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Lower Saucon Township  
Parks & Recreation Board

Meeting Minutes

August 6, 2012

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1. **Meeting Called To Order** – The meeting was called to order by Jack Cahalan at Steel City Park at 7:00 PM.
2. **Roll Call: Present** –Tom Butera, Vice Chair; Sheri Herman, Priscilla Oren, members; Jack Cahalan, Staff Liaison; Valerie Liggett, Township Planner; Dan Miller, Township Engineer. **Absent:** Dave Spirk, Scott Schanzenbach, Bill Ross, Judie Rossell. No Quorum.
4. **Citizen Non-Agenda Items** - None
5. **Projects:**
  - Steel City Park Planned Improvements – Jack welcomed everyone and introduced the Parks & Recreation Board members and staff who were present. Jack said this park plan has taken a couple of years to put together. A piece of property on the other side of the fence near the pavilion, which is about 9,000 square feet, was acquired back in 2009. It completes the full square outline of the park. That will give us some additional property we can utilize and that's where the basketball court will go. The other thing we did was to apply for a Park & Open Space grant to Northampton County in 2010. They received a grant of \$127,771.00, which will be used for these park improvements. In 2008, they held a meeting at the firehouse across the street, and the purpose of that meeting was to hear what you wanted done with this park. We also applied for a grant for composting toilets. We have been using portable toilets in Steel City, Polk Valley, and at the Heller Homestead Park. Southeastern and Town Hall Parks have permanent restroom facilities. They wanted to get something more permanent in the other parks. They applied to DCNR in 2011 and received \$90,000.00 in grants from the State for three (3) composting toilets. There will be a men's and a women's unit. That's going to be part of the park development. Most of the work is going to be done by Public Works, which lowers the cost. They've done good work in other parks at a very low cost for the Township. They were held up this year because of the Halloween storm back in October. They were cutting down trees from October through April. They have been working in Kingston Park and trying to finish that off. This will be the main target in 2013. They will also have to put out some of this work to bid.
  - Valerie Liggett, Township Planner – Valerie said the planning process for this was based on what they understood were your responses from the 2008 community visioning session. She will go over some of those higher responses. People took turns responding to a certain amount of questions they posed and they responded and then voted on the responses to those questions. The high number of votes, the top three, were read aloud and discussed at the end. She'll read some of them.
  - What do you like most about Steel City Park as it is today? The highest number of responses were:
    - small and local
    - simple and undeveloped
    - the basketball court
    - the park programs

Based on this, they tried to maintain those aspects of the park, keep the basketball courts, and tried to keep it relatively simple.

- What do you like least about Steel City Park as it is today?
  - One of the highest votes was for the Little League field to be refurbished into a practice field. It won't be a full game field and won't be suitable for actual games or tournament play. Its purpose is for practice.
  - Maintaining the basketball court
  - Proposed sand volleyball court.
  - No public restroom. The restroom facilities would be located in the center of the park.
  
- What would you like to see happen in the future for Steel City Park?
  - The highest response was better enforcement of park rules.
  - Safety was a big issue.
  - One thing people discussed a lot was the completion of the fence around the outside of the park. One thing shown on the plan is a complete 6' fence around the outside of the park that can be secured in the evening when the park is supposed to be closed. This will provide more security for the park.
  - Another response to that question was better maintenance of the playground and service areas.
  - A big response from the Fire Department was for a sand volley ball court.

Those were the top responses that were received from the visioning session.

- Jack Cahalan, Township Manager

On the plan it mentions a pavilion. They've been discussing relocating the existing pavilion. Jack showed a picture of the type of pavilion they would to install at the park. He said this was discussed with Council and they were satisfied with that. It will also be used at Kingston and Polk Valley Parks, and will be a uniform structure used at the three parks. Valerie said there is an ongoing discussion right now about relocating the play structures. Jack said they are going to have to be relocated. They are evaluating those to see what can be replaced and updated to save some money instead of buying a new play structures. Valerie said to replace one of the structures would be between \$35,000.00 and \$38,000.00. Jack said these are all inspected regularly by the Township PW staff. There were a couple of pieces that have been replaced and they have been doing this all along. Jack showed a sample of the rubberized mulch that will be used around the play structures. Jack said this product is used in the other parks. It used to be an annual cost for them to come in and put a layer of the new wood mulch down every year. It gets worn down especially in places like underneath the swings. There was a cost to do that in each of the parks every year, so they looked into the rubberized mulch product which is made out of cut-up tires. It's a very safe, non-toxic product that they checked out thoroughly before they purchased it. It lasts for a life-time; so we don't have to replace it. If you've ever been with your children in the parks that have it, it's almost like being on a trampoline. You can jump on it, and it's good for impact and maintenance. They also have a border around it and an entrance that allows ADA participants to get inside the play area. They will be doing this in Steel City Park.

Jack said the composting toilet they are planning to install is a product called Bio-Sun. They've been looking at that for about two years. The main reason they selected that product was because there's no maintenance required and no odor. It's composted into a vault below the unit and it only has to be cleaned out every six or seven years. The State awarded us grant money for the toilets, and we're going to install the first unit at Kingston Park and next year

we'll install it at Steel City Park. It has everything inside it, a men's and women's unit, standard bathroom fixtures, and he showed where it would be located on the plan. We have to work out whether or not the unit will be locked at night so there's no vandalism. This will be a permanent structure. A resident asked if it was going to have running water? Jack said it requires no water. It uses hand sanitizers. It will have electricity that runs a fan.

Valerie said there was some concern about the sand volleyball court attracting cats. A resident said there are at least eight cats roaming around. Valerie said there will be a 6' fence around the outside. A resident said he has fences and the cats get up and over the fence. Valerie said there are a couple of options. This was requested by the firehouse and they could be responsible for maintaining it. A resident asked why do they want it? Another resident said for beach volleyball. Donna Louder said why can't they the rubberized mulch down, won't that save in cost? Jack said they could look into that. A resident said he doesn't mind the sand, but there are a lot of cats. Donna Louder said the kids are going to see the sand and want to go in it with their trucks. Jack said in Hellertown they have a sand volleyball court and when it's not being used for volleyball, there are little boys and girls playing in the sand court there. They will look into it further and come back with more information.

Jack said the other issue is the lighting. Some of the pole structures are going to have to be moved. Over on the basketball court, which is going to be along Riverside Drive, the issue that has been discussed is whether that should have lighting so people can play in the evening. Donna Louder said yes, but if they play in the evening, they play until 2 or 3 am in the morning. Jack said the lights will be turned off at a reasonable time with a timer. Donna Louder said they don't care. Jack said it will be pitch black. This park will be closed from dusk to dawn and there will be no lighting in the park. They aren't going to lock the fence, but there will be a gate on the park and a sign saying "Park Closed". If there is an issue after dark, that's something the police will take care of. On the basketball court, are you interested in having a lighted basketball court so the kids could play later in the summer? There will be a timer on it so it goes off at 9 or 10 pm. They do that at Town Hall. A resident said aren't you conflicting yourself saying it's dusk to dawn, and now you let them play basketball until 9 or 10 pm. Jack said the rest of the park area will be closed. The park area at Town Hall is closed, but there's a lighted baseball field and you could have a softball game going on. They put it along Riverside Drive so it could be monitored. Paul Miller said that's right by his house and he hears what's going on. He does not mind a basketball court, but lighting may be a problem. Jack said okay, we hear you. A resident said at night there is a lot of foul language. Jack said they are looking for info and they hear what you are saying about the lighting. A resident said during the daytime the kids are using the park, and at night, the older kids hang out there. They drag the benches all over the place.

- Dan Miller, Township Engineer

Dan Miller said he's coordinating all the permits with everyone. They have been talking with PennDOT. They have less right-of-way than they thought they did. They have a 32' right-of-way. A resident asked about the parking on Riverside Drive. Dan said it's just the matter of getting PennDOT's permission to put in a strip of parking, which would go to the edge of their right-of-way. Right now, they don't have the best of edging on the road, so it's their plan to create a better shoulder and swale to get the water away from the road and it drains better, and they will accept that and encourage them to go on with the project. Dan said most of the poles can stay in their current location. One of the poles has to go further to the west. He showed the group where the parking was. There's going to be infiltration facilities to capture the water from the parking lot and basketball court and general runoff. There's a 50' right-of-way on Lewis Avenue, of which 25' is becoming part of the park. There's 25' on the other side that has

been vacated. The Township gave it away; and they are taking it back as a road. There's a little strip by the volleyball court that was also another avenue from the early 1900 plans that created Steel City and that will be vacated as well and will become part of the plan. Paul Miller said the vacated street that goes through here, you can see this property on Schwab and asked if it was vacated awhile ago? Dan said it was vacated in 2010. Donna Louder said it was vacated back in the 70's. Jack agreed. Paul said he moved here in 2008. His question was, does this part of the vacation go to his house? Dan said not currently. Paul said this was all one property, broken down into three or four lots. His deed says two lots for his house, and the deed for this might have been a third lot. When they sold him the house, they said they sold this to the Township. He knew about that when he bought the house. He assumed since the street was vacated and this house actually has their driveway on Schwab. Dan said he is going to work on the assumption that the entire road is vacated. It's possible yours has been vacated. Once it has been vacated, you have to do a quit-claim deed. You have to contact all people who have rights to that, people that use it as a means of access. Paul said they can talk about this later.

Donna Louder said is the fence going to be high where the baseball field is? Valerie said there will be a large backstop. Donna Louder said even though it's a practice field, we do have older kids that play baseball and those balls are flying at the houses. Jack said with the type of backstop they will be installing it is designed to keep the foul balls from flying over the backstop, so it won't hit cars, the balls won't go flying. Valerie said the backstop arches and goes over. She showed where all the gates were located. Jack said one important thing they wanted to put in here was the walking trail. That was designed to get more people in the park; and for all of you to get in the park and walk around and then you can be the eyes and ears and if you see something, you can report it. If there is someone in the park who is vandalizing it, they want it reported to the Police. There have been acts of vandalism here at the park. They want to keep the park looking really nice. In order to do that, they need everyone's cooperation. The walking trail gives you a good excuse to be in the park. A resident said the kids will be here, an officer will drive by, and then the kids are gone. It's like they station each other with their cell phones. As soon as the officer is gone, the kids come back. Someone said that when there are things taking place at the firehouse, the kids don't want to go into a boring function and they come to the park.

- Vandalism and Security Issues

Jack said they are putting in an application for a grant for gaming funds for a video security system. They plan on installing at least six video cameras within the park, if they get the grant, or even if they don't get the money. That video would be transmitted to the police station. It would be wireless so the police officer if he's in his cruiser, he can pull the recording up. This will also help to keep the park in good shape. A resident said police presence here is great, but they can't be here 24/7. Jack said the videos cameras will be vandal proof. Karen Bleam said a lot of the kids come from the Bethlehem. They are not from around here. Jack said they have a lot of people from all over using the Township Park, but that doesn't mean they have to destroy anything. A resident asked how long the recordings would be kept? Jack said that's something that has to be looked into. If you call, they can look into it and see what is on the recording.

When the ball field is finished, it will be treated and look like the ball fields in the rest of the Township parks. It will be really nice. There will be some landscaping. Valerie explained about the buffering and the trees and shrubs that would be put in. Matt McClaren asked what kind of chain link fence would be used? Valerie said similar to what's there now. The same resident said you see that in the city, and it kind of promotes kids coming in here and hanging

out at the park. He thinks if you put a like a split rail fence that may work and it may look a little nicer.

Jack said there will be gates, but they didn't say they would be locked. A resident said there is vandalism all over the place. Jack said if they are going to be locked, you need someone to lock them and unlock them in the morning. In Hellertown, one of their police officers has to probably go to Dimmick Park and unlock the restrooms in the morning. A resident said they could do motion lights. Jack said he doesn't know if the residents would like that as animals could set them off.

Priscilla Oren said in Florida they are members of a "Friends of Parks" group for their local parks and she doesn't know if LST has done that yet. Jack said we have an Adopt-a-Road Program, but not "Adopt-a-Park". Priscilla Oren said that's something that you may want to consider. In their group they have people who look out for the parks, and are in the park. Rett Oren said the people take ownership of the parks. If you don't keep the park locked, they are going to be in there. Jack said that's something we can work on. A resident said what he's hearing is night time activity is a big no-no. Donna Louder said in her opinion, the park is going to have some kind of lighting available. We need to make it more constructive for the kids in the Township as they don't have anything to do. Make sure you have a video camera on the entrance to the bathroom. She asked if there will be electricity in the pavilion? Jack said they weren't proposing any lighting for the pavilion. If they are reserved, it would be during the daytime. Donna Louder asked if there be some source of electricity during the daytime and will there be any charcoal grills available? Jack said they can look into the electricity and the grills which would be a good idea. Donna Louder said you did a good job with everything.

A resident said all it would take is someone to call the cops. Another resident said at one time they had ice skating, sled riding and Friday night movies and no one cared if they were there at the night time. The kids come here to vandalize, they get a kick out of that; not just in the parks, but anywhere. The skateboarders at the school create a lot of damage in a year. To have a park open at night with constructive things, he doesn't think anyone would mind. Donna Louder said how about lights off automatically at 10:00 pm? Jack said they can do that.

Sheri said if we were able to produce a more of an organized outline of what Friends of the Park consists of, do you think the community here would be willing to work together and communicate about and take that on as an option. She understands what goes on here is frustrating, and they want to promote the park and provide more activities here, but she feels we're getting a mixed message. Yes, we want good stuff and a great park; however, the better you make it, the more people we're going to get in and damage it. The police can help out, and maybe as a community, you can come together and have an organized group helping out. Will you all take the next step to keep the park nice by all working together and assisting the police department to keep the vandals and non-locals out and maybe scaring kids - holding them accountable. She understands that there is the fear that you don't want the kid to know where you live, or who made the phone call. If it's a community effort, and there are cameras, it's going to take a community to punish the child.

A resident asked Sheri when is the last time she checked out this park at 9 pm? Sheri said she had clients in this community. She is here till 9 pm at night many times. She's very familiar with what goes on. That's what we need to determine. Are we going to cause more trouble by fixing this park up? The residents said no. A resident said it's a bunch of teenagers hanging out here, smoking cigarettes, using bad language and riding skateboards and thinking they are cool. He will personally stand down here. It's going to take something like a block watch. You see someone in there after hours, you call the police. Sheri said she doesn't want you to be angry

two years from now that the parks been improved, and now you have more trouble. We want to come up with the solution in the best interest of improving the park and improving the community. How do we do that other than posting arms guard here from 9am to 4am? A resident said by looking nicer, it will improve things more. Donna Louder said once you put those trails in, you are going to be bringing in more people. Video cameras themselves are an ace in the hole, that's great. She thinks the kids are bored and once there is something constructive, it's going to turn around a little bit.

A resident asked about the timeline for the park? Dan said it will take a couple of weeks in the spring and a couple of weeks in the summer. They don't expect this to take very long. They have to wait for it to get stabilized. Once that's completed, they can do the swale, but they can't construct it until the rest of the site is finished. Jack said they may have to shut the park down temporarily. It could be a year until everything grows in. A resident said it may be a way to get rid of some of the kids. Jack said some of the paving of the trails may go in first. Dan said they are using regular paving asphalt with underground infiltration.

A resident asked if anyone has considered putting in a community bulletin board? Jack said they will have bulletin boards in all of the parks and he will look into having a section that could be used to post community notices. Valerie will have to select an appropriate place for it. It's usually where people park their cars and enter the park. There will be a new park sign, and it will also say park open dawn to dusk.

Jack said the Parks and Recreation Board are all volunteers. They meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of every month at 7:00 pm at Town Hall. If you have any issues, bring them to this body. If it's during the week, call him at Town Hall. We want to keep this park looking as good as the other parks in the Township and we can do it with your help.

6. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.
7. **Next Meeting:** September 10, 2012 @ 7:00 pm