

**BYRAM TOWNSHIP SPECIAL JOINT MEETIN OF THE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL, OPEN SPACE
COMMITTEE & RECREATION COMMITTEE - SEPTEMBER 8, 2020
REGULAR SESSION – 7:00 P.M.**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Rubenstein called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

This meeting is called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law. This meeting has been electronically sent to the newspapers and uploaded to Byram’s website, not less than 48 hours in advance of the meeting. In addition, a copy of this notice is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

ROLL CALL

Councilman Bonker, here; Councilwoman Franco, here; Councilman Gallagher, absent; Councilman Roseff, here; Mayor Rubenstein, here. Also present was, Township Attorney Tom Collins, Township Manager Joe Sabatini, Deputy Municipal Clerk Cynthia Church, Township Engineer Cory Stoner, Ben Spinelli, DPW Superintendent Mike Orgera, Phil Crosson

Open Space Committee Members: Scott Olson, here; Earl Riley, here; John Morytko, here; Scott Yappen, here; Eric Duch, here

Recreation Committee Members: Len Bicher, here; Scott Yappen, here; Robert Androsky, here; Jennifer Kerr, here; Jeri Quirk, here

FLAG SALUTE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

DISCUSSION ON THE PRIORITIZATION OF PROJECTS IDENTIFIED IN THE 2020 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN:

Mayor Rubenstein explained that for over a year work was being done to finish up the Open Space and Recreation Plan, which has now been adopted by the Byram Township Council, and by the Planning Board as an element to the Master Plan. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the 11 areas that were identified in the plan that should be focused on as capital expenditures over the next several years. The Township Council would like to get the consensus of the Open Space and Recreation Committees as to what they feel would be a priority to focus on. Ultimately it will be the Council that will decide where the money is spent.

Ben Spinelli spoke in regard to the eleven items listed on the agenda which consisted of:

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| • Dog Park | • Neil Gylling Park Bathroom Renovations / Replacement | • C.O. Johnson Field House Improvements / Replacement |
| • Forest Stewardship Initiatives | • Trails Development | • C.O. Johnson Field Improvement / Replacement |
| • Gazebo / Pavilion | • Artificial Turf Field & Lighting | • C.O. Johnson Walking Paths Improvements / Expansion |
| • Handicap Accessible Facilities | • C.O. Johnson Field #8 Improvements | |

Ben Spinelli explained that the eleven items came from the outreach that was sent out to the community, and from the analysis of the needs of the Township. It was designed to give the governing body tools to work with. The results of the survey were spread among all eleven items. Some items were more popular than others.

Mayor Rubenstein feels that C.O. Johnson Field is “the” park of the township and the center of most activity. He feels it should be the focus of improvement.

Scott Olson spoke in general for the Open Space Committee. C.O. Johnson Field is the hub, as well as Tamarack Greenway. Both are important to the Open Space Committee and should be considered in the long-term plan.

Earl Riley agrees that the focus should be on C.O. Johnson Field. He believes improvements need to be done to the Field House. The C.O. Johnson field house and playground need to be improved upon by moving things around. He suggested moving the playground area to the skate park as he believes that the skate park is underutilized at this time.

Mayor Rubenstein agreed with looking at the layout of the field as it is today, to see how it could change over the next few years.

Scott Olson agreed that the location of the current facilities could be moved, however, the environmental impact needs to be considered as well.

Scott Yappen questioned the data that was collected that speaks to the underutilization of the skate park. Earl Riley said that actual data was not used as much as what he sees when he drives by. He said that the skate park was heavily utilized when it was put in over 10 years ago, however, he does not see that it is utilized now in the same manner.

Jeri Quirk said that the heat at the skate park gives it a disadvantage. She said that the skate park provides an advantage to the groups of kids who are not athletes.

Eric Duch said that he does see people using skate park. He also agrees that the C.O. Johnson Park should be the focus of improvements, however, he does have some environmental concerns. He believes that C.O. Johnson Park would be a good site for bicyclists. He thinks that the township should also move forward with a dog park.

Len Bicher agrees that C.O. Johnson Field should be the area of focus. The field house should be re-named “The Community Center”, and more needs to be done with the field house. He feels that Field #8 needs to be more usable. The football field is only 80 yards and something should be done with it. It is only good for practices. Every football league uses the standard 100 yard football field, and it needs to be brought up to that size.

Earl Riley questioned Cory Stoner as to what it would take to expand the football field to 100 yards which would be suitable for football, soccer and other sports. Cory said the park was redone in 2004, and he said that there are some issues at C.O. Johnson Field and there would need to be some relocation of the electric and lighting. He said that making it wider would not be so easy. Earl said that if the field house and playground were relocated, could we make the football field a standard 100-yard size. Joe Sabatini said that if you want to change locations in the park, Field # 8 would be the best location for a multi-function field that could be utilized many sports groups. Len agreed that Field #8 would be a great location for a multi-function field.

Alex said that he does not agree with Earl and believes that the field house should remain where it is, and that the current football field could be reconfigured to a smaller field, and Field #8 can then be utilized for football and multipurpose field.

Cory Stoner said that a turf field would be a good idea for Field #8, as it would reduce the maintenance of the field. Ben Spinelli said that the cost for a turf field is high, and that the investment has tradeoffs for impervious coverage area. Ben said for football you would need 120 yards of turf because of the endzones. Alex said he is not on board with a turf field. The cost would be too high. Ben said you would need to bank \$100,000 a year to go towards the replacement at the end of the ten years. Ray said that he does not agree with the turf field either. He said we need to reconfigure Field #8 but take the turf field out of the conversation. Parking at Field #8 could be an issue, as well as the concession stand, there would need to be a small concession stand located closer. Field #8 should be a multipurpose field for games only, so it does not get beat up during practices. Field #5 could be used as the practice field for football.

The consensus of all that attended the meeting was that improvements should be made on Field #8 that can be used for multiple sports.

The field house should become a community center, and a small concession stand, or temporary field house could be placed closer to Field #8.

Scott Yappen would like to see more lighting at C.O. Johnson Field #8. Ben Spinelli said that it would cost between \$300,000-\$350,000 to light an all-purpose field.

Dog Park Discussion

There was discussion about the option of putting in a dog park at C.O. Johnson Field. Scott Olson and Cory Stoner recall that the area that they are looking at may have some wetland issues. Cory said he will investigate this. Cory said that you would need to get highlands approval for this area because of the tree removal. Cory said that ¼ acre of disturbance requires Highlands review, and this park would be at least one acer of disturbance, and that this task would be very difficult. Ray Bonker said the survey showed the dog park coming in at #2. He said there are many people interested in a dog park. Scott Olson said that 40% of people who took the survey do not want a dog park. Joe said that one acre of area is needed to build a dog park. It would need to include shaded areas, multiple entrances and should have two separate areas; one for small dogs and one for large dogs. Joe said that if the park is not maintained property it would be avoided completely. Joe recommends if it is an option at C.O. Johnson Park, we have to look at expanding the wooded area near Field #8. Earl Riley asked what cost would be for a dog park vs. improving Field #8 for other sports. We need to look more at the cost before a decision is made. Scott Olson said that Neil Gylling Park is another possible area for a dog park. In this case they would move the softball fields to C.O. Johnson Park. Scott Olson also mentioned the possibility of acquiring a property that is for sale off amity road. The old Columbia Campground behind the junk yard is another option. Alex will reach out to see if there is an interest.

Scott Olson is interested in expanding the walking paths around C.O. Johnson Field. He said that Cory had previously given the township a design and estimate.

Joe Sabatini said we also need to consider reconfiguring or moving the playground at C.O. Field so it can be made more handicap accessible.

Scott Yappen said that C.O. Johnson Field could be used for profit by holding tournaments.

Earl Riley asked how we can rectify the drainage issued on field #8, so we can use it as a multipurpose field. Mayor Rubenstein said that there was a memo prepared that provided six options to rectifying the field. The Township Council is aware of the memo and were waiting for the Open Space Report to come out before addressing it.

Councilwoman Franco would like to see a gazebo or seating area at CO Johnson Field.

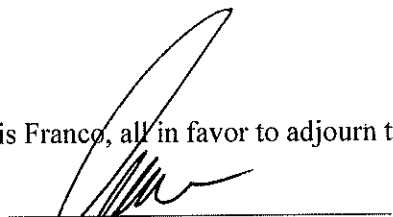
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – Mayor Rubenstein opened the meeting to the public for comments. The Mayor instructed the audience how they can participate and opened to the public.

No Comments.

The Mayor closed to public.

ADJOURNMENT – The Motion by Ray Bonker, Second by Cris Franco, all in favor to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 pm.


Cynthia Church, Deputy Municipal Clerk


Alexander Rubenstein, Mayor