



Northern Chester County Sports Forum Report

Monday March 1, 2010 7:00 - 8:30 P.M.
OJR High School

Participants

| Name | Organization | Name | Organization |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---|
| Mike Snyder | Coventry Little League | Michele Serbin | Coventry Soccer |
| John Coll | Phoenixville Babe Ruth | Joan Drumheller | Coventry Soccer |
| Jim Gegeckas | GEYA | Diana Urbanski | West Pikeland Township Parks and Rec |
| Lee Cummings | GEYA | Kim O'Rourke | West Pikeland Township |
| Andrew Bellwaar | GEYA | Lisa Lacroix | West Pikeland Township |
| Rob Devine | Norchester Red Knights | Charles Jacob | Warwick Township |
| Larry Challenger | Norchester Red Knights | Christine McNeil | East Vincent Township |
| | | Andy Paravis | North Coventry Township |
| Planning Team | | | |
| Ann Toole | Toole Recreation Planning | Michelle Brummer | Gannett Fleming |

Meeting Notes

1. Chris McNeil welcomed the participants. She described the planning project and its purpose.
2. Michelle Brummer provided information about the Northern Chester County plan and the outreach effort to groups throughout the study area of Northern Chester County.
3. Ann Toole facilitated the discussion among the participants about organized sports as follows:

What Works Well in Community Sports

- Use of fields without charge
- New soccer fields going in at Catholic church in East Vincent
- Communities such as West Pikeland have open space funding programs
- Lots of volunteers
- Soccer is willing to do outreach to all other organizations to share in field development and operation.
- Leagues and sports organizations are willing to travel but usually "not across the river".
- Sports programs are local and kids want to be able to play with their friends.
- Youth sports organizations serve as the feeder for high school sports.

What Does Not Work Well in Community Sports

- Out of season sports: fall baseball, spring soccer, year round sports all need fields. While some sports once only played in traditional seasons such as baseball in the spring and summer, the prevalence of sports played for multiple seasons increases demand for facilities. If baseball is played in the fall, then the outfields can't be used for fall soccer.
- Four season sports place high demands on facilities.
- School district fields are limited.
- Phoenixville baseball field is used by multiple school districts, schools, the community and CYO's. The fields are lighted and championship play caliber. A road is being planned to go through these fields, which

will eliminate them. While the league will be paid for the land, there is nowhere to buy replacement land in the Borough of Phoenixville.

- Only three 90' diamonds in the area.
- Could the former steel plant lands provide space for more fields? There are liens on several of the parcels.
- Coventry Little League: maintenance is a major problem. The electrical system is deficient. Bellwood Golf Club owns adjacent lands: do these lands have potential for additional sports fields?
- Can fields be centralized by type to locate them in one place? Would be convenient for residents in terms of driving to one location. Could have tournaments and schedule better.
- Parking is a problem at many field locations.
- Municipalities operate in the dark. There is no database about sports participation and field use.
- Indoor facilities are needed. The schools charge a lot of money to rent out their facilities.
- Weather causes delays and the need to re-schedule which compounds field demand.
- Sponsorships are down in 2010 over 2009 by over 50 percent. For example, last year at this time Coventry Little League had 48 sponsorships compared with the 20 in place this week. That could change with additional sponsorships going into place in the upcoming weeks.
- Divisions and tams in most sports are growing and expanding.
- Volunteerism is harder with fewer people willing to step up.

Ideas for Improvement

- Consider regional recreation. Look at how the costs and benefit scan be shared and supported. Consider how municipalities working together could benefit in cost sharing. Partnerships could lower maintenance costs and improve quality.
- Easier to raise capital and get grants as municipal partners.
- Evaluate municipal and school district owned properties for active recreation use.
- Look at Pennhurst property.
- Needs to be partnerships: educate the townships
- Downingtown Area School District has the old SMS property that has a couple of hundred acres.
- Sports Complex: maintenance would be easier and less expensive, amenities could be provided, advantage for tournaments, less travel for parents. Need to consider the important factor that kids want to play with their friends.
- Can we show the demographics in a way to attract private business? Example: USTC has 14 fields including outdoor, indoor and turf.
- Make sure we have recreational sports fields such as through HOA's. Provide practice areas. Consider multi-use fields.
- Adult Leagues: Leagues out of are for adults include Bradford, Tredyfrinn, Rocket, and USTC.
- Lighting is of concern because the night skies are very important here.
- Need to make the case through photos.
- People think sports fields are just utilitarian places – make them more park-like. Include shade, nice clean restrooms, and many uses beyond sports such as playgrounds, trails, picnic and sitting areas. Wilson Park has concerts, sports (Old Chesterbrook). Make the case for this through photos.
- Pool resources and make responsibilities equitable.
- Consider having sports organizations run for public office. Use the political process to influence support for recreation facilities.
- Use ordinances such as mandatory dedication as a means to acquire land and raise revenues. Provide sample ordinances? How can we use the land development and planning process as a means to increase recreational opportunities?

Request for Questionnaire Completion

Ann Toole thanked all those who provided completed questionnaires. She asked those who have not yet completed theirs to send them in right away. The information will be used to document the need for facilities and to try to make projections for facilities in the future.