

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARKS

MICHAEL WEBER, CHAIRMAN

Meeting Minutes

April 9, 2014

The regular monthly meeting of the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Board was held on Wednesday, April 9, 2014 at 6:00 PM at the Department of Recreation and Parks administrative offices, Cockeysville, Maryland. In attendance were Mike Weber, chairman; Eric van den Beemt, vice chairman; board members Mike Milani, Leslie Monfred, David Smylie, Chuck Munzert, Brian Weir, Charles Gilman and Robbie Palmisano. Recreation and Parks department staff included Susan Cormack, regional coordinator, Region 2, and Mike Schneider, community outreach liaison.

In attendance from the Perry Hall Recreation Council: Paul Amirault, treasurer; David Williams and David Walker, football coaches, and parents Shaun & Nicole Schroeder, Nick & Michele Hapsis and Gregg Apple.

Approval of Minutes:

Brian Weir motioned to approve the March board meeting minutes, Vice Chairman Eric van den Beemt seconded, and all were in favor.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Mike Weber announced that legislation was introduced by Councilwoman Cathy Bevins on Monday regarding background checks. He provided board members with a copy of the legislation and further discussion ensued. He plans to notify board members of the next work session and encouraged them to attend.

Director's Comments

In the absence of Director Barry F. Williams and Beahta Davis, Susan Cormack was in attendance. She addressed the board and stated that Mr. B. F. Williams asked her to thank all board members who attended the Soukup Arena Groundbreaking and the Perry Paw Dog Park Ribbon Cutting.

Old Business:

Mr. Weber stated that the board was previously approached by concerned parents regarding the Perry Hall Recreation Council football program. The board took their concerns very seriously. Shortly thereafter, some members of the board met with a large group of concerned parents. Mr. Weber then invited a member of the recreation council to come before the board. Paul Amirault, treasurer, Perry Hall Recreation Council, was asked to attend as he is aware of what had transpired.

Mr. Amirault addressed the board and circulated a letter from John McKay, a child abuse investigator and parent of a child who, prior to relocating, participated in the football program. Mr. McKay provided his comments to what he thought were the "key points of contention," expressing his thoughts in favor of the coaches. Mr. Amirault then provided background information on

himself and history regarding the council. He stated that he was not in attendance at the football practices. At the beginning of the season, a parent told the coach they wanted a particular group of children kept together; Mr. Amirault stated that this did not happen. He discussed the water break issue, stated that this was resolved and there had been no additional complaints since. Several team meetings were held between parents and coaches to discuss complaints, and Council President Jerry Soukup started to watch the happenings on the fields. A parent of a child on the team donated money for secondary uniforms and then the issue arose regarding misappropriation of funds (~\$500), which Mr. Amirault stated is a civil matter and discounted the allegations. He stated that there seems to be competing versions of the facts and said that the Office of Law would not defend any of them for defamation. He stated that the Perry Hall Recreation Council will not fire their coaches – if the Board of Recreation and Parks wished to fire coaches...

Mike Milani discussed what was stated in the notes from the November 12, 2013 meeting (with the Perry Hall Recreation Council Executive Board and parents of the football program) regarding coaches using foul language and stated that this should be addressed. He asked Mr. Amirault if the council was washing their hands of this. Mr. Amirault referenced Mr. McKay's letter and stated that he feels they have dealt with it. The coaches were reminded that this language should be avoided and all are aware of this. Mr. Milani stated that the program director should be responsible for dealing with this when issues arise. Mr. Amirault stated that they do not have enough definitive proof that the coach should be dismissed. Leslie Monfred stated that she does not believe they have addressed all allegations/issues brought to the board. Mr. Amirault stated that the chair of the program and Mr. Soukup started watching/looking when the complaints came in. Mr. Milani stated that the culture of youth football and what is accepted is what the board is involved in. Mr. Amirault stated that they are in the situation where he believes the parents needed to be removed from the program. Lengthy discussion ensued.

David Walker told board members that he coached the 11U team last year. He stated that if his child was being abused by the coach he would have pulled his son out of the program.

David Williams stated that he has been around for 25 years and coached the 9U team. His son was on the team in question. There were issues in the beginning and he then started mentoring the coach, who had only been coaching for ~2-3 years. Mr. Williams stated that if he felt his son was in danger, he would have removed him from the program, but he did not believe this was the case. He spoke to the parents and the coach in an effort to find out what the issues were. He stated that there was one assistant coach that was a little outspoken, and he told him to get a grip on it. He has heard him curse and stated that he is a bit loud and obnoxious but has never heard him use foul language towards the children. Mr. Williams attends all games and is on the sidelines. He stated that he wants a chance to get the coaching staff together. He stated that water was an issue but has since been handled. Mr. Weber responded stating that there is the ability to appeal to the Board of Recreation and Parks as part of the by-laws for every recreation council.

Chuck Munzert provided his history with recreation and then brought up the issue regarding money. He stated that all money must go through the recreation council. He stated that the council should penalize someone for breaking policy. Mr. Amirault replied stating that he frequently said in meetings that all money must be run through the recreation council. Mr. Milani stated that if there was a problem then this person would never be back in this position. Mr. Amirault stated that the accusation is that money is missing; however, he has no record of this. He said he now knows that money was collected but did not know this back in August/September. Mr. Munzert stated that if you are a board member and you know about it, then something should be done. Mr. Milani said

there are questions of how it was done but there was no follow up on this. Mr. Amirault stated that he knows money was received but doesn't know money was taken – this is an accusation. Mr. Weber asked Mr. Amirault what he thinks the problems are with this program. Mr. Amirault replied stating that the group of children that were requested to stay together were split between the A and B teams, the water issue – which has been resolved, and the money. He stated that he thinks the cursing is a side issue. Mr. Amirault and both coaches agree and stated they think there have been threats on both sides. Mr. Milani stated that if threats were going on and no coaches or parents were removed then no action was taken regarding unacceptable behavior. Mr. Amirault stated that he got involved and was made aware of this in the middle of November. He has football coaches and chairs requesting that certain parents not be allowed to come back and stated that all coaches can come back.

Mr. Williams stated that there were several team meetings throughout the season, which were very loud; he does not condone this behavior. He stated that he is involved with this team.

Nick Hapsis reported that at the November meeting there was a print out of the funds, totaling \$4K, collected by the team. This included money from each participant, the donation from a parent and candy sales totaling \$1300, which was split between the A and B teams. Each participant received a uniform and there was a pizza party, but they had to buy their pizza. Mr. Hapsis stated that his younger son will not be playing for this coach. The coach is lacking general knowledge of the game and his language is out of control. Other families pulled their children from the team; he did not because he was always there with his son and did not want to let the other teammates down.

Gregg Apple stated that he was threatened. He stated that a football was thrown at eight children because they were not running the plays the way the coach wanted them to. Mr. Apple gave Chris (last name was not provided) fifteen minutes but he never showed. He called 911 and waited until 8:00 PM but the police never showed. The coach came up to him and made a remark about using his last free pass. Mr. Apple stated that his son will not be back playing for this coach.

Shaun Schroeder stated that competency of the coach is an issue. He is also concerned about the safety of the children indicating there is helmet to helmet contact and referred to what is going on as “smash mouth football.”

Nicole Schroeder stated that safety is huge and there is concern that this is lacking. The coach's behavior is out of control. She reported that they do not even know the coach's full name, yet they are asked to drop their children off. This behavior is mostly done at practices.

Michele Hapsis discussed the Perry Hall Recreation Council meeting and stated that there were five in attendance that were openly willing to speak in opposition of the coach, two did not speak, seven did speak for the coach but two had prior complaints about him, and four families were not even there. She stated that there were people not happy and scared to speak up.

Mr. Milani stated that the board needs to deal with the facts. He asked the two coaches what they would do if these allegations were true. Mr. Walker stated that the team has an 8:1 record; however, if the coach threw the football at the children, you need to get rid of him. Mr. Williams stated that if the allegations were true, then you need to get rid of the coach.

Charles Gilman addressed defamation of character stating that the board is not defaming anyone, that this is not what this is. Mr. van den Beemt stated that the evidence is enough – parents coming

to him with complaints, you do not have the coach come back. He stated that you do not need to have video evidence. Mrs. Monfred stated that a volunteer serves at the discretion of the recreation council. She stated that the children's interest always comes first.

Mr. Williams stated that he gave parents information on where to go if they do not think the coach is acting/coaching adequately. Mr. Munzert stated that he heard the council is joining another league and asked if this was true. Mr. Walker replied stating that this was true. Background checks are not required. Mr. Munzert stated that their football program could have had background checks for about \$12/person.

Mr. Amirault brought up theft, stating that the parents accused the coach of theft. He went on to state that he did not know about things until November and proceeded to recap what he said before. He stated that their board was not there. In addition, he further stated that competency is not an issue with the council.

Mr. Weber thanked everyone for being here.

7:24 PM – the board took a break from the meeting.

7:34 PM – the board continued with their meeting.

In regards to coverage for volunteers, Mr. Weber stated that he has not heard from Mike Field nor does he believe Mr. B. F. Williams has because he has not said anything to him.

Mr. van den Beemt stated that the reaction he has received regarding background checks is that it is unfortunate it has come to this. Mr. Weber again stated that he will let everyone know the date of the work session. He thinks all board members should attend and be prepared to speak.

Lisa Liupaeter informed board members that the smoking ban legislation is on the County's website under 2014 Bills.

New Business:

Mr. Weir informed board members of the upcoming PUD meeting for North Point Government Center and stated that he anticipates that this meeting will be intense with many in attendance. He stated that the Dundalk Renaissance Council, the lawyers and the builders are all to attend. This is an open meeting that begins at 6:00 PM. Mr. Weir attended a meeting last week at Bob Staab's residence and stated that this is going to be a very hot topic because parkland was sold. Mr. Weir announced that he intends to speak at this meeting, given the 7th District Race.

Mr. Weir spoke to Bryan Sheppard today regarding the possibility of recreation councils obtaining a waiver for dumping. He stated that the councils are now required to pay for dumpsters and should not have to pay a dumping fee to a county landfill. He has been shopping around and found a good deal for the councils in his area. It is ~\$70/ton to dump at the county landfill. Mr. Sheppard is to get back with him.

Mr. Weir stated that the Dundalk Eagle has reviewed the board's meeting minutes and want to publicly print why the board closed Patapsco-Neck Norwood Recreation Council. In addition, they want to print what is going on with West Inverness and Gray Charles. Mr. Weir stated that he could

not attend the West Inverness council meeting and told Lenny Camphor to let them know that the board is very serious about what they need to do. Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Munzert reported that Bengies-Chase Recreation Council lost their tax exempt status over one month ago, receiving a letter from the state informing them of this. However, according to the federal government, they are still considered tax exempt. Mr. Munzert stated that the council does not know what to do and are looking for assistance.

Mrs. Monfred reported that she has spoken to board members and announced that they are ready to hold their election of officers. Both Mr. Weber and Mr. van den Beemt showed interest in serving as chair and vice chair. The board took a vote.

Old Business Continued:

In regards to the Perry Hall Recreation Council football program, Mr. van den Beemt stated that he was the chair of a program for many years and has removed coaches before – without video/evidence. He stated that we have spoken to enough parents and heard about the altercations with the coach; however, the analysis of the council is that they do not know anything. It is clear that these things happened – no water, foul language, throwing of football – the team is losing players because of the coach and the board needs to take action. Mr. van den Beemt stated that something should have been done. This is not good for the program and not good for the children. Mr. Weir responded stating that he thinks the board should suggest a two year probationary period, and if anything happens during this time, they are removed from the program. Discussion ensued. Ms. Cormack discussed staff's role with regard to the council and the volunteers. Mr. van den Beemt stated that the council needs to do something to convince the board that they took appropriate action. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the issues and the next steps to take; the council has not done anything. Mr. Milani stated that he would take this issue on and will deal with the football program. He will follow up. He stated that he would like the chairman to appoint a sub-committee.

Action:

Mrs. Monfred motioned to elect Mr. Weber as the Chairman of the Board of Recreation and Parks and Mr. van den Beemt as Vice Chairman, Mr. Gilman seconded and all were in favor.

Mr. Milani motioned to table the Perry Hall Recreation Council football program issue for one month, Mr. Gilman seconded and all were in favor with the exception of Mrs. Monfred.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Mr. Milani moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Gilman seconded the motion, and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Liupaeter