

**WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP
PARK AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING
AT THE MILES PARK PARKS AND RECREATION BUILDING
TUESDAY, JUNE 6th, 2023, AT 7:00 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

CONVEY CRAWFORD HECTOR
 KISSLING MANLEY ROBINSON
 EPSTEIN (CSD) BOS LIAISON: BOYLE NESTER
 YOUNG (WAC) TOWNSHIP STAFF: BLOMSTROM
 TOWNSHIP STAFF (MINUTES/ZOOM): DELANEY

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

4. APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 4th, 2023, MEETING MINUTES

- a. The April minutes were approved, and all were in favor.

5. PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD LIAISON - COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Open Space/PR/EAB Committee - Mutual Interest Communication Sub-Committee (Manley)

- i. The subcommittee continues to meet and review some options that they have with the cross-county trail plan.
- ii. Plan on doing and escorted hike through the newly acquired properties. The date is TBD on when this will take place.
- iii. The Board is all in favor of accepting the report.

b. 4th of July Parade Committee (Crawford/Hector)

- i. The last meeting was May 11th everything is going as planned and looking to have all registrations completed by June 26th.
- ii. All the entertainment has been hired. We have sponsors and judges ready to go.
- iii. The police have been informed and are in line with the 4th of July Parade.
- iv. Kevin Kissling motions and Tom Manley seconds to accept the report, the rest of the Board are all in favor.

c. Whitemarsh Athletic Association (Manley)

- i. No report.

d. Active Recreation Space Sub-Committee (Kissling/Manley)

- i. Tom Manley and Kevin Kissling will take lead on Whitemarsh Active Recreation Space Sub-Committee.
- ii. Jim Convey motions and Kevin Kissling seconds the rest are all in favor of the Active Recreation Space Sub-Committee.
- iii. The Active Recreation Space Sub-committee has 5 responsibilities:
 1. To be the voice of residents.
 2. To work closely with the Parks and Recreation Department leadership to seek out Active Recreation Space.
 3. To facilitate discussions with residents, athletic associations, and other organized groups.

4. Participate in discussions about open space funds to make sure Recreations needs are recognized and prioritized.
 5. Review and make recommendations to township leadership about land acquisitions for Active Recreation Space.
- I. Jim Convey approves of the Active Recreation Subcommittee report and goals, Jerome Robinson motions and Tom Manley seconds, all are in favor.

6. WHITEMARSH ART CENTER REPORT – Michael Young

- I. Spring Classes are in session, and they are going very well.
- II. Summer camp classes are in the registration process and numbers are looking good.
- III. The Whitemarsh Art Center has participated in a few events in the past few months such as Whitemarsh Township Day, and Chestnut Hill Garden days.
- IV. Last Saturday was the outdoor painting competition at the Whitemarsh Art Center.
- V. In June Whitemarsh Art Center will be holding and art exhibit from students and teachers.
- VI. The annual budget meeting was held 6/5/23.
- VII. Currently in the middle of discussing with the Township the next steps for our new property at Abolition Hall.
 - a. Jim Convey: Do you have a target date for Abolition Hall to open?
 - b. Michael Young: The target date is for fall time if all goes as planned.
- VIII. Keving Kissling motions to accept the WAC report and Tom Manley seconds the report the rest are all in favor.

7. DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION REPORT – Tom Blomstrom

a. NEW BUSINESS

- i. *Announcement of 2023 Spring-Summer-Fall Discount Ticket Program*
 - ii. *Announcement and Review of 2023 “Movies in the Parks” Series*
 - iii. *Announcement of Parent’s Night Out – Summer Series*
 - iv. *Announcement of the Hope Lodge Ambler Symphony Concert on the Lawn on Wed. June 7th (Rain date: June 15th) at 7pm*
 - v. *Announcement of 4th of July Parade on Tuesday, July 4th at 10am in coordination with the Lions Club of Whitemarsh – Community picnic to follow at Miles Park (Music, Hot Dogs, Water, Fun!)*
- I. The Parks and Recreation Department is happy to announce that we have our discount tickets are in for the summer.
 - II. Our summer staff training has been successful. We have completed CPR, backboard training, and parent orientation. Full day of staff training is Saturday June 10th.
 - III. The first day of summer camp with be June 19th.
 - IV. Whitemarsh Township was named 2022 Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation.
 - V. Dance program was a big success and finished up at PWHS with over 300 guest and 75 dancers. A big shoutout to Emily Moore and Ashlyn Brady for their efforts with this program.
 - VI. A very successful spring with our fun club program operating 5 days a week over at Whitemarsh Elementary School.
 - VII. Miles Park Camp can expect anywhere from 135-160 children per week and Cedar Grove is full, with 54 children per week.
 - VIII. The Eat and Enjoy Social series wrapped up in May and we had 41 participants out for that event. Emily Moore and Nick Delaney do a great job with that program.

- IX. Whitemarsh Township Day was an amazing day and had great community support with over 7,500 people coming out and over 100 vendors. Thank you to the Parks and Recreation Team, Colonial School District, and the Emergency Services.
- X. We had a Children's Concert in the spring with a great turnout with over 400 guests coming out to enjoy the music.
- XI. The Summer Movie Series has begun. The first one was May 19th, the second movie is June 28th at Cedar Grove, the third movie is July 19th at Miles Park, and the fourth one is August 16th at Miles Park. Streetside BBQ and Conshohocken Brewing Company will be in attendance.
- XII. The Board of Supervisors passed the PECO license agreement for the Miracle-Nature Trail.
- XIII. Parents Night Out will continue through the summer season.
- XIV. Please come out and march in the 4th of July Parade.
- XV. Tom Manley: How many Staff do you have at Miles Park and Cedar Grove Park?
 - a. Tom Blomstrom: 19 at Miles Parks and 11 at Cedar Grove.
- XVI. Tom Manley motions to accept the Whitemarsh Parks and Recreation Director's Report and Meghan Hector seconds the motion, the rest are all in favor.

b. OLD BUSINESS

- i. *Whitemarsh Little League – Request for Improvements to Batting Cages at Miles Park – Update Presentation, Feedback, and Recommendation*
 - 1. **Drew Cianfrani (WLL):** Whitemarsh Little League baseball averages 540 players per year. In 2023 they had over 560 players register.
 - a. Whitemarsh Little League plays over 360 games on only 5 fields. With this many games held during the year the batting cages get a tremendous amount of use and are currently not in good shape.
 - b. Whitemarsh Little League would like to enhance the state of the batting cages by building a state-of-the-art facility that would work for all ages. This batting cage would be very useful because you would be able to use it when it rains and when it is dark.
 - c. The lights would be very useful in the spring and fall when the sun sets earlier in the evening.
 - d. The original plan for the batting cage project was for 6 lanes and over 7,200 square feet. The updated plan would be reduced to 5 lanes which is the same number of lanes that the current batting cages have and around 6,000 square feet.
 - e. WLL proposes 3 walls that go around the facility to help block the sound and light from the surrounding properties. It would be a hard to stop at 9:00PM every night.
 - f. WLL talked to Whitemarsh Police Department about patrolling and putting in security cameras to monitor the area to help prevent any problems or issues.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- I. **Ron Cione (Public Comment):** Ron starts off by stating that the residents are always the last to know when there is a project being done in the Township and that should change.
 - a. It is a concern for us residents if these cages will be open to people outside the community.

- b. The noise levels are very concerning. This batting cage will be only 80 feet away from my property line and to hear these balls hitting the bats all day and night is outrageous.
 - c. The batting cages are currently a disgrace. Little League let the batting cages become completely unsafe.
 - d. 85 decibels over 3 hours can cause hearing loss.
 - i. For example, 1 child and his father were using the batting cage by themselves, and I had my decibel measuring tool out and just for 1 child it was 79 decibels. Just imagine what entire organization of children using these cages will be.
 - e. The updated proposal from Little League is still not good enough because it will still be 80 feet away from my property line.
 - f. The rain garden they are proposing to put in next to the batting cages will become an infestation with mosquitos, and vegetation.
 - g. You cannot leave a facility like this open because it will become an attractive nuisance for kids and teens to vandalize.
 - h. The current batting cages are extremely dangerous. Little League has cut these batting cages in half to accommodate their needs which is understandable, but they should not be sacrificing the safety of the kids and coaches.
 - i. We have been asked to come up with a compromise for this batting cage project and what I propose is to put it on the perimeter by the Concession Stand and the senior field. You would need to cut down a tree and would have a spot to use 110ft X 60ft. You would be able to get 6 cages in this area, you would have bathrooms right next to the cages, and police surveillance and protection nearby. Another suggestion would be to improve the existing batting cages and make them safer and have sound dampening walls around the cages.
 - j. Another issue is the walking trail and people voicing their concerns that there is no way to get down to the lower field without a problem. Take the trail out and make a direct trail down to the field from the parking lot.
 - k. We ask that the Parks and Recreation Board either approve upgrades to the existing cages or approve the cages to be moved by the Concession Stand area.
- II. **Linda Doll:** Linda Doll Starts off by asking a question, when we talk about the storm water garden, is there more water being added and is it being used through the same pipping system? Is it the same drainage that we use off Fairway Road? Can someone please look into that.
- a. I do not know how you can even vote on this topic tonight because nothing is in writing and that is what I am going to suggest.
 - b. I live in the middle between Victory Fields and Miles Park. These people from Little League seem genuine but they may not be around when it gets into play.
 - c. You need these rules and conditions put into writing before you can vote on this.
 - d. We need the actual hours in writing before anything can be voted on.
 - e. The word insulated must be in writing and we are not voting on this until it is in writing and we know that the neighbors are covered.
 - f. I believe that in legal terms everything must be in writing or nothing can be voted on.
 - g. There should be something in writing stating that adults and outside teams or organizations cannot use the facility.
- III. **Hank Clemmer:** I agree with Linda Doll.
- a. Who is going to enforce the rules?

- b. I got a letter in the mail about girls' softball batting cages has that been approved.
- IV. **Bruce Dormuth:** I strongly support what Linda Doll said.
 - a. I appreciate all the work Ron has done with the neighbors.
 - b. There is too much back and forth on this batting cage project.
 - c. Is it going to be open to the public? Is it just going to be for Little League?
 - d. There is going to be a 15-foot view block with this batting cage structure blocking my view from the park.
- V. **John Mailey:** I agree with Ron's Idea of putting the batting cages by the concession stand area.
 - a. I would like to see roller doors that would shut down the cages at a certain time.
- VI. **Nicholas Vetrone:** Mr. Vetrone has a sound demonstration on batting practice being done from roughly 75 feet away.
 - a. I hear this on a nightly basis and this sound is too loud to be heard every day.
 - b. I agree with Ron these cages are too close and they should not be building these new cages only 80 feet away from my property.
 - c. What is stopping adults or college teams or adult recreation leagues from using the batting cages?
- VII. **Mark Drayton:** I appreciate everything the coaches do for Little League, but these cages are way too close to resident's houses.
 - a. It is horrific to have something like these cages blocking residents view of the park.
 - b. There is so much noise going on as it is these cages would only add to the noise issue.
 - c. Parking is a nightmare already. People park in front of my house to go to the baseball fields. That is very annoying.
 - d. I would like Little League and the Parks and Recreation Board to strongly consider the alternative site.
- VIII. **Brian Burns:** Brian states the experience now is the same experience residents will witness with these new cages. It is kids being outside being active, playing with friends, playing sports, it is all positive things.
 - a. I live 300 feet from the batting cages and my air conditioner doesn't work so my windows are always open. I have never once been rattled by the noise of the bats. What I hear is kids laughing, kids playing, enjoying the parks.
 - b. The new batting cages will give kids another outlet and more space to play.
 - c. I believe both parties can come to a compromise so that the kids can have a great place to play.
- IX. **Madalyn Cione:** Madalyn states these batting cages will be right in the back of my house and will be an eye sore and will block my view of the park.
- X. **Fran Viti:** The batting cage will block the entire view of the park from my backyard, and I do not agree with putting these new batting cages in.
- XI. **Joe Felici:** I would like to respond to the public comment to answer some questions, we would not be opposed to putting in portable bathrooms, but we would not be installing sewer or water lines for permanent bathrooms.
 - a. As far as the height of the batting cage it does meet the ordinance of the Township. We are working within the Township regulations.
 - b. The structure is so important because we didn't get to start the season until April 10th and we lost 1 month of practice due to rain and losing daylight. This structure will allow us to practice when it is raining, or sun goes down early.

9. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

- I. **Jim Convey:** Will you be getting rid of the old sheds?
- II. **Joe Felici:** Yes, the old sheds will be coming down and we will be installing new sheds.
- III. **Kevin Kissling:** Would the walls cover all three sides facing the resident's houses? Would that help with the sound?
- IV. **Joe Felici:** Yes, it would cover all three sides and that would help with the noise of the bats.
- V. **Joanne Crawford:** Will the walls be insulated?
- VI. **Joe Felici:** We have architects still figuring out the best plan for the walls and what type of material will be used. If the Township would approve the insulated walls, then yes, that is something we would consider installing.
- VII. **Tom Manley:** What type of material will the siding consist of?
- VIII. **Joe Felici:** It will be a Trex siding so that it will not rot.
- IX. **Joanne Crawford:** During the construction of the project how long would this project take?
- X. **Joe Felici:** I believe it would take anywhere from 4-6 months.
- XI. **Kevin Kissling:** What would be the interim plan for batting cages?
- XII. **Joe Felici:** There would be no batting cages. Only pop-up nets to use for soft toss and hitting drills.
- XIII. **Kevin Kissling:** As far as use would this be open for anyone to use during the day?
- XIV. **Joe Felici:** It would be open to the public but during the hours of 5PM-8PM it will be reserved for Whitemarsh Little League.
- XV. **Kevin Kissling:** The proposal states the batting cages will be used from sun-up to sundown. Sun-up is 5AM will people be using the cages this early in the morning?
- XVI. **Joe Felici:** We can adjust the hours so that we have an agreement with Whitemarsh Township that works for everyone. We will create a sign and post it at the batting cage so that everyone knows the rules.
- XVII. **Kevin Kissling:** Would you be renting this batting cage out to other organizations?
- XVIII. **Joe Felici:** Unfortunately, we would not be able to rent the cages out to anyone else because we already have so many kids using the cages with Whitemarsh Little League.
- XIX. **Jerome Robinson:** Where are the bathrooms going to be at the facility?
- XX. **Joe Felici:** There are currently no bathrooms at the batting cages now. They will have to go to the pavilion to use the bathrooms or down to the snack bar area.
- XXI. **Jim Convey:** I believe this is a much safer concept for these batting cages. I believe that Whitemarsh Little League did exactly what the Parks and Recreation Board asked them to do, and they made many compromises to make this project work. I think this is a great idea.
- XXII. **Tom Manley:** Who will own the batting Cages?
- XXIII. **Tom Blomstrom:** We would have an agreement after we meet with the Township Solicitor. There would then be a list of rules and maintenance requirements that would fall on WLL that they would need to uphold.
- XXIV. **Chris Epstein:** Is there a way to secure the batting cage area from kids vandalizing the area?
- XXV. **Drew Cianfrani:** We talked to Whitemarsh Police Department about patrolling the area and installing cameras to help prevent any kids from vandalizing the area.
- XXVI. **Laura Boyle Nester:** Laura suggests that it goes to the Board of Supervisor to discuss and review the WLL Batting Cage Proposal.

XXVII. **Parks and Recreation Board:** The Parks and Recreation Board voted to support the proposal (4-2 vote) of the batting cage updated proposal as presented by WLL and move forward to the Board of Supervisors.

10. ADJOURNMENT

- I. Joanne Crawford asks for a motion to adjourn the meeting.
 - a. Jim Convey motions the adjournment of the meeting and Tom Manley seconds the motion.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, August 1st, 2023 at 7pm – Format – TBD

For additional inquiries or confirmation - Whitemarsh Township Website: <https://www.whitemarshwp.org/agendacenter>