

PUBLIC INPUT: Matt Hoffman, 7 Arbor Way. Matt said this is an issue that has generated a lot of passion. He reviewed some of his statements from previous meetings in regard to the use of Packard Field. Sullivan Field is no longer adequate for our program due to logistics and safety. Because of this Packard Field makes the most sense for our use. Last year Suffield Soccer had no problem with us using the field in the spring. The Suffield Soccer club used Packard in the fall and there was no problem with the field. If the Packard Field is to be used only for soccer – why were we allowed to use the field last year. Matt reviewed how Packard Field came about and that it was a Sports Council project.

Matt gave his reasons for allowing lacrosse to use Packard Field and that it is a town field and as such should be available to be used by lacrosse since lacrosse is a spring sport and soccer is a fall sport. We are not infringing on soccer.

The project to make Packard Field for the high school soccer team in 1997 (which is no longer using Packard Field) should not affect the use almost 30 years later.

Matt is hoping for a decision from the Parks & Rec Director on the lacrosse request for use of Packard Field this spring this evening.

MINUTES: Brian said a name was written incorrectly under attendance and under Public Input – Dave Fountain should have read Jason Fontaine. Bill made a motion to accept the minutes with the above amendment. Dave seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to accept the minutes.

CORRESPONDENCE: Melissa and David Mack sent a thank you note to the Parks & Rec for the Bowling Buddies program. They also sent a significant donation. They are very appreciative for the community made available to their daughter.

The second document is the letter from Town Attorney Derek Donnelly with the first 2 pages of the opinion on Packard Field.

The third document is from Jay Bombard, Five Fathers Charity Golf Tournament. They normally ask that the donation be used for the basketball program. This year the donation is in memory of Steve Bombard and Lou Casinghino. They would like their \$750 donation to be used for the tennis program.

The last correspondence is a thank you note from Brian and his family to the commission for their support and flowers at his Dad's services.

PROGRAM REPORTS: Donna's report covers the December 16 Bowling Buddies Holiday party which is held at the Senior Center. Some of the funds from last year's Dancing Stars program enabled us to rent a charter bus to take the Special Needs group to Bright Nights and a stop at McDonald's.

We work with the Board of Ed and all town employees through Cigna to offer a discount for fitness programs. This is also offered to the commission.

Suffield Alight and Market happened after last month's meeting. It is weather dependent and it turned out great. We had good weather with a good turnout. There was a tremendous team of people making the event happen. Thank you to commission members for their help, especially those that helped with breakdown at the end of the night. A thank you to Chad who took aerial photos which were beautiful.

We have started interviewing Summer Camp employees: lifeguards, counselors, jr., counselors, etc.

Brian asked about the inter-town basketball program for the older kids. We have the most teams in the league. The program is doing well.

OLD BUSINESS:

Suffield Alight and Holiday Market: See above.

New 5K Road Race Route Update: Peter said that he would like to have a route by next month so he can have it measured, that way it can be certified before we start advertising in May. Steve said that the group has not met yet but a date for a meeting will be set tonight.

Gazebo/Bandstand: This is still being reviewed by the Historic Commission. Robin Zatony has received good feedback from them and the project is moving forward. We have a new design, and the cost will include the cost of the roof.

Packard Field: Brian reviewed the discussions over the last 3 meetings which covered the request of the lacrosse program for use of the Packard Field. An opinion from the town attorney was requested and we have received a letter from him with his legal opinion. The letter is very detailed. There are a lot of strong feelings on the outcome of this decision, and we want to do what is best for the kids. It is a difficult decision due to the history of the field.

Bill made a motion based on the information we received from the town attorney that we allow the director of P&R, as indicated in the attorney's letter, to make a decision on how the fields will best be used. Chad seconded.

The commission discussed the motion regarding the town attorney's opinion, the director's authority and concern regarding the gift portion. It was felt that this portion was too broad. The commission discussed the policy we have for allotting fields and that it is different than the schools. The school administers the gym time, and we have to apply for that.

The vote was: Andy opposed, Steve abstained, Sam voted yes, Chad voted yes, Dave voted yes, Brian voted yes.

Andy expressed his opposition and other commissions gave their opinions.

Bill amended his previous motion removing the portion where he talks about receiving a gift: *specifically the section where he talks about receiving a gift the town should use the gifts as intended.* Steve seconded. Vote was carried unanimously.

The commission continued discussing whether Packard Field can be used for other sports, whether it needs to be strictly for soccer, the history of the field, the letter from the town attorney, whether fields should be restricted to certain sports, etc.

The commission discussed whether it might be helpful to have a decision from the Board of Selectmen that this field can be used for other sports. This would supersede the prior handling of the situation. This will help in the future if a similar situation occurs.

Steve made a motion that we make an advisory opinion, as the commission, on the future use of Packard Field that it is not to be exclusively available to soccer. Sam seconded the motion.

Dave opposed. Brian, Sam, Bill, Chad, and Andy voted yes. Motion passed 5-1

There was more discussion on whether we need documentation to avoid problems in the future.

Andy made a motion to bring this recommendation to the Board of Selectman to officially designate Packard Field as a nonexclusive sports field. Bill seconded the motion.

Dave opposed the vote. Brian, Bill, Steve, Andy and Chad voted yes. Motion carried.

Bill suggested that the letter be signed by all commission members.

Dancing with the Suffield Stars Fundraiser: The event will take place March 28 and tickets are limited. This is a fundraiser for the Special Needs Bowling Buddies program. Brian said the previous year's performance was great entertainment.

Bill left the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Youth Basketball Tournament: The youth basketball tournament will be held in the spring during March. The Middle School is not available. We are fortunate to have a community partner, Suffield Academy, who is allowing us to use their gym. It will be a

rec tournament, probably the 3rd and 4th grade boys' group. We will start small and hopefully grow.

America's 250th Celebration Events: In the commissioner's packet are 2 logo designs. Peter is looking for opinions on which one they like the best. There will be many different events throughout the year to celebrate. The working group is not finalized yet and Brian asked if we could have some commission members on it. There will be events in the spring, summer and fall.

Summer 2026: We have received approvals for use of facilities and are scheduling camps, sports camps, etc. We are working on the Junior Team Tennis program that is being partially funded by the donation from Jay Bombard. The high school kids will join to travel to other towns.

The intern will be exploring having a lower classification for a women's social league, USTA league.

Andy left the meeting.

FY Budget & Capital Requests: The initial budget has been sent to the selectmen's office. The minimum wage affects the wages we pay to our summer employees, and the rates have to go up. This is a hidden cost to the parents. We have to increase all wages. The minimum wage was discussed as to when it is determined by the State and how the increased are figured.

Capital Requests are as follows and include other departments along with P&R:

P&R upgrade to sports supplies and equipment \$7,500
Minibus \$130,000
Another vehicle for Seniors \$30,000
Dining Room Chairs and 4 to 6 round tables \$7,000
Master Plan \$75,000

The master plan is essential for the town for planning. It would enable Parks & Rec to plan and determine future needs. Peter elaborated on the items that this plan would cover and how the town government can use it for their needs. Peter also talked about other towns that have implemented a master plan.

Some of the items that are going into the Senior Center are a washer/dryer hookup for washing uniforms, rags, etc. We have heavy doors to the bathroom, and we had one senior who could not open the door, so we have a power assisted door.

The playground area for the Senior Center could be used for 2 pickleball courts and Peter put in for that.

A new storage shed at Sullivan Field

A feasibility plan to enclose the Senior Center patio to make 2 rooms for storage.

Not all the requests will be approved.

Brian asked if Peter thought we would get the vehicles. The need for the minivan was reviewed and Peter said that it is critical that this gets passed.

Other: None.

ADJOURNMENT: Sam made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dave seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Scheitlin, recording secretary for
Sam Lombardo, Clerk

These minutes are not official until accepted at subsequent meeting.