
Lower Saucon Township
Parks & Recreation Board

Meeting Minutes

June 4, 2012

1. **Meeting Called To Order** – The meeting was called to order by Dave Spirk at 7:08 PM.
2. **Roll Call: Present** – Dave Spirk, Chair; Tom Butera, Vice Chair; Bill Ross, Sheri Herman, Priscilla Oren, members; Jack Cahalan, Staff Liaison. Guest: Rett Oren; Roger Jurczak arrived at 7:35. Jack said Roger is the Chair for the Saucon Rail Trail Oversight Commission.
3. **Approval of Minutes** – Motion by Tom, second by Bill for approval of the April 2, 2012 minutes. All in favor.
5. **Citizen Non-Agenda Items** - None
6. **Projects:**
 - **Town Hall Park** – Jack said no update.
 - **Southeastern Park** – Jack said the meadow is still growing and doing fine as far as he can determine. Rett said will there ever be a gazebo at Southeastern? Jack said it's on the plan and as soon as he gets some other projects done, he will work on that. Priscilla said are we done paying for this? Jack said the meadow is paid for. He'd like to get a group in and follow the plan that Larry Weaner did, cutting the pathways through and putting up the gazebo. Priscilla said it is self-sufficient? Jack said it's growing on its own and they mow it once a year. Priscilla asked if we are we saving money in the end? Jack said yes.
 - **Steel City Park** – Jack said we have the plan that's been approved for the improvements at Steel City. It's the plan that's out here in the hallway, which came out of the meeting they had two years ago at Steel City, which will be a complete redo of the whole area. The baseball field is going to be improved. The pavilion is going to be moved. There's going to be a paved walking trail in the interior of the park. There will be a volleyball and basketball court. There will be all kinds of landscaping and other amenities in the park. There will be a parking area where you can pull off Schwab Avenue and pull into the park and park inside. The existing park is not a full rectangular or square. There's a piece on Riverside Drive that belonged to the other property owner, and it was three or four years before they finally acquired that. Now it's a perfect square or rectangular. With the additional land, they have room for a volleyball court and a basketball court. The big chunk of black top that takes up about a third of the park will be removed and there will be grass and a ball field in there. That's ready to go. He's been working with staff and they've been having meetings with the engineers who have to do some work to determine where the storm water can be infiltrated through a rain garden. That's being worked on. We also have a paper street that runs along the east side that we have to vacate so that we can take over half of that property. There's also a stub alley that has to be handled legally. That's being done right now and is on schedule to be completed so we are ready beginning in 2013 to close the park and start the construction. We'll be doing most of that in-house. Public Works can do most of the work and we will put out the bid for landscaping and the other plantings that have to be done in the park. That's moving along.

Jack said there was an act of vandalism up at the park last year. A teenager with a saw cut through some of the playground equipment and started sawing through some of the posts on the pavilion. That was a concern because no one in the area seemed to notice that going on, and it seemed to occur over a couple of different days. We thought we would have a meeting with the residents to talk about that and see how they felt about it and to see if they thought it could be

policed and get some recommendations from them. That's part of a meeting that we want to have and he scheduled August 6th tentatively up at Steel City Park at 7:00 pm. He will have the planner there and they will go over the entire plan. He's also trying to have a police officer to talk about reporting incidents if people happen to see suspicious activity in the park. He will put a sign out in front of the park announcing the meeting so that anyone in Steel City can come by and attend the meeting.

Jack said the other issue that's come up since then, is the landfill out on Applebutter Road has announced they would like to expand the permitted area up there. They have come before the Planning Commission and the Council and the first thing that has to be done is rezoning that's being worked on right now. What has happened with that is a group of residents in Steel City had started attending meetings to protest that. There have been some statements made about odors and wells being cracked because of blasting. One of the things that came up with this, is that they expressed some statements that the Township is not doing enough for Steel City. That's one of the things that he wants to address at the August 6th meeting as we have had the plan out there for awhile and we did have the planning meeting up at the firehouse. He wants to explain to the residents that we are intending on spending a good deal of money to make that park really one of the best around for a pocket community park.

Jack said another minor issue he just dealt with today was a complaint from one of the residents up there about the type of mulch that Public Works put around the swings. If you recall, we've always used mulch up there, and after a year's worth of use it's kind of dug out around the swings and slide. Every year we come back and put new mulch down. This year we didn't want to spend a lot of money on the park because we intend of tearing it all up and rebuilding it next year. The Public Works guy that was up there went up to the Compost Center and got the mulch there. There was mulch that was ground once and some ground twice. The mulch that's ground twice is all gone because everybody loved it and they came up and got three or so truckloads. There is mulch there that was ground once and it's not really a good mulch. He used that product and put it in the depressions. The product has a lot of fine materials, and on the bottom of it, there's a lot of sticks and material. The rains came and washed away the fine material and someone looked and said look at the garbage they put out at our park, so they went up there today and took a look at it and said that's not going to work. It's all been removed and we're going to go get the regular mulch product that we've been using and put it in for at least this year. Next year when the park gets done, as you seen in our other parks, we used rubberized mulch which is a product that you don't have to replace. It's terrific and it doesn't wear away. It's non-toxic and it's safe. You put it down and it will basically last for 30 years. It saves a considerable amount of money in the long run from having to replace the wood mulch every year. Priscilla asked if there were parks that used natural rubber runners or mats? Jack said that's a flat type of thing and he thinks it's more expensive than the mulch. Dave said they used it at the church, across from Neighbors. You can actually have it poured in place, it's a liquid that's put down, or you can have it in the rubber mulch that Jack is talking about or the mats. The mats are actually not as expensive as pouring it. Priscilla said she was thinking of the mats. Dave said the truth is, they don't stay, and someone will take them. Priscilla said we could use them temporarily in Steel City. Jack said we are going to get mulch up there. It will be good for this year.

Sheri said do any of the residences have personal property on the paper alley that we want to take half of? Jack said no. It's not being used. They have their half and we have our half and we'll just take over that. That will be part of the parking area and will be landscaped. It will look very nice. There will be a meeting on August 6th at 7:00 pm at Steel City. Davie said he will be on vacation that week. He wants to make sure we have a quorum. It would be a shame to have that meeting and we only have one or two people show up. Priscilla said she joined so

they would have another member. Jack said Judie will be back by that time. The whole meeting will be about Steel City Park, and he's hoping some residents will come and they can talk about that and monitoring the park to prevent any more vandalism as there will be a lot of improvements up there and he'd hate to see them damaged. Dave said he thinks it's in the middle of the night when the damage is done.

Sheri asked if any other parks endured as much damage? Jack said no. At Town Hall Park someone took a baseball bat to the signs on the nature trail several years ago. Polk Valley Park has been really good and he thinks it's because there's a lot of activity up there on the fields and with people walking on the trails. With the trails going in at Steel City Park, that's going to open it up to different age groups because at the meeting, there were older residents who said there is nothing for them to do at the park. That will get more people in there and if they see something, we need to talk to them about not being hesitant about calling the police. All we've had is the usual stuff, litter at the basketball court, two feet away from the trash can. Once or twice we've had a port-a-john pushed over. Another time someone backed into one.

Priscilla said can we go back to the Heller Homestead Park. She said it's one of the favorite locations for geocaching. Rett said they went there this week, and met two women from Lehigh University who were doing work in the Saucon Creek. There's some parasite they have and they are doing a lot of research on it. They are being sponsored by the Philadelphia Waterworks. Dave said he had the East Branch of the Saucon Creek tested and they said it's like drinking water. Rett said it's the benchmark for creeks. They had over 100 hits on the cache they put there and it brought 100 people to that park.

Bill said at one point we talked about putting a playground at Polk Valley Park. Do we have a timeframe for doing that? All the use the park is getting, it may be something we want to start thinking about. Jack said it was in the concept plan and also a pavilion was in the plan. He has to go back to Council and talk to them about it. We received funding from the County for playground equipment. There's a deadline we have to meet on that. He'll put that on an agenda within the next month or two because of the deadline. Dave said anything that is put there is going to get used. The place is jumping constantly whether it's actual games or practice, people are using the park.

Priscilla said they were asked to do an introduction for the Blue Birders for the Audubon Society. They are doing it at Franko Park in Salisbury Township on Saturday morning. It's something they could do at this park. Jack said who is running that? What organization? Is Salisbury Township involved in any way? Priscilla said you just need to get permission and they introduced the Audubon Society to Franko Park as her and Rett know the park. Jack said you basically need an area in the park to do it? Priscilla said they do their summer picnic there. The Polk Valley Park is also a premier birding place because of all of the wild flowers and things that were put in. That would be a good thing to consider. Jack said to Roger that Priscilla and Rett are geocachers and birders. They could approach the Saucon Rail Trail Oversight Commission and do an event on the Saucon Rail Trail. Dave said technically in our parks anyway, you have formal or organized events, you need a permit. Jack said there's a special event process. Dave said a team must have a game or a practice, someone wants to have a picnic, you need a permit. If they want to have a race or an event on the SRT, you need a permit. He doesn't think it's about the money, it's just the fact that we'd like to know what's going on. Priscilla said would you need that for bird watches? Dave asked how many people? Rett said anywhere from 3 to 30. Priscilla said she doesn't know how you would set up protocol for bird watching. Jack said it would be for the event. The event would be specifics of dates, times and the number of people you have in the class, what location, and then you would approach the SRT Oversight Commission and tell them you'd like to hold this event and here

are the specifics about it. Jack has a form you can fill out. They review it and if they have no problems with it, they approve it and you're good to go. Rett said there was a geocaching event held last year. It was an annual picnic at Upper Saucon Park and they had to reserve it. After the picnic and lunch, people just went out on the trail. Dave said we have to technically reserve it. You have food and drinks. You think why would you need a permit, but it's just to keep things in check. Jack said if other people show up and you don't have a permit, they can use the pavilion or park.

- **Heller Homestead** – Jack said no update.
- **Polk Valley Park** – Jack said the Connector Trail is open. Hopefully people are using that.
- **Kingston Park** – Jack said the trails are being completed. There's a pervious concrete trail around the garden going to the parking lot. That's all being completed by the end of this month. We are working on getting the composting toilet installed. We got a grant for that and we want to install that at the park. We ran into some red tape with that as the dealer who makes the product we want, actually sold it to another dealer closer by, Modern Concrete in Ottsville. They have to go through a process of getting approved by the state so we can bid on that. We are waiting for that. We also have to get clearance from the Pennsylvania Game Commission to say we're not impacting any endangered species. We did get that letter, so we have jumped through that hoop. The composting toilet is a bio-sun product that goes into a vault and has an aerobic fan. It doesn't have to be cleaned out for six or seven years. We got a grant for three of them. We want to do this one first, then Polk Valley Park, then Steel City Park when that's done next year. He's hoping to get it in so people can use them. It's about \$60,000.00 to \$70,000.00 a piece. The grant was from DCNR. The only electric is an electric line for the fan to run. We're trying to get that in place the same time we are getting the trails paved. Dave said does this one need an access route to get a truck behind it? Jack said it has a waste area where you can open the door and can get access. Dave said you can go on the upslope and the working end is down. The bottom line is you need some slope. Jack said yes. The good news on the product is the first one the guy was manufacturing looked like a modular trailer. It was put in a Township down in Bucks County and about six months after it was put in, some kids vandalized it and almost destroyed it with a bunch of baseball bats. We saw that and said this is the one we want to do, and we don't want that to happen. The good news was with the transfer to Modern Concrete, they now have a concrete unit that is as solid as a rock and has all the bells and whistles with the unit inside, and it's basically indestructible. That's the good thing about having the concrete unit. Priscilla said back in 1982, we were going to have a toilet in every park. Jack said we had them in every park, but they aren't permanent. Because we are bringing an electric line in to the composting toilet, we are looking at options on lighting on the pathway which he will discuss with Council. It would go through the tree line into the schoolhouse. They have some events where people have to walk through that tree line. Dave said at night time? Jack said it's more like dusk and they have to walk to the parking lot, so they are hoping to get some security lights up there.
- **Saucon Rail Trail** – Jack said we are putting the benches on the Rail Trail. Rett and Priscilla already have one. The seventh one is actually due to go up shortly. There's an area south of where the Oren's is, down to Bingen Road, where maybe another bench or two could go in there. People contacted him about those benches, but they also asked about benches at the dog park. He said we may be able to look into something like that. Priscilla said maybe someone will want a memorial for their dog. She asked why do they have three benches at the one area where the parking lot is? Jack said they wanted to have one as soon as you park so people could tie their shoes or do whatever. The other thing is that the trailhead makes it easier for people to come to the Rail Trail and just sit on the bench. It's kind of grouped with three of them on both sides like a park would be. Priscilla said are people requesting to have those benches? Jack

said he has two people who called him and said they'd like a bench and Jack put them on the waiting list. The benches are \$995.00. Priscilla said that's their memorial bench when they die. Jack said a woman said she'd like a bench at the dog park. If you have no objections, he'll try to put something together and bring it back to another meeting and see if we can come up with a recommendation to the Council. It could also be for the entire park. The Board thought that was a good idea.

Jack said the Saucon Rail Trail Oversight Commission has approved a Special Event Form which is similar to the one we use in the Township. The Township Council looked at that and was satisfied with the Rail Trail Oversight Commission reviewing and approving those events. If there are any events on the Township portion, they are satisfied with the Oversight Commission approving those events. In Hellertown and Upper Saucon, they wanted to have a little more oversight as their parks are adjacent to the SRT. They were concerned, especially in Hellertown, about having events on the SRT and having a conflicting event in Water Street Park. They want to have some oversight and so does Upper Saucon. The Commission has approved an agreement for a website design. The guy is actually working on that. We have the domain name of Saucon Rail Trail.org. As soon as that's ready, they will be looking at that. There's a lot of information about the Rail Trail, some maps and history and any information about events that are occurring on the SRT, so it should be pretty good. Priscilla said did you get it worked out about the geocaching issues? Jack said he did in the Township. They adopted the policy. They all sat down at one of these meetings and worked out the policy. He made sure that the geocachers were in compliance with the rules that were adopted, and they have to come to the Township if they want to place a geocache and they have to fill out the form. Upper Saucon, as he understands it, has geocaches located on the trail, but he doesn't know if they have a policy. They may get approval, but don't have an approval process like we do. Hellertown doesn't have a policy either. At some point, the Oversight Commission may want to do that, but it may be subject to local policies, and they have no problems with that.

Jack said he mentioned the 7th bench has been purchased. They will be installed shortly. The other thing they are working on is the Saucon Creek Watershed representatives have been at several meetings and they are assisting the Rail Trail Oversight Commission with base mapping of areas of the trail to identify sensitive areas, areas with invasives, and so on. That will assist with any clean-up projects that the Rail Trail is going to schedule.

Roger said is there going to be a review of the trailhead plan? Jack said he doesn't have that ready for tonight.

- **Grants** – Jack said no update.
- **Volunteer/Scout Projects** – Jack said no update.

7. Old Business:

- **Saucon Valley Recreation Partnership – Update** - Jack said he and Dave have been going to these meetings. If you have a chance, there's a quick survey which is accessible on the Township and Hellertown Borough website. It will take you five minutes to fill it out. There are a couple of questions about recreation needs, and we are also putting together an inventory of all the recreation programs. They will put something and put it on the website or in a brochure that you could pick up if you are interested in signing up for a program. Sheri asked about the summer programs with the Community Center. Jack said no one signed up for Steel

City Park last year, so they'll be at Southeastern and Town Hall Parks and they will be doing the recreation program for the tots in Seidersville Hall. That's a very popular program.

- **Easton Road Fields Improvements – Update** – Jack said the last time we discussed the Easton Road fields, the big issue here was access to the upper field. He had a plan and showed Easton Road, Mockingbird Hill, and the baseball fields. The Little League had an agreement and a lease with the church and constructed these two fields. The lower field backstop is in pretty good shape. The upper field was built, but the only access to it was a private lane which comes up from Easton Road. At one point, there was a guy at the lane who had a shotgun, and people were told they could not use the lane which effectively blocked the field access and they stopped using the field. When the property was bought by the Township, there were trees growing up in the infield. The goal on this was to get some parking off the street. If you want to use the lower field, you have to pull off Easton Road and park in the grass. The engineer came up with a plan for a driveway coming in off Mockingbird Hill Road and a parking lot with 27 parking spaces and two handicapped parking spaces with pathways to both fields. What he didn't realize when they were working on it, is the elevation of the parking area is so much higher than the field here, and it would require the installation of a very steep ramp down to the lower field. The other problem was that it had no access for people to get around to the front of the field for any spectator areas. It did meet ADA requirements. If you can get a disabled person to the field and it's the same surface, grass, and they can get down through there, it's fine, but it just didn't meet what they were looking for. You drop people here, and they still have to walk around and they couldn't put any bleachers for the spectators. The big problem with this is this is the property line that the church owns and the engineer said there is no access route to continue the pathway around there. They sent it back to the drawing board. They asked a couple of questions. The first thing they wanted to know and discuss was could they reorient the fields to maybe move home plate to a different orientation and have the field face this way to gain extra space. That did not work and didn't give us any more room. He asked the planner to see what it would look like if you moved the lower field in a westerly direction. The reason they did this one was to come up with a clearance between the church and the cemetery. The problem they had was that it bumped up against the fence along this private lane and that blocked off any access they had for the upper field. That wasn't satisfactory plus they would have needed a retaining wall down here on the left field side, which would have been pretty high. The other idea he asked them to look at was to figure out what the configuration would be if it was made to high school regulation size. That requires 400' from home plate out to centerfield. If you look at this drawing, that would require some pretty extensive earthmoving to push the fence back into the hill. This is a terraced area that goes up the slope here to the upper field. That would have gone back pretty far, and then the retaining wall, there would have been a lot of work. Those were two considerations, but he doesn't think those were the ones they wanted to go with. Then they had two more options drawn up. One of the things our own staff asked was why don't they take this parking lot and put it down here on Easton Road, as it could fit down here and see if you could get the ADA pathways to connect to the lower field from that parking lot. We asked them to look at that, and they came up with two plans, Option A and Option B. Option A, is broken into two phases. Phase I they would put the parking lot off of Easton Road, and come up the slope with pathways that terminate at spectator viewing areas on both sides of the field. That takes a lot less work than this would to put this in, so that was pretty satisfactory. The other thing they did on this was they took the upper field and the parking lot and called it Phase II. That would mean you concentrate on fixing the lower field up and put the parking lot in and work on the upper area as future development. The one thing about the upper field was it is undersized and it's never going to be ever made into a regulation Little League field. That's one consideration. The other problem with this field is on the side of the field going up to Route 78, there's a pretty big concrete retaining wall. There are some safety issues about the kids running into that. If that was to be used, they suggested we

put the driveway in from Mockingbird Hill Road and put in a small parking lot there. That would be Phase II. This would be pretty expensive to put a driveway and parking lot just to go to a field that he's not sure how it's going to be utilized. That's one of the considerations. With Plan A, it does take us to the fields, getting the players to the field and getting the ADA ramps and spectators can sit here and watch the game. The other thing that shows on Option B, the same thing, but with the high school field dimensions. You can see that it pushes the center field fence back and chops off a good portion of the upper field. Also, you would have a parking lot for the driveway in from Mockingbird Hill Road, which again is a lot of work for an undersized field. Dave said would the Township Council go along with any of these? Jack said he thinks they want to do something. Dave said wouldn't B be cheaper than A assuming you do Phase II? Jack said yes, B would be cheaper. Dave said assuming you finish Phase I and II, B would be cheaper. Jack said if you did this up here for Phase II, at least on Phase I you'd have a really good field with a parking lot down here which is what he wanted to show you. These other two the engineer did, he put the walkways in, but it still shows the upper parking area and the driveway in off of Mockingbird Hill Road. His thinking is if you can get this parking area off of Easton Road and you can get the people to both sides here with the ADA pathways, there really isn't any need to go to the expense of cutting through the trees and putting a parking area. Dave said he'd go with Option B. It doesn't make it sense to make it a high school grade field. Jack said it will take a lot of work to do that. Dave said the problem is right now the league designates these as practice only, so if we could actually make one of them useful, that would be great. T-ball would not come up here to the upper field at all. They have games at Dimmick Park in every corner. So to have a T-ball field here doesn't make a lot of sense, they would never use it. They play in little squares in the park and the parents are there and the kids are running around, and it's a whole different thing from an organized game. He has a meeting with the League on Thursday and he can see what they think. He thinks they will say let's have one useful field as it's so far away from Hellertown and Dimmick Park, and they may go for Option B. He's pretty sure it may be cheaper just to go with this one. Jack said it's being used by the Legion by now. Dave said just for practice. Jack said he thinks they are going to start playing games there. Dave said they only practice on it. Bill said if there's a need for it, we could get a softball field that would fit within the measurements. Dave said the softball field at Dimmick is rarely used. It's a regulation softball field. Jack said the guys said in order to do that, you'd have to skin the infield and have a portable, moveable mound. Dave said Dimmick's field is a softball field with dugouts. Jack said when you say Option B, you say moving the fence out to the high school regulation. Dave said that's Legion. Once the kids turn 13, they play on regular baseball fields. This would work and the Legion adult baseball and professional high school, they are all the same field at that point. Jack said the good thing about that is the high school field with this kind of weather if they had games, it would be unplayable. Dave said it's so close to Polk Valley Run. Jack said a year or two years ago, they were looking for another field and someone looked at it and said it would need a lot of work to meet the PIAA standards. This would give us really a good field for multiple uses, the high school, Jr. and Sr. Legion. It would also address and alleviate any of the issues about the upper field use and the conflicts with the residents up there. That field was kind of shoehorned in there. It wasn't really thought out, but they were trying to use the area they had leased and just stuck that up there. If you feel that way, that's fine with him. Dave said he'll pass it by and let Jack know. Jack said is this group satisfied to make a recommendation so he can pass it on to the Planner? We are going to discuss this at the Council meeting on the 20th? Dave said let's see what they say first. There's T-ball, Major and Farm, and Farm and Major could use the field the way it exists now. The Dimmick fields fit those two. They are Farm and Major, they have a need for the big kid's size. Dave will let Jack know what they say. We like Option B. Jack said okay. Dave said it may be the cheaper version. Bill said could we use the hillside to put bleachers in there for access rather than having a path down or is that too far away? Dave said it doesn't meet ADA. Jack said you wouldn't want anything up here. Bill said couldn't we

use the hillside? Jack said he wouldn't suggest it. Sheri said how much does it leave us in the back? Jack said you are pushing right up to the hill. As you come around here, you are basically going into the bank.

- **Reading Road Trailhead** – Jack said they had a couple of different options that were discussed. The Planner has to do some surveys and wetland delineations. They are going to come back with the plan and at that point it will go to Council. There is temporary parking up there, and the port-a-johns are in. Once that gets in, they hope to have a volunteer who will do a kiosk. If you've seen the trailhead in Hellertown, there is a wood kiosk put in there by Water Street. It's right on the trail. Jack said they did a beautiful job. Roger said one of the runners who runs from Upper Saucon to Hellertown and back inquired as to whether he might donate a water fountain. He thought about the location being the Reading Road Trailhead. Jack said we have a water service right on Reading Road. That will not be difficult to run the line into the trailhead property and we'll work with this gentleman.

8. **New Business**

- **August meeting at Steel City Park** - Jack said this will take place on August 6th at 7:00 pm.

9. **Adjournment**: The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

10. **Next Meeting**: July 2nd at Polk Valley Park.