

Thornapple Area Parks and Recreation Commission

Minutes from July 12, 2023, meeting at the Thornapple Township Hall

Chairwoman Catherine Getty called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Board members Present: Getty, Anne Hamming, Eric Schaefer, Ann Williams, Kristen Cove, Jeff Kenyon.

Non-voting Advisory Members present: None

Absent: Tom Hamilton, Keara Hilton, Emily Dock

Staff present: Baseball program director Nathan Fischer

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Cove to adopt the agenda with the addition of Item H - Mileage reimbursement, seconded by Williams. Motion carries 6-0.

Minutes: Motion by Cove, seconded by Williams to adopt the minutes from May 10, 2023, meeting. Motion carries 6-0.

Public comment: None

Treasurer's report: Cove recommended that the checks not be included in the report because their inclusion makes the payers' account numbers part of public record. She also recommended that the final four digits on TAPRC's bank statements be redacted.

The financial report showed a net loss because of timing. Entity payments and audit reimbursement hasn't come in. Entities have received the invoices. Hamilton asked Getty to tell the board that he will share the audit reports with the board in August. The auditors gave a clean report, indicating the financials are in order and meet industry standards.

Motion by Cove to approve report with the recommendation that account information be redacted moving forward. Seconded by Williams. Motion carries 6-0

Director's report: Last game was June 30, and it was a successful season. Fischer was impressed with coaches, umpires, and the high level of sportsmanship. It was great to see TAPRC teams cheering on opposing teams and he heard compliments from other communities where our teams played. Children developed skills and had many positive experiences. Parents were committed to getting kids to games and practices. Mike Bremer was at the fields daily and the fields never looked so good. Tyler Boltema ran the umpire duties smoothly. He thanked Catherine and Emily for being available to help at all times.

Despite the very positive experience, Fischer turned in his resignation. The job took too much time at all hours of the day in addition to his full-time job as a teacher. He said he needs to resign for his family because the job takes so much time and commitment to do it well and be there for his own children's events.

Board members noted that Nate was the third director in four years, and they discussed at length the staffing challenge and the challenges in funding TAPRC adequately to staff programming and core mission. Getty noted that TAPRC was started as a capital improvement facilitator and Getty would like to see the organization return to that. Getty said it is possible the organization would stop programming to return to the core mission. One way to continue programming could be more smaller paid positions

(stipend) such as sponsorships manager, and equipment manager, to offload work from the director and board members.

Fischer indicated that compensation wasn't the problem. It was the time away from family with regular interruptions, especially on nights and weekends. There was consensus among board members that it seems the job can't be done along with another job because of the demands during April, May, and June. Board members discussed options to either lighten the burden by splitting the job up even more than was done this year, make it full-time for those months, or don't do the baseball/softball program at all and let another organization form to run it. The last option was the least desirable to board members because it is hardest on kids.

Board members also discussed how the organization has become synonymous with baseball/softball in the community to the detriment of the core mission of facilitating park and recreational opportunity improvements. Board members comments suggested consensus that it is time to invest time into ensuring the core mission is still desired by all three entities and get back on mission. Hamming pointed out that the timing of such conversations is critical because opportunities for the township and village to seek parks and recreation funding could become available as the school district's debt retirement millage drops in late 2027 or early 2028. Now is the time to begin conversations about what the entities want parks and recreation to look like in the future. Hamming recommended that Getty meet with the village manager, school superintendent and the township supervisor to review the purpose of TAPRC and assess/affirm if there is buy-in from the three entities on the purpose and commitment to work together. Getty agreed this was a necessary step to determining the future of youth baseball/softball and the future of TAPRC. Getty and Schaefer agreed that the meeting would be useful, and Getty said she would extend the invitation to the village manager and the school superintendent so the four of them could meet. She said she would report back to the board at the next meeting.

Cove moved that the board direct Catherine Getty to convene the leadership of the school district, township, and village to meet to discuss the future of TAPRC. Seconded by Williams. Motion carries 6-0.

New business

- A) 2023 Entity/Audit: Getty updated the board that invoices have been sent.
- B) Andy Saldivar Coach of the Year: The award was created to recognize coaches who go above and beyond the required coaching responsibilities and display strength of character, dedication to players, and the love for the game. The award is given to one baseball coach and one softball coach each year. The award-winning coaches will be invited to the August meeting to get their awards. Board members discussed the nominees and noted that there were several deserving nominees. Motion by Kenyon, seconded by Williams to give the baseball award to Jake Cartright. Motion carries 6-0.
Motion by Schaefer, second by Kenyon, to give the softball award to June Behrendt. Motion carries 6-0.
- C) Shed, equipment and field day cleanup: For end-of-season cleanup, Fischer said the banners still need to be taken down at the fields. He will coordinate with Mike Bremer and ask for volunteer help. Team bags still need to come out of the shed and be returned to the township hall basement storage area. Kenyon noted that a coach's equipment bag was stolen from the locked shed at Crane 3.

- D) Plaques and thank you letter distribution: Getty asked board members to take at least four plaques to deliver to sponsors.
- E) Parent/player survey: Getty and Dock will send out the player survey.
- F) Charity Shed: Getty pointed out that board members are struggling to keep up with the shed. Cove offered to coordinate a sign up for other organizations to handle the donations every month. Getty moved that Cove be appointed the coordinator of the charity shed rotation with other community groups. Seconded by Hamming. Motion carries 6-0.
- G) Day of Caring (Sept. 14 and 16) project ideas: Getty said she would contact Mike Bremer for ideas of projects.
- H) Mileage reimbursement: Board members discussed mileage reimbursement for Nathan and Mike Bremer. The rate was based on the IRS recommended reimbursement rate. Cove moved to reimburse Nathan for mileage for the season in the amount of \$120.26. Williams supported. Motion carries 6-0.
Cove moved that all TAPRC employees (field manager and lead umpire) be invited to submit mileage for the season. Seconded by Williams. Motion carries 6-0.

Used Sports Equipment sale: Community events committee (Williams, Schaefer and Hinton) will have bin available for items to deposit items for donation at the township hall.

Heritage Day Event: There was consensus that the board doesn't have much bandwidth to do an event this year even with the later date for Heritage Days in early September. Board members discussed not holding an event. If the event was canceled, board representatives would need to reach out to the sixteen sponsors to offer them their money back. In the face of that, the two members of the community events committee present (Schaefer and Williams) said they would organize a Paddle for Parks event in conjunction with Heritage Days, beginning at 9 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 9. Getty said she would get the planning document from last year's event to Schaefer for him to update and email the list of duties for board members to take volunteer assignments. No additional sponsors will be recruited.

Board member Comments: Getty thanked Nathan for his work all season and his willingness to continue to wrap up the season.

Getty adjourned the meeting at 8 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Anne Hamming, Secretary