or similar. They need to figure out what do they have to do in order to make sure the event gets held without any disruption, anyone getting hurt, or any damage to the Rail Trail. This will give them something that they'll be filling out.
- **Composting Toilets Grant** – Jack said we also received the grant for composting toilets for three parks – Steel City when we do it in 2013 and also Polk Valley Park. The composting toilet is a nice unit that's modular with male and female and ADA. The Kingston Park one will be there in spring. We'll see who that works out, then we'll do Polk Valley Park and Steel City Park next year.

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- **Reading Road Trailhead** – Jack said the Township finally acquired the trailhead site on Reading Road last Friday. That is our property and we're working on a plan that will put in about 20 parking spaces. There is a portable toilet there already. There will be picnic tables and a kiosk and it should be a real nice spot to pull in and park and get on the Rail Trail.

9. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.

10. **Next Meeting:** Monday, April 2, 2012 at 7 pm at Town Hall.