

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 24, 2020**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Yon at 7:00 p.m.

II. ATTENDANCE

Present: Mark Yon, Chair; S. Joseph Jablonski, Vice Chair; Mary Lasher, Mary Lee Mahon, Matthew DiGirolamo, Shamus Petrucelli, Michael Veltri

Staff: Julie A. Jakubec, CPA, CGMA, Township Manager

III. MINUTES

A. August 28, 2019

Motion by Mr. Petrucelli to approve the subject minutes as presented was seconded by Chairman Yon and carried unanimously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Presentation by Fox Chapel Soccer Association

Representatives from Fox Chapel Soccer Association were not in attendance. Discussion was deferred pending representation of the Fox Chapel Soccer Association.

B. Update on Parks relative to COVID-19

Manager Jakubec recalled the first case of COVID-19 arrived in the Township in March. Most park facilities were shut down, with the exception of trails and flex fields. The plan for reopening is to open low-touch areas, such as tennis courts and the gaming areas, along with the installation of COVID-19 signage. Last Friday the playgrounds and basketball courts were opened. The next step will be to open the shelters, but not for rentals. Restrooms are a problem due to the guidelines for cleaning. The Township has not hired any summer college students, leaving Gary Bruce, a Public Service Department employee extraordinaire, to maintain all the parks. Gary can only be in so many places so many times a day. The restrooms will likely remain closed because the Township cannot possibly clean them enough in accordance with CDC and other guidelines.

The Manager recalled prior to COVID-19 she had ordered some new game panels which will be sprinkled through the parks. She had split staff into two teams up until a few weeks ago and there is a lot of work to make up for that time period we were not fully staffed. Ms. Mahon asked if port-a-johns would be provided in the parks. Manager Jakubec stated no because the port-a-johns are only cleaned once a week. She stated restrooms are probably one of the most difficult places

to keep clean. She noted if the number of cases would drop drastically, she may reconsider opening shelters and restrooms.

Ms. Mandy Steele, a Fox Chapel Borough resident and Council person inquired about the Parks and Recreation Commission's thoughts on the momentum in removing the name 'squaw' from the park.

Manager Jakubec stated no one has officially approached the Township, and noted she had heard that Fox Chapel Borough is looking to change the name of "Squaw Run Road/Trail". The Manager did not think anyone would be opposed to discussion, adding that they would want to be respectful of the Native American folks. She also recalled a petition is circulating and suspected it would be submitted at some point. Manager Jakubec explained O'Hara Township's process, in that the topic would be presented and discussed with the Parks and Recreation Commission, who would make recommendation to Council, per the Home Rule Charter.

Ms. Steele indicated there are two petitions circulating; 1) remove "squaw" from the name, and 2) alternate names. Manager Jakubec indicated O'Hara Township would probably have a contest with the Township residents as to names for the park. She also referred to the Township's History Book, which could provide a lot of good names. She stated changing the name of the creek would be more complex, as it would have to go through Federal Government channels. She recalled naming an unnamed stream, with took about four years.

Ms. Steele verified when the Parks and Recreation Commission would meet, which the Manager stated July 22, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Steele indicated she was planning to approach Council about changing the name of the park. Manager Jakubec reiterated the Township's process.

Chairman Yon stated he understood the tremendous urgency, but did not see a need to rush into changing the park name without input from Township residents. With the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual meetings, he thought it might be better to wait until they could meet in person.

Ms. Steele stated she had talked with George (Stewart) and he is all for discussing the name change. She asked what the next step is, going to Council and to the Parks and Recreation Commission. Manager Jakubec again explained the Township's process, which allows for more opportunities for the public to comment. She also offered to provide information on how to name a stream.

The Manager inquired about arrival of a representative from Fox Chapel Soccer Association, but there was no response.

Moving on to Other Business, Manager Jakubec informed the Parks and Recreation Commission that the bridge crossing the creek at Squaw Valley Park is closed due to a washout. As a result of COVID-19 and the possible impact on Township revenue, the bridge may not be fixed until after the second quarter revenue is received.

The Manager stated the Rami Nature Preserve at Crofton Park sign was to be installed today to tomorrow. Public Service employees have been weeding and they are trying to schedule a meeting with the Audubon Society so they know how to properly care for the preserve. She had been in contact with Mr. Nat Rami and he loves how the preserve looks.

Manager Jakubec stated the Public Service employees have been weeding the Edible Trail and plants would have signs replaced.

The Manager noted a tree came down in Squaw Run Creek in the Park. The remaining debris would be removed next week.

V. COMMISSION COMMENTS OR CONCERNS

Ms. Mahon asked if a second wave of the virus occurs would the parks be closed again. The Manager explained if the County goes back into the yellow opening phase, it is a probability that the parks would be closed. The noted the problem is some people, especially little kids, are asymptomatic. The kids go to the playground, they visit an aunt or grandparent, which is a concern. The Township will continue to follow the Pennsylvania Recreation & Parks Society guidelines, along with CDC guidelines.

Ms. Mahon recalled mentioning a conversation with an Indian woman a few years ago. She referenced the Three Rivers Indian Council and questioned if they would have any input, or if the name “squaw” offends them. Manager Jakubec stated the google definition is not favorable. She noted a representative of the Three Rivers Indian Council may want to attend a Town Hall Meeting. She also noted the Township History Books has lots of potential names, or a contest could be conducted. The Manager indicated she would let Council know the Parks and Recreation Commission would discuss the matter at its July meeting and may make recommendation to Council.

Chairman Yon indicated the first step is to decide if we want to change the name and if so, consider the possibilities and let everyone in the community participate in a contest, or pick four possible names and let people vote on it through the Newsletter. He noted communication is stifled now due to the pandemic and they could not meet in person.

Ms. Mahon suggested meeting in the Park. Manager Jakubec noted everyone would have to wear masks and social distance as mandated by the Governor. She stated there is time to coordinate a meeting and hear everyone’s input. The Township wants the public engaged as much as possible. Renaming the creek will be complicated.

Chairman Yon referenced all the information available in the Township history book, which may take a few months to put together.

Mr. Petrucelli question when and what the Township is doing with the pond, noting the parrot feather seems to be multiplying. Manager Jakubec stated the pond guy, Joel is aware and treating the parrot feather and working with Gary Bruce to get the proper enzymes in the pond.

Mr. Petrucelli noted he feels on the national and local levels there is so much push for change, and to him, it is a knee-jerk reaction. He recommended the Commission go through the process, but it will take time, noting Chairman Yon had indicated people do not want to wait. They want a name change tomorrow, and he did not think that to be the way to go about it. If it takes three to four months, so be it. There is a lot of great history, great people that came out of the Township and Mr. Petrucelli thought it warrants significant discussion between the Parks and Recreation Commission and the community. Whether the community elects to accept what the Commission

has to say is a separate issue. He was in favor of looking at it and discussing, but did not want to see a hasty, quick decision because of public fear and threats. This is a marathon; not a sprint.

Ms. Mahon suggested looking into the reason for the name, recalling a love story about an Indian girl and boy in love and ran away. Mr. Petrucelli did not know the history and would like to learn of it. If there is a good, valid reason to keep the name “Squaw” they could consider that. Ms. Lasher stated the story is included in the Township history book, and the girl and boy ran off because the father did not approve.

Chairman Yon was unaware of how many Native Americans that have taken offense to the name, but the Activists have taken offense to it. He suggested trying to find out the Indian girl’s name and keep it with the story. Once people know the story they might not want to change the name. Any historical significance may be a factor in the name. Chairman Yon requested the Commission to read the history book, and if they did not have a copy, asked the Manager to copy the section of the book about the park and provide to Parks and Recreation Commission for the next meeting.

Ms. Lasher stated the generation of today has something to say about ‘squaw’, but if you go back several generations, to the Native Americans, you can read that they just called the women ‘squaw’. Ms. Mahon noted it was not a derogatory saying, and compared it to ‘my old lady’.

Manager Jakubec stated she would provide information from the history book to weigh and have the public’s input. She would inform Council that the Commission would discuss the matter in July, and possibly make a recommendation for Council’s consideration, as Council would have to take official action even to remove the signs, and may want to have a naming contest to engage the community as much as possible.

Mr. DiGirolamo asked if the Manager perceived anyone stepping up to sponsor a name for the park. Manager Jakubec explained the Township tends to stay away from that since you can only name it for so long.

Mr. DiGirolamo asked if Fox Chapel Baseball was using the Township fields, which Manager Jakubec affirmed. She noted they have rented the fields for fall ball as well. A girls’ softball league is using Raymond A. Schafer, Jr. Park fields. In order to use the fields, they had to sign a COVID-19 agreement, acknowledging the rules as a result of the pandemic.

Mr. Veltri noted a few trees along the Edible Trail did not survive, but the trail still looks nice. Manager Jakubec indicated whatever did not survive would be replaced with something else.

Ms. Lasher stated people walking dogs on long leashes are not keeping the dogs off properties. She has seen dogs on long leashes on neighbors’ porches. Manager Jakubec indicated dogs have to be on a leash, but the length of the leash was not specified.

Ms. Lasher asked if a recreational fire has to be 25-feet from the house. The Manager stated the regulations are on the Recreational Fire Permit Application. She added that the Code Enforcement Officer does inspect the locations for the fire permit application. Ms. Lasher indicated with how close the houses are in her neighborhood, she gets nervous with all the recreational fires.

Mr. Petrucelli questioned what Fox Chapel Soccer Association wants to do at the soccer field. The Manager explained the Association claims there is a fog at the field and there is a certain way to cut the grass which would eliminate the fog. The Association is willing to take this on at their expense. She preferred the Fox Chapel Soccer Association to make a presentation to Parks and Recreation Commission, possibly in July.

VI. STAFF CONCERNS

Manager Jakubec stated Harding Road is now open after performing some sewer line construction. She also noted the pickle ball court lines had been repainted.

Ms. Mahon asked if people are able to have picnics in the shelters they rented. Manager Jakubec answered no.

The Manager noted monthly Parks and Recreation Commission meetings would continue via Zoom. Chairman Yon indicated the Commission would meet in July, and if necessary, in August, via zoom. He suggested if the Commission were to have a meeting with public involvement as far as renaming the park, it may be better to wait for the Covid-19 pandemic to slow down. He suggested the Commission take the opportunity to think about renaming the park and get neighbors' feedback.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

Manager Jakubec indicated she would get the information from Fox Chapel Soccer Association, and let Council know the Commission will be discussing the possible name change of Squaw Valley Park in July.

Ms. Lasher asked if Mandy Steele had said she has the petition. Manager Jakubec was aware of a petition circulating. Chairman Yon noted O'Hara Township has a process in place to follow.

Manager Jakubec indicated she would contact Fox Chapel Borough Manager, Garby Kohler, that the Township Parks and Recreation Commission are discussing the park name change.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Cathy Bubas, Recording Secretary