

HAMPDEN PARKS & RECREATION  
Meeting Minutes September 2, 2015  
Town House

Originally Approved September 9, 2015  
Amendment approved October 14, 2015

Meeting called to order at 7:02pm

**Members Present:** Dave Paradis, Eric Jacobson, Dave Turcotte, and Terry Ford

**Members Absent:** -none-

**Also Present:** public

**Bills:** -none-

**Mail:** -none-

**Agenda Items:**

**Basketball:**

Terry opened the meeting informing the audience that the board had met and voted 3-1 to revert to the previous format of basketball. Hearing quite a few complaints for this decision, the commission decided to send out an invitation for an open discussion. The board did not want to be seen as operating in the shadows, moving kind of quickly, due to vacation and being short a board member. Terry stated "Heather our basketball coordinator, I thought was invited, I apologize for any confusion." He then asked for everyone to put their cell phones on vibrate or silent mode and informed the audience that the meeting was being tape recorded for accuracy and a clear record to prepare minutes for next meeting.

**Minutes:** Admin read the minutes from the August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015 meeting. Terry asked they be amended by changing cannot to may be grandfathered.

Dave P pointed out that there was a lengthy discussion during the 55 minute meeting.

Comment from audience member asking commissioners to speak up.

*Terry made a motion to amend the minutes as discussed. Dave P seconded 4-0 in favor.*

Terry then addressed the audience to let them know that the format that was going to be followed was to let those who had contacted the office asking to speak address the board first and then anyone else who wanted to speak could.

Terry then addressed the audience by telling them that everyone would be welcome to speak, and Heather Jolicoeur would be the first to speak since she had requested the meeting. He asked that everyone wait to be recognized before speaking.

Commissioners were then asked for their comments.

*Dave P stated that he would like to motion to vacate the vote made at the last meeting. He thinks it was noticed properly as to the open meeting law and questioned whether or not Heather knew. He asked that this meeting be the discussion.*

*Eric seconded, all in favor, 4-0*

Terry remarked that Hampden sports doesn't work without parents volunteers and coaches.

Eric told the audience that everything is posted online and that residents can "call us and ask – we could've avoided a lot of this" - if someone had asked. Glad to see everyone here. Merger was originally questioned because someone approached and asked why the board did what they did last year.

Last year decided to merge, there were concerns as to why it was done; was it better for the program, the kids, or our town? If we are Hampden sports, why are we moving sports to Wilbraham? How are we going to expand sports in town if we move them to Wilbraham? As new members came on board, people began asking questions of them.

Dave P remarked "When we had discussion, it was never a question of did it go well," I want to keep merger in place", I like the idea, 1 – Different levels of kids, for every age group there are 3-4 kids who are heads and shoulders above the rest of the players on their team.2- The combining allowed for a similar level of play and the red division kids were exposed to the speed of play, even though kids look good at try outs, speed still matters. The social development is good for kids combining teams and playing together. Some concerns were about the ability of the white division – this is the same as blue division skill set wise. He stated he felt that the most disservice was being done to the higher level players. He then stated "My position is that we should stay the same stay combined." He went on to offer that what's best for developing sports in town, my feeling is that the members who voted against keeping the merger didn't vote against it because it was a bad idea, they are trying to have Hampden still in place, still relevant

Dave T – "I really have nothing to add" I totally agree, from competition perspective, some kids benefitted, and some did not. Feels that there were more kids done a disservice here in town and that the kids who went on to play in the red division better benefitted from merger. He is worried that programs are vacating this town.

Terry remarked that as Dave T had said, red level better benefitted, look at the totality of the situation and make appropriate for each skill level and as fun as possible in a competitive way. He felt the CYO program suffered terribly, especially the boys 7/8 teams although one team was competitive; the other team was done a disservice and had a horrible year. The 5/6 boys suffered terribly and had a bad year as well since recreation level kids were mixed in and a number of kids came out very, very frustrated. There was no girls 5/6 CYO team because the majority of girls went to Falcon basketball and those who were left had to go and play recreational level in Wilbraham. The third and fourth grade players were not affected since they are not playing in Suburban and CYO remained the same for them. Terry also remarked that the gyms used to be packed to capacity with teachers and students – that was a huge sense of community that he felt a sense was lost.

Heather Jolicoeur introduced herself as the basketball coordinator and told the audience that she was not at the meeting and that she had nothing to do with this decision. She went on to say that she had asked the admin to email her with any new questions or concerns that the commissioners had that she could answer. She remarked that she had requested the meeting. She addressed the crowd stating that it was their responsibility to be at parks meetings, and that the commissioners are on their own, they don't see the public, only when there is a problem or a complaint. She saw the meeting as an opportunity for discussion. She went on to say that "Wilbraham accommodated us, there was a different style of coaching, it wasn't us against them". She added that Bryan Litz, should have been contacted and a professional courtesy extended to him for a professional opinion since he does this for a living.

Heather then described the four options she felt we had for Hampden kids, red – division 1, white – division 2, CYO and recreational in Wilbraham and that kids had an option to stay in Hampden. She addressed her email to parents and that the majority of those she emailed felt that ending the merger would limit their options. She feels there can still be full bleachers and camaraderie, she asked people to share schedules, put them on Facebook.

Dave T asked Heather what number was the majority that she mentioned.

Heather answered that there were 34 kids from Hampden and that she had only her from one mother that wanted to keep basketball in Hampden and no longer be merged with Wilbraham.

Barry Sanborn, a longtime Suburban coach and Wilbraham resident stated this was a rewarding season coaching, he had five Hampden and five Wilbraham girls on his team and Dan Sheehan was his assistant coach. Even though the kids didn't know each other, he paired each girl with an out of town girl, and feels that since these kids are going to MRHS now that they will have friends and that we are missing the boat if we don't keep the merger and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. He shared that his daughters were placed on b teams and remarked that Wilbraham spent thousands of dollars on uniforms and he is wondering the reason why the decision was against keeping the merger and that it doesn't seem right to him.

Mike Orzech, a gym teacher at Minnechaug and the head basketball coach expressed that he feels the players benefit if they are together sooner and his philosophy is to place every kid in the best situation for each kid each season so they are the most successful.

Eileen Kolisko, a Hampden resident asked Mike Orzech if once a player makes an a or b team are they locked in for good and Mike responded no, there is a yearly evaluation. He went on to say that the teams play against city schools and more kids playing at the highest level possible is what we want.

Eric asked how last year's freshman team did. Mike responded that there were kids of mixed ability, one player made varsity, a couple made jv and 12 kids played at the freshman level and that they are trying to field the best teams possible. He also asked if the MRHS coaching staff had been able to see any of the 7/8 teams play

Tom Cebula, a Wilbraham resident and jv/asst coach for more than 35 years offered that there should be as many suburban levels as possible and that he does watch the 7/8 games and that kids should be playing the best basketball and even if they don't win a lot they can show improvement and that doesn't mean that a lower level player can't make a higher level team the following year.

Derrick Biermann asked Coach Cebula if he watched the CYO games and coach replied that he hadn't been given a schedule but that he does see a lot of recreational games since he referees them. He added that he went to Hampden games prior to the merger. He told the commissioners that he has been asking for this (merger) for 35 years - that he has fundraised for uniforms and basketballs.

Dave T asked why he thought it took so long-

Terry asked if our kids on white Suburban are better served playing on a blue Suburban team

Bryan Litz, the Wilbraham Parks and Recreation Director answered stating that the top two –three teams should be in the white division and that those teams are more consistent with more parity.

Heather added that the girls white were the a team players and the blue were the b team players and that this needs to be an ongoing conversation so that everyone plays and develops confidence. She want to slot kids correctly and that Wilbraham has just as much to lose as we do, that kids should be put in a situation to succeed. Derrick Biermann asked if Wilbraham kids could play on Hampden 5-6-7-8 teams.

Bryan Litz told him yes, that was going to be offered to his players this year

Tom Cebula added that he is not scouting for high school level, he want to help kids develop and progress.

Lisa Morace stated that everyone else had covered most of what she wanted to say. Our 7/8 grade girls team won championship last year, her son was on the 5/6 a team and already working on third graders since it looks like we may not be able to field a team

Eric reviewed the 3/4 and the 5/6 girls numbers from last year and 4 girls went with one coach to Wilbraham recreational league.

Bryan Litz asked how we plan to fill the voids - Eric responded that we could go to Wilbraham for players - Bryan countered with why would they go along after Hampden had pulled out of the merger? Eric continued stating we want to grow our sports programs, there is not an issue with overall LAX, football, but there is an identity loss parents are asking why we are doing this, they want to play Hampden sports – Eric stated he has no bias, as both of his kids are in high school

Heather has asked at two meetings if there were any complaints or feedback from merger.

Terry responded with there was an obvious concern with the board whether to go back to blue division, CYO, or to keep the program as is and that he had no idea until the phone call was made that we could go back to blue.

Eileen Kolisko added that the basketball coordinator should be more involved and that we should have a Facebook page

Eric stated at the August 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, both Heather and Dave P were absent so the basketball part of the meeting was changed to August 25. Dave P responded with he had moved to vacate so that people can be heard

Lisa Morace requested more specific agendas

Eric asked if we continue to move sports to Wilbraham, what will/does that do to Hampden – parents are bringing him that question

Eileen Kolisko “My son did not make an a team, he made the lower team and they lost most games.”

Mike Roy, a Wilbraham resident and Athletic Director for MRHS stated he felt ‘ blindsided’ That this seems to be an identity issue in Hampden, not an a/b level issue. His daughter made the lower team and he thought the socialization was good. He questioned if Wilbraham turned over Suburban to Hampden, would we still be having this discussion?

Katie Illig asked Mike Roy what his strongest sports Mike Roy answered with Baseball, LAX, girls LAX, tennis, swimming, golf and girls soccer and that they were working on athletes being mentally stronger this year

Terry stated that there were very few complaints regarding try outs and Mike Roy responded that he is not thrilled that the basketball coached are doing the evaluations and the way it can be perceived.

Eileen Kolisko added that so much money has been spent and it is an adjustment and time needs to be given for the kinks to be worked out. Dave T replied that it was never communicated how much money had been put into it

Bobby MacGregor, a former Hampden player stated that he feels that kids will play and be active and that all of the programs offered are incredible and that he loves Hampden sports and stayed in town and played recreational league. Dave T asked if he thought he would have benefitted and increased his skills and social skills and Bobby replied that he didn’t know if the merger would have benefitted him. He also added that he watched his brothers CYO team and that ‘no kid in Hampden is going to go and play in the NBA’

Selectman John Flynn addressed the audience telling them that the commissioners are volunteers who give up nights and weekends and that he understands the blending of the group of children now that we have the opportunity for the kids to get to know each other. He went on to say that this is about the children and out of 100,000 only one makes the pro level

Dan Sheehan – asked about following Parliamentary procedure, asked what we were going to do, he remarked that the board was being ambiguous. Terry replied that as of right now we are back to being merged and that this issue can be address today or at any time. Dan replied to Dave T that he was being condescending and said “you are all incompetent and you should all resign.”

Stacy Black added that her son was left behind when Marty (McQuade) took kids and went to Wilbraham

Warren Black told the audience that Jay Ray had invested thousands of dollars and that we were finally starting to get something of our own back after being left out and that we don't use any of our resources.

Stacy Black remarked 'so our kids aren't left behind" always our kids going to Wilbraham and Wilbraham kids aren't coming here. Bryan Litz replied that he had sent Wilbraham kids to Hampden for baseball.

Derrick Biermann offered that some kids wanted to stay and play in Hampden and Terry asked Derrick if his son was frustrated playing CYO. Derrick told him yes, due to the difference in abilities, although his younger son did play Suburban.

Terry stated that he doesn't want it to seem like they are bashing Wilbraham, we have very few choices in town and appreciate that our kids can play in Wilbraham.

John Wilkinson stated he had lived in Wilbraham for 30 years and now in Hampden for seven and seen an improvement in his grandkids play and that he feels the opportunities from the merger outweigh the towns identity and that if Hampden wants its own identity they should have their own high school.

Terry stated that the CYO kids have the opposite opinion of the merger and that its not a high school developmental program and that we need to watch for kids with lesser abilities and that the parents who were here at the meeting were those of the kids who played upper level

Sandra Sheehan stated we need to provide balance and consider this a business and that she doesn't feel that the decision being made is what's best for kids

Terry answered with the Red level kids who benefitted were in the minority and that the white division kids played at a lower level and the majority of kids will benefit by playing in the blue division and that the CYO kids were badly mismatched

Mike Roy asked if we have too many teams and maybe we should only have two

Dave T stated that we had seven Hampden teams and if the kids would've stayed in Hampden we would've played in the more competitive blue division and that kids got cut and did not make any Suburban team. Dave P remarked that he was getting too deep in to specifics -Katie Illig interjected that they had an AAU team and remarked that now we were just going to 'drop the program' Dave P reminded her that when everyone else was speaking he had given them an opportunity to speak and he was now speaking. He continued with the fact that he wanted the merger to stay in place, he could move to table the decision – that it could be the coward's way of keeping merger, if no one moves then it will stay and that if the issue was pushed the vote could be against the merger.

*Dave P moved to table this until after the season, Eric seconded*

Dave P added that unless vote called for it will stay merged

Marty McQuade added that next Wednesday at 7pm at MRHS there will be a task force meeting

Ann MacGregor stated she had come in with an open mind thinking the merger was a good thing.

Marty McQuade said he was starting to figure out what Hampden identity is and that it is bi-polar. He remembered when Heather & Jim Jolicoeur came to a board meeting to ask if their son could stay in town play up and he told them to take him out of town. He mentioned that Andy Rogers was called twice but no one was called for the girls and that he is concerned with CYO and feels we should get out of CYO and number are going down and if we felt that Hampden's identity is hoop then we'd better "pick it up" He also added that he didn't think this describes our town and hoop we get the board member and baseball coordinator that are needed. He understands being on the board and that it was not an easy decision and that he is glad that people turned out. He feels that CYO was always a problem and that there is parity in recreational ball.

Derrick added that CYO didn't do well

Bryan Litz offered that he has never heard anything good about CYO and that rec has always been a dirty word but isn't if kids are placed correctly

Terry added that while CYO is partially dysfunctional, it is pretty competitive

Eric offered that there would've been two teams if kids hadn't gone to Wilbraham

Heather Jolicoeur thanked the Wilbraham residents for attending, she thanked the players for attending and added that we are not giving basketball to Wilbraham and that she is working in coordination with Bryan Litz

Barry Sanborn stated that basketball was the only sport that was not merged to which Dave T answered that baseball was not merged, Eric added that Hampden kids were pushed to PVJSL, corrected to Falcon soccer and that we didn't merge with Wilbraham.

Lisa Morace interjected that she thinks it is fantastic to table this until after the basketball season.

*Dave P moved to table indefinitely, Eric seconded, all in favor 4-0*

Eric to Eileen Kolisko in regards to her email that is her opinion and your opinion is not everyone's in regards to when you said we should do what you want us to do. We want everyone's opinion so that we can make the right decision.

Terry inquired as to any new business.

*After inquiring as to any new business and hearing none, Dave P motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:05pm, Terry seconded. All in favor 4-0.*

Next meeting September 9th, 2015 @ 7pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindi Connors,  
Administrative Assistant