



HARTFORD COUNCIL FOR RECREATION
PO BOX 332, HARTFORD, MI 49057
www.hartfordrecreation.org

March 23, 2022

Minutes

Hartford High School Library

Called to order at 7:15 PM by Chairman Birmele

Interlocal Board Members present: Birmele, Mead (arrived 8:05), Mireles, Hall, Morsaw
Interlocal Board Members absent: Bachman, Sweet
HCR Directors present: Birmele, Morsaw, Mead (arrived 8:05)
Others present: Nikole Sewell, Veronica Wolf

Motion to approve February 2022 meeting minutes made by Hall, supported by Mireles. Motion approve 4-0 (Mead not present). Before approval, Jerrod reminded the board of all the discussion topics from the meeting that we discussed, so that those who may have missed the meeting previously knew what was discussed.

Jerrod brought the board up to date with the latest treasurer's report for the past month, which showed the current balances in the General, League of Miracles and Concession funds, as well as showing the expenditures the council had in the previous month. The current balances in the account showed that the general account had \$15,918.26 in it, while the League of Miracles account had \$1,304.18 in it, and the concession account had \$1,405.91 in it. While that shows the accounts in solid shape, the general account is significantly higher than it normally is, due to baseball / softball signups (both in-person and online) and the proceeds from the quarter auction, which is addressed later in these minutes. In addition, sponsorship checks have started to come in, as those were mailed out between the February meeting and tonight's meeting, and we had three donations (that equated to \$125.00) related to memorials from the funeral services of Ralph Bailey Sr., who passed away in December. Accounts paid out included for basketball jersey materials, basketball referees, electric bills, hardware supplies and bank fees.

In addition to the treasurer's report, Jerrod did mention that, as promised, Allegan Youth Baseball / Softball did send a check on March 1st, which was received shortly thereafter, for the \$470.00 for the 2021 baseball tournament. That check was deposited, along with the sponsor and memorial checks the previous day.

Jerrod spoke little of the audit from Hungerford Nichols, stating he has heard nothing directly (to him) from the company since his inquiry back prior to the previous meeting. 2020 and 2021 still need to be completed, on top of the 2019 audit, which is holding us up from going to the township and seeking back funds for the last three years. In addition, it is our assumption that the township will not be returning to the Interlocal Agreement and the board discussed ways to attempt to get them back on board and other ways to approach them. Several board members cited an article about the township giving money to the float committee for Miss Hartford, and whether it might be a good idea to have a board member take some players (boys & girls) to a meeting to see if this would be a good way to make a positive resolution. It was determined we would take that stance at a future meeting, but the more important goal in the near-term would be to get this audit done in due time.

Regarding baseball and softball, Jerrod brought the board up to date on the progress of these sports. Since we have taken the reigns and had a schedule out well in advance, things are ahead of schedule, which is a good thing. Signups have been completed, and we will head into the 2022 season with a total of 226 participants playing baseball, softball and T-Ball, which is up year-over-year and is surprising somewhat, considering last year was a return to 'normal' from COVID, and many players were interested in just getting out and playing a sport. The biggest issue the board had with signups is the many messages we received from parents / guardians following the end of the signup period to get kids registered. As a group, we must stand our ground in future years and offer an incentive for those who sign their kids up early (like an 'early bird' special). The only way we should allow signups after the posted dates should be centered on additional kids to fill a division, or enough kids to split into an additional team.

Continuing with baseball and softball, Jerrod mentioned that the league has accepted our 10U softball and Minor baseball teams into the fold, essentially putting six of our eight divisions under the Southwest Michigan Baseball and Softball League banner. Now that the process has happened, our team numbers have been submitted and the league will work on the scheduling. Our 8U softball and Instructional baseball will remain local and will play Coloma and Watervliet for the most part, but discussions will continue with neighboring communities (like Decatur, Dowagiac and South Haven) if we need more games in those divisions, due to their close proximity.

Continuing with baseball and softball, now that the draft of teams has occurred, jerseys will need to be ordered prior to the beginning of the season and hopefully, barring no team or individual changes, we will get them done on time, but like most situations these days, hopefully they will not be delayed. The board agreed that since Lazer Graphics was handling our spirit wear fundraiser (mentioned later in the minutes), that we would give them the opportunity to do our jerseys, as well.

Continuing with baseball and softball, it was determined that weather permitting, teams could begin practice before spring break, while rendering those practices 'optional'. The most likely outcome is that most teams will begin after spring break, once participants return from their vacations and go back to school. In addition, Jerrod stated to the board that Megan (softball director) and Kellan (baseball director) will need to meet after the season begins to look at the tournament rules and make sure everything is how we want it. The biggest change to the rules, in our minds, will be the rule change regarding illegal bats.

Regarding football and basketball, both of those sports are now in the postseason, but we still wish to do the right thing and have an awards program at some point soon (with certificates the most likely outcome) for the 2021 season, as we want our families to see that we care about each

player being recognized. Marilyn was not available at this point of the meeting, so we could not find out directly the status on how things were progressing.

Regarding League of Miracles, Jerrod received a message from Sandy that bowling was good this year and that they are planning on joining us on the diamonds again this spring for baseball. Jerrod stated that once the scheduling with the league is complete, and once he knows the home dates, he can work on a schedule to accommodate them with the earliest possible starting times. Jerrod admitted last year that he didn't properly schedule them and that they had to look for additional places to play, which wasn't ideal for them.

In old business, Jerrod brought everyone up to date on some recent events that have occurred. First, the quarter auction held in March was a success, with about \$1,500.00 raised that goes back to our kids. Marilyn was instrumental in coordinating the event, having gathered donations and buying and making food that was served that evening. Many people attended the event and we are hoping to make this an annual event in the springtime. A spirit wear fundraiser that we approved in February has been underway and sales are minute so far, and we hope with more social media awareness that we will be able to meet the threshold to get money back from the sales.

Regarding fundraisers, Joe mentioned that he has talked to one of the fundraising vendors that has a connection with the High School athletic department and that a popcorn fundraiser could be done by our participant's this spring. The cost of the popcorn would be \$20 / bag (large bags), with the Hartford Council for Recreation receiving half of that back. The suggestion is this is intriguing, but how long would we do this for? The suggestion by the board was to approve a popcorn sale for roughly two weeks, with the paperwork being handed out April 4 and lasting through April 14. We would collect all the money (cash and check only), deposit it and then write a check for the amount raised, divided by two.

In new business, plenty of things were brought up that were directed at our attention. Number one was the change in the mascot to 'Huskies' for the 2022-23 school year, and the effect it will have on our ballpark name, which is currently Indian Pride Park. The board agreed to have the name remain the same for this coming baseball / softball season, and then request the community help us find a new park moniker as fall sports come around. This is the exact same procedure that occurred when the name was done in the first place less than a decade ago.

(Mead arrived at 8:05)

Continuing in new business, Jerrod mentioned that there has been recent vandalism at the park, including damages to the ladies' restroom and graffiti spray-painted on doors at the clubhouse (the old bathrooms) and on one of our scoreboards. Jerrod thanked Police Chief Tressa Beltran for coming down and cleaning as much as they could of the spray-paint, and it was determined that we need to look into getting cameras in certain areas of the park in the future, once our financial situation becomes most securely stable.

Continuing in new business, the board determined that several needs will need to be addressed in the coming weeks in preparation for baseball and softball. We will need to order supplies, like bathroom supplies (paper towels and toilet paper), replacing bases that are ripped and need attention, and buying baseballs, which looking at early prices will be substantially higher than in previous years due to supply chain issues. In addition, the board also discussed utilizing certain 'aging' football equipment at the high school to help with our helmet and pad situation, as we know there are things that might be too outdated for high school kids, but that would give us some things to work with instead of just patching old things up. The board agrees wholeheartedly that equipment needs to be improved with health and safety protocols at the forefront of what we strive to achieve.

Continuing with new business, some of the roofs of our infrastructure, including the clubhouse and dugouts, are starting to lose tiles and are showing signs of its age and use. While not at catastrophic levels yet, it is something we will need to address in the next few years. In the past, we know that Hostetler Metal Sales has donated money to our organization, but maybe it would be a good idea to approach them and see if there is anyway that they would be interested in redoing the roofs, in exchange for a long-term sponsorship agreement. The board will consider that approach at a future meeting.

Finally, in new business, Honor Credit Union is purchasing the old Huntington Bank branch in Hartford and is going to make it a permanent home in our community this spring. The board would like to hear from them regarding their products and then make an informed decision on whether we will transfer our funds or not at that time. Jerrod will reach out to the credit union to see if they would come to a meeting and give us a course on the products, they offer to organizations like ours. In addition, the council would like to see if they would be willing to sponsor us this year, as we had not sent them a sponsorship request like we did all other businesses on our lists. Rick said he knew one of the 'top heads' of the company and asked our sponsorship levels. The sponsorship request is ranging from \$100.00 to \$500.00, with all businesses \$300.00 on up getting names on jerseys. Rick said he would make contact and have them print the request and send in the money directly, if they wished to.

In open discussion, Joe has been named the head football coach in Hartford and discussed his plan to potentially have a rocket football 'Pass, Punt and Kick' on May 26th at the ballpark. It would allow us to have the kids active and getting into the football mentality and give us an opportunity to possibly have early signups. The board will discuss this further at the next meeting.

Next meeting will be April 20, 2022.

Motion to adjourn by Birmele, supported by Hall. Motion approved 5-0.

Birmele adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM.

Submitted by
Megan Mireles
Interlocal Board Secretary