

City of Montgomery
Parks and Recreation Committee Minutes
August 13, 2018

Present

Brian Riblet, City Manager
Terry Willenbrink, Assistant Public Works Director
Connie Gaylor, Clerk of Council

Committee Members Present

Lynda Roesch, Chair
Gerri Harbison
Mike Cappel

The Parks and Recreation Committee of Council convened in Council Chambers at 3:30 p.m. with Ms. Roesch presiding.

Discussion of City Owned Athletic Fields

Ms. Roesch explained that members of the Sycamore Premier SC (SPSC) contacted Council Member Harbison requesting to meet regarding the use of city soccer fields. Ms. Roesch stated they were invited to come to the meeting along with members of the Greater Sycamore Soccer Association (GSSA). She welcomed both groups to the meetings and asked them to introduce their members. In attendance representing the GSSA were Derek Scranton, Board President; Nancy Louis, Administrator; and Dave Diersing, Field Coordinator. In attendance representing the SPSC were: John Mercurio, Board President; Brian Middleton, Board Member/Field Manager; and Scott Reynolds, Board Member.

Mr. Scranton began the discussion by stating that the GSSA organization has been in existence for 41 years and has partnered with the City for 20 years for the use of city owned fields. He stated that they stripe the fields for every use and also provide the goals.

Ms. Roesch stated that the issue at hand is the demand for the fields due to the growth of soccer as a sport. She stated that the City wants to make sure that everyone has access to the fields. Ms. Roesch stated that each group would get time to speak on behalf of their organizations. She asked Mr. Scranton with the GSSA to present first.

Mr. Scranton thanked the Committee for allowing them to come and speak with them. He explained that the organization was formed in 1977 as a recreational youth soccer league to provide opportunities for children in the Sycamore Community Schools district to be able to participate in soccer. He reiterated that the league began using the City's fields in the early 1990's. He stated that the current fall league has 780 registered participants, for the U6 up to U19 brackets, which equates to 76 teams. Of these 76 teams, 50 are the U6-U8 age group. He explained that the U6-U8 age group uses the fields at Weller Park because the fields and goals are specific to their size. He further explained that the field at Pioneer Park was a full-size field, the field at Dulle Park was an instructional size field, same as Weller Park. He also stated that the GSSA utilizes fields at Blue Ash, Mapledale and Symmes elementary schools.

Ms. Roesch asked Mr. Scranton how many practices a week they hold.

Mr. Scranton replied that it depends on the teams and age level but typically one to two a week for each team. He calculated 85-90 practices a week overall for the organization. He stated that the practices are held Monday thru Thursday with no practices on Fridays. They usually begin practices at 6:00 p.m. and run thru 8:00 p.m. He added that games are scheduled for Saturdays and Sundays for the younger players as well as some week night games for the older players.

Ms. Roesch asked if the GSSA use Weller and Pioneer parks Monday thru Thursday.

Mr. Scranton replied that they did. He stated that they reduce the use of the fields in the spring but for the fall season they utilize them all. He added that the fields are scheduled on the weekends for games on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and on Sundays from 1:15 to 7:00 p.m. He stated that with the current schedule all teams play 10 games in the fall season. He explained that Weller Park and Symmes Elementary fields are used for games and that Mapledale Elementary, Pioneer and Dulle Parks are only used for practices.

Mr. Riblet asked if there was an opportunity for the scheduled times to be changed so that practice times could go later.

Mr. Scranton replied that it is hard in the fall as it gets dark sooner and there are no lights on the fields. He also stated that there is a lot of pushback from parents to practice later.

Mr. Willenbrink asked if any of the teams used any of the fields at community churches.

Mr. Scranton replied that they do use the soccer field at the church next to the Sycamore Junior High school for practices.

Mr. Willenbrink stated that there is a field at Swaim Park that could be used in the fall.

Mr. Scranton thanked the City for the use of the fields and for the support and cooperation of staff.

Mrs. Harbison asked Mr. Scranton if the GSSA has been approached by the Sycamore Premier group to use the fields.

Mr. Scranton stated he had spoken with Mr. Middleton about field space. He stated he is willing to talk but wouldn't know until after fall registration how many teams they would have in order to determine field space.

Mrs. Louis, with the GSSA, stated that the GSSA is a large organization and although they would like to have a great relationship with the SPSC, she is concerned about the overuse of the fields. She doesn't feel that the fields can handle all the use and they need to focus on player safety.

Mr. Diersing, also with the GSSA, stated that he monitors the field use and will not schedule on them once they become too worn. He stated that they work to be good stewards of the fields out of respect for the City.

Mr. Mercurio with the SPSC introduced himself along with his fellow board members: Brian Middleton and Scott Reynolds. He stated that the SPSC has nothing but good things to say about the GSSA program. He explained that he was a recreational soccer coach in the GSSA and that they had great success against club teams. He stated that the SPSC was formed in 2014 for the U12 age group as the players were aging out of the GSSA age requirements and wanted to remain together as a team. He explained that the SPSC met with Jeff Bieber and Paul Issacson of GSSA to incorporate the older levels, however they did not support expanding the program and would not allow the addition of these teams.

Mr. Mercurio explained that in 2014 when they began they only had 14 players. For the first two years of the program they did not request the use of any fields and would practice at the Sycamore High School. He stated that they currently have 23 teams and close to 300 players. He stated that their mission is to work with the high school coaches to develop their players to be ready for the high school team. He stated that most of the players come to practice from school so they try to begin practices at 5:00 p.m. whenever

they can. He explained that he has requested fields through Mr. Willenbrink before but was told that they were already in use by the GSSA.

Mr. Mercurio stated that they also play in the fall and the spring. The high school has allowed them to use green space, however there is no field lining in these areas. They are currently paying to use fields which cost \$40.00 for every night of use. He stated that most of the families live in Tanagerwoods and the Reserves and drive past Weller Road every day. They see empty fields yet are paying to use others.

Ms. Roesch asked how many practices they would hold a week.

Mr. Mercurio stated that there would be two to three nights a week that practices would be held. He explained that each practice is around 90 minutes as the players are older. He explained that the GSSA's practice time of 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. encompasses the available practice time which would prevent them from holding a practice. He stated that their big ask is to have a field at Weller park designated for their use.

Mr. Mercurio stated that the SPSC would be willing to participate in cost sharing in order to add lightning detectors to the field(s) that they would be able to use to contribute to the safety of the players, coaches and all who attend the practices and games.

Mrs. Harbison asked what their age groups were.

Mr. Mercurio stated that it is currently U7 to U15.

Ms. Roesch stated that their U7 teams could possibly use Swaim field for their practices.

Ms. Roesch asked the groups if they are willing to work together.

Mr. Scranton replied that they have already released a field schedule for practices and games for the fall season.

Ms. Roesch stated that there must be some time available.

Mr. Scranton replied that because of their teams age differences, they schedule differently. He also explained that the rules for the 9 and 10-year-old age groups have changed to the required field size which means they will need additional use of smaller fields.

Mr. Mercurio stated that the use of fields on Friday's would work for their group. He explained that in their standard schedule allows for one day off in between practices.

Ms. Louis asked if they were asking for a field at Weller Park.

Mr. Willenbrink stated that the field at Swaim Park is available now.

Ms. Roesch asked both groups to work together to come up with a solution. She reminded them that the parks are public property and that if the City must determine field usage there may be a decision returned that would not be conducive to both parties, so it would be in their best interest to collaborate and determine a schedule for a remainder of the fall season but definitely for the spring season.

Mr. Cappel stated that in order for a compromise to be made that some people may have to go to a different park which would be no different than travelling to a game outside of the city.

Mr. Mercurio stated that the SPSC feels like they must take only what the GSSA is willing to give up.

Ms. Roesch stated that the City expects them to make accommodations for the spring season.

Ms. Roesch asked the presidents of each Board to follow up with her with an email to inform the City of their progress and plans.

Other Business

Ms. Roesch reported that the 2019 Tree Academy is slated to be held in the city with Wendy VanBuren leading the academy.

Mr. Willenbrink stated that in the past the City reserved Terwilliger Lodge for the academy.

Mr. Riblet stated that if the dates are open in Terwilliger Lodge that he supported hosting the academy.

Mr. Cappel moved to support the City hosting the 2019 Tree Academy. Mrs. Harbison seconded. The Committee unanimously agreed.

Ms. Roesch discussed the management of visitors to the Parks and Recreation meeting when held in park areas. She discussed how meetings were conducted and the seating arrangements when in a City facility but how to manage that when in a park shelter. The Committee discussed the proper handling of this type of meeting.

Minutes

Mr. Cappel moved to approve the September 11, 2017 Committee minutes. Mrs. Harbison seconded. The Committee unanimously approved the minutes.

Adjournment

Mr. Cappel moved for adjournment. Mrs. Harbison seconded. The Committee unanimously agreed.

The Parks and Recreation Committee of Council meeting was adjourned at 4:34 p.m.



Chair