

PALMER TOWNSHIP RECREATION BOARD
May 21, 2024
7:00 PM
GENERAL MEETING

The Palmer Township Recreation Board held a General meeting on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at 7:00 pm at the Charles Chrin Community Center. The following were in attendance: Chair Cheryl Nielsen, Vice-Chair Thom Lee, and Dawn Ackerman. Also, in attendance was Dan McKinney, Director of Parks and Recreation, Charles Bellis, Member of the Palmer Township Board of Supervisors and Jeffrey Young, Member of the Palmer Township Board of Supervisors and Kent Baird, Director of Planning.

Cheryl Nielsen called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

1. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Approval of Minutes – April 2024.

INFORMATION

The Board needs to approve/disapprove the minutes of April 2024.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Thom Lee, Seconded by Dawn Ackerman.

Board Members voting Ayes: Lee, Nielsen, Ackerman
Passed 3-0

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Shannon Wisniewski, 151 Blenheim Drive and Sandi Bush, 6 Kent Lane, of the Shade Tree Commission attended to discuss the white pines around the tennis and basketball courts at Old Orchard Park. They have a landscaping plan to take trees down and replace them with lower landscaping. They would like to look at a larger effort to look at landscaping at all parks. Nielsen commented that when she takes her grandkids to Old Orchard, she looks up and prays they do not fall on her. Ackerman commented that a three-foot branch came down when I had my kids sledding there. Wisniewski and Bush agreed that all this prompted the idea to take down and replace because maintenance is too expensive. Bush stated that there are plans for additional amenities or take away and replace or add to those, would reduce mowing, and increase butterflies. Wisniewski explained that work had to be done in Old Orchard Park. Lee asked what part of your plan is removing and replanting? Wisniewski answered it would be the removal of trees that are dying or need to be replaced. Bush stated that there has been no inventory of Palmer Township, just focus on Old

Orchard Park. Wisniewski stated it is on a case-by-case basis. Lee explained to the Public that we are a recreation board for recommending for recreation. Wisniewski stated outside of the trees, we would have to come to the Recreation Board, that extra space outside of recreation use. The Board of Supervisors told us to come to the Recreation Board. Bellis commented that the idea is correct, it is Parks and Recreation. Wisniewski shared more shade, more beauty. Young educated that before when the Shard Tree Commission took down a tree, they replaced it with two. My opinion is to work together for ideas. Nielsen stated that kids play on that field. Ackerman stated that the hill at Old Orchard is used for sledding in the winter but less this year because of those trees. Young stated that residents will be upset if the pines come down. Wisniewski explained that residents are the ones that prompted them to come down. Nielsen suggested that the trees over the playground be checked by Palmer Public Works, and they would be the point of contact, a meadow of wildflowers would not hurt winter sledding. Wisniewski stated that they wanted to make sure they came to the Recreation Board before moving forward. Nielsen commented that the trees had to be put there in the 60s. Lee asked if they had an estimate of an annual budget? Wisniewski explained that the budget would depend on how much we need and decide to do. Young suggested that Bush and Wisniewski read the description of the Recreation Board. Wisniewski stated that she was told that it would go under Public Works budget, the parks that are used Recreation, we have only been to two. Lee suggested that they can bring a presentation to the Recreation Board, and we can make a recommendation to the BOS. Bush asked if there was map of the parks? Baird answered by explaining that park planning starts in the Planning Department, collaboration between Parks Department and Planning, we cannot pursue grants unless all boxes are checked. Lee asked if he thought there were any grants out there for this project. Baird stated that the county and state likes to see a master plan, better position with a rough site plan to improve habitat, park and trail change brings more visitors. Put in high caliber trees and still not have enough in the grant to fund it. We have already been trying to look into this, updating the Open Space Plan, and the possibility to increase Recreation fees but this is the time to start looking at the 2025 budget. Wisniewski asked what the best way is to do this. Baird responded to work together, prioritize parks, ADA is a big priority, which park will get the attention? Wisniewski asked about prioritizing. Baird answered with an action plan across all the parks, Old Orchard might be a maintenance strategy, might be wildlife engaging. Wisniewski explained that the only reason we looked at Old Orchard is because residents complained about the trees. Young explained that the only concern is that this might be a long-time plan, do some stuff in the interim, do not want them to wait until Planning gets it rolling. Lee commented to move it along, falls on this Board to make the recommendation, it is then put in our minutes, voted on and then goes to BOS. Wisniewski STATED THAT THEY COULD CREATE A DRAFT, STEP BY STEP AND THANKED EVERYONE FOR LISTENING. Nielsen commented that we want everyone to be safe and thanked Bush and Wisniewski for coming.

3. OLD BUSINESS

A. Adaptive Playground Equipment INFORMATION

Deb Ackerman, 4 Courtney Court, stated she was at the meeting to hear the
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presentation on inclusive playground equipment. Nielsen discussed the Bethlehem Township Community Center playground. Bellis brought up that so much more is happening at the Parks in Palmer Township, more participation, Heart of the Leopard being held at Cottingham Stadium, Lafayette coaches, people grouping together to run a Pickleball tournament, we are ready next year, cycling groups to ride the trails, novice and beyond. Nielsen questioned with a bike company? Bellis explained, No, a Palmer group, two people already, one more when up and ready, would like this group to look at ordinance of the bike path width, to make wider, new development coming in. Nielsen stated that these were wonderful ideas and that the Heart of the Leopard would be starting soon. McKinney shared that this was PTAA generated, Dave Dumpel, 4 Heritage Lane, stated not generated but supportive, it was all Bellis. Ackerman asked if it was free and multiple days, like a Varsity E. Bellis confirmed it was free. McKinney explained the background of prior meetings, the lack of adaptive equipment in Palmer Township, looking for an area, showed a map of Fairview Park and to start with one or two features and then expand. Nielsen explained the path to get there. McKinney explained that this was just the beginning, to find a spot in the park. Baird stated congratulations to Ackerman, people are paying attention to Disabilities, various levels of the spectrum, there are designers, equipment builders and folks that put together the final touches, this is community and economic development. 2025 budget is a good and to look for grants this Fall. I can have someone come and make a presentation. Ackerman confirmed she had a video and explained it is not just people with disabilities that use this equipment. Quakertown changed the ground to make it softer and changed the swings. All people use it. Dawn Ackerman asked how big the space was? McKinney confirmed he wasn't sure but can get it. Bellis responded that people sit there to watch their kids. Lee confirmed that we agreed months ago that this is a good idea to move forward with but are unfamiliar with ADA regulations. Baird stated that it is very important that you can get to it. Lee asked if we could get price quotes and move on with it? Nielsen asked if we knew how many would utilize it. Baird explained it is usually a survey, numbers change on a daily basis. Ackerman restated, go to Quakertown, and see the inclusive park, it is not just for disabled children, it is for young, old, and disabled. Dawn Ackerman stated that the township has Miracle League right here, maybe after their games they would go Fairview. Baird stated speaking of Miracle League, there could be private funding too. Ackerman explained that Little Tikes gave direction and were very nice. Baird commented that they are good people and nice throughout the entire process. Nielsen for the Parks and Recreation committee to look at Recreation fees and Open Space for new development. Baird suggested if you are going to review with us, it is appropriate to weigh in. Young stated that's the way it used to be. Baird said that community input and all department heads weighing in is vital. Bellis started to back up Young, we use to review all plans. Nielsen stated it used to be about shopping, hotels and walking paths. Baird explained to build staff reporting, all the plans are asked for a review and comment, would be happy to present to the Recreation Board. The last one was a car wash adjacent to Shammy Shien across from Sheetz, want to put a self-car washing station. McKinney asked what else would be an option for something like that? Baird explained that open space or Recreation fees for no open space there. Young reiterated that the language has to be fixed. Baird agreed that the

Open Space Plan must be updated so we can increase our Recreation fees.

Dawn Ackerman made a motion to recommend to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to accept Recreation fees for Shammy Shine on Kingston Drive

Motion: Approve, Moved by Cheryl Nielsen, Seconded by Thom Lee.
Passed. 3-0.

Board Members voting Ayes: Ackerman, Lee, Nielsen

Cheryl Nielsen made a motion to accept the Recreation Fees for 537 Milford Street.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Thom Lee, Seconded by Dawn Ackerman.
Passed. 3-0

Board Members voting Ayes: Ackerman, Lee, Nielsen

B. MOU INFORMATION

Members of the PTAA were in attendance. Nielsen explained that last night at the Board of Supervisors meeting, the BOS presented the MOU for Palmer Township Athletic Association and Palmer Township. There were two sticking points, one was fees, and the other was to retain registration fees. No one is asking to make money, just maintain what you are using. Young continued to explain that registration fees and nonresident fees and percentages, this was Robert Williams, Mike Brett and myself, that went over the MOU. Ackerman questioned that the BOS made this document? Young iterated that it input from all. Chase DeNardo, 3390 Rocky Lane explained that a lot of our registrants are from Easton, we have better facilities, maybe add but not Easton at 200%. Jennifer Swinsburg, 14 Towpath Circle E stated that her daughter plays softball and without Non-residents there would not be a team. Young stated on behalf of the BOS, we are concerned about maintaining. Lyne Blodgett, 1327 Camelot Drive asked about 200%, the few that we have, won't that cover? Gator Conner, 3112 Forks Street asked how much have maintenance fees gone up? McKinney answered that when former BOA Robert Smith was here, some kind of feasibility study was done. Young commented that sometime ago, he saw a document that stated 300,000. Nielsen and Ackerman clarified that the Recreation Board did not make the 200% recommendation. Bellis questioned outside residents, when do we go back to taking care Palmer Township kids? Whenever we take outside residents, we take from our own teams. Lee explained that a discussion occurred some time ago when the PTAA became independent that the suggestion was made to take outside residents to help financially. Conner explained that they had to cancel their Connie Mack season because they were unable to fill a team. Ackerman wanted to

make it clear that there are parts of the Easton Community that do not have teams to play for but in the end they all come together. Nielsen stated that we should be teaching sportsmanship. Ackerman pointed out that teams are primarily residents first, older teams need to be able to play because they won't be playing anywhere. Dumpel clarified that upper baseball, older soccer teams, older softball teams need members to complete teams. We believe that the township should get money for non-residents. Lee asked everyone to always remember when two palmer kids are sitting, why are two Nazareth kids playing, if this is not true, then should not be an issue. Young stated 20% is just a shot we came up with. When we changed the structure there was money put into the Youth Capital Account. If managed properly and numbers are lower, then shouldn't be a problem. This has to be managed, we are not here to provide for other communities, we are here for Palmer kids. Dumpel stated that a money amount would deter that. Young commented that he knew this discussion would happen. Ackerman questioned that when you open registration, is it open to Palmer residents first or everyone at the same time? Money would deter and give Palmer the opportunity to play. PTAA states the link goes out. Swinsburg confirmed that we do not advertise the link. Bellis stated he was told if they wait, then cannot fill teams. McKinney questioned if their registration software has the ability to charge residents and non-resident fees? All PTAA said yes. McKinney reinforced that the PTAA runs these sports for Palmer Township, they are in a better position and do a great job. They are the experts, more than ever and all in for the right reason. No resistance to giving back to the township, we really have to listen to them. Blodgett informed that Easton is forfeiting teams. Dumpel confirmed that the MOU is overdue and thanked everyone for working on it. We are already into Fall registration; this fills in the holes and great that dialect is now. Lee expressed that this was the ultimate goal, never been a negative word. It is the responsibility of the Board to make sure that we are taking a look at fields and gyms to maintain, constantly being told Recreation fees are drying up, where is the money going to come from? This was not driven by the Recreation Board, driven by BOS, new members asking for the agreement, bylaws need updated. Dumpel confirmed that the PTAA bylaws have been updated. Young confirmed that our Recreation fees will dry up, less than two million in the future. Lee also stated that there is no hidden agenda from this Board, we helped put an understanding together to help. The earnings are more than what the township was funding. The last report showed sufficient funds, not getting any revenue from PTAA for building and fields. PTAA confirmed that we were looking at old numbers. McKinney asked how many registrations on average? Dumpel stated 1600. Young stated sometimes Lee and I disagree, up 20%, I absolutely believe youth sports is the fabric of our township. When I became a supervisor, it is the sports program that is the glue, it doesn't matter that we spent 323,000 to support the PTAA, we violated the agreement we said, but it does not mean it lasts forever, that's how we got here. Dumpel reminded that the PTAA was born out of a study of improving parks and everyone helped on the project for the good of the children. Nielsen stated we agree except the 20%. Conner said maybe you should ask us. Ackerman preceded with what percentage of your participants are out of town. Dumpel reiterated that we need some

verbiage that Palmer kids play first. Ackerman asked do we want to do a percentage, number of participants. Lee commented that is it not fair because we have missing board members, offered the PTAA the Recreation Board's recommendation. Conner stated no money and let us run our program. Young asked what happens when everyone moves on? Conner stated they would not give it to just anyone. Ackerman suggested that we need to table it and meet up, look at document, we just got it, give time to compare, contrast. McKinney again reiterated that nothing is in writing, and it has to be. PTAA said agree. Young confirmed there is no rush from BOS.

C. Youth Center Update

INFORMATION

Discussion of the Youth Center took place.

4. Director's Report

INFORMATION

McKinney advised that the floor is here and going to be installed here at the CCCC first and then the Youth Center in about two to three weeks. There was a meeting about putting turf on the playground, explained where the turf came from. Also discussed batting cages. Pickleball courts are in.

5. Egg Hunt

INFORMATION

None

6. ADJOURNMENT

Thom Lee made a motion to reconvene the meeting at 9:08pm, the motion was seconded by Dawn Ackerman.

Board Members voting Ayes: Ackerman Lee, Nielsen
Passed. 3-0.

Next meeting June 18 , 2024 at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Lazarus
Corresponding Secretary