

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Tenafly Environmental Commission
Municipal Center
September 19, 2013**

Present

Joe Lavin, Jeff Toonkel, Carole Hodges, Nina Seiden, Jon Warms, David Cavilla, John Purdy, Jeff Miller & Jim Coyle.

Guests

Mayor Peter Rustin
Bruce Baker
Marc Feldman
Sandra Divack Moss
Edee Kornfeld

Joe Lavin called the meeting to order at 7.58 p.m.

Review of July Minutes

July minutes were reviewed and accepted with minor changes. Motion to accept by Jeff Toonkel and seconded by Jim Coyle. The motion to accept was carried with all in favor.

There were no minutes for August as there was no quorum

Open Space Trust Fund

Jeff Miller asked whether we had planned to write a letter to the Mayor and Council at the July or August meeting discussing our concern over the use of Open Space Trust Funds (OSTF) for lighting or artificial turf at Geisinger Field. Joe Lavin recommended any concerns of the Tenafly Environmental Commission be directed through Jon Warms, the Council Liaison. Mayor Rustin reinforced that he too prefers the TEC send written letters via the Liaison so they can be read and entered into the minutes of the M&C.

Jeff noted concern that the Council meeting to discuss the Open Space Fund and Geisinger Field (Tenafly High School field) is planned for September 24th, only one week after the TEC meeting. He expressed concern that Mayor Rustin should have met with the TEC well in advance and that this issue did not come to light sooner. Mayor Rustin explained the issue of the potential lighting/artificial turfing of the field had been made public months prior.

Each of the TEC members spoke before the Mayor and expressed their opinion on the matter of using OSTF for improvements to Geisinger Field:

Jim Coyle spoke first and noted he was troubled over why it took so long for the TEC to find out about the proposed use of OSTF on Board of Education Property. Jim was concerned the fund was already relatively small and that the use of the money on artificial turf was not a wise environmental decision.

Mayor Rustin explained the OSTF can be used for artificial turfing of the field, but could not be used to replace existing artificial turf.

John Purdy expressed concern that a plan should have been in place to review properties prior to the use of any of the funds.

Mayor Rustin acknowledged he was actively involved in writing the original plan in 2005. It had the original goal of being used to purchase open land for preservation and a secondary goal of funding recreational use of existing land. He added the artificial turf is a better choice than the natural grass in the long term and reduced runoff of fertilizers.

Jeff Miller disagreed that the use of artificial plastic turf could be considered "green". He also raised the issue that the land was not municipal property but belonged to the Board of Education (BOE). Jeff also added the M&C has done little review of what other property may be for sale or may be on the market in the future.

David Cavilla raised the issue that well managed grass can mitigate the runoff of nutrients especially if the field is treated with organic applications. He also noted concern that no consideration had been made of chemical leaching from the plastic artificial turf which could include Bisphenol and Pthalates.

Nina Seiden was concerned residents may feel they were duped and did not have enough information presented about the use of the money

Carole Hodges agreed with Nina and said she was listening to all sides in the matter.

Jon Warm's noted that even with the current reserves in the OSTF there would not likely be enough to cover the purchase of an expensive property in Tenafly. He also explained that the OSTF funds are already in place having been paid in over the last few years. This would allow the improvements to be made without raising additional taxes.

Jeff Miller asked if any sharing agreement had been made between the BOE and M&C to use the field. Mayor Rustin said they would have an agreement with the BOE.

Joe Lavin noted the irony that OSTF money would be used to install plastic turf rather than live grass on open space. He would prefer the money be used for the original purpose of preserving open space.

Guest and former TEC Chairperson Sandra Divack Moss spoke before the committee about how the OSTF monies should not have been put on hold but should have been allowed to grow. She explained how she was involved in the original development of the OSTF and was clear that its main purpose was to preserve open space.

Jim Coyle asked if the TEC would vote to approve and send to the M&C the letter written by Jeff Miller.

Jon Warms noted the letter may not be on point as the Borough Attorney has already reviewed the OSTF and determined the money could be used for lighting or turf.

Discussion was had by the TEC on the content of the letter and potential changes.

A simplified letter was drafted to say:

We the Tenaflly Environmental Commission believe the Open Space Trust Fund monies should be used for acquisition of land for recreation and conservation purposes and not for improvements at Geisinger Field.

A motion to accept was made by Jim Purdy and seconded by Jeff Toonkel. All voted in favor with one abstention (Warms).

Guest s

Edee Kornfeld spoke before the TEC about tree loss at the Lost Brook Preserve. She expressed concern that the Tenaflly Nature Center proposal to build a new center could involve removal of many trees.

Planning Board

Jeff Toonkel asked whether we want to consider asking developers to plant more trees when developing in commercial areas of Tenaflly, especially the northern part of town.

Other Business

Joe Lavin mentioned ANJEC is having an upcoming Annual Environmental Conference one October 19 from 9AM-4.30PM

Meeting was adjourned at 10.43 PM

Respectfully submitted by David Cavilla