
Lower Saucon Township
Parks & Recreation Board

Meeting Minutes

May 4, 2015

1. **Meeting Called To Order** – The meeting was called to order by Bill Ross/Tom Butera at 7:07 PM at Town Hall.
2. **Roll Call**

Present –, Tom Butera, Bill Ross, Alan Hall, Priscilla Oren, Katrina Schreefer, Gary Gorman, members; Jason Cherry, Jr. Council Member; Tom Maxfield, Council Liaison and, Jack Cahalan, Staff Liaison. Guests: Ron Horiszny, Rett Oren, Keri Maxfield

Absent – Dave Spirk
4. **Approval of April 13, 2015 Minutes** – Alan moved for approval of the April 13, 2015 minutes, second by Gary. All in favor.
5. **Citizen Non-Agenda Items** – None
6. **Projects**
 - **Town Hall Park** – Jack said that we had another incident of vandalism of the signs that were put up along the nature trail by a Boy Scout several years ago. The signs were showing some wear but someone went up there and must have swung a bat at them and knocked the sign displays off the pedestals. The police investigated but do not have any information on who might have done. Jack said that they will be looking into installing security cameras up in the park that can be wirelessly connected with the security system we installed in/out of Town Hall last year. Members recommended that they be concealed as they could be subject to damage themselves.
 - **Southeastern Park** – Jack said there are no issues up here. The meadow was mowed last year and is showing very little growth at this time. Jack said that the SV Lions have planted several more trees around the parking lot in honor of their departed members following the planting plan that we supplied to them several years ago.
 - **Steel City Park** – Jack said that PW is ready to begin work up there right after they complete the final landscaping at Polk Valley Park. We posted a sign announcing the construction this year; the trees have been taken down, and PPL has moved the utility poles, so PW will be going in there shortly to remove the fence, the asphalt, the playground structures, and the pavilion, and will then start on constructing the stormwater features, and by the end of the year the park will be seeded and stabilized and should have the Phase 1 components in place: the walking trail, parking lot, new pavilion pad and, hopefully the basketball and volleyball courts. The park will be re-opened in 2016 and then we will work on installing the Phase 2 improvements such as landscaping, baseball backstop, pavilion, and eventually a composting restroom.

Rett said that he spoke to a geocacher from NJ who had a cache in the park and he has removed it.

 - **Heller Homestead** – Jack said that there are now two scout projects that have been approved for the Heller Homestead Park area. The first scout had come up with a plan to clear the area behind the barn ruins that the Saucon Valley Conservancy wants to use for additional exhibit space. When he discussed it with Council, we felt that it relied too heavily on the use of the

Township PW and the Council advised him to get assistance from volunteers to help him with the project, which he is now doing. A tree service company volunteered to take down some of the trees for free. A second scout has proposed to refurbish the signs that were put up several years ago along the Nature Trail Loop by a Girl Scout for her Gold Award. He discussed that at an EAC meeting and got there blessing for that. Jack passed around his project proposal that he dropped off that afternoon.

Jack briefly reviewed the planned Saucon Creek Arts Festival that is planned for May 30th and the shuttle that will be used to transport visitors to and from the parking area on Lehigh University's Goodman campus.

- **Polk Valley Park** – Jack said that Public Works hopes to be up at the park by the end of this week to install the pathways and complete the final landscaping. Jack said that children are continuing to play on the play structures and the orange fence around the area keeps getting pulled down and PW keeps putting it back up.

Priscilla asked if there were any further issues with parking for events? Jack said that he has not heard of any problems from PW or the police about people parking on the grass. Bill said that when he is up there everyone is using the designated parking areas.

Priscilla said that Bill had spoken at previous meetings about the need for steps down to the playing fields. Bill said that it is a dangerous situation and he has seen people fall down trying to maneuver up and down the hill. It is especially hard on the coaches who have to lug equipment, etc. up the hills. He knows that the pathways are the designated route to the fields but if you are using Field #3, no one uses the pathway which starts down by Field #5 to get to the field. There was a discussion about the pros and cons of installing steps or ramps to the field. Jack suggested that they hold the discussion out at the park for their June meeting and he will bring an early draft plan for the park that recommended steps be installed.

Bill asked about the mowing of the fields. Jack said that the mowing and lawn treatment contractors have been approved and have started their schedules so the field should have been mowed at least twice. Priscilla asked about the problem we had with the mowing and the nesting birds? Jack said that that concerned the natural areas such as Ella's Garden at Kingston Park and the meadows at Southeastern and Polk Valley Parks. Our policy use to say they had to be mowed by April 1st each year and, if that could not be done we had to wait until July to protect the nesting birds. Last year we mowed all these areas mid-summer and got a lot of flak from the public about us cutting down the flowering plants and ruining the habitat for butterflies. We realized that it was impossible to get the mowing done by April 1st due to the weather, so we have changed the policy to mow the natural areas in late fall each year. There will be no mowing of these areas this summer because there is very little growth.

Jack said that we had a discussion about the Dog Park vandalism at our last meeting and the recommendations were to create a Facebook page and look into a gate at the entrance. He made a report about this at the Council meeting which was reported on by the Saucon Source. We did create a Facebook page to communicate with the users and posted the article about the vandalism and the users were 100% supportive and also dismayed by the damage. Since then the fence has been repaired and we put the open/closed placard on the road sign a little more securely. This past weekend we had a user post that there was a hole in the interior fence that allowed her small dog to get over to the large dog area. We responded to her and said that the problem would be fixed. Katrina suggested that we put a sign out there asking the users to "like" and link to the Facebook page. Jack said that they may look into a small bulletin board.

Jack said that he is also thinking about coming up with a list of play structures for the dogs that could be done for scout projects.

Alan asked about the bat houses. Jack said that a girl scout had gone to the EAC with a project to install 5-6 bat houses at PVP. She has all of the details worked out as far as where to locate them, how to mount them and she is supposed to send us a map showing the locations.

- **Kingston Park** – Jack said that he spoke about Ella’s Garden already. The only other issue is that they had a problem with the snow melt they used on the concrete sidewalk outside the composting toilets which spalled the concrete. PW will be applying an epoxy to seal the surface and it should correct this problem.
- **Easton Road Fields** – Jack said that this project is on the Public Works list of projects for this year and will not be done until after baseball season.
- **Grants** – Jack said that we have a grant in to the D & L National Heritage Corridor for funding the help pay for the management plan that the Planner is doing in three stages for the Saucon Rail Trail.
- **Woodland Hills Preserve** – Jack said that this property is restricted to passive activities only. Because Public Works has such a long list of projects to do this year and he cannot count on them having the time to cut in a driveway and parking lot off of Countryside Lane, we are going to see whether it’s possible to open up a pathway through the parcel that the Township owns that is across from the Lutz-Franklin Schoolhouse. If this can be done inexpensively, it would allow visitors to park in Kingston Park, use the restrooms and pavilion there, and access the Preserve. We’ll paint a crosswalk on Countryside Lane and mow some paths on the property that connect with the paved cart paths and that will allow people to walk around the property. Priscilla said that this could be a potential Important Birding Area and she and Rett would like to get on the property and start getting a count of the bird population as this is the migration period. Jack said that you can park on the road and push you way into the property. Rett said that we need a sign. Jack said that there should be two flags there. Ron said maybe we can get a scout group or volunteers to cut the trail in. Jack said that the cart paths do not run continuously throughout the property and that the plant growth was several feet high and he would not go in there with the threat from ticks. Priscilla said that they will do more research on the Important Birding Area. Tom said that the restriction on the property goes further than passive recreation. According to the agreement with Northampton County who gave us funding to purchase the property, we are required to let the property revert to its natural state except for the areas we were going to mow for trails. There are multiple ponds on the property. Jack said that he did see some cattails on the property adjacent to the schoolhouse so he is concerned that there may be some wetlands there. If there are, we would have to maybe look at a boardwalk or something which is a little more involved. Tom said he and Ron will go out there and survey it and see if there are any wetland plants. Ron said could we have a P & R meeting out there to look it over? Jack said that he didn’t see how that was possible until the trails were put in. Keri said that she thought that there was a spring on the Township parcel.

Priscilla asked if there are any rules or regulations for putting up birdhouses on this property or other Township park properties. Jack said that there isn’t any policy. We would handle a request on a case by case basis. We had a Boy Scout who put up bluebird boxes at Polk Valley Park several years ago. He was told not to attach them to the trees but did anyway. Rett said that there are a lot of bluebirds out at Polk Valley Park but they don’t use the boxes; they are full of mice. Jack said that he would have to come up with guidelines for installing birdhouses.

- **Saucon Rail Trail** – Jack said that we have the engineering plan completed to install a composting toilet at the Reading Drive Trailhead this year and this is on the PW list of projects for this year. Jack updated the group on the plans that Dr. Frank Pazzaglia has for the boulders at Water Street Park and for the cut area below Coopersburg in UST where the dinosaur tracks were located and with the plans that have been announced to expand the trail southward into Springfield and Richland Townships.
- **Draveczech Parcels** – Jack said there is nothing new on the Draveczech parcels. Ron asked whether there has been any interest from biking groups in developing this area like Rett described they did at Walking Purchase Park? Ron said that he feels that since we have the Woodland Hills Preserve property we don't need another walking trail at Draveczech and it would be more suitable for mountain bikers to use it. Priscilla said that we should speak with Steve LaBrake. Jack said that he will check with Chris Garges but he believes that Chris spoke with the mountain biking group that he knows who worked with DCNR on the bike trails at Lake Nockamixon to see if they had any interest in working on a trail system up at Draveczech. Katrina said that the property lines would have to be posted as it is very easy to walk off the property onto adjoining property when you are walking the trails.
- **Volunteer/Scout Projects** – Jack said this was covered under the previous reports.

7. **Old Business:**

- **Friends of Park** – Priscilla asked if there was anything new on this. Jack said that he had not had a chance to do any work on this. Priscilla asked where the survey was? Jack said that they did get the okay from the SVP to renew the Survey Monkey subscription so they could do a survey for this. We are going to use it for the Economic Development Citizens Committee and the Hellertown Area Library also wants to survey their patrons. Katrina said that social media like Facebook would also be helpful in attracting potential members.

8. **New Business**

- **Amendment to Special Events Policy Covering Special Amusements** – Not covered.
- **Dog Park Facebook Page** – Covered above.
- **Vandalism in Township Parks** – Covered above

9. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

10. **Next Meeting:** Monday, June 1, 2015 at 6:00 pm at Polk Valley Park