

Orford Parks and Playground Committee
Minutes of the Meeting
February 19th, 2025
Orford Town Offices
5:30

Present: JJ Hebb (Chair), Lawrence Hibbard, Larry Taylor and Robb Day

Also present: Esther Dobbins-Marsh, Terry Martin and Kate Lester (via Zoom).

JJ opened the meeting at 5:30. JJ motioned to accept the January Minutes as read, Lawrence seconded and all were in favor.

JJ welcomed Terry to the meeting. Terry represented the Rivendell Schoolboard. There is frustration on the board of the cost increase of the Community Field Lease. He felt that the fields needed work and that the school was paying too much. Terry questioned the condition of the baseball fields as well as the soccer turf. JJ informed him that there was limited to no maintenance last year due to a family health emergency with our contractor Diamond Turf. It is expected that this year will be a catch-up year and many issues will be resolved this season. JJ also informed Terry that there have been maintenance issues originating from the baseball team. Daily maintenance needs to be conducted on the field after usage such as watering and covering the pitcher's mound and home plate as well as dragging of the base lines. Lawrence mentioned that the storage buildings are full of equipment and very hard to access. He also mentioned that there has been flooding issues and expensive equipment such as pitching machines are left to sit in the water. Daily team field maintenance has not been performed adequately which created problems that needed to be dealt with by our contractor to ensure a safe playing surface. Terry was unaware of this and felt that the new Superintendent of Schools may be helpful as far as communication and what maintenance is needed to be performed by the team and school personnel. Terry was still shocked by the price of the lease and Esther went over the numbers and explained that all of the hired maintenance is covered by the lease, this last year the costs were less than the lease amount charged to the school, but that will be made up this year and it should all even out. The Town is not profiting on the Lease revenue.

JJ talked about the new dugouts that were donated to the school and accepted by the Athletic Director without adequate communication with the Parks and Playgrounds. Lawrence and JJ felt that the dugouts may be too small for High School teams and that there are costs to install the dugouts that have not been figured into anyone's budget. Robb suggested having an assigned contact person

with the school as communication has always been a problem and could solve many misunderstandings. He also felt that the Parks and Playgrounds could give copies of the Diamond Turf quotes to the Schoolboard in the interest of transparency. Esther added that all of the turf work and baseball field work was for the benefit of Rivendell students. There was some talk of contracting elsewhere for playing field use and Larry felt they would be hard pressed to find a better deal than the Community Field. Terry said that Rivendell's student body is declining and that there may not be a baseball team next year. He also suggested that others that use the field should be paying towards the maintenance. JJ said the bulk of the use is Rivendell and that the School has priority over any other users. Terry acknowledged the costs of maintenance and agreed to talk to school management to increase lines of communication with the parks and playgrounds and to go over team responsibilities. He was still very concerned with the lease amount and would like to see a drop in annual payments to ensure good faith between the Town and the School, even a few thousand would be a welcome gesture.

A few ideas such as a lower lease rate and having the School billed if maintenance that year was in excess of the lease. Esther suggested maybe an addendum to the lease. It was agreed to research options.

Orford Swim Program

Kate Lester joined the group on Zoom and the 2024 swim program was discussed. Kate said that it was very hard keeping swim aides and that hourly pay should be increase to keep quality aides interested in the program. Lawrence agreed. JJ said that we had agreed to increase the base pay to \$10 per hour and \$13 for returning aides. Kate thought \$15 for returning aides would be more desirable.

JJ asked about tuition students and about the difficulty of collecting the fees. Kate mentioned that folks do sign up and sometimes do not show up for lessons which can lead to discrepancies in the figures. JJ asked if we should increase tuition to make up the needed revenue for aides. It was also decided that we could run the program for two weeks instead of three, that would reduce total labor costs. JJ ran some preliminary numbers and agreed that we could make it work with a two-week program and paying the older aides \$15 per hour and the new aides \$12. JJ asked Kate to share the registrations with her as she has had some requests from the Town for Parks and Playgrounds to possibly take over the registration of students to the program. Kate agreed to share the Google Docs with JJ concerning the 2025 season.

There was discussion that there could be tuition increases or a small fee such as \$10 per student for Orford and Piermont kids which has always been paid for by their subsequent Towns.

Bandstand

Larry met with Jarrett Olsen regarding his expressed interest on repairing the bandstand. Jarrett agreed to send a quote to JJ the next day and was planning on starting work in early March. JJ had not received any correspondence from Jarrett and the meeting was weeks ago. Larry suggested that since this has been the outcome of other meetings with Olsen, it may be wise to put the job out to bid. All agreed.

The Bandstand Committee had approached Esther to ask if a tent could be set up for the summer in front of the Bandstand as thoughts are that the repairs will not be completed this season. Robb would not be opposed to this request as long as the site would be repaired after (reseeded after the tent is taken down), electrical cords removed to facilitate mowing and trash cans removed between concerts. Larry added that the tent would need to be taken down during the Flea Market. Larry and Lawrence also talked about the possible need for proof of insurance for the tent as it is not a “Town Building” and it is unclear whether or not the Bandstand Committee is a true “Town Committee” and covered under the Town’s insurance policy. Robb was also concerned about the condition of the Bandstand and that it could come down in a weather event and that it could be a danger if the tent was placed too close to the bandstand. JJ will ask Esther to contact Ann Green to relay this to the Committee.

Meeting adjourned at 7:39.

Minutes taken by Robb Day