

Westgrove PACK Board Meeting 11/11/2020

In attendance: Liz Yap, Anne Street, Emma McAlary, Megan Kesling, Jeff Pandin, Hanna Beard, Mike Bober and Jonathan Amaya

Meeting started: 6:08pm

Agenda

1. Chair's Greeting - Our new chair Jonathan thanked everyone for allowing him to be part of the board.
2. Treasurer's Report - As of today, we have \$8,338.33 on hand. We shouldn't have any additional spending in the calendar year, unless we buy trees for the Eagle Scout Project (more on that below)

We came in substantially under budget.

So far, we have raised \$4,537.22 during our Fall Fundraising drive, which is 30% of our goal. We came to the conclusion that the Fall Fundraising drive will end when we meet our goal of \$15,000.

3. Old Business -

a. Review of Board Communications Norms -

Emma explained to the new board members that we implemented these communications norms last year. She read aloud the following:

1. Whenever possible, the business of the Board should be conducted during regularly scheduled, face-to-face monthly board meetings.
2. At the conclusion of each formal board meeting the secretary documents the agenda for the following meeting. The secretary will email that draft agenda seven (7) days prior to the next scheduled board meeting.
3. Board members wishing to propose new business to the agenda should email those proposals three (3) days before the scheduled board meeting with supporting documentation if necessary.
4. In cases of emergency, these norms can be bypassed, but that should only be done in cases where a decision must be made on a faster schedule.
5. The norm for communication outside of face-to-face meetings shall be email.
6. Board members should be given at least 24 hours to read and respond to emails.
7. The number of emails should be limited. The subject line should include a justification for the email (ie action item, informational, etc.)
8. Email about a new subject should get a new header and not be added to an existing chain.
9. The Chair shall be primary point of contact for the FCPA. The Chair shall provide copies of all emails sent to or received from the FCPA to the Vice Chair. This process also applies to

any board member who has formal or informal meetings with county officials regarding Westgrove Dog Park.

10. The board should speak with a single voice that reflects the VOTE of the board members per the by-laws and all votes will be documented in the minutes.

b. Mud/Drainage -

The problem of mud and water in the small end hasn't been completely solved. The work the County has done has helped a lot, but we still have a muddy mess. We acknowledge that we might have to spend some money to alleviate the problem. We hope that because the project is so substantial, the County will be willing to complete most of the work to solve the problem.

Anne and Johnathan will set up a meeting with Phil Hager. This is will be an opportunity for Johnathan to meet him for the first time and to discuss the next steps for mud abatement.

The board discussed the remaining issues of the area. We discuss how we might be hitting the limits of Phil's authority and we might be getting to the point where we should nudge it up the ladder to his boss. The next decision might be beyond his authority.

A board member asked if the County has a specific budget for our park and we discuss that the park budgets in for ALL the County parks. We are a minute fraction. We discussed that the Fairfax county park bond passed, but we are so small we don't get singled out.

We discussed how labor and material costs are different in that we might have to pay for the material, but the County could possibly provide labor. We have partnered with them many times like this.

We discussed if it would be helpful to have a written proposal from a company. We can have a written line-item report made to show the County exactly what needs to be done.

Our chair, Jonathan, says that his cousin works for a drainage company. She estimated the cost to be about \$30,000-40,000 dollars. Of course, the final number would depend on what company we chose. She told him that hiring someone a little further south in VA would cost us less.

Other info Johnathan's cousin gave: We will definitely need a French drain (perforated pipe) running through all of the wet areas to capture the humidity on top of the lawn and then in the lowest areas where the main puddles are, we will need some catch basins (aka drain boxes) so that they can capture all of the water that accumulates.

Afterwards, we will need to resurface the yard with new grass seed, because the lack of grass makes it easy for erosion to take place and that's how we end up with low areas and areas with no grass.

She explained that at her company they charge by linear foot of drainage system and reduce the cost as the feet increase. For example, if we need 4" diameter French drain her company charges \$35/linear foot. If we need 6" then her company charges \$30/linear foot. She has seen companies charge as low as \$22-25/linear foot.

She suggested that we call Premium Drainage and Erosion Solutions. The owner, Adrian, used to work for her company and then he opened his own company. He offers better prices than VM Drainage. She says that we should make sure he offers us a warranty of 5-years or more on whatever drainage system we end up choosing.

We divert our discussion to the topic of using our non-profit status to elicit sympathy and ask for better price from companies. We decide it doesn't hurt to ask.

Mike says we should try to solicit "in kind" contributions. These in theory would act as a charitable contribution.

We also discuss that if we do any advertising at the park the County would have to approve it. We have tended to stay away from that.

We discuss that the next step is to have another meeting with Phill and his boss. We need to find out what, if anything the County is going to do. We can ask Phil who he would like to come up with the plan—us/company or the County. If he gives us the go ahead, we can approach an outside company for an estimate. If we don't like what Phill says we can go to his boss.

c. Memorial Bricks -

We are planning a project to brick pave the two non-paved entrances to the park. We are looking to do the whole vestibule and 4-6ft into the park at each entrance. To do this we are going to do a Memorial Brick Fundraiser. Most of the details are not hashed-out yet, but we've looked into two companies. Polar Engraving and Brick Markers. Both companies are about the same price and offer many of the same things. However, Brick Markers uses a vitrifying process to turn the clay into glass. This process lasts a lot longer and requires little maintenance.

When researching Brick Markers and talking to their sales rep, Emma found out the following: The company offers free fonts and clip art. We provide them information and they can make us a free website for ordering and also make hard copy order forms. They will also put together a free three leaf brochure to advertise the fundraiser. They also help us come up with a brick layout design. They provide quantity discounts on both engraved and non-engraved bricks. The engraved price is around \$17.50 and the non-engraved is \$1.50-\$3.00. Again, both prices are subject to the quantity ordered.

We broach the subject of possibly offering our users a quantity discount too. For example, if we sell the bricks for \$100 each we could offer 2 bricks for \$75 each and so on. It was brought up that we might be able to sell more if we do that. No decision has been made yet.

No other decisions have been made because we have to determine the number of bricks that need to be installed. Our next step is to contact the landscapers to give us the area measurements and estimated labor price. After this, we will be able to figure out the quantity of bricks needed and start working out a timeline.

All other decisions will be made at the next meeting. Emma will share all information that the sale rep gave her with Jonathan and present it at the next meeting.

d. Eagle Scout Project -

We have a park user who is seeking to complete his Eagle Scout badge. To do this he needs to plan and oversee the execution of a project by March. He asked if he could do one at the park

and of course we said “yes”. Anne has given him three options. The first option would be to plant new trees where two of our trees have died. The second option is to plan a clean-out of a part of the east of the park where we have a tangled mess of invasive species. The third it to design and dig out doggy play tunnel with huge tires. This would probably require the most work and planning—of course we would help as he directed us. Anne has spoken to him twice and told him that he needs to write a proposal and present it to the board. We decided that we can do it through zoom to keep it safe. Or we can do it outside. We decided that if he picks the trees we can supply them. Our next steps are to wait for his proposal.

4. New Business

- a. Shutting off the South End Water Fixture - The new fixture is not weather proof. It will freeze when the temperatures drop if we don't turn it off. That being said we came up with a standard annual routine to shut off and drain the line that wouldn't be totally dependent on checking the weather. We discuss that the average start of frost is Nov 15. Based on this we decide that we should shut off the water off the weekend of Thanksgiving. If it is dire before that date, we can make adjustments. We will announce via Chair letter, on Facebook and Instagram and we will post it around the park.

We will then turn the water back on after the spring seeding.

- b. Fixing the plastic fence around the birch -

The stakes holding the protective fence are breaking and falling down, thus causing the fence to fall down. It does not look appealing and it is not protecting the tree. We discuss that it will take metal rods dug 4-6 feet into the earth and standing three feet up to do this.

We realized it might be hard to get the rods 4-6 feet down do due the stone composition of the earth. We'll have to play it by ear. We discuss the logistics further. Jonathan will go to the store and pick up the rods and try to get this project done this week. He is given a budget of under \$100.

- c. Lucky Dog -

The organizers said they had a blast at their last adoption event despite the rain. They would like to have another event in December. They are asking for either the 6th or 13th from 12-2pm. We decide that either day is fine because they will be in the small end and the large end will not be closed until the spring. That means our park users will still be able to use the park too. Johnathan will follow up.

- d. Leaking Faucet -

There is a leak in the small end water fixture. Jonathan has already sent Phil an email about it. Phil said the water fixture was rebuilt a week ago. However, it is still leaking. Phil said he will ask his plumbers if the fixture can be replaced with a new one. It wasn't new when they first installed it —it was something they found lying around in their supplies. Jonathan will follow-up.

- e. Fundraising Ideas -

Our new Membership and Fundraising Chair, Mike's personal background in political fundraising. He talked about some of the issues we face as a non-profit park. He said we need to think about how we motivate users to join as caretakers and find fundraising opportunities.

Mike asked questions about how we keep up with our Caretakers. Jeff explained what we have traditionally done. Our calendar year for fundraising starts on Oct 1. Caretakers are charged based on the date in which they signed up. For example, if they pay in August—they are caretakers until the next August. Mike asked if there is an annual renewal program. We explain that there isn't, but we aren't opposed to him establishing one. He proposes that we use a system that will allow us to do this. It would also help us track emails, etc. We do not have to do this on a spreadsheet anymore. He wants to automate as much of this part of the fundraising as possible. He says he will research different systems and come back to us with a proposal at the next meeting. He goes on to explain a few examples of what he would like to implement. Jeff says if there is something that involved an expense he would like to know before he puts together next year's budget. Mike said he can figure it out within a week. He explains that he doesn't want to take away Caretaker Saturdays, coin jars or anything else we have already been doing to raise money.

A few more questions are asked like —is it one company or one website that does it all? Yes, it would be and it doesn't take a person to "man" the terminal, so to speak. It gives a uniform place to populate info across an email list, it keeps track of the financials and it also does membership tracking. We can make it as robust or as bare as we want.

We talk about other companies that track things. For example, Anne likes that Chewy keeps track of when a dog passes and sends a card and bouquet.

We have to create more value for our members that is not tied to access to the park. We discuss other ideas like membership portals, partnering with companies for member discounts, etc. We also discuss that we can possibly to a boarding share on our website or on Facebook.

We discuss advertising on Facebook and how it becomes tricky because we don't want to endorse a particular thing and be liable for what happens. We go on a tangential conversation about the purpose of our Facebook page. We determine that the purpose is for community building and not advertising. People can make recommendations, post memes, etc. We discuss how we need to police who joins a little more closing by adding questions when users ask to join. We talk about some of the questions we can ask. Megan said she would google this and try to set it up.

To bring us back to membership and fundraising, Mike said he would also look into some sort of affinity program to incentivize being a Caretaker.

He will also come up with a message to kick off the fundraising year and a letter of solicitation. He will send us a draft so we can approve it as a board. He says if we have any idea or recommendations he will gladly listen.

We talk a bit about the Restaurant fundraising. We need more passive revenue generators. That being said, Mile also presented us with ideas for selling merchandise as a passive way of fundraising. He has looked in to a website called Cafe Press that allows us to upload our logo to different items. We do not have to come up with inventory or money up front. The items are made to order. We can sync it up with our site and it will direct users to purchase items directly from Cafe Press. They can order whatever items we choose to offer. We can choose what profit margin we want from each item. He has already begun setting that up.

Mike would also like to explore organizations that give annual grants to dog parks. We explain that we have done a few of those in the past—Pet Safe and Masten Booker Grants. However, we continue to miss the deadlines because we have no one keeping track of them. We do have documents from the past that Anne or Jeff can dredge up. We discuss how someone needs to keep track of the deadline and the rules.

Mike suggested we start thinking about themed giving opportunities a la giving Tuesday.

A tangential conversation begins about budget. Jeff asks that if we want to change the landscapers then he asked that we do it before he sets the budget for next year. Also, if we do change, we have to be respectful of the county agreement regarding turf management. Do we need to reassess our landscaping budget? We don't think so.

Mike and Liz start to discuss how they will work together graphically and strategically on the fundraising plan. We discuss how we might have an overarching style or brand for all of it. We need guide rails so it becomes a plugin type of situation.

e. Social Media/Communications Liaison -

Do we want someone to take care of this? Right now, we have no one who is in charge to of a cohesive strategy. This will help us get new caretakers. Without social media and a cohesive communication plan it is harder to sell ourselves.

We discuss if we want to bring someone else in to do this. We do have an empty at-large seat and we discuss that we will advertise that seat as social media/communications centered. We have board members that are willing to help, but we need a leader in that area.

Mike will commit to trying to find someone among existing contacts who has an affinity and interest.

We reiterate that no board position has to do their job alone.

Our last order of business is whether we will have a December Board meeting. We leave it on the table to see if we need to have an emergency board meeting on Zoom.

Johnathan moves to adjourn and Mike seconds it. We all agree.

Meeting ended at 7:54pm.