

**Pocono Township Parks & Recreation Committee**  
**Mountain View Park Meeting Minutes**  
**February 10, 2015**

Members: Charlie Trapasso, President, Alex Grum, Vice President, Denise Herbert, Secretary Bobby Felins, and Andrea Learn.

**1. Call to Order:** President, Charlie Trapasso, 7:30am

Present: Charlie Trapasso, Alex Grum, Denise Herbert, Bobby Felins, Jim Olizsarowicz and Andrea Learn.

Absent: Dean Hartshorn

Also Present: Gregg Schuster; HJP's Harold Ernsberger; Rick Triana, Boy Scout Troop 85 leader; Dee Ackerman, Township Receptionist

**2. Approval of the Minutes:**

*Once the Township website is developed, approved minutes will be posted to the site. It was requested that the Committee's Secretary send a copy of the notes to Pam Ernsberger.*

**3. Eagle Scout Update**

*Rick Triana of Boy Scouts Troop 85 spoke about possible Eagle Scout projects. He indicated that the project perhaps should focus on environmental needs. Some examples mentioned were correcting the bank erosions. Charlie mentioned that the nature trails have signs down that could be re-posted. The project would need to be achievable, benefiting both the Township and the Boy Scout, and include fundraising activities. Alex indicated that he did not want to see what happened to a prior Boy Scout, Brett Patterson, reoccur with any future projects; specifically, that the Scout in question created a project and then eventually was unable to fulfill it for various reasons, wasting the Scouts' time and energies.*

*There was discussion among the group that Troop 85 could be involved in the 2016 Bi-Centennial celebration. Rick indicated that they could in a supportive manner, but he would like to see the community and churches offer assistance or have a project to complete.*

*Harold noted that the park's benches need to be renumbered and brochures edited, which would be about a \$100 project. Long term maintenance could be factored into the proposal.*

*Rick mentioned that the bird houses could be fortified, making them more durable and lasting longer. Charlie and Jim indicated that they were still unclear about the process of approving Eagle/Boy Scout projects. Gregg indicated that the Committee would make a recommendation for a project and then Gregg or Dean would make a decision.*

*Alex reiterated his concern about such projects working, based on a previous failed project by another Scout.*

*Gregg noted that Dean would not have the final word on such projects. However, Dean is responsible for maintenance and their needs to be consultation with him to understand whether the project will work within the Park.*

*Jim suggested that a project list be created.*

*Rick clarified that he would like projects to be created by civic groups and then maintained by Scouts. He suggested a round table to develop, present and discuss projects.*

*Charlie wanted to know about costs associated with projects. Rick indicated that this would depend on the project. Also, fundraising should be encouraged, as parents could pay but this would not be the best idea.*

Charlie asked Gregg if he had anything in mind for the Scouts; he replied he did not. Dean could come up with a list, but he was not available at this time to discuss further. Gregg mentioned that he did think that the building and maintenance of bat and bird houses was a good idea. Jim suggested that there be an Eagle Scout application for such projects.

#### 4. Pocono Township Manager, Gregg Schuster

a. HJP: Gregg indicated that at the last Commissioners meeting, 2 Jackson Township Commissioners attended, but none from Hamilton. There was no outcome as to the HJP contract. The HJP contract is valid until 12/31/2015; if another agreement is not finalized by this time, it will expire and the Township will be out of the agreement.

Charlie asked about Townships contributing money, but Gregg indicated that all Townships needed to contribute an equal amount to make it work. BOC wants it to be a substantial contribution from all three Townships.

Charlie reminded Gregg that HJP projected cost is in excess of \$20 million dollars. She asked if there could be a million dollar bond issued without taxpayer knowledge, support or input. Gregg stated that it is a policy issue to be decided by BOC.

b. A public works director (PWD) will start on 2/17. Gregg had a previous applicant who was very qualified but this person would not relocate from NJ. The person hired, Jeff Clapper, has had previous experience with public works and sewer systems, working for Camp Hill as their director. He also had worked in Arizona or New Mexico as a PWD. Jeff will attend Park Committee, planning and possibly, BOC meetings.

c. There is no news on the stockpile relocation.

d. The septic tank within the Park has not yet been located; consequently, it has not been cleaned. Charlie will meet with Dee to locate the original site plans.

e. Applications for a new recreation Committee member, replacing Neal Gallagher, have been received and interviews will shortly begin.

f. Criminal background checks were discussed. Currently, the Township does not complete background checks on employees, volunteers, or other Board members. Gregg has consulted with the Township solicitor to determine what needs to be completed with the new Child Abuse regulations. However, Gregg stated that 80-90% of the Park employees probably would not need background checks because they did not come in direct contact with children.

Denise suggested that Gregg also check with *Monroe County C & Y* for additional information on the requirements, but Gregg stated that he had a source of information—solicitor—and he likes to stay with one source.

Dee mentioned that many of the employees were long term and there had been no problems.

Denise indicated that it was all in the approach to employees, and they need to be reassured that completing background checks was for their safety/well-being as well.

Denise and Charlie indicated their concern about Park employees not having clearances and the possibility of working with or having contact with children. There was also a discussion among Denise, Charlie, Alex, and Jim about who should have the clearances—full-time employees, volunteers, Board members.

Alex asked if hired employees had a clearance completed; Gregg stated they did.

Gregg stated the Commission could make a recommendation about the clearances. Charlie did and Denise seconded this motion. Alex stated that recommendations would be put in writing and submitted to Gregg.

g. Internet access and website development: Gregg stated he favors the Community Center having internet access, especially so the Park Director, Dean, can access information. Gregg also noted that the Township is considering transitioning their current timesheet system to an electronic one that may require a fingerprint to login.

There were also discussions as to whether the Park itself should have internet access, Wi-Fi. Charlie indicated that some home schooled students come to the Park with teachers and this may help them with lessons. However, Gregg, Rick, Andrea, and Jim stated that the park should not have Wi-Fi, as it is there for the community to enjoy nature and have an open air experience. Gregg noted there would also be the additional cost of wiring the Park.

h. Charlie indicated that there is an upcoming seminar in Lancaster pertaining to local parks and the recreation industry. Both she and Andrea will attend. Charlie asked Gregg if we retained anyone who could apply for grants on behalf of the park. Gregg indicated that the new PWD does have some experience with grant writing. However, Gregg is not opposed to bringing in a grant writer as well, although the last one employed, cost 10% of the grant received, which he thought was too expensive. Jim suggested that we wait for the Director to start and see what that brings before hiring another grant writer.

Charlie indicated that there is a grant available for community development projects however the application must be submitted by April 1. This particular grant is for community park rehabilitation, green features, modernizing facilities, and technical assistance. Gregg asked what the project would be for the grant. Charlie indicated that the Community Center could be renovated and available year round and also made ADL accessibility.

Gregg stated that it is unlikely that the grant would be awarded because a plan must be submitted with the grant. Gregg stated that the cost to procure an architect is not currently in the budget, although it could be added. Charlie stated she felt confident that a plan could be developed if she could encourage a reputable architect to develop a sketch/plan pro-gratis if the Township Engineer agreed to design the floor & site plan. The first step would be to meet with BOC and discuss ideas and then hire an architect. There should also be a discussion about having the Community Center opened year round, such as what staff and maintenance would be required for the expansion. Once all of this has been completed, then there can be a grant submittal. Charlie asked if the Committee needed to make a recommendation, and Gregg indicated that it should be put on the BOC agenda. Also, the architect would only provide cost estimates and a preliminary plan, not the full development plan. Gregg responded that the final decision on this would fall to the BOC. They would award a bid based on what is received. Also, there is bidding requirements that have to be adhered to, such as if a bid is over \$10,000, 3 bids needed to be obtained. If above \$19,000, an RFP needed to be issued. Gregg also indicated that the bid did not have to be put out unless it met these criteria. Gregg asked if a Committee member could attend the BOC on 2/17 to present the project noted. Alex and Charlie will determine if one of them can present on this day.

Gregg suggested that the grant for April 1 not be submitted because a plan and approval will not be in place. Gregg said that time needs to be taken to explaining the benefits of having the Community Center open year round. Jim indicated that there should be a conceptual plan of the Community Center project.

Gregg also suggested that 2015 be a planning year for projects, with execution in 2016. Gregg delivers a budget to the BOC by September of each year, so project information should be available before this time.

i. Charlie asked the status of safety audit of the park. Gregg replied that the Township has a new insurance carrier that serves municipalities. This company, MRM, offers playground inspections. Once the weather improves, MRM is available to complete the inspection of both TLC and the Park.

## **5. New Business**

a. Charlie discussed the pavilion rentals. Dee indicated that many of the pavilions have already been reserved. Gregg suggested that planning on any pavilion change take place this year, with execution in 2016. Gregg would like to see pavilion rentals completed through an online system

in which the community could reserve pavilions and provide payment. Dee had no objections to this system, indicating that community members would still contact the Township office with questions. Rick indicated that DCNR has this system for state park rentals. Alex inquired as to how insurance, residency, and other information would be verified. Gregg offered that it would be a good idea to look at other communities who use such software systems and determine what would work for the Township. Jim stated he had spoken to Townships in NY and NJ and found that some of them were using online systems and some were not. However, what was most successful is when whatever system is used is streamlined and there is one process for all activities. Gregg suggested that the Committee make a recommendation to him about a system to use for reservations. BOC would then be notified of the recommendation.

b. Charlie stated she had been in contact with ESU Dean Jeff Weber about an intern to assist with a variety of tasks. She was referred to Samuel Quainoo, Professor and Chair of the Political Science Department at ESU. Gregg stated that an unpaid intern could certainly work with the Committee, but that person's major or minor should focus on recreation or a related field. He actually has an unpaid intern assisting him now. Charlie indicated that she will follow up on this resource. Gregg informed her that the intern could possibly assist with pavilion reservations, and the ESU contact was Daria Belinski.

c. Charlie informed the Committee that *Big Pocono Mountain East Little League* had taken over little league activities; she would inform the program director of what would be required to reserve fields.

Alex indicated that there is field availability in Tobyhanna and Barrett Township.

Dee noted that children's leagues receive priority over adult leagues. She indicated there may be a higher need for Township fields, but Jim and Alex stated that with the availability of other fields, the requests for Township fields may decrease.

Alex asked if the Titans team has been informed of the League change. Dee stated they had not.

d. Gregg made a suggestion that the Committee agenda be simplified, with an additional meeting held on occasion to discuss special projects or events. The Committee agreed this would be an efficient way in which to handle a variety of Park business. Charlie agreed to send the Committee dates to work on several of the projects discussed.

e. Pocono Alliance has agreed to submit a proposal to expand the Autism center within the *Crossing Abilities* playground.

f. Regarding the 2-10 year plan for the Park, Charlie provided Committee members with a hand out detailing some of the proposed projects through the next several years; she asked for comments in an email or at the next meeting.

g. Gregg indicated that one of the first priorities for the new PWD would be working on the Capital Improvement Plan.

## 6. Old Business

a. According to Gregg, the Bi-Centennial Celebration Committee now has 3-4 candidates, mainly from the Park Committee (Andrea; Denise; Charlie) and the Celebration Committee needs 7 on its board. The thought is that there could be multiple events throughout 2016, culminating with one large event. The actual bi-Centennial is November 2016.

Jim asked about participation of *Northampton County Community College*. Gregg stated that talks continue. Gregg also noted that should the contract with HJP be withdrawn, NCC could figure in more prominently.

b. Charlie indicated that she had obtained current playground equipment catalogues, and in an effort to conserve time, asked the Committee members if they would accept her recommendations. There were no objections. Charlie also asked about the playground bar installation, but Dean was not present at this meeting to address it. Gregg suggested that Charlie

and he meet with the *Little Tykes* representative when the snow clears and conduct a walk-through of the park. Also, he can meet with Dean and Charlie and discuss what is needed.

c. Charlie suggested Pocono Township join the National Cooperative Contract Solutions (NJPA) versus the CoStars as registration is free and membership provides an 8% discount on playground purchases. Gregg enlightened the members as to the benefit of this type of membership. Currently we are members with CoStars. The bidding process has already been done therefore joining a cooperative allows municipalities to access nationally leveraged purchasing contracts that are cost efficient and meet state statues and guidelines.

d. Charlie noted that Bobby Felins' company had provided an estimate of \$4000 to complete the repaving at Pavilion 3. Jim recommended that the work be completed prior to the park opening where there will be higher traffic throughout the park.

Because he is a member of the Recreation Committee, Bobby asked if there is a conflict of interest should he be contracted to pave the pavilion. Gregg stated there are ethical concerns as well as the *perception* of ethical concerns. Since the Committee does not award contracts, Gregg did not think there would be a problem; however, he would like to think on it some more and get back to Bobby.

e. Charlie mentioned a concern brought up by the sales associate for Little Tykes about stolen portable aluminum bleachers sold for scrap. Since we are budgeted to purchase new bleachers and Dean prefers portable for mowing convenience, Charlie wondered if this should be a concern for us. Gregg stated that there has not been a theft in the park as of this meeting and at the end of the day, should the benches be stolen, an insurance claim would be made.

f. Neal Gallagher received an award from BOC recognizing him for his many years of service with Pocono Township Parks & Recreation and the Crossing Abilities Playground.

g. Charlie brought up the possibility of hosting outdoor music venues at the park. Musician Mike Cabot offered to host a benefit however Charlie plans on referring him to the Bi-Centennial Committee for consideration.

## 7. HJP

a. Harold indicated that the Daddy/Daughter dance held at *Pocono Manor* was a huge success, with about 400 participants. Participants were asked to pre-register. Charlie and Harold discussed the implementation of a software program that would assist HJP in making reservations for such events. A base system costs about \$7000.

b. The next HJP event will be a trip to Philadelphia for the annual Flower Show.

Motion to close meeting by Charlie at 9:20am; Alex seconded.

Next regular board meeting is scheduled for 7:30 a.m. on March 10, 2015 at the Pocono Township Municipal Building