



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

April 27, 2022

Minutes

Hartford High School Library

Called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Birmele

Interlocal Board Members present: Birmele, Mead, Mireles, Hall, Bachman, Morsaw

Interlocal Board Members absent: Sweet

HCR Directors present: Birmele, Morsaw, Mead

Others present: Tim Fish, Joe Lehnert, Joey Lopez, Robin Najacht, Kellan Nichols, Nikole Sewell, Ian Sharpe, Courtney Whitman and members of the Hartford Major Baseball Teams #1 and #2

Motion by Birmele, supported by Hall to amend the agenda to move item 6(a) to the beginning of the meeting, to allow Robin Najacht the proper opportunity to discuss a charity event that they would like to have at our facilities this coming weekend; April 30th and May 1st. The Najacht family, along with Sandy Burtchett, who have put numerous hours in at the ballpark over the years, are organizing a fundraiser to benefit Robin's grandson, who is currently 1-year old, who is a Type-1 diabetic and is looking to raise money for a diabetic dog. Jerrod approved the use of a field for their use (while still allowing other teams to practice on the other open fields), but the issue at hand now is the use of the concession stand.

Discussion amongst board members commenced, and the biggest issue raised was that the property, including the concession stand, is not owned by the Rec Council (we lease the property from the school district), but that all buildings (including the clubhouse) are covered under the city's liability coverage, which only covers our organizational events, and not events held by outside entities. While it was important that the event had a good amount of insurance coverage, the board debated if something were to happen, whether it be an injury to a player or worse yet, a fire that could damage or destroy the concession stand, we could be held liable for damages, or become part of legal proceedings, and that was something that the board does not want to see happen. After discussion, the board, with a heavy heart, did not approve the event to be held on our property, but did offer suggestions, such as reaching out to Hartford Public Schools, to see if they would be able to host the event on short notice. All board members agreed this was a tough decision to make, as the event was for a worthy cause, but we must stand our ground.

Motion to approve March 2022 meeting minutes made by Hall, supported by Morsaw. Motion approved 6-0. 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 accounts showed that the general account had \$9,951.87 in it, while the League of Miracles account had \$525.92 in it, and the concession account had \$1,491.94 in it. The accounts remain in solid shape, but the general account had a lot more expenses coming out of the account than income. The only income was for signup fees for spring sports, while bills for water / sewer, fuel, baseball / softball season supplies (through Amazon), balls and jerseys were paid for, totaling close to \$7,000.00. Concession made one expense to get food supplies going for the upcoming baseball / softball season, while getting a boost in funding from the general account. League of Miracles made one deposit, while making several expenditures in the period.

In addition, Jerrod reminded the board a check for insurance, that was written for \$1,083.43 to K&K Insurance Group has not been cashed yet. Meanwhile, deposits for signups and popcorn still must be deposited. In addition, more than \$1,200.00 remains out in terms of baseball, softball and T-Ball fees; the task to collect was given to our baseball / softball directors.

Jerrod spoke of the audit from Hungerford Nichols, stating, once again, that he has heard nothing directly from the company since an inquiry made back in February. He reminded the board that 2019, 2020 and 2021 still needs to be completed, and that is holding us up from collecting money from the township, who will not make any payments until a full audit is presented to them, per the terms of the Interlocal Agreement. That is \$15,000 total, and that is a lot of money that the Interlocal Board and directors can put to good use once the payments are received, but reminded everyone that audits are a tedious process, and even if we sent in the 2020 and 2021 today, it would not be expected to get done in speedy time. Jerrod will attempt to contact Ryan (auditor) and report to the board at the next meeting.

Jerrod started to address the board about baseball and softball, but a number of coaches, parents and players made an appearance at the meeting to discuss a situation that had happened at the ballpark earlier in the evening. The board decided to allow those who attended to the meeting to discuss the situation at that time, while attempting to ensure that one person spoke at the same time and keeping the discussion cordial. This pertained to some inappropriate verbal conduct that happened, featuring numerous people involved, during a Major League scrimmage that Team #1 (Hicks) and #2 (Nichols) were competing in. Those who attended wanted the board to take a look at the situation at hand, in addition to some other smaller issues and board members agreed this is something that needed to happen immediately, but needed to happen in a closed session between just the board, baseball / softball directors and the head coaches.

Motion to go into closed session made by Morsaw, supported by Birmele. Motion approved 6-0. At 7:38 PM, the Interlocal Board of Directors entered a CLOSED SESSION to discuss coaching issues and the consequences that would follow, based on the Codes of Conduct we have established.

Motion to return to regular session made by Mead, supported by Mireles. Motion approved 6-0. At 8:45 PM, the Interlocal Board of Directors

returned from their closed session and returned to discuss the remaining agenda topics.

Regarding baseball and softball, Jerrod brought the board up to date on the progress of these sports. Schedules have been finalized and games will be starting on May 2nd (baseball) and May 3rd (softball). Once again, Jerrod reminded the board that roughly 230 kids signed up this year and that does not include those playing in the League of Miracles program, so this is the most participants we have had in quite a long time. In terms of scheduling, the league scheduled all the divisions, with a caveat that they split the league in an east / west format, meaning Hartford will just play teams from Coloma, South Haven and Watervliet, for the most part, in baseball and softball. Due to the lack of 14U softball teams in the league, Hartford and Watervliet decided to join the Suncoast League in that division, and that brings in Berrien Springs, Brandywine, Coloma and Lakeshore, among other opponents. If we had not made this move, it would just have been Hartford and Watervliet and that is no fun.

Continuing with baseball and softball, jerseys were ordered this year through Lazer Graphics since they were kind enough to help us with the spirit wear fundraiser and did our football jerseys last fall. Because of the late order (due to additions / subtractions and a few team changes), picture day will be moved back to May 23rd and 24th so that everyone has their jerseys by that time.

Continuing with baseball and softball, the popcorn fundraiser was a big success, and brought in over \$4,300.00 in total sales. After receiving \$10 per bag (bags sold for \$20 – our organization gets half), we will be able to keep 50% of the official final figure. The board thanked Joe for his effort on this task and he mentioned that popcorn will be coming in around May 11th. At that time, we will have to cut a check for the gentleman running the fundraiser for his half of it (looking like \$2,190.00).

Regarding cheerleading and football, Joe mentioned that the varsity football program will be putting on a 'Punt, Pass and Kick' event at Indian Pride Park on May 26th from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. It was mentioned by multiple board members that we usually have an issue with last minute signups and maybe this would be the perfect opportunity to begin getting kids signed up sooner than later. The board felt that this event would be the perfect opportunity to begin the registration process.

Continuing with cheerleading and football, the board then had to decide on the structure for fees for the 2022 season. As all of the board members noted, costs for everything (football equipment, footballs, insurance and jerseys) are climbing significantly due to the economy and, unfortunately, this is something we have to offset or we will take a hit on the balance sheet. The board decided a price hike was warranted, most notably on our junior and senior rocket football players, as those participants cost the most when it comes to insurance, among other things. The board agreed to begin signing those players up at \$85 before June 30th, rising to \$95 until July 31st and \$105.00 in August. Participants in cheerleading and flag football will remain the same as in previous years, as most of their costs are not as numerous at this time. Perhaps by offering incentives for earlier signups, we make people signup quicker so that we are not scrambling on our team numbers and get jerseys ordered faster. It was also determined that we will have signups at some point on the weekends during our all-star baseball and softball tournaments, when plenty of our Hartford families will be attending.

Regarding League of Miracles, Jerrod did not have much to report, but now that scheduling for the spring was completed, a schedule for this group was sent to Sandy. The schedule includes more than ten dates where the team can practice or play games at our fields, instead of having for them to scramble to find other available places to play, like what happened during the past season.

In new business, after the opening topic of the night, the board had a long discussion about future ways that our facility could be rented out using the proper channels. Discussion topics revolved around whether the school and city should be involved in any decision we would make (since it's their property and liability insurance) and how we would potentially handle liability. The board decided to bring that discussion up further at future meetings, but for right now, the park should only be used for the purpose of our athletes and school athletes.

Continuing in new business, the board discussed topics on the upcoming baseball / softball season, which begins in earnest next week. The order has been completed for baseballs and softballs, but like everything else, the supply chain is limited in what is available in stock. Jerrod was told by M.A.S.A. (the company we order balls through) that certain companies have said to not expect any new stock until the fall. In addition, additional chalk will need to be donated / ordered, as we still have a decent supply, but will need some in the coming weeks. Lastly, we will need to ensure we have enough adults / youth to umpire games this year, and try to ensure that some sort of veteran umpire or adult is with some of our younger umpires when they are on the field.

Next meeting will be May 18, 2022.

Motion to adjourn by Birmele, supported by Bachman. Motion approved 6-0.

Birmele adjourned the meeting at 9:30 PM.

Submitted by
Megan Mireles
Interlocal Board Secretary