

**TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA
RECREATION COMMITTEE
Monday, July 2, 2018**

**Municipal Complex, Committee Meeting Room, 3rd Floor
100 Ann Edwards Lane, Mount Pleasant, SC 29464**

Minutes

Members Present: Gary Santos, Chair; Tom O'Rourke, G. M. Whitley
Staff Present: Eric DeMoura, Steve Gergick

Mr. Santos called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes from the June 4, 2018 meeting

Mr. O'Rourke made a motion to approve the June 4, 2018 minutes. Ms. Whitley seconded the motion. All were in favor.

2. Public Comments

Mr. Al Bradshaw-Whittemore, the USA Pickleball Ambassador for Mount Pleasant, of 577 Antebellum Lane, Mount Pleasant was recognized. He said he wanted to thank the Mayor and the Oceanside Collegiate Academy for considering pickleball courts for the new sports complex. He said he wanted clarification in looking at the minutes of the last three meetings of the Mugsy Kerr Tennis Complex and it mentioned an additional six tennis courts and also mentioned pickleball courts. He said he spoke to Mr. Gergick prior to the meeting and he said the plan was to proceed with six tennis courts and they may mark them with pickleball courts. He said that four pickleball courts can be put on the same area as one tennis court. He said at the present time there are no dedicated centralized pickleball courts. He said they have many locations, but it is scattered and sometimes there are not enough people at one particular one because they have so many. He said one centralized location would be greatly appreciated. He said he knew they were proceeding with tennis courts, but he would like them to consider reducing the six courts to three. He said they could then have twelve dedicated pickleball courts and they

would still be adding to the tennis courts. He said that the Miriam Brown Community Center has four pickleball courts on the basketball courts and there are huge cracks in the surface. He said that Daniel Island has a fee and they only have six feet behind the base line and play requires eight feet. He said if one has to pay to play they want a facility that meets the regulations.

Mr. Santos thanked Mr. Bradshaw-Whittemore for including him on his email list. He said he did notice they did have an issue with getting people to show up to play and asked if he had rectified that.

Mr. Bradshaw-Whittemore says participation varies. He said at the Jones Center the surface is rubberized and it was extremely noisy which is a problem for some older participants. He said that attendance went down recently at Park West due to the air conditioning was out.

Mr. Santos asked if he could keep them informed about the growth of pickleball, so they can review it as they make decisions.

Mr. Bradshaw-Whittemore said they have grown by 100 more people and currently have 400 on a weekly email list. He said some on the list want to protect their emails and theirs are not shared.

Mr. O'Rourke said he did not know if they should take a look at pickleball growth in a vacuum. He said Mr. Gergick had information on the growth of all programs and historic data from the past. He said if Mr. Bradshaw-Whittemore provided information and they looked at it, he did not know that it would mean anything unless they had a way to look at everything else that goes on in the Department with the facilities. He said he agrees that they should look at it but thought it was much larger than that. He said Mr. Bradshaw-Whittemore was present today, but it could be lacrosse or another group asking them to do the same thing. He said it was a good idea to look at all numbers and historic data.

Mr. Santos said the Recreation Department provides the Athletic Report and Events every month and he was happy to see that everyone one of the programs had increased.

Mr. O'Rourke asked if the fields and courts they play on had increased proportionately. He said they need to find out what they are doing and find out how many fields and courts they have and then they can keep up with the growth.

Mr. Santos said he thought that was a good idea. He said with the report he just mentioned that everyone of the programs had increased with the exception of a slight decrease in tennis. He said it shows they have growth and need to get more fields.

Mr. Bradshaw-Whittemore said that every Friday from 12-1 p.m. at the Senior Center in Mount Pleasant they give pickleball instructions. He said the previous week there was eight people who had not played and every week they have new people show up that are interested in pickleball.

Mr. Santos asked if they can track that and let the Recreation Department know how many people are playing pickleball and are involved in it.

Mr. Bradshaw-Whittemore said at all the facilities they sign in. He said there was also a core group of four to eight participants that plays every morning Monday-Saturday at 6 a.m.

Mr. Santos asked if they could get that report.

Ms. Whitley said she agreed with Mr. O'Rourke that they need to look at the Recreation Department as a whole and look at the long term needs and where they need to go.

Ms. Brenda Corley, Principal of Oceanside Collegiate Academy in Mount Pleasant said they are a free public charter high school. She said she wanted the Committee to understand the recent newspaper article. She did not know if they had read her comment was "no comment". She said the reason was because she was not ready to comment as she had not spoken with the Committee about it. She said they have no permitting and just own the land. She said they had paid for the architectural drawings and they are just beginning. She said she had received a lot of emails with people complaining. She wanted to make sure the Committee understood they are just at the beginning and it would be a collaborative venture. She said most are positive, but people are upset that there will be no baseball

or softball fields. She said they do want to help out with the pickleball court situation as well. She said if they had any questions to email or call her.

Mr. Santos thanked Ms. Corley for the offer of a school tour. He also thanked her for the school sharing their gym with the Town. He said that was how it should be as they do it with Wando and other public schools. He said he thought it was a good working relationship, a good partnership, and looking forward to them getting more State championships.

Ms. Corley said this year they were not allowed to play for a championship, but they obtained two. She said as a member at large one can compete for golf, lacrosse, and swimming. She said they took golf and lacrosse. She said she just did not want the Committee had have misconceptions about what was written.

3. Discussion regarding artificial turf fields

Mr. Gergick said he had been asked to put discussion for artificial turf fields on the agenda. He said it was a recap of the previous time that it was discussed at Committee, so everyone would have the same starting point. He said the presentation was given in 2016 on artificial turf. He said at the time there was concerns with the number of rainouts that they had. He said they had to close a lot of fields. He said in 2014-15 they had two wet years with hurricanes and the storm of the century. He said they took a look at synthetic use of fields in other municipalities in South Carolina. He said they looked at potential synthetic field locations in Mount Pleasant. He said they got cost estimates from Carolina Green and looked at the pros and cons of synthetic turf as well as some alternate options. He said at the time the focus was how to prevent as many rainouts as they used to have.

Mr. Santos suggested they ask questions on each segment, so they do not miss something.

Mr. Gergick went over the background of significant rain activity through 2014 and 2015 with a high number of rainouts. He said they installed Cambridge drainage on five fields in the summer of 2015. He said the new system dramatically improved drainage on most fields. He said it was a

less successful on the Park West Football Field and Track Field because of the soil condition was holding water. He said synthetic turf was suggested as a way to reduce the number of rainouts in the Department. Mr. Gergick shared a Rainout Comparison in 2014 without the Cambridge system and the number of rainouts in 2015 with the Cambridge system. He said there was eight days in 2015 that were complete washouts with lightning and huge storms. He said that the Park West Football Field still had a significant number of rainouts as it was not draining as well because it did not have sand slit injections. He said since that was added it had done much better.

Mr. Santos said he noticed there was more rainouts with the system than without the system on the football and baseball fields. He said he wanted the public to understand as well that these were days that did not include the days they take the fields down to grow grass. He said that there was 136 days the fields were down without the system and 127 they were down with the system if one adds the days they take the fields down for rain. He said they are actually down two months out of the year on top of the rainouts as it did not show that in the figures.

Mr. Gergick said that was correct as the focus was on reducing the number of rainouts and was not addressing the closing of the fields during the summertime for maintenance. He said the Use of Synthetic Turf by other recreation departments in South Carolina were in Rock Hill at Manchester Meadows which is a tournament soccer complex and also at Grand Park in Myrtle Beach. He said both of the departments are designed primarily as tournament complexes and do not use a lot of recreation use on those. He said the other 27 departments that were contacted were not using synthetic turf at the time.

Mr. Santos asked if Mr. Gergick had checked with Shipyard Park which has four synthetic fields.

Mr. Gergick said he had seen it and was aware of that.

Mr. Santos said he noticed in the analysis that Berkeley County was not included which is in the vicinity. He said there was Shipyard Park or Wando High School which are putting in a synthetic field. He said he wondered

why the Department went around the state but did not look at people right next to Town.

Mr. DeMoura said the report was two years old and they were just regurgitating a presentation.

Mr. Gergick said it was the 2016 presentation and was just giving them the previous information. He said at the time the comparison was with other recreation departments not with private organizations such as Shipyard Park.

Mr. Santos asked Mr. Gergick if he had an opportunity to talk to Wando's Coach Hayes or others to find out why they decided to go with turf.

Mr. Gergick answered in the negative. He said they had identified at the time, in 2016, some potential locations. He said they were the Park West Track Field, the Park West Football Field, and Carolina Park Field 1. He said future fields that could be considered was Carolina Park Baseball Field, Carolina Park Rectangular Field as there will be a new field constructed at Carolina Park in Phase III, and Rifle Range Road. He said they have a conceptual master plan for Rifle Range but no full design. He said it could be a location where a future turf field could be installed. Mr. Gergick said there was some Synthetic Field Cost Estimates that were provided in 2016 by Carolina Green. He said they include erosion control, excavation of soil, subsurface, stone base, 8-year warranty, markings for football, and one Sweet Master Turf Brush for grooming purposes.

Mr. Santos asked if they had only received one estimate.

Mr. Gergick said it was not for bid purposes. He said it was for information for what it may cost for consideration as to whether they should pursue a turf field at the time. Mr. Gergick answered in the affirmative that they only received an estimate from Carolina Green. Mr. Gergick said the cost estimates for a rectangular field was \$850,000. He said a standard rectangular field using the track field which is 91,500 square feet came up to \$850,000. He said at the time it was \$9.29 per square foot for installation of an artificial turf field. He said while a rectangular field may be a standard size, one may include additional turf out to a fence line or at

the edge of a track. He said this would control growth as they do not want grass growing into the artificial turf so there is usually a border surrounding the turf field. He said for a diamond it was \$1,100,000. He said another option was to do a diamond infield only and not including the outfield. He said the prices do not include: \$50,000 to \$100,000 for design, engineering and storm water implementation; \$8,000-12,000 if they wanted additional markings with marking for a football field and then also for soccer or lacrosse; perimeter security fence. He said it was recommended that one maintain security of the field with only players and coaches on the field. He said there are rules that need to be maintained so it does not hurt the field with drinks, gum, high heel shoes. He said it also does not include performance and bond payments, builders risk insurance; utility removal, replacements or adjustments, and permitting fees.

Mr. Gergick said the replacement cost estimates were after an eight-year warranty. He said they heard estimates that replacement is needed somewhere between eight and twelve years. He said that more play on them causes more wear and tear. He said weather conditions and UV rays can also impact the life span of a turf field. He said the replacement value is at \$5-\$5.50 per square foot and one does not have to do all the additional work when the field was built. He shared the replacement cost of the rectangular, diamonds or the infield only. Mr. Gergick shared information on the Annual Natural Turf Maintenance Cost of approximately \$30,000 per field per year and annual synthetic turf maintenance cost of approximately \$14,500 per field. He said it was a savings of approximately \$16,000 in reduced maintenance cost per year.

Mr. Santos said he liked \$16,000 savings.

Mr. Gergick said the pros of synthetic turf was improved drainage – reduces the number of rainouts, durability for continuous use – field can be played on continuously over the course of a weekend tournament without negative impact, and consistent field conditions – eliminates wear and tear in high use areas. He said most of the present Town fields do really well in most places but in specific areas in front of a goal or certain areas of a field. He said there is also reduced maintenance cost of

\$16,5000 per year. Mr. Gergick said the cons to synthetic turf was the initial cost - \$850,000 to \$1 million per field which depends on if one needs perimeter fencing and a border between the grass and turf area. He said another con was a single field serves a small fraction of program participants but there can be additional markings, but they may be confusing. He said also access to field must be controlled and rules need to be enforced. He said it was the same with Manchester Meadows and Myrtle Beach as there is no gum, no drinks or snacks, no portable chairs or high heels. He said they keep people off and it is for coaches and players only. He said it reduces the flexibility of field use for other sports or other special events. He said one would not put a stage in the area or have pony rides. He said there was high surface temperature on an artificial turf field. He said there had been concerns regarding carcinogenic components and research both ways regarding these concerns.

Mr. Santos said he thought that was debunked.

Mr. Gergick said one can find articles and opinions in both directions. Mr. Gergick said at the time they were looking at alternative options to reduce the number of rainouts which was the primary focus of the study. He said one was to expand the use of Cambridge drainage and is \$75,000 per field. He said for fields needing additional drainage improvements was the sand slit injections of \$20,000. He said that since that time they had completed the fields at the Jimmy Seignious Field behind the Jones Center, Carolina Park, all fields at Cheryl Woods-Flowers and looking to complete the fields at Duffy in the upcoming year. He said it had been very successful and made a dramatic improvement on all of the fields. He said it can rain in the afternoon and they can get on the Park West Football or Baseball Field very quickly after a rain.

Mr. Santos asked if that was the next day.

Mr. Gergick answered in the negative and said on the same day. He said it could hard rain up to noon or 1:00 p.m. and they will be getting on the field at 5 p.m. and it works very well.

Mr. Santos asked the Town charges itself permitting fees as Mr. Gergick had mentioned local permitting fees as part of the cost.

Mr. DeMoura answered in the affirmative. He said they do not exclude their selves from some payments. He said if it was necessary, the Town pays.

Mr. Santos asked if the Town pays itself for permitting fees by an employee going into the office and picking up a permit.

Mr. DeMoura said they pay National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES).

Ms. Christiane Farrell said they are typically State agencies.

Mr. DeMoura asked that if the Town was paying the fees.

Ms. Marcy Cotov said not to the Town itself but to other agencies.

Mr. Santos said it said local permitting fees which made him think the Town and not State.

Ms. Cotov said the Town does collect them locally.

Mr. Santos asked if the Town pays itself.

Ms. Cotov answered in the negative.

Mr. O'Rourke asked Mr. DeMoura if they approved a capital budget for the Carolina Park project.

Mr. DeMoura answered in the affirmative.

Mr. O'Rourke asked how far does Council get involved with the scope. He asked if they tell staff they want four urinals or yellow home run marker.

Mr. DeMoura answered in the negative. He said staff brings the Committee the conceptual master plan for approval.

Mr. O'Rourke asked if they say as a group that the city would like to experiment with all the ghosts they have been told about by doing one field, looking at it themselves, and could they just say to do that and then staff put that in the scope like everything else. He asked if they have to go to Council for approval because of turf if the budget does not change.

Mr. DeMoura said with Carolina Park Phase III the Committee has approved the uses of what will go in the final phases such as baseball fields

and rectangular fields. He said if the budget does not change then the Recreation Committee has the power to adjust those uses. He said for something like this it is likely to increase the cost of the budget and if it does then Council has to approve that and reallocate funds.

Mr. O'Rourke said that was what he thought. He said since this is not happening tomorrow and since Ms. Whitley and himself were not involved in the scope of that project he asked if they can have, maybe next month, the scope of the project, estimation of probable cost, and then they can look at how the numbers come out. He said they will know at that time whether there is enough in there with adjusting or they have to go back to Council. He said this was good and said thank you. He said with alternative options, the fields are shut down 60 days.

Mr. Santos said 60 days with 30 in the spring and 30 in winter.

Mr. O'Rourke said that was two months that they cannot use the grass fields. He said for him it was not about cost, it is not about all the things, it is about being able to use fields because the need to use them during the 60 days has not gone away. He said they have to do it in steps. He said the first step is what do they want at that phase, does it fit within the budget of the capital project and if it does not then they change the scope, or they add money to it.

Mr. DeMoura said that was a wonderful idea. He said that perhaps a first step could be where would they like to see the field. He said why look at Carolina Park Phase III if they may decide that may not be the best place for a turf field. He said for example the soil conditions at the Park West Football Field which does have stadium seating and berms. He said they may say that may be the best location for it. He said then they would no longer focus on Carolina Park Phase III but instead they develop a scope for that particular project.

Mr. O'Rourke said he understands that and the only reason he said that was that there is a capital budget right now for money to be at Carolina Park and there is no capital money for any additions to the field at Park West. He said he agreed with all that logic. He said at the end of the day

this was about money also and the budget. He said if that great idea works then they are 12 more months out.

Mr. Santos said that the problem with Park West is that they have their Children's festival there and if people are not allowed on there or gum or things like that then they would not be able to use that field. He said that would be hurting the Town as far as the Children's Festival as the field would be off limits according to what Mr. Gergick was saying.

Mr. O'Rourke said he looks at this as an experiment. He said they need to get in the game. He said there is turf being put in everywhere. He said fake fields are going in at Daniel Island and all up and down Georgia. He said the reason they are not in South Carolina is because no one has any money in South Carolina. He said they do not have money for grass. He said this was something that is happening out there. He said he thought the Town should plan their own in-house experiment with a turf field and see how it goes.

Mr. Santos said that Wando was putting one in as well. He said that the children coming out the Recreation Department most of them will be going to Wando playing on a turf field. He said it would be nice if they learned and trained on a turf field prior to getting up to high school so that they are familiar with it. He said they went to Rock Hill for the State Championship football team and when the children walked on it. He said they did well because they were conditioned better than the other team and ended up winning. He said they were nervous about playing on turf fields and if they had a chance to practice on turf fields and get them use to it the fear would have gone away. He said that now that Wando is doing it and the Department is a great feeder to Wando that is another reason he would like to see it.

Ms. Whitley said she would like to see the incremental cost differential between putting in a grass field. She said that \$1.1 million for a field seemed really high to her. She said that maybe it cost \$800,000 to put in a grass field so it is not that much of a difference. She also wanted to know what sort of funds could be recouped if they have the fields for an additional two months and able to use them for more tournaments. She

wanted to know what sort of fees they would charge and what would they regain and recoup in the Town. She thought it would be more palatable to full Council if they had a clear cost benefit analysis.

Mr. Santos said it was very clear they would be saving over \$16,000 a year and that is a starting point of savings.

Ms. Whitely said if it only cost \$300,000 to put in a grass field that is a \$700,000 savings and they are never going to recoup that with the \$16,000 a year. She said she wanted to know how close they were in the differential.

Mr. Ralph Lundy, 3134 Ball Court, Mount Pleasant, said that he had been coaching for 44 years and artificial turf is everywhere. He said play can start at 7 a.m. on artificial turf and close at midnight. He said they could have schools, clubs, lacrosse club and everyone play on it. He said his priority was all kids. He said they need to build four fields now because the population is growing. He said to either build the fields or build detention centers. He said Manchester Meadows use it for everything. He said he had been there for ten years and two with his son winning the national championship. He said he took his daughter to Spain, Italy and Vancouver and never played on a grass field. He said he had a freshman that made all league from England and hardly played on a grass field. He said South Carolina is so far behind. He said weather does not matter as it can pour rain and they can play ball as long as there is no electricity as it drains. He said that companies are so competitive and there are so many of them. He said regarding heat they are doing great research on different filaments. He said the black filament is put on the green turf field and the turf has become better, longer, deeper. He said that was the concern about what that was doing to children and now they are looking at white filament. He said they are looking at absolute safe health conditions with the filaments. He said the heat is always an issue. He said he coached at Brevard College and they just built a massive field and use it for lacrosse, soccer, football, and can convert it to the varsity softball field in the spring. He said you can have special events with tight management meaning children with no gum. He said he appreciated Steve, Jimmy, and Jody

working hard on the fields but playing 7 a.m. to midnight they would not have to worry about it. He said they need to take care of the children. He said he would be glad to help.

Mr. Santos said he received an email from an adult soccer team wanting to use the fields also. He said that more and more people are asking to use them, so it is growing.

Mr. O'Rourke asked where does this end and what are they going to do.

Mr. Santos said that Mr. O'Rourke had asked them to come back the next month.

Mr. Gergick said he had the scope of Carolina Park available.

Mr. O'Rourke said he thought it was more than just that. He said he thought there should be an agenda item next month and they should look at that, discuss it, and look at the estimated probable cost. He said then they can say there is enough money or there is not enough money and go from there. He said they have to have that in front of them before they can make any kind of decisions about anything. He said they have to see what the scope is and what it is going to cost.

Mr. Santos told Mr. Gergick he did not think they needed a large brick wall going around it to keep people out. He said a high chain link fence would suffice. He asked what the time frame was for Carolina Park Phase III.

Mr. Gergick said design is just starting for Carolina Park Phase III. He said that this was an appropriate time to be having this discussion. He said the opinion of probable cost comes with the design process. He said it would be a ball park estimate until they get full design.

Mr. O'Rourke said he could get Mr. Gergick some turf costs that are less than the one presented. He said they are all guessing now, and this was not a bid, but they want it cheaper.

Mr. Gergick said that as they were doing some cost comparison a lot had to do with the amount of land that was needed to build up a field and whether it was native soil.

4. Discussion of the Neighborhood Sports Program

Mr. Santos said he asked for this to be put on the agenda and it was in the brochure. He said he just wanted an update to let the Committee know where they are with it. He thanked the attorneys for drafting the legal paperwork for them to be able to start.

Mr. Gergick said they have a framework field use agreement that the attorneys have drawn up as a draft agreement that outlines the aspects of what would be required of entity that would want to enter into a facility use agreement with the Town. He said there are insurance requirements. He said the Town's insurance would not cover the Department's program at their facility at offsite locations. He said there is a big benefit for them in that this is the homeowner association (HOA) serving their residents. He said the thought process is it is not a favor that MPRD is asking of them, it is something the Department is able to do for them by letting its teams that are grouped by that neighborhood practice in that neighborhood. He said the Department is happy to accommodate that and it would be wonderful. He said they have the agreement to establish it. He said the other entity may have requirements also and that would have to go to Legal for review.

Mr. Whitley asked how it was being marketed to local neighborhoods and their fields. She asked who had the authority in the HOA's. She asked how the Department was reaching them with mail or email.

Mr. Gergick said it was in the Moultrie news twice, in the brochure, several times on Facebook and the website. He said it will be driven by people in the neighborhood and then they go to their HOA.

Ms. Whitely asked if it had been on the Next-Door app.

Ms. Allison Lane answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Gergick said Ms. Lane had done a good job in getting the information out on the program.

Mr. Santos said it would be great with all the traffic in the Town and they would not have to get in traffic. He said they get on their neighborhood field and play with neighbors and friends. He said it allows fields to be available to older children who can practice earlier because it allows fields

to be available and could be possible savings. He said he appreciated staff working on this.

Mr. Gergick said he thought one thing hindering people is that they think they do not have an athletic field. He said they just need flat green space.

5. Program/projects update

Mr. Gergick said participation was going well with increases.

6. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Bedenbaugh, 7/2/18