

**UPPER MACUNGIE TOWNSHIP
PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
Monthly Meeting Minutes
November 2018**

The monthly meeting for the Upper Macungie Township Recreation Board was held on November 29, 2018 at the Upper Macungie Township building. This meeting was rescheduled from November 15, 2018 due to inclement weather. The following Recreation Board members were present: Katie Shade, Andrea Russell, Matthew Bernard, Gwen McCurdy, Wes Schlauch, and Bret Spangler. The following Recreation Board members were absent: Dave Kentner, April Navarra, and Karla Trumbauer. Also present at the meeting: Township Manager, Bob Ibach; and Recreation and Events Coordinator, Lynn Matula. R. Thomas Ballantine from Ballantine Consulting, LLC; Philip Hoch from Ballantine Management Group; and Curt Mosel, ArtsQuest COO, also attended the meeting. The Township's Parks Team Leader, Jim Soltis, was also absent.

Katie called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. She asked all present to join her in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Andrea wanted to make a clarification to a statement of hers in the October 18 minutes regarding the Farmers' Market in response to a question from Wes. The draft minutes stated: "Andrea explained that the vendors make money; the entity of the market itself would be the nonprofit because people can't make money in the parks." Andrea wished to amend the minutes to state: "Andrea explained that while the vendors may make money, they fall under the umbrella of the larger non-profit entity, which follows the Township ordinance." A motion was made by Andrea and seconded by Katie to approve the October 1 special meeting minutes and October 18 minutes with the proposed change. All were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ballantine Consulting, LLC, and ArtsQuest

R. Thomas Ballantine, President of Ballantine Consulting, LLC, and Philip Hoch, Vice President of Special Projects with the Ballantine Management Group, presented information to the Recreation Board about their companies' event planning services. Mr. Ballantine explained that they are logistics and planning experts and that they are a full-service management company for event venues. The companies pick their projects, and maintain a niche in the market. Their company previously owned the Lehigh Valley Expo Center, the facility in South Whitehall on Cetronia Road now owned by St. Luke's Hospital. Their primary facility is the Fredericksburg (Virginia) Convention Center. They worked on large national events, such as the Super Bowl and national political conventions, including the RNC and DNC.

Mr. Ballantine told a story about a call he received from a municipality in Foley, Alabama. The municipality was nearing completion of construction on a sports and recreation facility that would host tournaments year-round but didn't have a plan for how to run the facility. The company prepared a plan for the operator. Mr. Ballantine cautioned the Board against beginning a project without knowing how it would be operated.

Although Mr. Ballantine and Mr. Hoch know the Lehigh Valley event market very well, their interest in Upper Macungie Township is exploratory and outside the box. Mr. Hoch noted that they put on three shows a year at Ag Hall in Allentown. Their interest generated because they socialized with ArtsQuest representatives and Upper Macungie Township Supervisor, Sean Gill. Their company still gets interest about Lehigh Valley events. Even ArtsQuest is limited by their lack of green space. Andrea asked if the companies are involved in events at the PPL Center, Sands Events Center, and or

ArtsQuest. Mr. Hoch served as a food vendor at the Sands Event Center, and got a contract for food vending at ArtsQuest. He has worked for 25 years at ArtsQuest as a vendor. Mr. Ballantine has 30-years' experience in event planning.

Bob asked what kind of events would they bring to Upper Macungie Township, or Grange Park? Mr. Hoch suggested something similar to the Kids' Expo they run in Virginia. Mr. Ballantine further stated that popular event has been running approximately 5-6 years in Fredericksburg. Mr. Hoch also suggested a new event called Balloon Glow with tethered balloons and food trucks. In Orlando, Florida, 10-15,000 people attended this event on one day, with 40,000 attending in 3 days. The balloons don't fly, so it isn't as weather dependent as a traditional balloon festival. There is nothing in the area that competes with it. Bret wondered if these event would be periodic or on-going. He asked where the revenue comes from and what would the cost to Upper Macungie Township be. Mr. Ballantine said the events' structures could be all of the above. Their company is efficiency operators who come in to partially mitigate risk, take some burden off the municipality. Considerable upgrades may be necessary. When that is the case, the company mediates to make sure those needs are met. The company takes over operations and renting. Mr. Hoch noted that Bob isn't looking to tax Upper Macungie Township staff further. The company leaves the park as they found it. Mr. Ballantine said that if someone rents the park for a tournament, does the Township know they capable of producing a professional event? The company's is generally larger scale, but this is a new twist, with the potential community center. He asked what kind of traffic can the location bear.

Andrea inquired about the company's fees. According to Mr. Ballantine, the company hasn't gotten that far. But you have to consider what prices people would pay and then budget. The Township might be covering what needs to be offset. The company bases it on expectations. Bret clarified that the Township would not be paying Ballantine Consulting. Bret proposed that this would be by percentage. Mr. Hoch explained that these relationships are typically performance based.

Mr. Ballantine said this would reestablish the special events base in the Lehigh Valley. Bret asked about the events in Allentown and Bethlehem. He wondered if Ballantine Consulting would you move anything. Mr. Hoch said their three events at Ag Hall sell out because space is limited there. Andrea added that it's not enticing. Mr. Hoch continued to mention Lehigh University's venues. Stabler is too small. At Rauch Field House, you have to carpet at a cost of approximately \$8,000, not including the rent for an event. Mr. Hoch said that sports teams come first at institutions, so it's tough to get a date. Beyond that, the PPL and Sands Events Centers aren't designed to host events. You might get in during the summer.

Mr. Ballantine and Mr. Hoch introduced Curt Mosel, COO at ArtsQuest. He has 10 years' experience in the NBA, plus experience in many other settings. ArtsQuest took a business minded approach when SteelStacks was under construction. ArtsQuest is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit for economic development. Billings, Montana is learning from ArtsQuest about its revitalization efforts. The ArtsQuest model is garnering national notice but they are confined by dates and space. When ArtsQuest started talking about events, they look at zip codes of attendees. There is a New Jersey influence. There's an opportunity to replicate an existing event on this side of the Valley. After talking to Mr. Hoch, in 2019 ArtsQuest wants to pick smaller events for 3-10,000 people over a weekend. At Grange, they'd use the stadium and permanent seating eventually. Basically ArtsQuest would host events the community would enjoy. As of now, they don't have a sketch for what ArtsQuest would want to do at Grange Park. Mr. Mosel suggested their Sangria Festival could be an duplicate event on the western half of the Lehigh Valley with new supporters. Andrea stated that the Township's roadblocks are ordinances, specifically no alcohol in the parks. She believes those events would be great, but that's a limit on them. She suggested a food truck festival. Bob noted that the ordinance(s) could be changed or the Township could issue special events permits to allow it. Ballantine Consulting would be the intermediary and they do carry a liquor license in certain places. Mr. Hoch said their liquor license is for

50 events a year off-site. Mr. Ballantine clarified that 501(c)(3) nonprofit status has benefits for the type of license. Ballantine Consulting works with the necessary insurance companies, with Upper Macungie Township being listed as an additionally insured. Ballantine Consulting would stay on top of all aspects of the logistics.

Andrea inquired about Ballantine Consulting's accuracy at predicting attendance. Mr. Ballantine said his first event was a high end antique show many years ago in Massachusetts, for which the VIP tickets sold out but the regular attendance didn't match. He believes indoor events are different and more difficult to gauge. The Ballantine holiday festival in Fredericksburg sees up to 18,000 each year. According to Mr. Ballantine, the worst thing that can happen is that expectation exceeds the result. Ballantine manage all of that uncertainty. Mr. Mosel said that ArtsQuest knows their attendees based on their database, social media, and website traffic. Their media relationships are discounted. But you always face weather and other factors. You don't want to take bad risk. Getting sponsors helps to alleviate the risk. Mr. Ballantine said that you have to have reasonable expectations for some level of success. Andrea said that marketing is a persistent problem for the Township. Mr. Ballantine said it helps to have hooks. He's used Chick-Fil-A offers in the past because many people will come for free chicken sandwiches. Andrea added that they have great customer service.

Mr. Ballantine explained that the Township's involvement with his company would be a phased approach. Their involvement is for special events. The company is simply not happy about the venues in the Lehigh Valley. For instance, 10% of their attendance wouldn't come from Bethlehem or points east but also they would have someone from up north. Mr. Mosel said Minneapolis, where he previously worked, has the same problem. Entertainment traffic in the Lehigh Valley is east-west. In Stafford County in Northern Virginia where Ballantine Consulting's main event facility is, there they face a similar north-south travel boundary where the local community doesn't attend because they have to drive along I-95 but residents of Richmond, to the south, do attend. He believes the recent changes on the western side of the Lehigh Valley are encouraging. Mr. Hoch reiterated his statement that sports teams have priority at many institutions but is also hopeful that there's downtime that could be used for really fun events. Lynn said that using Grange Park as a community hub is a Township goal. Andrea sees opposite ends of the spectrum. She thinks the Recreation Board has to be concerned about the residents and even some other Recreation Board members. Mr. Mosel confirmed that Musikfest deals with this phenomenon in Bethlehem but they have embraced dramatic heritage for Musikfest and Christkindlmart. It took the City of Bethlehem, the redevelopment authority, and the school district cooperating to get the \$100 million for SteelStacks. Mr. Ballantine previously lived on Palomino Drive near Grange Park. As a former Upper Macungie Township resident and an event professional, he knows that coordination and selling the events properly will be crucial. He is convinced that almost anything will be used by the community. Andrea and Gwen noted the Township has hotels. Recently, our major lacrosse tournament, Lax-a-palooza, left Grange Park because of the volume on the fields. Lynn informed the Board that the Township has a request from that tournament for next year. Andrea reminded the Board that traffic was a problem. Mr. Hoch didn't think Lax-a-palooza had any traffic control. Andrea said Grange Road is tough. Mr. Hoch said that the Township is not allowing construction another warehouse nor building more 300 homes. Bob said he spoke with representatives from St. Luke's, who see tons of opportunity in Upper Macungie Township parks for older residents. From an SPYA standpoint, Bret said they have the building and use the parks. SPYA still struggles with field access. They are currently filling the building with pickleball rentals, etc. and exploring other revenue streams, like birthday parties. Bret said the Board has to have buy in from the community.

The Board thanked Mr. Ballantine, Mr. Hoch, and Mr. Mosel for the information.

[After discussing the rest of the agenda, the Board discussed this presentation in more detail.]
Andrea was curious where this interest is coming from and what their intention is. Bob advised the Board to be cautious. He believes Ballantine Consulting wants an events center but suggested that

partnering with ArtsQuest could provide another element of activity in the park. He mentioned that the Township, in its efforts to get the community center to break even, could let Ballantine Consulting or ArtsQuest use the facility when it is not being heavily used. The Township would have to be clear that Township events come first. He warned of the situation of the youth associations' playoffs when an event could be planned for after the regular season but later a team (or teams) makes the playoffs and will host additional home games that could conflict with these events. Planning may be difficult and/or Ballantine Consulting must be flexible in that situation. Lynn recommended finding maybe three weekends per year that would work for their events. Bret said SPYA doesn't wholly rely on Grange for its sports. But that will change as more facilities to host additional activities will be built at the park. Andrea expressed concern about the parking. She isn't sure the park can legitimately accommodate this type of use. Matthew said they'd park on the grass. He inquired about the maximum capacity of the community center. Lynn said that depends on what is built. Andrea's concern was outdoor events. Matthew noted that the Township should make sure Ballantine Consulting and/or ArtsQuest wouldn't compete with Lynn's efforts to secure fundraising for Township events. Bob said Ballantine Consulting would undoubtedly be looking for larger sponsorships than the Township would. Bob requested that the Board discuss this further and give a list of questions and concerns.

Andrea wondered what should the relationship look like. The Board talked about a food truck festival before but there are limitations in the ordinances. Bob said that when the Township hosts an event, the Township pays the cost for police and public works employees' overtime. Bret expects that Ballantine Consulting would have the traffic controlled. He sees no real negative to pursuing an arrangement with them. Andrea noted that Ballantine Consulting does all of the marketing. Gwen thinks these events will bring people into the Community Center.

REPORTS

Community Programs Scheduled

The *Pickleball Flex League* is ongoing at Blue Barn Park on Wednesdays at 4:00 PM and Sundays at 9:00 AM.

The *Photo Scavenger Hunt* concluded on October 15. The winner has been chosen. The Board decide to include a splash park card, Grange Park pavilion rental, and gift cards to local restaurants totaling \$100, with each gift card to be \$25 or more.

Pick-up Indoor Basketball was held on Thursdays beginning September 13 and ending November 29 from 6:30 – 8:30 PM at Jaindl Elementary School. Lynn will check with Jarell about dates for spring.

Pick-up Indoor Volleyball continues on Tuesday evenings from 8:00 – 10:00 PM through April 30.

Lauri Moore's gallery was held on November 8 at Independent Park from 7:00 – 8:30 PM. 38 registrants attended this event. Registration fees totaled \$780.00. Ms. Moore charges a \$350.00 fee. The fundraiser raised \$430.00. It was \$20 per person this year.

The *Holiday Show* will be held on December 7 at 6:00 PM at Independent Park. Tracy Adams has volunteered to be the elf. Deb Soltis will run concessions. Barry Moyer will be Santa again. Andrea sent out a Signup Genius before the meeting and asked the Board to check their emails to make sure they received it. Currently, 23 people are signed up for this event. Katie will drop off the tree next week; she has the elf costume to give to Lynn tonight. All donated cookies must be wrapped. The Township has drinks, popcorn, and hot chocolate. Katie suggested that Tracy get her child abuse clearance. Tracy is a Township employee and she should've had a background check done when she was hired. But Bob did not think she would've needed the child abuse clearance then.

Kids' Noon Year's Eve will be held on December 30 at Trexlertown Fire Company (Station 25) from 10:30 AM – 1:30 PM. Lynn will create a Signup Genius for volunteers. We will need volunteers in the game room and at the registration table during the event. Deb will again be handling the concessions. Set up will likely be Friday. We need volunteers for clean up too. Andrea asked if the fire company would have an event on Saturday. Lynn said they do not and we can decorate early. New games and decorations were ordered. As a reminder, this event often has fewer sponsors and vendors due to it being on a holiday. It is hard for vendors to get staff to work it. Sponsors include- Keystone Consulting Engineers, Orchard Hills Church, and another is pending. Lynn booked the face painter and DJ a few months ago.

The *Hunter Trapper course* will be held on February 17 at Independent Park from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM.

Proposed/New

The *Dog Park Training* will be scheduled in 2019. Bret asked if they have been doing this at Grange. He sees 10-15 dogs there on weekend days. He hasn't seen any signage. He notices them when he's going in the SPYA building for pickleball and leaving after. They're not in the dog park; they line up along the parking lots.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Next steps for:

The Community Center Capital Campaign

This was approved by the Board of Supervisors and will start in the new budget year.

The Farmers' Market Bid

Lynn emailed the Board about this earlier this week. This should be advertised in Parkland Press next Wednesday. Lynn informed representatives from Trexlertown Farmers' Market.

NEW BUSINESS

Cookie Decorating Class

Everything is prebaked. The price is high but could be lowered to the audience. Bret agreed the cost is high. Matthew said the instructor's work is very professional. Andrea agrees. Gwen suggested that the Board check out the instructor's work. Lynn suggested that she could rent Independent Park and hold her own class at whatever price she wants. That's what she wanted to do initially. Andrea wanted the Board to let the instructor do the work advertising. Lynn will try to schedule this on a Friday night or weeknight.

OTHER BUSINESS

Independent Park Community Center rental and building update

In October 2018, there were 8 rentals, which generated \$5,585.00 in revenue.

In October 2017, there were 9 rentals, which generated \$4,930.00 in revenue.

Katie asked Bob what is happening with this park. He informed the Board that the property is going out for bid. Transferring the property must be done either by bid or a public auction. Bob has heard from interested buyers via their realtors, though he does not know their identities.

Pavilion rental update

In October 2018, there were 11 rentals, which generated \$1,350.00 in revenue.

In October 2017, there were 19 rentals, which generated \$2,200.00 in revenue.

Upper Macungie Township Recreation fund balance **\$759,229.96**

Friends of Upper Macungie Parks and Recreation, Inc. fund balance **\$31,119.87**

Park and Grant updates: none.

Community Center: none

Updates from Lynn: none

Officer updates

Katie thanked everyone for coming out tonight because of the rescheduling.

The Board then discussed the attendance policy and specifically, whether or how that should be applied to Dave's current situation. Bret reminded the Board that there were previous members who couldn't ever attend and he hoped that we would give Dave latitude. If the Board was to vote on a recommendation to remove Dave, Bret would abstain because of his relationship with Dave in SPYA. Bret thanked the Board's new members for attending regularly. The Board decided this situation did not fit the intention and spirit of the attendance policy. There were special meetings and family matters that led to Dave missing more than three meetings. All absences from the October 1 special meeting and this month's rescheduled meeting should be ignored.

PUBLIC COMMENT: none.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made at 9:07 PM by Katie and seconded by Andrea to adjourn the meeting, and all were in agreement. The Recreation Board's next meeting is scheduled for January 17, 2019 at 7:00 PM at the Township building. There will be no meeting in December due to the holidays.

Katie Shade, Chairman
UMT Parks and Recreation Board