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Lower Saucon Township  
Parks & Recreation Board

Meeting Minutes

November 4, 2013

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1. **Meeting Called To Order** – The meeting was called to order by Dave Spirk at 7:00 PM at Town Hall.
2. **Roll Call**  
  
**Present** – Dave Spirk, Gary Gorman, Tom Butera, Alan Hall, Priscilla Oren, members; Jack Cahalan, Staff Liaison  
  
**Absent:** Bill Ross, Bernadette Fong
3. **Approval of Minutes:** The minutes from the September 9, 2013 meeting were approved on a motion by Alan, second by Tom.
4. **Citizen Non-Agenda Items:** None
5. **Projects:**
  - **Town Hall Park** – Jack showed photos of the repairs that are needed on the pavilion and said that a contractor has been approved to do the work. Also, the Cub Scout Cub Car Rally has been approved for Saturday, November 11, 2013 at the park.
  - **Southeastern Park** – No update
  - **Steel City Park** – Jack said this project is scheduled for next year.
  - **Heller Homestead** – No update
  - **Polk Valley Park** – Jack said that the Council approved the pavilion, tot lot and proposed future location for the composting toilet. Jack handed out the report from the agronomist who completed his annual inspection of the turf conditions on the multi-purpose and ball fields at PVP, Town Hall Park, and also at Easton Road Fields. Jack said that he also made several minor changes to our Park Maintenance Policy. Jack handed out the estimate they had gotten from Dura-Edge for the infield dirt for the baseball fields and said that the dirt is very expensive and they will try to do one field at a time.
  - **Kingston Park** – Jack said Kingston Park was dedicated and officially opened on Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>. They finished the composting toilet, lighting and the pavilion. Jack said that they have a Girl Scout troop who agreed to adopt the garden and they have been given training by our planner on how to monitor and weed it.
  - **Easton Road Fields** – The engineer is finagling the plans for the parking area.
  - **Saucon Rail Trail** – Jack said they found a Boy Scout who is interested in constructing the kiosk for the trailhead for an Eagle Scout project and a nearby resident contacted him and said they would donate the cost of the materials.
  - **Dravec Parcel** – Jack said he is waiting for an alternate parking plan from the engineer. Parking on the parcel that the Township owns made not be safe due to the bridge crossing and we may have to look for another area on the uphill side.
  - **Grants** – Jack said that the owners of the three parcels have accepted the Township's offer to sell the properties to us. We also submitted the application for Act 13 funding for the three (3) Polk Valley Road/Reservoir Road properties.
  - **Volunteer/Scout Projects** – Covered under Saucon Rail trail
6. **Old Business:**
  - **Polk Valley/Reservoir Road Properties** – Covered under grants. There was a discussion about the park and open space uses for these properties.

- **Friends of the Park** –Priscilla said that she will work with Jack on this. Jack explained about the project that the SCWA and Master Gardeners are working on for the Reading Drive Trailhead property.

7. **New Business:**

- **Agronomist Report on Field Inspections** – covered under Polk Valley Park.
- **Metal Detecting in Township Parks** – Jim Bongiovanni was present at the meeting to speak about metal detecting. Jack said that he invited Jim as one of the Council Members had run into him out at one of the parks and was under the impression that the Township had a policy prohibiting this activity on Township property. Jack advised that he had recommended several years ago that the Township prohibit it on historic properties like the Lutz-Franklin Schoolhouse and the Heller Homestead but Council took no action at that time. Jim is an expert in this area and can provide us with the information we need to formulate recommendations for the Council. Jim said as far as historic areas are concerned, they are off-limits. If the historic societies are interested in locating historical objects on their properties for their displays they will help them out if requested. As far as metal detecting on Township parks, if the right group is out there they can police their own. He suggested that the Township issue permits to these people and keep the fee between \$20-\$30 per year. He said he has a permit from Bucks County and whenever he sees that there is a permit available from a local government he gets it so that he can go about his hobby peacefully. He said if the park has a historic site on it that should be off-limits. Most of the people he knows around here are hobbyists not treasure hunters. He would suggest that if we do allow it we do not make a big announcement like “come metal detect in our parks”. Word of mouth will get the word out very quickly as he personally knows about 50 people who are waiting to hear from him how this meeting went tonight. Tom asked why would parks not want you to do metal detecting? Jim said because as with any hobby there are people who do not do it correctly. Jim said he finds coins, buttons, buckles, etc. that are 300 years old 3” down in the ground. There is no need for a 3 foot hole in this hobby. The problem is that there are treasure hunters who don’t know what they are doing and they hear a sound and the next thing they are doing is digging a gigantic hole and they are not filling it. When you allow people like him into the parks they will fill in the holes, they will pick up the trash. Jim said 97% of the metal detecting individuals around here do it correctly. Tom asked how deep do the metal detectors go? Jim said they don’t go very deep. The expensive one that he has can pick a coin up 10” down in the ground. He has seen golfers make a divot in the ground that is deeper than they would go to remove something. Jim said that there are no prohibitions against metal detecting in any of the public parks around here but he still gets chased off of them from time to time. While there are no laws against it they can always fall back on that it will “destroy park property” which is the minute one of our tools goes in the ground to cut the plug and flip it back. When the 97% of us who do it right flip that plug back down the grass doesn’t die and you don’t even know we were there. Dave said okay, so we allow this in parks; we issue permits; no historical sites allowed, what about playing fields? Jim said that most of them are smart enough to know not to go onto baseball, soccer, football fields during the seasons they are in use. Jim said you could put in a stipulation that during the season, no detecting on the playing fields. Dave said that the seasons never really end on those fields. Jim said then you say no detecting on the playing fields. Most of the park playing fields are new and they prefer the older parks anyway. Unless you want a group to come in and work with the historic groups, Jim said I would not let any old person go on the historic sites to detect. Dave said if we allowed detecting on the playing fields that could potentially be dangerous, somebody could step in a hole. There should be specifications on how deep; how wide; not in the shrubs, the wildflowers etc. Jack handed out guidelines on metal detecting that he got from the Monmouth and Burlington County Park Systems in New Jersey and asked Jim if he would have any problems with these guidelines? Jim said that it is much easier for him to hunt in NJ. These rules are stuff that they already abide by. There is a digger’s rule of ethics. We have to present ourselves in a certain way as people don’t understand the hobby. When they hear “hole” they think manhole but we mean a hole the size of a coin or

button. We do provide a service at some of these parks because we will remove and take away any pieces of trash, such as old cans, etc. Jim said once they know they are allowed in the parks, they will police their own. Jim said these guidelines are perfect, that's why they do not have any problems over there. The rule that if anything historic is found it has to be turned in is important because he found a Civil War era belt buckle in a church in Richlandtown – it had no value to him but he turned it into the church and they put it in the local historic society. The 97% will do exactly like he did. The remaining 3% are going to be knuckleheads anyway. Priscilla asked Jim what the name of his group was? Jim said the Upper Bucks History Hounds. She asked if there was a national organization for metal detectors? Jim said that there was and he can provide that information to Jack. There is a national task force that helps navigate the rules in the states. There are a few shows on TV right now. Jim said one of them was "Dig Wars". The people on that show are friends of his and he has arranged from them to come up in this area and film a show at the Cascade Lodge. Jim said that he could arrange events at sites that you want to bring attention to and generate revenue for the Parks & Recreation program. Jim said that there is a national federation and a person by the name of Dick Stout is the expert. He has written several books on the subject. It used to be that metal detecting was allowed everywhere but opinions have changed and now it's more restricted. Rett asked how many metal detectors there are in the Lehigh Valley? Jim said hundreds in the LV and hundreds of thousands in the US. They all connect via websites, meetings, etc. He goes to an event in Virginia called "Diggin in Virginia" where they pay to go on a farm for a weekend. He is one of 300 people going down to a 2,000 acre farm where there were Civil War battles to hunt over a week-end and they are each paying \$250 to go there. So there is money to be made if you are interested. For now, it would be very simple for you to say if you want to come in our parks, you pay for a permit. Jim asked if anyone had ever heard of anyone being hurt in a park because of a metal detector. The members said they have never heard of that. Priscilla said that this is similar to what we did with the geocaching which was a new thing and this group put together guidelines and recommended that there be a requirement that they register with the Township. Dave said that if we allow metal detecting in parks and we find out there's problems we will be back here discussing how to fix it. Gary asked if there were any restrictions as far as time? Jack said that our parks are only open during the daytime. Jim said they are usually in the parks when no one is there as it is a solitary activity. They would not be there during a soccer game. Priscilla asked if Jim was recommending that we have a permit policy for people to go on our parks? Jim said yes, and if they do not have a permit you have to get off the site, period. Priscilla asked who would monitor that? Jack said that if the LSTPD come to Easton Road Fields and see Jim metal detecting they can ask to see his permit. Tom said so if a resident sees someone in the park metal detecting they can call the police about it? Dave said it's the same as a solicitor or someone who wants to use the pavilion up in the park. Priscilla said it is the same as the permit they issue for geo-caching. Jim said it is a good way to track who is there. You will know who I am immediately. You'll have my name and address. Tom said if we need someone to work with the historical societies we'll know who to call. Jim said that the restriction on no digging deeper than 6' may have to be looked at because he finds quarters all the time at 8-10". The problem isn't the depth of the hole, it's the width. You don't dig a hole, you dig a horseshoe shaped plug that you can flip back with all the dirt still attached so the grass doesn't die. He uses what's called a "Lesche" digging tool. He has what looks like a shovel but actually is a tool with a long handle and a garden trowel on the end because his back and knees hurt from too many years working on a lobster boat. Jim said if you let them into the parks we will police them and ask other metal detectors if they have a permit. Priscilla asked if they would have the permit on them? Jim said he carries his with him. Dave said it's like a fishing license. Jim said he will fax over a copy of the permit that he has from Bucks County. Rett asked if they get permission from churches? Jim said yes. What about cemeteries? Jim said cemeteries are off-limits, they never go into cemeteries. Jim said he has 24 churches between Hellertown and Ottsville where he has permission to go on a metal detect. Priscilla asked if there are any liabilities in giving this permission, if someone gets hurt? Jim said it would be the same if someone got hurt playing baseball, etc. you have coverage

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for that, he's sure. He carries Hold Harmless forms with him. Dave thanked Jim for coming to our meeting tonight and providing this information. He said that we will talk about it a little more tonight and then have another meeting. Jack said that this body is a recommending group for the Council and ultimately it is up to the Council to adopt any rules or guidelines.

9. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.
10. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be on December 2, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.