

**WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP
PARK & RECREATION BOARD MEETING
MILES PARK - PARKS AND RECREATION BUILDING
TUESDAY, APRIL 5th, 2022 AT 7:00 PM**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joanne Crawford, Kevin Kissling, Tom Manley (via phone), Meghan Hector, Megan O'Rourke

LIAISONS PRESENT:

Laura Boyle Nester (BOS), Allison Boyle (WAC)

TWP. STAFF PRESENT:

Tom Blomstrom (*P&R Director*), Robert Vandegrift (*P&R – Minutes*), Nick Delaney (*P&R – Training*)

ALSO PRESENT:

Jason O'Neill (WGSL), Bernadette Waters (WGSL), Nick Bell (Public), Joe Fox (Public), John Westerfer (Public), Vincent Ferst (Public), Elaine Susko (Public), Katie Mackin (Public) and Laura and Alex Gallo (Public)

1) CALL TO ORDER

- a. The Whitemarsh Township Park & Recreation Board Meeting was called to order on Tuesday, April 5th, 2022, at 7:01 pm, by Joanne Crawford.

2) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3) ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Appointments
 - i. Megan Hector – Welcome! – Term through 12-31-25

4) UPDATED 2022 PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEMBER LIST

- a. Joanne Crawford asked if there were any additions or changes to the list and received no changes.

5) APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 1st, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

- a. The February 1st minutes were motioned for acceptance by Tom Manley and was seconded by Kevin Kissling. Motion passed unanimously.

6) PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD LIAISON – COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Washington Street Study Steering Committee (Liaison: Kevin Kissling)
 - i. Kevin alerted the group to the fact that the committee had its final presentation/listening session on March 3rd and that all presentation files are on the website. The feedback received was similar to previous meetings and touched on flooding, traffic and parking. The final committee meeting is scheduled for April 11th on Zoom.
- b. Open Space Committee (Liaison: Tom Manley)
 - i. Tom Manley mentioned that there have been no meetings since the most recent Park and Rec Board meeting, but they are hoping to meet in April.
- c. Whitemarsh Athletic Association (WAA) – Annual Meeting – 3-28-22 (Liaison: Tom Manley)

- i. Tom Manley reported that the annual meeting was held on Zoom the week before this meeting and included a large portion of the local groups. The call had about two dozen participants who had the chance to listen to a nurse from University of Pennsylvania hospital give a presentation on concussions in youth.
- d. 4th of July Parade Committee – (Liaison: Meghan Hector)
 - i. Meghan reported that there had been a meeting on March 24th. An overview of the previous parade occurred, the committee is off to a good start and there's another meeting scheduled next month.

7) WHITEMARSH ART CENTER REPORT

- a. Welcome Allison Boyle – New Director of Development
 - i. Allison thanked everyone for the warm welcome and provided a brief rundown on her background prior to joining the Art Center. She began in January following the absence of a director for a few months. Art runs in her family, as her mother worked for Woodmere Art Museum.
 - ii. Allison then reported that the Art Center is in good shape, especially considering the pandemic situation over the last couple of years. The staff is currently busy over at the Art Center as there are a number of programs currently running and they recently hosted a cancer support group at the Cedar Grove Barn, where they put together mosaics by breaking old dishes. They look forward to the upcoming events that they're taking part in, including Whitmarsh Township Day, Chestnut Hill Garden Festival, Plein Air competition, classes on Saturdays and the re-emergence of their summer camp!

8) PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- a. Whitmarsh Township Parks & Recreation Director, Tom Blomstrom, presented the report, as submitted.
 - i. Tom is excited for the annual Lion's Club Egg Hunt at Miles Park.
 - ii. Also taking place on April 9th is the Wells St. Spring Clean-up.
 - iii. The department has continued its outreach with email blasts including Staycation, Nature's Touch and Health Hub. Also did e-blasts for Black History Month.
 - iv. We're happy to welcome Nick Delaney, who has a degree from Temple and started with us on 3/21.
 - v. I'm happy to share that we received two state awards for excellence in parks for Magic Mcsnowflake and our Spotted Lanternfly program. Robert Vandegrift and Jon Walker went to the PRPS conference to accept the awards. It's always nice to receive one, and we're humbled to receive two.
 - vi. Thank you to the Union League for their donation of the tables and chairs that are in use tonight.
 - vii. Through the DHS license for the Cedar Grove Summer Camp, we were able to receive a grant from the Office of Childhood Development and Early Learning for \$155,840 for the camp to cover costs for this year and back to 2020. Kudos to Rob for his research and action on this grant.
 - viii. MLK Jr. Clothing Drive went well, as we collected over 6,000 pounds of clothing in 547 bags. Total amount earned from donation was \$906.58 which will be go towards Township Day and Colonial Neighborhood Council.
 - ix. Valenteenie's Day occurred on February 14th and the McSnowflake's were reunited!
 - x. Spring Shredding Day ran on March 5th, 2022 at the Miles Park Lower Lot from 8am – Noon. We collected 32,700 lbs. of paper and over 300 cars came through. Residents were generous,

donating \$3,982 day of donations, which was split between the department and the Whitemarsh Emergency Services.

- xi. Teenie Shamrocks Day ran on March 10th at the Cedar Grove Barn, with 20 children and parents coming out for the mini event.
- xii. The March Eat and Enjoy Social Series had 54 registrations to see the King Brothers perform for St. Patrick's Day. We're looking forward to the next Eat and Enjoy Social scheduled for May.
- xiii. Township Day is on 4/23 at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School's Victory Fields from 12pm to 5pm. We have 75 participating vendor groups. There's great entertainment booked, such as magician, juggler, clowns, stilt walker, Aqua String Band, and more. A slew of good rides including new ones in Big Baller, Reaction Wall and the Wild One Obstacle Course. Fun Fieldz is returning this year with the combine, Home Run Derby and Bubble Land. Wristbands are on sale starting tomorrow. \$20 beforehand and \$25 on the day of the event. We've had a great response with sponsorship this year.
- xiv. Concert at the courts is upcoming on May 12th.
- xv. Mini Spring Fling is scheduled for May 24th with two morning sessions.
- xvi. The Miracle Nature Trail Feasibility study has closed and went to the Board of Supervisors and they approved the plan.
- xvii. Miles Park Phase II meeting this Thursday 4/7, which is the first big meeting for the second phase.
- xviii. At this point, Tom ended his presentation and allowed board members to ask questions.
 - (a) Kevin Kissling asked how the registration for summer camps have been going. Tom had Robert Vandegrift answer for Cedar Grove Summer camp and he stated that the camp has been filled since the start of 2022 and has a lengthy waitlist. Tom then answered that Miles Park Summer Camp is filling and has been doing better than it has in recent years.
 - (b) Kevin followed up his question with a question regarding if the camps will be doing trips this year. Tom Blomstrom answered that they will be and are looking forward to adding that special bit back to the camps.

No further questions from the Board. Kevin Kissling motioned to accept the Director's Report. Tom Manley seconds. The report was accepted unanimously.

b. NEW BUSINESS

- i. Whitemarsh Girls Softball League Lights Presentation by Jason O'Neil
 - (a) Tom Blomstrom introduced Jason O'Neil, basic presentation points, and explained that discussions for this potential project began in February and March between Tom, Jason and Bernadette Waters. The recommendation given for the project was to follow the same process as the Whitemarsh Little League when they wanted to implement lights over at Miles Park. Tom ended by thanking the WGSL and the neighbors for their conduct thus far in the process.
 - (b) Jason O'Neil started off the presentation by introducing himself and Bernadette Waters.
 - (c) He then began the presentation by stating the current state of the WGSL as having renewed levels of interest over the last six to eight years and this has led to the registration of nearly 250 families that practice and play on four or more fields as they utilize all possible fields, both township, school and other.
 - (d) With the renewed interest, Jason is seeking to improve the experience for girls and their first step is lights. The WGSL is hoping to start with temporary lights at Cedar Grove Park as a test for their feasibility. The light towers would be used to extend time to play by about an hour each night in the April and May, as June would be light until they finished the games.

- The hope is to only use two towers for each field, but four if needed. The lights would be installed as soon as they are approved and removed immediately following the season.
- (e) Jason then revealed some of the research that they had come across while looking into the lights:
 - (i) Local companies were researched for this need and it was found that Musco has exorbitant prices.
 - (ii) Temporary light towers that are used for construction, at Plymouth, etc. have interior generators to power them.
 - (iii) The beams of light travel 250 ft, but the primary illumination is gone by 150 ft.
 - (iv) Jason personally tested and measured the decibel levels generated by the running generators.
 - (f) The WGSL proposal would be that games would be completed by 9:30pm and lights out by 10:00pm at the latest. As far as cost, the WGSL would pay in full.
 - (g) Jason then elaborated on the main concerns of the neighbors and the reasons they aren't, which are as follows:
 - (i) Noise – Typical generator noise. When 8 ft. away from the generator, the noise level is 75 decibels, which is the level of a vacuum cleaner. While there will be more noise than before, it shouldn't be at a disturbing level.
 - (ii) Height of the Towers – When in use, the towers will be a max of 25 ft tall, but will likely be shorter. When not in use, they will be 8 ft tall.
 - (iii) Glare – Chief Ward joined their Zoom and stated that nothing pointing on the road would be approved. As such, the WGSL would aim the lights away from houses and the lights would only be on the field.
 - (iv) Cedar Grove Park and Miles Park Differences – Neighbors don't want Cedar Grove to become like Miles Park and neither does WGSL.
 - (v) Parking Issues – This is always a discussion for games at Cedar Grove Park.
 - (h) Jason wrapped up by stating the proposal would be for six days a week, but that WGSL would be open to less than that.
- ii. At this time the board members were given the opportunity to ask questions:
- (a) Kevin Kissling led off by asking if there would be fencing placed around the temporary fixtures to prevent safety issues.
 - (i) Jason answered that there would be chains securing the lights, no fuel would be stored at the field. Temporary fencing could be put up around the lights.
 - (b) Megan O'Rourke asked if the lights would be placed on the field or behind the fence.
 - (i) Jason answered the hope is that they would not have to be on the field.
 - (c) Kevin Kissling followed up by inquiring about the frequency of fueling.
 - (i) Jason stated that he hoped they would not have to fuel, but that trucks would pull up on the road and use hoses to fuel up.
 - (ii) Tom Manley stated that when Colonial Soccer has used the temporary lights, and they have not had to fill them throughout the year.
 - (d) Joanne Crawford asked how hot the generators get and how long the generators would be on for.
 - (i) Jason answered that the lights would be on from sunset till 9:30pm/10:00pm at the latest, but that he was unsure about the heat.
 - (ii) Tom Manley followed up that the machines had gotten better over the years and they have not had issues with vandalism.
 - (e) Joanne Crawford then asked how old the girls are who play on the field and how late they'll be out using these lights.

- (i) Jason answered that 1st grade through 8th graders use that field, but the lights will serve the older groups.
 - (ii) Megan O'Rourke also stated that the lights would only be used for 26 girls and their families, so not impacting a ton of players.
 - (f) Kevin Kissling asked if they plan to have double headers or just one event per evening.
 - (i) Jason answered that the typical schedule would be to have one or two teams practice and then have a game.
 - (ii) Bernadette Waters followed up by stating that it could also be a game and then a practice following if practices had been rained out.
 - (g) Kevin Kissling asked if this would increase the amount of parking needed.
 - (i) Jason answered that it wouldn't change the number of spots needed, but the lights would extend the length of time the cars would be there.
 - (h) Kevin Kissling noted that this may provide an opening for the township to utilize.
 - (i) Tom Blomstrom remarked that the parks and recreation team would not be utilizing the lights at this time.
 - (i) Kevin Kissling asked if there is any chance for a one day demo for the neighbors in case they were interested.
 - (i) Jason stated that Tom Blomstrom recommended this, but the timeline is crunched with the season started. WGSL would still be open to it for sure.
 - (j) Joanne Crawford inquired about why the families did not park in the parking lot at Cedar Grove, rather opting for parking on Wells St, thinking this could be better communicated.
 - (i) Jason stated that the league can certainly put times on forcing people to park in the parking lot.
 - (ii) Bernadette Waters followed up by stating that the league has asked parents to park in the lot and not on the road as is possible. Parents follow when told, but do not stick to it.
 - (iii) A public member then asked why they don't use the police for tournament play, parking and safety reasons.
 - (iv) Jason replied that they only have one tournament a year there, but it could be explored.
 - (v) Megan O'Rourke added that maybe putting out cones will help prevent illegal parking on Wells St., prevent the parents from parking beyond where they're permitted to.
 - (vi) Tom Blomstrom revealed that there is currently an agreement in place with Militia Hill (opposite the fields) for improved parking. The parking lot would be on the Militia Hill land and would provide parking for Wells St. and for Cedar Grove fields. A positive that is coming down the road that addresses a direct issue.
 - (i) Public member inquired about how many spots this would provide.
 - (ii) Tom answered that he believes it was 24 spots, but could not remember.
 - (k) Joanne Crawford asked if the league can have coaches alert parents to park in the lot.
 - (i) Jason said that is certainly a possibility.
- iii. At this time, the floor was opened to the public for comment on the lights.
- (a) Nick Bell – 99 Cedar Grove Rd.
 - (i) Started his comment by asking if Tom Blomstrom had directed WGSL to look into the Township Code regarding lights.
 - (i) Jason answered that yes they had discussed it on Zoom.
 - (ii) Nick then proceeded to state what the code was in relation to lights and some specific points that he thought were selling points in the code, including:
 - (1) Protecting drivers and pedestrians from light glare of non-vehicular sources.
 - (2) Protect neighbors, the environment and the night sky from nuisance glare and light trespass.

- (3) Promote energy efficient light supply, not sure if diesel engine fits into that.
- (4) Protect and maintain the individual character of the township.
- (iii) Tom Blomstrom informed him that this code is in reference to permanent lighting.
- (ii) Nick continued his statement by noting that he had measured the distance from the proposed locations and they are 99 feet from 101 Cedar Grove Rd. and 97 feet from 99 Cedar Grove Rd, which is well within the light distance.
- (iii) While Nick's son was a Colonial Soccer Club player, he was in charge of their temporary lighting fixtures and they were loud and certainly louder than a vacuum.
- (iv) While lighting the field would benefit the girls, it would come at the expense of the neighbors.
- (b) Elaine Susko – 101 Cedar Grove Rd.
 - (i) Started by stating she is against the lights as they would progress to a permanent fixture and that she does not believe the lights would only be used from April-June.
 - (ii) Elaine also believes that the property values would be lowered by the presence of lights at Cedar Grove Park, was confirmed following her conversations with real estate agents.
 - (iii) External Obsolescence...
- (c) John Westerfer – 112 Cedar Grove Rd. – Next to Militia Hill.
 - (i) Long-time resident and has lived on Cedar Grove Rd. for 46 years. Has been employed by Whitmarsh Township Parks and Recreation and has been an umpire for the WGSL.
 - (ii) Described his neighbors, their tenures in their homes and how the park was purchased with project 70 funds back in 1964.
 - (iii) Agrees with the previous statements made by his neighbors and believes that the proposal does not meet Township Ordinance. Stated that Miles Park is a better location for lights, as Cedar Grove Park is a different type of park.
- (d) Joe Fox – 90 Cedar Grove Rd.
 - (i) Started off by stating that he too agrees with his neighbors points. While he enjoys and supports the softball players, doesn't agree with lights.
 - (ii) Argues that while the distance the effective light goes won't impact all the neighbors, the light still impacts everyone, much like a distant cars headlights.
 - (iii) Quality of life would be diminished with lights on 6 days a week and until 9:30pm.
 - (iv) Discussed the decibel ratings and noted that the levels are around a vacuum and power tools, but imagine hearing those levels of sound for 2 hours straight, 6 days a week. Beyond the neighbors, the girls playing would also be subjected to the loud noise. While the girls are benefited for the season, the neighbors would be negatively impacted for years.
- (e) Laura and Alex Gallo – 105 Cedar Grove Rd.
 - (i) Laura showed a picture demonstrating the impact of the street light outside from a dark room in her house. Notes that the field lights would be brighter and more intrusive.
 - (ii) Notes the phenomenon of light trespassing and how these lights would impact the dark night sky.
 - (iii) Laura also discussed her medical diagnosis would be negatively impacted by the lights. Her inability to sleep due to the lights will hurt her ability to perform her duties at a high level and puts her clients at risk.
 - (iv) Noted the levels of noise from the park for a softball practice and says imagine this at 9:30pm.
 - (v) Alex noted that the sound from playing radiates and they cannot enjoy the outdoors while there's softball going on. Stated that it's tolerable due to knowing they'll conclude by sunset.
 - (vi) Joanne Crawford sympathized with the neighbors as she notes she can hear softball from her house which is situated nearby.

- (f) Vincent Ferst – 111 Cedar Grove Rd.
 - (i) Started off by agreeing with his fellow neighbors. Believes Cedar Grove Park is too small accommodate lights.
 - (ii) Noted that the park began as a community park before girls softball was established there. The community came out and utilized the flat level field there for a variety of reasons/sports. The addition of the outfield fence has squashed their ability to do so. States that softball has taken everything from the park, as they also took the basketball court due to the batting cages.
 - (iii) Finishes by stating that while he supports girls softball, he is against lights. Recommends starting games earlier.
 - (g) Katie Mackin – 107 Cedar Grove Rd.
 - (i) Started by saying that you get used to the sounds during the days.
 - (ii) Big concern of the use of diesel fuel for the generators and the impacts they would have environmentally.
 - (iii) Also questioned what would stop permanent lights from being used year round. For these reasons, she believes Miles Park would be a better place as well. Asks that if this proposal moves forward to please balance out the usage, maybe two days a week.
 - (iv) Recommends going solar for power instead of diesel generators.
 - (i) Jason O’Neil replied that they looked into solar, but it’s 1.5x more expensive and provides significantly less lighting, which might require more lights.
 - (h) Megan O’Rourke thanked the neighbors and praised their intelligence and research on the matter.
 - (i) Kevin Kissling stated that there is a lot to think about in concern to the lights. Proposes to delay any motion to give time and to make an informed decision.
 - (j) John Westerfer asked who makes the final decision.
 - (i) Both Tom Blomstrom and Kevin Kissling answered that the Park and Rec Board only makes recommendations, that the decision would come from the Board of Supervisors if it is recommended by the board.
 - (k) Joe Fox asked how the neighbors will know what decision is made.
 - (i) Kevin Kissling stated that the Park and Rec. Board meetings are on the first Tuesday of every other month. Tom Blomstrom followed up to say he would inform the neighbors.
- iv. Tom Blomstrom reviewed the remaining items under new business, each of which he had previously touched on in his Director’s Report.

c. OLD BUSINESS

Motion to accept the full report made by Megan O’Rourke and seconded by Kevin Kissling. Unanimously accepted.

9) PUBLIC MEMBER COMMENTS

- a. No public comment was made on an agenda items outside of the light proposal.

10) BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

- a. Tom Manley noted that he was impressed by the community and their turnout tonight. Stated that Cedar Grove Park is a location for passive recreation and not active recreation. Unfortunately, there’s no space for the increased recreation, hence the use of Cedar Grove Park. While Tom mentions he’s not a fan of the portable lights even though Colonial Soccer Club utilizes them, he

doesn't think that WGSL has much choice moving forward. Doesn't think it's entirely fair to talk about no noise, as that will be a location for softball for years to come. Noted that the Township purchased this land to block housing developments. Thinks the township will need to rethink and do it's part in supporting the WGSL and their girls.

11) ADJOURNMENT

- a. Kevin Kissling made a motion to adjourn, Meghan Hector seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:51pm, unanimously.
- b. The next Park and Recreation Board Meeting will take place on June 7th and the meeting format will be determined at a later date.