

**BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE**  
**Mayor & Borough Council Meeting Minutes**  
**July 26, 2021**

Mayor Mary Jane Canose called this meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. remotely via Zoom. Present were Council Members John Donahue, Jeff Hammond, Matthew Marino, Jena McCredie, Chad McQueen, and Christine Zamarra. Also present were John Pidgeon, Borough Attorney, Tom Czerniecki, Administrator, and Anthony Suriano, Borough Clerk.

**STATEMENT OF PRESIDING OFFICER**

Notice of this meeting was provided to the Bernardsville News, Courier News and the Star Ledger, filed with the Municipal Clerk and posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board on June 21, 2021 and revised on July 14, 2021.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**PRESENTATIONS**

**Draft of Recreation Master Plan,** Mayor Canose gave some background on our recreation plan. She said we had started this process with an ad hoc committee to look at all our recreational facilities and open space to get an overview of what needed to be done. Then the committee made a recommendation that we should be using more of our open space money for development and the council put a referendum on the ballot in November of 2019. She said we all agreed that should this referendum pass, we wanted to have a plan in place as to how we would use that money in order to really be transparent with the public and also to get as much public input into what people wanted from our recreation facilities. She said we engaged the services of Brandstetter Carroll, who had done a number of recreation plans including Randolph and Morris Township. Mayor Canose said one of the key factors in doing this plan is collecting public input and commended Pat Hoagland of Brandstetter Carroll for dealing with collecting public input during a pandemic. She said he was very creative in finding ways to meet with all our different sports groups and all our committees. He also did a survey by mail, an online survey, an online MindMixer where people could talk about what they wanted to do, attended the Farmers' Market, met with the Recreation Steering Committee on Zoom, went to the fields to see teams playing, and went to the pool.

Pat Hoagland of Brandstetter Carroll did a presentation and discussion with the Mayor and Council about the draft Recreation and Open Space Master Plan. He said there are four phases to their planning process. The Evaluate Phase, the Engage Phase where they get public input to find out what residents want, the Envision Phase, and the Plan Phase where they get in the actual recommendations. He discussed goals and objectives. Goal one is Connectivity, Created and Sustained with Objective 1.1 Trails and Pathways, Objective 1.2 Social and Cultural Encounters, Objective 1.3 Marketing and Promotion. Goal two is Empowered and Healthy Lifestyles with Objective 2.1 Athletics, Objective 2.2 Active Living, Objective 2.3 Community Vitality. Goal three is Excellent Space, Accessible to All with Objective 3.1 Modernize Parks, Objective 3.2 Gathering Spaces, Objective 3.3 Sustainability. Goal four is Legacy of Remarkable Services

with Objective 4.1 Adaptability, Objective 4.2 Operations and Maintenance, Objective 4.3 Staff Development and Retention. He discussed improvements to Claremont Field, Peters' Park, Rose Bowl/Nervine Memorial Park, Evankow Tract, Polo Grounds, the Municipal Pool, 251 Claremont Road, Peters' Tract, Laurelwood/Round Top/Borough Springs, 271 Mine Brook Road, Morraine Crest, and Whitenack. He said the next steps are to review and incorporate any edits, finalize the plan, and adopt the master plan.

### **OPEN SESSION**

Mayor Canose opened the meeting to the public.

Christina Balas, Old Fort Road, thanked Mr. Hoagland and everyone who put in all their hard work into the Recreation Master Plan document. She said she really appreciates the concentration on accessibility as she has small children and this is important to her in terms of strollers and toddler parks. She said if things are made to be ADA compliant, they'll probably be more stroller friendly. She said she has a friend who lives in a different town that has a child with special needs, and we want to be welcoming to all, so as we are considering parks, there's a really great blueprint in Wayne, NJ for an all-inclusive playground. She said it would be wonderful for our community to have that offering as part of its planning. She said it would also be beneficial for grandparents and other elder caregivers to be able to interact.

Melissa Provost, Garibaldi Street, said there should be consideration and thought given to some kind of public space in our downtown area where our older kids can go to hang out with their friends. She said they only have Kings Plaza and our downtown area is sorely lacking for a place for older kids to hang out.

Steve Reynolds, Stevens Street, said the pool components are 60 years old and gave an example of the possibility of turning on the pool next spring and having all the underground components fail. He said we should really start looking at that as the pool being a key component of the town.

Mike Long, Crest Drive and member of the Recreation Steering Committee, said this has been a really good effort by Brandstetter Carroll as well as all the various component committees that provided input to this plan. He said he appreciates the focus on the Polo Grounds and feels it's been one of the prime assets that the town and the school community have and it has been underinvested for a long time. He said the idea of a path to link the pool and athletic fields in addition to doing the bare minimum of making it ADA accessible is critical. He said if we install a path, people will use it and it is a very beautiful sight. He said he questions whether the property at 271 Mine Brook Road is really feasible to do active recreation and he does not know whether there are some wetlands issues. In terms of funding he said we have a lot of different options but one of them is if we have \$400,000 per year coming in as an income stream through taxes and the referendum that we passed a couple years ago. He said that is definitely something

that should be looked at if we want to try and do things before we are all of an age when maybe we can't appreciate it, start moving out of town, or people won't want to move here because we don't move fast enough.

Melissa Provost, Garibaldi Street, asked Mr. Hoagland if he felt he got a large enough sample size given how many people actually live in town and the 512 number of responses sounds very small. She asked how he is confident that the input received from the community is reflective of what everybody wants and not just with the loudest and most involved people want. Mr. Hoagland said they did two different surveys. One Web and Handout Survey and a Statistically Valid Mail Survey and they were promoted in a variety of different ways. Mr. Hoagland said the Statistically Valid Survey went to a random sample of households whether they use parks or not because they wanted to hear from those people as well. He said they got about 310 returned and wanted at least 300, so he feels confident that's a good sample for a community of our size plus we got the stakeholder groups where you can get into more detail with some of the sports groups. He said he thinks we got a good number and the results are consistent with what we've seen all over the country.

Mike Long, Crest Drive, said people around town are having conversations about this topic and he knows many other interested people. He said sometimes it's easy to let cynicism get the better of us when we're trying to do big things and we get wrapped up in them and we want to complain about them as opposed to the things that we can do if we try hard to work together, compromise, and discuss. He said he was really more of speaking to a different group of people than necessarily the people who are on this call.

Heather Eick, Stone Fence Road, said after the last Recreation Committee meeting, they had discussed the 271 Mine Brook Road property extensively about fields and possibly putting a field there or having a community gathering space. She said it then was brought up that parking and safe walkability would be an issue, so she is surprised to see that now listed on the report as a prime spot for a community gathering space. Mr. Hoagland said one of those meetings they had two plans, one that showed a concept that had a soccer field on it just to see what would fit. He said the Steering Committee felt strongly that taking up that whole upper space with just one undersized field, not even a full-size field, wasn't a good use of that space. He said there's a larger need for community gathering spaces that we don't have in town and again, they looked at our other properties and based on the previous study that had been done on the shortage of fields, came to the same conclusion that the borough owned land we have just isn't appropriate. Ms. Eick said when it's stated the surveys are consistent with others that Brandstetter Carroll has done, is that versus other mail-in surveys. Mr. Hoagland said it is both and added that the Statistically Valid Mail Survey was consistent.

Mayor Canose closed the open session.

**CLOSED SESSION**

It was moved to adjourn to an executive session to consider Contract Negotiations and that the time when and circumstances under which the matter can be disclosed to the public is when it is finally resolved. The motion was seconded and approved with five yes votes.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05pm.

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