

Thornapple Area Parks and Recreation Commission

Minutes from the May 10, 2023, meeting at the Thornapple Township Hall

Chairwoman Catherine Getty called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Present: Getty, Anne Hamming, Eric Schaefer, Tom Hamilton, Ann Williams, Keara Hilton, Kristen Cove (Dock present by phone)

Absent: Jeff Kenyon

Staff present: Baseball program director Nathan Fischer

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Cove, seconded by Williams to adopt the agenda with the addition of item D – Andy Saldivar Coach of the Year. Motion carries 7-0.

Minutes: Motion by Cove, seconded by Williams to adopt the minutes from April. 12, 2023, meeting. Motion carries 7-0.

Public comment: Jackie Schneider thanked Catherine Getty for the amazing job she does leading the TAPRC Board. Schneider thanked Getty for being an outstanding mentor and a wonderful asset for the community.

Treasurer's report: Hamilton pointed out that the apparel sale created \$305 in revenue. He will correct the scholarship amounts and player fees. Actual amounts will be in line with the budgeted amount. Sponsorships are up from what was budgeted. The charity house is already halfway to budgeted for the year. The designated funds for Sheridan Park are still showing in the balance. They will be transferred as when the Barry Community Foundation completes setup of our designated fund. Hamilton received a draft of the audit report. He will share it at the June meeting.

Motion by Williams, seconded by Hamming, to adopt the financial report as presented. Motion carries 7-0.

New business

- A) United Way 2022 survey – Each spring TAPRC completes a survey to report how we use the annual grant. The survey includes information such as the number of scholarships and ZIP codes of our young athletes to know what municipalities they come from for the 2022 season. It helps United Way see that the funds are used as intended. Dock will complete it and submit it by the June 1 deadline. The grant last year provided nearly \$5,000 in scholarships so children from low-income families could play.
- B) Annual report will be presented to Thornapple Township on June 12.
- C) Sale of Polaris Ranger utility vehicle for \$4,000 to Joshua Wickham is complete and he was very happy with the purchase. Getty said she is still looking for something to drag the fields, which is hard to find right now. Fischer offered his old garden tractor as a donation and the board accepted.
- D) Andy Saldivar Coach of the Year – The award was created to honor the longtime TK coach. Last year the board gave two awards. Cove will update the Google form, so it is ready to be sent out the week of May 22 and close June 19.

Used Sports Equipment sale: Community events committee (Williams, Schaefer and Hinton) to get permission to collect donation at school athletic events and at the downtown market. Once collection plans are confirmed, Williams will share details so board members can promote collection events. Donations can also be dropped off M-Th at the township hall.

Paddle for Parks: Last year we had revenue of \$600 from registration fees. Getty recommended tiered sponsorships. Community events committee will meet and bring ideas back to the board in June.

Director report: Opening Day on May 8 was successful. Teams played despite rain but the kids had a great time. He thanked the board for support with materials, planning, sponsorships, social media. Fischer encouraged board members to stop in to watch games and enjoy watching the kids gain skills. Picture day is Saturday, May 13. He is working to get support from families to chalk the fields, which will be a tremendous help to field manager Mike Bremer. Fischer created a how-to video that will be shared on social media to encourage volunteer sign ups. T-Ball begins Saturday. Tri-Com is allowing youth as young as 12 to umpire so Fischer is hopeful that spectators will be kind and he is doing what he can to get ahead of any unsportsmanlike conduct from parents. Cove offered up the idea of showing appreciation for all the coaches. Getty asked if it might be possible to acknowledge them at a Friday night music night. The coach of year award could also be presented that night. Youth programming committee will convene to hash out the details. Getty will contact a representative from the Lions Club about partnering for a food booth on the designated night.

Closing board member comments: Ann Williams shared copies of a statement from Village President Mike Cramer with concerns he has about the TAPRC agreement. Board members discussed their responses to his message. Board members pointed out that it has never been the responsibility of TAPRC to buy land and develop parks and that TAPRC does not have the legal authority or funding authority to do so (no authority to collect millage). That rests solely with the township and the village. Board members discussed that TAPRC was created so the three entities (township, village, school district) had a means to collaborate on park improvements for the entire community, avoid duplication, avoid working in isolation and work together to strategically determine the location of parks improvements based on overall community need. Board members indicated that the previous village manager didn't seem to understand or appreciate the spirit of the TAPRC agreement, as evidenced by the appearance of going it alone on a Calvin Hill Park plan that duplicated many features of the Sheridan Park plan but did not address the most critical needs as identified over more than a decade of planning. Last, board members took issue with Mr. Cramer's suggestion that the baseball/softball program exists to feed our high school program. In fact, the baseball/softball program is an expression of the collaborative nature of our organization to foster opportunities for all residents to get outside and have their lives enriched through physical activity and sport. The aim of our youth programming is to help children develop skills and a sense of sportsmanship that will last a lifetime regardless of how many years they play.

Getty adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Anne Hamming, Secretary