



Saint Ignace Area Recreation Advisory Committee
 Meeting Agenda *June 9th, 2021*
 6:00 PM Little Bear East & Zoom

1. **Call to Order** by Craig Therrian at 6:06 PM.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

3. **Roll Call- Voting Members** (*Need 6 for a Quorum*)

	Present		Present
Ed Paquin, St. Ignace Citizen at Large	<u>X</u>	Craig Therrian, Moran TWP Rep. (Chair)	<u>X</u>
Emily Fullerton, St. Ignace Citizen at Large	<u>X</u>	Jimmy Dekeyser, Visitors Bureau Rep.	___
Robert St. Louis, City Council Member	<u>X</u>	Tammy Shepard, SIHA Rep.	___
Connie Litzner, City Council Member	<u>X</u>	Bridgett Sorenson, Sault Tribe Rep. (Vice Chair)	___
Martha Sjogren, St. Ignace Area Schools Rep.	<u>X</u>	Darcy Long, City Manager	<u>X</u>
Merlin Doran, Moran Township Rep.	___	Morgan Mills, Recreation Director (No Vote)	<u>X</u>
		Hannah Tropiano, Events & Program Coordinator (No Vote)	<u>X</u>

4. **Corrections, Deletions or Additions to the Agenda** (Board & Staff Only)

5. **Approval of the May Minutes** by Martha Sjogren, seconded by Emily Fullerton

6. **New Business**

1. Little Bear Update

a. Recent Events & Meetings

i. City Meetings at LBE

1. **MM:** This is the third city meeting happening at Little Bear in a row. It's exciting to see people around again, and now that zoom is set up for this room we have the ability to use it for more diverse meetings, which is great.

ii. Animal Aid Garage Sale

1. **MM:** Last week we also had both the Highland Games and the Animal Aid Garage Sale. The garage sale seemed to go really well. Saturday was their busy day and Sunday was more of a trickle of people.

iii. Highland Games

1. **MM:** The Highland Games had a good group turn out. Unfortunately, it did rain, but they had shelter with seating available to the spectators.

EF: Who put on the event?

MS/MM: The Visitor's Bureau and Chamber of Commerce

MM: One thing that was brought to my attention was that there didn't seem to be many locals at the games. Flyers were probably sent out to the hotels but LBE for

example didn't receive one and we could have helped to spread the word further. But those who came did seem to really enjoy it.

iv. Cheerleading

1. **MM:** We've also closed out cheer. They started in the winter and tomorrow is their last practice of the year. It was another way to utilize the conference room space for recreation which was great.

MM: LMAS also hosted their final clinic here last week. They will go forward with giving vaccines in other ways (locations) because the number of people coming to these clinics have dwindled as of late.

b. Upcoming Events

i. Wrestling Camp

1. **MM:** Wrestling camp is coming up, which will be a full-facility rental. The charge for wrestling camp has increased since it started coming here a couple of years ago. RJ (leads the wrestling camp) knew that this increase was coming from when we had a conversation about it last year, but it was still a big change. RJ talked with the Visitor's Bureau—and was reached out to *by* them—and heard different things from them about payment than what we were told by the VB. In other places he has contracts, but here we don't have that because our rates have always been so low for him. He also asked about hotel deals but wasn't getting anything. Anything we can do in that regard?

EP: Unfortunately he contacted hotels really late, which may have been a covid-related decision, but hotels are filling up fast right now. We had to turn one group away because there was no room. People are coming back and we can sell those rooms for full price right now.

MS: What was the rate? What is it now?

MM: He was severely undercharged. \$3,000 for 8 days of the full facility. For 1 day, a full-facility rental is \$2,000. Sometimes with recreation we have an agreement (like we have with cheer), so maybe in the beginning that was the case. But RJ has been doing this camp for a long time at LBE now and it has been doing really well here, so we can't keep charging that rate.

It was going up to \$4,500 for the camp at some point in the past. Instead of \$16,000 for the full rental time, I was going to charge \$8,000. If he takes care of all the cleaning we'll do \$6,500.

CT: Is cleaning a liability if someone else does it? Bathrooms, fluids...?

MM: He puts on the whole camp himself, so it would be cleaning up after himself. The Visitor's Bureau told us that RJ would do all the cleaning if we cut the price. He seemed unknowledgeable of that conversation but did say that he would think about it.

EF: How many kids attend this camp?

MM: Around 300 people per camp this year.

CL: And they get the full facility for the entirety of the camp?

MM: Yes, with the exception of the fitness center. We do allow coaches to come and use it if they would like to, but otherwise it remains a separate entity.

EP: The original rate was too low and we have talked about raising the price before in the past. Each kid has to pay to come to camp, so he has the money.

MM: RJ knew the price was originally way under and knew it was going up, and I am okay with meeting him in the middle. He is coming either way and is going to clarify with the Visitor's Bureau.

MS: What would MM like from us?

MM: I just wanted you to know that wrestling camp is happening and that there will be a change in the charge. I would also like to know that I have the support of the board when it comes to making a decision on the financial-side of things. I have to commit to changes if we want things to improve at our facility.

MS: I think your approach is appropriate and have my support. The rates are fair—it is a big increase from before, but is still half-price of the normal rental charge.

MM: Thank you. If this is our amount we should stay at this price for a couple of years. I do want to be fair to them and see their camp succeed.

CT: It is a 250% increase, which is a large increase. But now after listening to it, it seems very fair. All these years that we didn't raise it he did save money.

CL: I agree. We have talked with Teryn and MM about this in the past. Going forward MM should send out a letter when we raise our rates so that everyone has a proper heads-up and have time to adjust in the future.

RS: That was the problem this year. He didn't know until late if he could even have the camp.

EF: I think you're being extra generous. Why is the Visitor's Bureau involved?

EP: The Visitor's Bureau already gives money to this place (LBE) to do stuff like that.

MM: The Visitor's Bureau gives money towards ice and hockey, and whatever is left goes towards events. I think we need a new agreement with them so everyone is on the same page.

EP: They should have a document from when Scott was here.

DL: I'll look for it in the office and send it to Morgan.

MM: I just want it made clear where the money is going and how they can use the facility based on the donation.

RS: This is a city facility. No matter who puts on the events, the city should support the facility. At the end of this camp are you going to let him know that this is the set-price for next year, or what that price will be?

MM: I will make sure that he knows.

EF: We have a set rate and have spent a lot of time in previous conversations setting those rates and making sure that they're fair. So why does he get a discount now compared to people in our community who rent the facility?

MM: It makes it hard if someone has been given a donation previously. Obviously we do have a form for non-profits and people who want to put in a donation request to help cover costs, but if people don't need it then we are going to charge full price.

EP: RJ is very respectful, so I'm sure if we let him know ahead of time of prices he would probably be able to prepare better and be okay with it.

CT: Can he hire one of the LBE staff to clean the bathrooms for him?

MM: Cleaning has always been included in our rentals.

ii. Car Show

1. **MM:** Immediately following the wrestling camp will be the car show using our parking lot.

iii. Weddings

1. **MM:** In July, a lot of weekends are filled with weddings. They can use either the conference room or the arena now that things are opening up, which is great.

c. Little Bear Softball Fields

- i. **MM:** When do they become our responsibility/do they become ours? Right now they are still under the 'project period'. Is there a timeline for when it will become ours or when the budget will be added to ours or what that will look like?

DL: When the grant from DNR is closed-out and whenever the grass is done, it should move to you. Is there a plan in place to move the fields over?

CL: Since this is a city project, the DDA allowed Scott to be the Project Manager. So it is the city's decision.

MM: Is there going to be a budget of any cushion coming in once they're transferred to us?

DL: The first year there will be costs that you will have to figure out before you can properly add it (such as maintenance) into your budget.

CL: Where is funding coming from going forward?

EF: Who takes responsibility for it right now?

MM: I would assume since it's on our property we would take ownership, but I don't want to assume since the DDA has done a lot of this so far. I'm concerned about budgeting for maintaining the fields. I'm grateful for having them, but concerned about taking them on with so much still unknown.

CT: Girls softball tournaments will help pay for it, but probably not adult league.

CL: But who puts on the tournaments? What do we foresee with costs? Will we rent them out, or just use them?

EF: We have been asking the same questions about these fields from the beginning of the project and no one has been able to answer them. Now that the fields are almost done we still have the same questions and still no answers—who do we go to for answers?

EF: Regarding money: We are still taking our mill out of the general coffers, is that correct?

CL: Yes.

EF: Can we ask for half a mill for recreation on top of what we previously asked for?

CL: We need to get that to the voters, but it probably won't happen before November. In a practical sense we need to come up with a budget to both run this place and run recreation. So if a millage could run this place it would probably benefit this space. MM really needs to know what the expenses are and what is needed. I know the general fund it *tight*. So if we can get a mill and save on the general fund—everyone will benefit.

EP: The ice arena is not recreation—the hockey association pays to use it. Only the fitness center and fields count as rec. So we have to be careful not to overlap recreation funding with LBE Center.

EF: I don't want to see LBE suck all of the money out of recreation just because the facility takes so much money to maintain it. Especially with discounts happening (like wrestling). Recreation always suffers.

DL: I know of one association that would maintain the grounds (of their fields) and then volunteers would run concessions. Then that money would go back into the fields because it was all volunteer-led. Advertising was also done along the fencing.

MM: Advertising is something we definitely want to do next year. Income from potential tournaments is another avenue, but needs to be looked into further first. I recognize that it's the Little Bear side that is the money-maker and that recreation often costs more than it makes. So we have to recognize and supplement recreation.

DL: If we bring a tournament in, those people are travelling so you can charge. But we will probably have to rely on volunteers and do some creative fundraising.

CL: Can MM create a list so we can start looking at these things?

MM: Ok.

EP: I have a question regarding Moran Township. I read in the paper that you guys donated \$20,000 in exchange for five exclusive days (at the LBE Park).

CT: Yes.

EP: Was it a donation?

CT: We did what everyone else did (Lions Club, Kiwanis) when they asked us for money. They asked us for \$5,000 and we gave \$10,000. Later on as it was going, they needed more money so I went to the board—before I was on the board—and asked for an additional \$10,000. This gave a total of \$20,000 for recreation.

EP: What about the 5 days of exclusive use? If you're donating the money, donating means that you don't get anything in return.

CT: The problem with that, for us as a township, is that it is illegal. A government entity cannot give money to another government entity without getting something back. The five day exclusive use was just a way for us to comply with the auditors and be able to give to recreation.

EP: Where are we on the trail behind the fields?

MM: I will have to get back to you. Last month there was definitely more trail, but it didn't have the walkway down yet and the deck (or dock) hasn't been done.

EP: Is there anything that we can do to help get it done? I know volunteers and equipment are needed but hard to get right now.

CT: Scott is working on getting the equipment.

CL: Will it be done this year?

MM: Not by the end of this season, no.

EP: Scott should probably give us an update.

MM: I agree. I'll invite him to our next meeting.

MM: Last thing: In July we have a circus coming on the 11th and 12th. If anyone would like to help us sell tickets, we would greatly appreciate it. We get approximately 25% of the proceeds from tickets sold. I think the circus will be great for the community. It will be outdoors and a lot of fun for families, something different for sure.

2. Recreation

a. Summer Sports

i. Little League & enforcing deadlines

1. **MM:** We started little league at the end of May and it goes to the end of June. We have been learning a lot—from chalking the fields to dealing with parents. We're trying to get better with registration form deadlines and enforcing them, but that didn't go over well with parents so we opened registration back up. Next year we want to stick to registration deadlines. It helps us be better organized and have a more accurate roster for our coaches and kids.

EF: I recommend splitting up sport registrations throughout the summer for each sport when it falls in the summer. It's hard to know what summer's always going to look like so a little leeway for parents is nice. I do understand that you need to move forward with rec. programs though.

CL: Suggestion: Having a deadline for registration and then a late fee for 2 weeks after that first "soft" deadline, then after that a hard stop.

EP: It's hard when it's about the kids because it's not their fault. If their parents fail to make the deadline, why should we punish the kids? It's a hard decision, especially when a lot of sign-up is done by word of mouth through the kids once the season has already started. We want kids to be able to play and to have playing time.

HT: And that's one of our frustrations when we continually have kids sign up throughout the season. One of our teams has 17 kids on it, which is almost enough for two full teams, and the reason we have so many is because we're getting two kids sign up one week, then two more the next and so on since there's no deadline. When you have 17 kids on one team how can we give them all adequate playing time, especially when we don't have enough coaches to support more than one team?

MM: And this extends even to T-Ball. We're almost maxed out with all of our teams. We almost added another team at the beginning of the season but had a couple kids pull so we didn't. And since then we've had four or five kids add and so now with numbers we should probably have another team, but it's too late.

RS: Maybe once we get the new website online and people start checking that out we can put sports deadlines on it.

ii. T-shirt Sponsorships

1. **MM:** We were able to get enough sponsors for shirts. T-Ball will not get theirs until the end of the season because shirts are about one month behind. But I'm looking forward to seeing them worn around town. We should get our T-Ball and basketball shirts by the end of June.

iii. Upcoming sports

1. **MM:** Basketball and tennis will start the week of the 21st. Kaley is going to be our tennis coach. Soccer will begin the 1st of July and flag football in August.
EP: The high school starts their basketball season next week so you might want to read when their practices are and then adjust your hours. You can find it in the newspaper.

b. Lawn & Field Care

- i. **MM:** We do have a contractor for our fields. We have received complaints about the school fields and how they are up-kept. Other people are under the impression that all aspects of field maintenance—not just mowing—are our responsibility (i.e., dragging, mound upkeep/replacement, etc.). I just want to clarify what is and isn't our responsibility because I don't want to overstep, but I also don't want to not take care of the fields if it's expected of us.
EP: As far as I know from my years in recreation is that you are responsible for the infield.
CL: What actually needs to be done on the LBE fields still? Shouldn't we work on those first?
MM: The outfield grass still needs to be done and the infields need to be dragged.
EF: There is such a thing as a portable mound, Mark used to have one.
MM: Next year we can make sure the baseball field is more ready for little league (different field dimensions and mound placements for different divisions) now that we know it's our responsibility.

3. How are we holding up?

a. Communication

- i. **MM:** Last meeting a lot came up. I wanted to revisit one of the points about communication. Sometimes I don't know what information you need or want to know and how much is extra that you don't need. There have been times when you guys have been really helpful, but there have been other times that I felt people on the board have been against me. Lately people have been harsher with their opinions and in part that could be due to pandemic stress, but there have been times that I have felt unsupported by the board.
CL: I understand. We can come here and try to have a productive conversation with you and bounce around ideas rather than demanding "why? why? why?"
MM: Yeah, and it's not necessarily all coming from the board but from parents and other community members as well. I feel a bit burnt out from the negativity and lack of respect towards me. All in all I'm disappointed with the lack of trust and support that I feel I have received from the board and I want to feel that I can come to you for advice, but there are times that it is really hard. I'm excited to see the facilities and recreation grow but I would also like people to come to me with concerns in a respectful way. It has been a rough transition and I just want to know that I have your support and that you have my back when I do have to make these hard decisions and know that you can trust me, too.
CL: I feel for you and I'm sorry if I ever came across as one of those people. I'm sorry if we

let you down as a board, but we will try to do better.

RS/EP: We hear you and thank you for sharing.

EF: I've heard from others that parents especially can be particularly opinionated, so try not to take it too personally against you. Some of the comments are, unfortunately, part of the job. As for your first question, I want to know about recreation. The LBE information doesn't interest me. I just want to know what you're doing recreation-wise and how we can support you. Maybe an email-blast during off weeks?

EP: Let me know when you go to the baseball field next to see what needs to be done.

MM: I will.

b. Our approach to bettering current processes

i. Little League Board & ways we can improve moving forward

1. **MM:** Most Little League teams have a board of directors for Little League, which sounds like a lot except that Little League is a big deal and a lot of people want to have input as to how it should be run. It would be helpful for us to have a board to help with scheduling needs, give field input, or just be extra hands for those who want to be more involved. Maybe January of next year we could get a small board together for Little League.

CL: I think that's a good idea going forward. How many people are you thinking to have on the board?

MM: I don't know how many is normal, but probably just a few.

EP: I think it's a great idea, too. Are you planning on being sanctioned next year?

MM: Yes. We weren't chartered this year because we were unsure of division boundaries because we had kids from Cedarville and Hessel join our teams. But we now know that it is allowed for us to have them join us since they don't have their own Little League teams.

7. Public Comment

8. Next Meeting Date –August 11 @ **6:00 pm (Any excused absences for next meeting?)**

9. Motion to adjourn by Emily Fullerton, seconded by Craig Therrian, at 8:09 PM.

10. NOTE: A full Zoom audio recording of the meeting can be accessed by emailing the Assistant to the City Manager, Stephanie Baar, at sbaar@cityofstignace.com

PLEASE CONTACT OFFICE 24 HRS IN ADVANCE IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND