

**LOWER PAXTON TOWNSHIP
PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
NOTES
AUGUST 2, 2023**

Members in Attendance

Stan Smith
Bob MacIntyre
Kirby Lentz
Alan Gallagher

Members Absent

Mayur Patel
Jim Seidler
Neal Johnson
Wendy Steinbrunner
Sandy Mort-Backus

Also in Attendance

Rachelle Scott, Staff Liaison
Michelle Thompson
Hodges Heights Residents, See
attached list

CALL TO ORDER

The Lower Paxton Township Parks and Recreation Board was scheduled to have a regular meeting however without a quorum, any business items have been postponed.

Board members met with residents of Hodges Heights to discuss the park's condition, and ideas for the future.

**PARKS & RECREATION BOARD
and STAFF INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Smith welcomed the members of the public to the meeting, and explained that he would like to do introductions, then share the findings of the geological study done on the ground beneath the park, share and receive ideas and

Mr. MacIntyre has been on the PRB for 28 years, graduated from CD High School, and worked for the Parks Department during high school and college. He explained that he has been asking to do something at Hodges Heights for years. As ideas came up and suggestions were made, the answer was always that you can't do that on the landfill site. The results of the study done this year provide actual data. He would like to find out what the neighbors would like, share with the neighbors what can be done, and to work together to make that area a great asset for the community.

Mr. Gallagher has lived in LP or surrounding area since 1972, and he stated that while he is new on the Board, he is active in Lyons, Kiwanis, National Guard, and other civic activities.

Mr. Lentz retired from Lower Paxton after 37 years, and this Board is a way for him to continue to serve the community. He went to school with many of the residents of Hodges Heights and is familiar with problems the park faces.

Mr. Smith stated he has been on the Board for about 20 years. He is hoping to provide some justice finally to the situation with the park by researching options and getting resident input. Ms. Scott stated that she has been the Director for the Parks Department for about four years, and the Friendship Center prior to that, totaling about 20 years. Ms. Thompson is somewhat new to the Township but is happy to be a part of the Parks Department and Township withing with residents and events. Ms. Hiner is the Recording Secretary for several Township committees, and has been with the Township for 23 years, about half in Parks and Rec and half in the Admin Department.

Mr. Smith stated that the Parks and Recreation Board is comprised of 9 volunteer residents of Lower Paxton. While they do not live in Hodges Heights, they are citizens with an interest in the parks. He noted the pavilion was repaired or replaced more than once, and eventually with a floating platform base, which has also been unsuccessful. The other amenities have failed or struggled over the years as well and there was never any scientific research done to find out what could be successful there.

The 2022 Parks Master Plan calls for Hodges Heights Park to be a priority. The first step was to investigate and find out what *could* be done there based on engineers' and other professionals' data, and not rely on anecdotal information.

HODGES HEIGHTS NEIGHBORS **INTRODUCTIONS**

Victor Banks has lived in Hodges Heights for over 30 years and he has taken a role of advocating for the neighborhood and community, as it relates to the landfill and compost, and incoming residential development, and other things over the years. The park continues to be a concern. He expressed a strong interest in keeping the park in the current location and highlighting the history of it.

Judy Banks stated he has raised two daughters in Hodges Heights and chose the area for the special historical value and the community and neighbors. She is interested in seeing the park maintained and developed as best it can, and to allow it to be enjoyed by those close by and those that may visit as a destination. She wants the Township to help the community preserve the historical park which is part of a neighborhood with a lot of historical richness.

Dr. Fred Waters has been in LP for 37 years first near Koons Park and now on Jordan Drive. The park is too rundown to use for working out or for just relaxing.

Brenda Jones has been in Hodges Heights for over 40 years and has raised her sons there.

Dr. Diane Harper is the daughter of David and Juanita Harper who were some of the first homeowners there, and has been there well over 50 years.

Rosetta Archie, she and her husband John have lived in Hodges Heights since March 1972 and raised two children there.

Melissa Gingerich has been in her current home since 2006 and prior to that in her parents' home in Hodges Heights since 1993. Her husband Ken Roth introduced Mirabell who is 5 and loves the park.

Jackie Brouten has been in her current home for about 8 years, and her family was one of the original homeowners who built their home in 1959.

Lois Lippert has lived on Lyters Lane since 1997. Her home was built by the Pittmans who had lived there from 1959 till 1997. She would like to see the park spruced up.

Susan Evans has lived in Hodges Heights for 45 years and raised three children there.

Marge Phillips has lived with her husband Dr. Thadeous Phillips in Hodges Heights and raised 6 children and some grandchildren. She would like to see the park maintained and improved. She enjoys the closeknit neighborhood and the wonderful neighbors.

Debra has lived in the area for almost a year.

HODGES HEIGHTS PARK **UPDATES AND DISCUSSION**

Original Plan, based on the 2022 Master Plan

Ms. Scott stated that the site plan drawings showed updated playgrounds, basketball courts, and the pavilion, provide trails and sidewalks. The renovations were estimated at \$850,000. Prior to any work, it was important to evaluate the settlement issues. An engineering firm performed a study to find out how deep you must go to reach bedrock or firm ground. She asked for the study to include the area just inside to the right of the park entrance to see if a small amount of parking could be put there. The results were pretty discouraging. As garbage decomposes, the ground will continue to shift. The soft material depth is as much as 30-40 feet in areas that we wanted to put things. Options to stabilize the ground included insertion of expanding grout material at two-foot intervals (\$1-1.25 million), or removal of the trash cells (\$14 million).

Conway and Nyes Roads

It was brought to Ms. Scott's attention that the Township Sewer Authority owns a nearby 8-acre parcel of land, so she wants to find out more about that, in case it is feasible to build a park there. She will apply for a grant to do a master plan for that parcel.

Ms. Phillips asked about the name of the new parcel if it became a park. There are development homes on all sides, and people will come to that park from many neighborhoods. Mr. MacIntyre stated that naming is probably the last decision to be made. The current process is in an extremely preliminary stage.

Mr. Smith suggested that if the other parcel becomes a feasible plan, the community would likely be involved in the naming of it; that is a normal course of action.

Passive Recreation Park

One idea is to make Hodges Heights Park into a more passive recreation area, such as stone-dust trails, picnic tables with canopies, and a more natural setting.

Mr. Smith described a passive park as one with walking, park benches with a canopy, space to gather or picnic. It does not include sports fields or structures that require some sort of footing to keep it stable. Ms. Banks asked if the swings and young children's play equipment could remain in a passive park.

Ms. Scott shared a sketch of a passive park layout at Hodges Heights which shows a small playground, but with the information from the study, it may or may not be possible. The playground there now, even though the kids use it, may not meet the current codes.

Dr. Waters asked if it is possible to have multiple pavilions with trees around. He suggested a plaque or some sort of commemorative marker. He also suggested some lighting for the walking paths.

Mr. Smith stated they are interested in providing the best recreational resource for the area, and they are not interested in closing Hodges Heights Park. The ground doesn't allow for cookie cutter park equipment, so there needs to be some other ideas. A grove of trees is a great idea, but the type of tree selected has to be able to survive in that environment.

Ms. Banks stated everyone is aware that the soil is ever-shifting. She is interested in hearing more about the passive park idea. A small park is valuable in a community. The second park raises questions about the distance and getting to it safely. The group's goal is to keep the park, not to close it or turn it into a dog park or something else. It should be walkable and

pleasant. The park is getting a lot of use in recent years, and it is getting used more as families move into the area.

Mr. Roth stated that the park could have small play equipment with the walking paths and pavilions. Mr. MacIntyre stated the requirements for equipment in a public park are very different than what would be required in a private backyard. There are still options, but it depends on what the residents want. Mr. Smith agreed and noted that if that is the desired direction, they can look into what equipment could go there that would meet the standards. Dr. Waters suggested that some of the things could be in platforms so that if there is a problem with the ground, it could be moved. Mr. Smith agreed that smaller canopy structures might work better than a large pavilion and he would like that to be explored. Ms. Brouten suggested using the driveway as part of the park and let the trucks use the lower entrance only. She asked what would be done about all of the activity at the compost facility.

Mr. Smith would like to see the historical value of the park be celebrated and recognized in some way. It would be an ideal feature in a passive park.

Mr. MacIntyre summarized that the neighbors want a place to picnic and gather and walk; you don't need basketball and sports fields. He speculated that those would be attainable goals. He added that plantings would have a better chance of survival than trees because of the depth of the roots.

Mr. MacIntyre asked if a couple of small picnic pavilions, a couple tables with an umbrella, flower gardens, walking trails and a playground is something that meets the needs of the community for a passive park. Water fountains and a restroom were suggested.

Other Notes or Suggestions

Mr. Lentz asked if the fan is still drawing methane out. Mr. Banks stated it is still there but he wasn't sure if it still runs. Ken Shoaff used to monitor that and the meters. Mr. Lentz stated that there are a lot of underground lines that would draw the methane to the fenced in area and burn it off into the air. He cautioned that when work is being done there, the contractor has to be sure it won't hit any of those underground lines.

Dr. Waters asked if the methane can be sold or used, but Mr. MacIntyre stated it isn't pure enough to be useable. Mr. Lentz added that there isn't enough of a consistent quantity of it either.

Mr. Lentz asked if the other parcel connects to the strip of land that the Township owns along Nyes Road.

Ms. Gingerich shared that this park is used more now than it has been at any point over the last 30 years. Mr. Roth agreed that he sees families from other areas that drive in to use it.

Ms. Lippert asked if there would be something to shield the view of the compost facility from the park users. Members agreed that would be important.

Mr. Banks reported that he spoke with the Public Works Director about accessing park 2 from park 1 via the landfill property. The answer was no because of DEP regulations. However, he wondered if it would be possible if the path were fenced on both sides (behind the homes that face Conway Rd, and preventing access to the compost facility). The other option would be a sidewalk in front of the homes along Conway Road, but there may be a substantial cost to that. The truck access to the compost facility restricts these ideas. It would take a joint effort to make any of these connections work. Concerns about the truck traffic can be directed to the Public Works Director, Tim Nolt. Ms. Thompson will also share information with Mr. Nolt.

Ms. Jones explained that there is an annual picnic for the neighborhood at the park. She suggested the small canopies wouldn't be enough cover to comfortably hold a large gathering such as that. Mr. Smith stated that is important information and for something like that there should be a way to use a temporary canopy or something similar.

Mr. Smith summarized. There is interest in a more passive style park, with canopy picnic areas and playground equipment, monument or something to embody the heritage, trees/bushes/plantings, something that would make it residents proud of it. Also an openness to exploring larger park amenities (equipment/courts/ballfields) at the other location.

Mr. Banks suggested a person from the Township could attend the community meeting in order to bring information back to the Township to be addressed.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Scott gave the following updates on park activities.

- Demolition will begin at Forest Hills Park next week.
- Brightbill Park playground demolition will begin August 18th.
- Bids were received for cameras, and they will prep for installation starting 9/6/23.
- Staff will meet with representatives from the Bhutanese community about usage of the park. They are planning an event on 8/19/23.
- The Local Share Grant application will be submitted for a master plan for the Conway Road parcel.

- The amended developer agreement for Autumn Oaks was sent, but Mr. McNaughton thought the list was excessive, so he is reconsidering installing the sidewalks along Patton Road.

Mr. Gallagher shared that Kiwanis bought another book box and would like to ask Public Works to install it at Stray Winds Farm Park. He noted they go through around 200-300 books each year.

ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is scheduled for September 6, 2023 at 7:15 pm. The meeting ended at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Hiner, Recording Secretary