



**City of Newport
City Council Workshop Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2016**

1. ROLL CALL

Council Present – Tim Geraghty; Tom Ingemann; Bill Sumner; Dan Lund

Council Absent – Tracy Rahm

Staff Present – Deb Hill, City Administrator; Bruce Hanson, Supt. of Public Works; Renee Eisenbeisz, Assistant to the City Administrator; Fritz Knaak, City Attorney; Larry Osterman, Sergeant; Jon Herdegen, City Engineer;

Staff Absent – Steve Wiley, Fire Chief;

2. DISCUSSION REGARDING BASEBALL FIELD RESERVATIONS

Steve Bern – I’ve been a resident of Newport since around 2002. I’ve got 3 young boys ages 10, 7, and 4. It’s bothered me for years that Loveland Park is not used and sports have gone over to Woodbury. East Ridge athletics now fully encompasses Newport so we’re drawn into East Ridge and Woodbury. It’s bothered me that we have this beautiful Loveland Field facility and it lies fallow while we can’t even get fields for some of my kids to play in Woodbury. So anyway, I started making calls and one thing lead to another and the Newport Athletic Association has a long history. It started in 1976, it has been defunct for years so I ended up taking that over. I gathered all the funds and reestablished its legal status but the bottom line is that I’d like to see those parks used. I’ve done a lot of searching around and thinking about what’s the positioning of the Newport Athletic Association. Historically, the association has had a deep hand in allocating the fields for its own use and I think actually stepped beyond that. Once upon a time Newport fielded its own teams and shipped them around to Maplewood, Oakdale and those days are gone. A lot has changed with Woodbury growing up just a few minutes away but that’s all kind of a long story. The short story is that I’ve been working to get East Ridge, which draw kids from Newport, to start using the fields. They have a desperate need for fields and I’ve been working with Dan, Deb, and Bruce to figure out how to get these fields going and Bruce is a part of our initial discussions. He was able to replace all the fencing out at Loveland and I’ve got teams that are interested in using the fields this year. The question that I raised to Deb though was that as a city, we need an allocation process for the fields. It can be simple and I’m happy to “grease the skids” on working with the athletic associations to use our beautiful facilities but we just need a permitting process and I suspect eventually we’ll need formal policies in terms of how we allocate fields because it’s possible that demand will exceed supply. That’s not true right now but I suspect it might be because we happen to have a very nice 90 foot field out at Loveland and 90 foot fields are in short supply in East Ridge Athletic Association. I think the topic of the meeting here which was the particular allocation of the fields. Woodbury has a very thick policy for doing these things and in talking to Woodbury they’re most contentious issue at City Hall every time it comes up is how they allocate fields with this particular policy. We don’t need anything like that particularly nothing for 2016. I think though that it’s not within the scope of the athletic association to issue permits for the fields. As I look at my own succession planning for the athletic association I’m not sure if it’s even going to exist. So what I’m trying to do is get a sustainable model in place. I’ve taken control of all the funding for the athletic association which was in disarray. All the funding is stable, it’s not going

anywhere. I'm going to collaborate with Bruce to get things in a particular state to get our facilities used and ultimately I'd like to have a little league program that extends over to Newport Elementary but that's probably a 2017 goal. Anyway, that's a bit of who I am and why I'm here and I think the main issue before this assembly is that we need a simple process where somebody can apply for a field and get a permit for the season.

Admin. Hill – You've already spoken with the East Ridge group though?

Steve Bern – Yeah.

Admin. Hill – They've been wanting to use our 90 foot field I believe that is.

Steve Bern – Yeah there's a rec. softball league that wants to use the 6 foot at Loveland and the East Ridge Athletic Association boys travelling squad wants to use the 90 foot.

Councilman Ingemann – What size is that one down by Pioneer?

Mayor Geraghty – It's the tee ball one.

Councilman Ingemann – We've still got a batting cage up at Loveland right?

Mayor Geraghty – So we don't have any specific demand anyway right?

Mayor Geraghty – Nobody uses it right?

Steve Bern – People sneak on there, it's open.

Mayor Geraghty – I don't know if anybody tries to get a game together.....

Admin. Hill – It was granted that we'd love to see those fields used.

Mayor Geraghty – I think this is something you could take over. I'm not sure if you need any action from us just to administratively work with them. I'm not sure if they have a master calendar in Woodbury or a scheduling calendar that they could put the fields on there.

Councilman Lund - I thought we wanted to be careful about giving Woodbury control of our fields. I think all we really need is a form and a priority.

Admin. Hill – We need to get through this year. When we had our meeting with Woodbury.....they have all their programs setup. Newport kids can sign up, we could send out fliers for them to sign up for all the park and rec. programs they have and it's quite extensive from what I understand. I asked if they needed any space through this year and they said "no" they're all scheduled out for this year. When Steve was talking about getting the East Ridge teams onto the Loveland fields.....to see them being used is wonderful but maybe we could use the time in between to talk about some sort of agreement with Woodbury for a couple of our fields to see those used too.

Councilman Lund – I think we've got to backup a second. There's a lot of different organizations here and it's very easy to get confused. There's the Woodbury Park and Rec. which is for kids. That's not associated with the schools program that Woodbury puts on. They're using a very small number of the fields compared to the rest of the program although they probably use a lot of soccer fields. There's also the Woodbury Athletic Association which is separate from the schools and runs most of the programming within all of Woodbury. Then there's the East Ridge Athletic Association which doesn't have general programming just travel teams. So there's a lot of different organizations and right now East Ridge is the one that's kind of losing out on the available space in Woodbury.

Councilman Ingemann – We also want to keep in mind that our kids can go play in the Cottage Grove Athletic Association as well.

Councilman Lund – One of the things Steve has brought up is that now that we have the new school boundaries, all the Newport kids are going to be going to East Ridge and because of that, the kids who are young that are going to end up at East Ridge live in Woodbury by and large. So I think it probably makes sense to pair with Woodbury so that those kids can play with each other before they go on to play competitively in High School together.

Councilman Sumner – Is Woodbury East Ridge?

Councilman Lund – Well.....because East Ridge is only a travel program, the Woodbury Athletic Association is really a feeder for the traveling program at East Ridge. East Ridge is very small compared to the Woodbury one.

Councilman Ingemann – We've got kids playing baseball in Cottage Grove.

Councilman Lund – Yeah we've got kids playing everywhere so we can do a little bit to make it easier for them to go to one way or another.

Councilman Ingemann – What grade levels is it in East Ridge?

Steve Bern – So all of what Dan is talking about is baseball. East Ridge has football programs that are open.

Mayor Geraghty - Does it have a full spectrum of ages?

Steve Bern – It starts at third and fourth grade and goes on up to....for football and travel baseball.

Councilman Lund – So why I wanted to make that clarification is because when we start talking about Woodbury...Woodbury is completely separate from the Woodbury Athletic Association, it's not the same people. Woodbury Athletic Association schedules their fields through Woodbury the city but the city is not in charge of the program.

Councilman Sumner – So who do you propose that we be linking up with?

Councilman Lund – So one of the things that Steve is asking for is to have a priority of who can reserve our fields. Bruce has also brought up that we have people up there 6 hours a night so we probably want to limit the amount of time they can be reserved. We also need a process for people to turn in an application and any requirements they need.

Steve Bern – I don't think that right now we should link up with anybody I actually think the contrary because in 2016 we need to work and figure stuff out. There are offers on the table, for example, Woodbury has suggested that they could actually manage allocation of our fields and if they could put Woodbury teams on them and increase demand on our fields they could actually do some of the maintenance on them as well. I think that we're getting ahead of ourselves and for 2016 we should just get our kids out there and have a simple allocation process and see how it works. So there's no linking up yet. I do think that we should embrace the fact that we are a part of East Ridge. Interestingly, I asked why doesn't East Ridge use Newport's fields? Newport is the only community that is fully within the boundaries of East Ridge and completely absent from any interaction with them. I guess there's a long history when East Ridge reached out to the Newport Athletic Association back when it was being formed in 2008 and Newport Athletic Association basically said, "we want nothing to do with you". Those years

are behind us though and now it's a different perspective. I know now that the woman that was leading the Athletic Association was from Cottage Grove, who knows the politics that went into the decision.

Admin. Hill – Renee and I spoke today and we'd gotten a policy from Woodbury on how they choose who gets the fields first. First, we would request that it be a recognized youth organization for Newport residents or those that attend 833 which would be East Ridge. There'd be some requirements for liability insurance because usually the organized teams are covered. Obviously we do have our own insurance for anything that happens in our parks but this is more of a preventative type thing. Participation would be 90% of kids in the South Washington County School District.

Asst. to the Administrator Eisenbeisz – I don't think so.....and that's just if the Council wants to create a formal policy for the city to reserve the fields or if it wants the athletic association, who has been responsible for it since they formed in the 70s.

Admin. Hill – The second priority would be youth and adult Newport resident groups. We'd start with the youth and then third would be non-resident groups so that'd be the hierarchy of who could be first come first serve. It could also be used for camps and clinics too because we've got Bailey and the trails up at Loveland and the tennis courts and stuff. We would like to see them used.

Councilman Lund – Do we need a formal process or would it be okay to have an application process and then have requirements? Staff and Bruce could recommend what an appropriate use is and say that "these are the ones we should do this year" and do that with the idea that we're not trying to fill up every night.

Mayor Geraghty – No I would rather have a casual policy this first year and it might be something that the Park Board might get involved with. This year I think it could be worked out between you and Bruce and staff.

Steve Bern – I agree totally. On the website there should be a button that allows you to email somebody, just a very informal process and a question for Deb, what information do we need from here? I think that fields should be allocated from April through the end of July for seasonal use and you also have a process if somebody wants to rent facilities on a Saturday afternoon or something or maybe don't I don't know.

Councilman Lund – We already have that process.

Admin. Hill – I'm trying not to have a lot of work for staff because this used to be done by the athletic association and scheduling fields....now that we're on the shortened end now too. We've already committed the Loveland Fields for certain days of the week and extended the opportunity for them to have those.

Steve Bern – First of all, this can't live with the Newport Athletic Association, it's going to go exactly the same way, it's a closed process and nobody knows how the priority is set. It's just not how it should be done. Can I do it? Yes I can, for the first year it doesn't matter but this is kind of quintessential city's responsibility like issuing a permit. So I've made it very clear that I'm working with the city but they will have to make some sort of application form at least to the city and a permit will be issued.

Mayor Geraghty – Thinking long-term and structurally, I think the message should be that we want our kids to participate and go in that direction and get whatever information we get out to kids to promote that. Also, would they allow Newport residents on the board so that we have representation?

Steve Bern – For East Ridge that's definitely the case. For Woodbury I'm not sure.

Mayor Geraghty – But if they want our kids and our facilities.....

Councilman Lund – We could change the priority that way.

Steve Bern – But right now it's East Ridge so it's totally consistent. I think the issue is when you start going a bit further down into the main pool....how do you allocated between Woodbury or Cottage Grove?

Admin. Hill – The slippery slope here is the front office becoming the Parks and Rec. Dept.

Councilman Lund – All we have to do is reserve the fields once a year. You get a stack of permits and a deadline.

Admin. Hill – If it was that clean you'd be doing it.

Councilman Lund – The Newport Athletic Association was dead and buried and Steve pulled it out of the ground so if we want this to last, we have to do it ourselves.

Steve Bern – I think this is a half hour a year or a couple hours.

Councilman Lund – We do dog permits, this is going to be less than dog permits. Turning in an application to reserve a field will be no longer than a dog permit. With a dog permit you have to check the rabies vaccine, here they can show insurance and say they have insurance.

Mayor Geraghty – It's almost got to be set once a year right?

Councilman Lund – Yeah only once a year, there can be a single deadline.

Asst. to the Admin Eisenbeisz – Part of the Woodbury policy that was in the packet said that applications were due by November 15. It will take time to reserve so that's part of what the Council needs to discuss as well as creating a policy on the priorities, who it goes to first and when the applications will be due.

Mayor Geraghty – I would think you'd set it up in the spring. February, March, April. The other question is could the Park Board do it?

Councilman Lund – Yeah I think that's a great idea. Then we don't have to spend our time figuring out what the structure needs to look like, the Parks Board can do it. We don't need to have Steve sit through all of that.

Steve Bern – Well I want to make sure that it's done....I'm trying to get teams out there this year. Is there a way we could figure out what information they need, for example, requiring that they have insurance with names for a beneficiary.

Admin. Hill – I'm sure they have insurance forms that they have to present to other fields. We can have a checklist of things they need to have. For the two groups, they'll need to go through the council and maybe the park board.

Councilman Lund – For this year we can just do the two right? If we need a formal process we can make the parks board work on it.

Admin. Hill – That would make it the simplest to just have these two.

Steve Bern – We'll know a lot more at the end of the season.

Admin. Hill – Yeah because we're plowing new field again here.

Steve Bern – What I'd love to say is that we "have a basic process" and they need to fill out this form. I'm asking if you can define a skeleton process that's as simple as possible and then I'll have these people jump through that hoop. Then they get a permit and it can be as simple as an email. Something from the city that says " you can use this these nights of the week until the end of July".

Admin. Hill – The five things that we highlighted here is that they would have to have a written description of their program including ages so if we just define that. They should have liability insurance that has a statutory limit of \$1.5 million for each occurrence and \$2 million for general aggregate. I'm sure that's pretty classic. Also that the organization defend the city on any claims and that they must be from a surrounding area. The last is that at least 90% of their people must be in the South Washington County School District.

Councilman Lund – That sounds great.

Spt. Hansen – Is there anything on there that in the schedule determines whether it's a game or a practice if they're using it? They'll have to submit a schedule to us for maintenance.

Steve Bern – I told them that you're going to scrape it twice a week.

Spt. Hansen – Okay. In the past we've maintained it on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Admin. Hill – The schedule will be from April to the middle of July?

Steve Bern – Yeah.

Admin. Hill – Because if they have some empty times out...if somebody calls to see if they can have the field.

Steve Bern – That whole insurance requirement thing....I'm mixed on that. I think that for athletic associations you need it but as a general requirement I'm always so-so because you get these smaller organizations. I think it would be nice to open our fields to them like we used to. If a club needs a place to play a tournament on a Saturday.

Admin. Hill – These kids won't be there on the weekends as a whole.

Steve Bern – I believe that's correct.

Mayor Geraghty – Do you want them to play tournaments?

Steve Bern – I want them to. We're working on it. It's a nice 90 foot field, I'd like to get lights out there someday.

Admin. Hill – Let's start with the two groups before we have the bar league come in and ask for a field.

Councilman Lund – We have a permit process for that already.

Asst. to the Administrator Eisenbeisz – No we don't, just the pavilion. The fields have always been through the athletic association.

Councilman Lund – The athletic association died.

Steve Bern – In 2006 or 2007 I emailed the athletic association asking if I could use the batting cages. I never got a response back. The system is opaque and we have to get away from that and make this sustainable and simple. I'm here to be a liaison between the athletic associations that want to use this and want to keep open communication. There's not going to be a problem I don't think. There might be in a couple years when there's more demand.

Admin. Hill – I'm hearing from Council that he can contact the two organizations then?

Mayor Geraghty – Yeah the message is that we want to work with them.

Councilman Lund – Could you have them email you and you reply back with a short list of thing you'd like to see? Just close it off to just those two this year and let the parks board come up with a formal process. We can have them contact Deb and she can reply with what the city would want to know before they reserve the fields and then we bring a resolution to the Council and we approve the resolution for this year and we can make the park board do all of the work and write up the formal process by next year. I'm the Council liaison for the park board so I can keep an eye on it. Maybe it'll make sense to wait until August. As far as a formal process we want to make the park board do it.

Asst. to the Administrator Eisenbeisz – I do think if we are taking over reserving the fields moving forward that we do need to create a formal policy probably by October so that we can start reserving in November and taking applications.

Councilman Lund – Part of the reason they want it so early is not because it takes an incredible amount of time for the city, although maybe it's harder with 40 fields, is because they have to send out registrations to know that those kids have a place to play.

Asst. to the Administrator Eisenbeisz – Public Works will need to know when they need the fields ready by. The earlier we can get it in so the schedule is set the better.

Councilman Lund – We don't have to commit before April do we?

Steve Bern – November 1 seems a bit draconian from Woodbury.

Asst. to the Administrator Eisenbeisz – I think at least by the end of the year because I think we need to give Public Works time.

Admin. Hill – The concern is that we become the Parks and Rec. Dept.

Councilman Lund – Could you get them to email Deb in the next couple of weeks? Hopefully we can have a resolution by next meeting.

Steve Bern – Deb can you let me know what info you want me to have and fill out?

Admin. Hill – Yeah that'll be on Monday.

3. CLOSE THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC FOR DEB HILL'S PERFORMANCE REVIEW
4. ADJOURNMENT

Signed: _____
Tim Geraghty, Mayor

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrew Brunick
Administrative Intern