

**Focus Group Summary
Township of Middletown, N.J.
Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan**

**OVERVIEW OF RECREATION MASTER PLAN INTERVIEW PROCESS WITH
BRANDSTETTER CARROLL INC.**

We have reserved time for your organization to come into our offices and have a discussion with Brandstetter Carroll, the consulting firm that has been hired to do an in-depth analysis of municipal parks and recreation in our community. The purpose of these discussions is to obtain in-depth information about your organization, its needs, and ways to improve parks and recreation opportunities in Middletown.

To the extent that these suggestions are appropriate to your group, please be prepared to offer documentation or to discuss the following:

- Brief history of your organization.
- Number of participants, demographics, growth history, trends and pressures as relating to the service that your offer.
- List of the facilities your organization currently uses. And your assessment of the adequacy of those facilities.
- Successes and failures.
- Relationships within and outside of the community.
- How are you funded?
- What is working and what is not?
- Your relationship with the Middletown Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs and how it could be improved.
- Pretend it is 2017 and you are extremely pleased with what your organization and the Township of Middletown have accomplished over the last ten years. What has happened to result in this success? What does your organizational landscape look like? What is your vision for your organization and the Middletown Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs?

We have set aside 1 hour for most groups hoping that this will provide adequate time for a full discussion of the issues that are important to your organization. If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact me accordingly.

Focus Group: Recreation Advisory Committee

Date: March 26, 2007

Comments:

We reviewed the Scope of Services and schedule for the Master Plan process. This was followed by an exercise in which we asked the Recreation Advisory Board members what their future vision for the Parks and Recreation in Middletown would be. The following are the responses that the individuals on the Advisory Board suggested for their future vision:

- Dog park
- Kayak launch
- Coordination with County parks
- More walking parks
- Better coordination with schools
- Playground for special needs children such as a challenger playground
- Destination parks
- Sprayground
- Water park
- Better baseball fields
- More indoor courts
- More activities for teens and seniors
- More passive recreation space and open fields
- More money for recreation and parks
- Need restrooms in the parks
- Vandalism is reduced

Needs

- There is a need for dog park in the community
- There is a need for a skateboard park that is available to the teens, where the teens are and open more hours. There is nowhere for teens to go.
- There is major friction between the Board of Education and Recreation Department.
- The location of Parks and Recreation facilities in the Township is skewed between the Bayside (most) and the west side of the community.
- There is nowhere for seniors to go other than the senior center at Croydon Hall.
- The Township needs a Challenger park for the 150+ children in the community that have autism. We should meet with Paul Hooke (he is one of the focus groups).
- If baseball fields in this community were upgraded and more usable, then they would not need any additional fields.
- Organizations using the fields have to do a lot of their own work in using their own funds for the programs.

Focus Group: Basketball Organizations

Present: Robin Martino, River Plaza Youth Club President
Bill O'Reilly, River Plaza, Board Member and Coach
Rob Fischer, River Plaza Basketball Commissioner
Wayne Nef, Bayshore Basketball Program
Alan, Gray, Lincroft Basketball Organization
Patrick Hoagland, BCI

Date: March 26, 2007

Comments:

Bayshore:

- The Bayshore Youth Athletic Association (BYAA) provides basketball, baseball, soccer, and wrestling and may provide softball.
- In the basketball program, there are 300 children in the 8-13 age range.
- There are leagues for 8, 9, 10 and 11-13 year olds. There is also an AAU travel team for 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 year olds.
- Teams play at Croydon Hall on the weekends and they practice at the elementary schools in the Bayshore Area.

River Plaza:

- River Plaza basketball program is primarily a winter sport with teams from the 3rd thru the 9th grade. They play their games at the Thompson Middle School and the High School South bubble.
- There are 375 children in the program which include the following:
 - 3 and 4 year old clinics for boys and girls
 - 5 to 6 year old boys
 - 7 to 9 year old boys
 - Total of 36 teams, no travel teams.
- In the summer months, they provide an outdoor program for 450 kids starting at 5 years old at the Nutswamp Park, MTT Park, Dorsett and Wilmort Parks. They have 12 games per night Monday thru Friday with most teams being in the younger age groups. There is no championship. They play a six week schedule in June and July.
- Lincroft basketball provides basketball for 3rd to 7th graders, 200 children in the program. Boys and girls play at the High School South bubble and Croydon Hall two hours per week and they rent other facilities.
- In the spring they play with 4-11 year olds with approximately 200 kids in the program and they use the High School South bubble and rent facilities.
- The schools charge to use their gyms on weekends, but not on weekdays, because they need to hire janitorial staff.
- They pay \$8,000 to \$9,000 per year to use the schools. They also pay \$60 per hour to use St. Leo's.
- Access to gyms is a problem. Some of the programs have travel teams on Monmouth County and these groups are done before the recreation leagues.
- Sometimes they use the Rebounds facility in Neptune which is a private facility owned by the Hoop Group and they charge \$110 per hour.
- There is very limited practice time for the children now.

- There is a question as to whether the high school coaches control the gyms.
- It was pointed out that there is a church on Leonardville Road with a new gym which could be a possibility.

Vision:

- When the Middletown North bubble is turned over to the town, then it would be more available for the group.
- More use of the high school gyms indoors.
- Need a better relationship with schools.

Focus Group: Lacrosse

Present: Andy Kaiser,
Wayne Bain, BCI

Comments:

- He is a former college Lacrosse player.
- There are not any Lacrosse programs currently being offered in Middletown.
- Local high schools do not have a program.
- Lacrosse is largest growing sport in the country.
- Andy tried to start a program in Middletown last year, however the field was not taken care of properly.
- Park property is currently under utilized.
- Middletown Parks and Recreation owns the swim club, the public should not own a private facility like this. It should be sold and use the funds for needed public facilities.

Vision:

- Be able to use Middletown South Football field and track.
- Parks and Recreation provide dedicated playing fields and or days for various sports.
- Open doors to high school bathrooms when utilizing ballfields.
- Better use of the parks we currently have and allow access to them.
- Need bathroom facilities at ball fields when programs are in operation.
- Middletown should provide destination points for the families such as:
 - Large indoor athletic complex.
 - Indoor aquatic facility.
 - Two sheet Ice rink.
- Two synthetic ballfields for football, soccer, lacrosse

Focus Group: Middletown Tennis Association

Present: Joyce Worthington, Board of Directors (MTA)
Wayne Bain, BCI

Comments:

- Non-profit organization that has been in existence for 25 years.
- Conducts tennis leagues for adults only
 - Monday PM Women
 - Tuesday PM Women
 - Thursday AM Woman
 - Thursday night PM Men
- There are approximately 100 adults 18 and up playing.
- League plays at the Tindall Park Tennis Courts on 6 of the lighted courts.
- The league is for advanced beginners and up, they do not provide beginner or instructional programs.
- The program starts in June and they pay Parks and Recreation for the lights at the courts.

Concerns:

- The courts are not well maintained
- Nets are in poor shape
- Weeds, poison ivy, etc. are a problem.
- Biggest concern is the lights on the courts. They do not believe they are tennis type outdoor lights. This is always the biggest complaint from the users and they have lost many players, as a result.
- Tindal courts are well used and should be better maintained, things are better but could still be improved.
- Normandy Park Tennis Courts get a lot of play and they should be better maintained.

Vision:

- Develop a program to properly maintain the courts, nets, cleaning, trash, etc.
- Keep courts properly upgraded in regards to cracking, lights, etc.
- Add additional benches for spectators and people waiting to play.
- Add restroom facilities at the park.
- Add better lighting to the area where the picnic tables are located next to the shack Tindall.

Focus Group: MYAA Basketball

Present: Jim Engelmann, Commissioner
Wayne Bain BCI

Comments

- MYAA has been in recreation basketball for 40 years.
- 06/07 season the program has 600 kids, 400 boys, 200 girls, 7-15 yrs of age; Boys 7 and 8 years, 9 and 10 years, 5th and 6th grades, 8th and 9th grades; Girls, 7-8 clinic, 9 and 10 years, 11-15 years.
- The program utilizes Thorne School, New Monmouth, Middletown South Bubble, and Croydon Hall on Sundays.
- The program plays games on Saturday and practices during the week.
- Program has grown steadily, however has leveled off the past 2 years with only a 5-10% increase each year.
- The program also offers a competitive league with 6 travel teams with 12 kids on each team.
 - Sept.-Dec. 4 Boys teams 5th and 6th grades, 7th and 8th grades.
2 Girls teams 5th and 5th grades, 7th and 8th grades.
 - Dec.-Feb. 2 Boys teams 4th and 5th grades.
- Teams play at Thorn and Croydon Hall as well as in other towns such as Monmouth and Ocean Co.
- At Thorn and Monmouth Schools they pay \$8,000 for custodian fees.
- The program has a good relationship with Parks and Recreation.
- The main concern is equal distribution of playing time for teams. This primarily goes for the use of the Middletown South Bubble. There are groups from outside of Middletown utilizing the facilities. Priority should be given to Middletown teams as well as equal use.

Vision:

- Build an indoor athletic facility with a minimum of three courts. The courts could be multifunctional and used by various sports.
- The ability to use the Middletown North Bubble.

Focus Group: Football Organizations

Present: John Grotheer, Middletown Athletic Club
Kevin McCauley, Middletown Athletic Club
Joe Mandaile, Middletown Athletic Club
Keith MacDonald, Middletown Athletic Club
Rob Fischer, River Plaza
Rob Martino, River Plaza
Pat Hoagland, BCI
Wayne Bain, BCI

Date: March 27, 2007

Comments:

Middletown Athletic Club:

- Middletown Athletic Club was organized in 1962. There are currently 400 kids in the program age 5 to 15. There are 200 in football with 100 cheerleaders and 100 flag football players.
- The organization built the current football field.
- They use the Croydon football field and the Spy house during Middletown Days.
- They play in an organization of Monmouth and Ocean County teams in the Pop Warner Organization. There are a total of 35 organizations in the Jersey Shore Pop Warner.

River Plaza:

- River Plaza has 200 football player, 100 cheerleaders and 50 flag football players.
- The teams have an eight game schedule and play their games on Saturday nights and Sundays.
- The flag teams play on Saturday afternoon and Monday nights.
- Travel teams are a part of the Jersey Shore Pop Warner organization.
- River Plaza uses the Nutswamp Field which is overused due to going from baseball straight into football.

Comments:

- The Croydon field is overused, schools use the field and people use it to hit golf balls in the area.
- MAC put \$20,000 into trying to make the fields safe in 2006.
- If fields were designed properly in the beginning, there would not be as much of a problem at this time.
- Both organizations are growing but can't grow much because of the limit on facilities.
- People tend to use the fenced in football fields for dog runs and need to stop this process.

Vision:

- Consider a synthetic turf field at Croydon Hall and Nutswamp Park.
- If Nutswamp field became a synthetic turf field, the baseball fields would need to be relocated.
- There are sufficient ball fields if the Board of Education fields would become available and proper maintenance was provided on the fields.

- Other sports could utilize the two synthetic fields when the football program is not playing. Concession issues would need to be worked out.
- Need to update the maintenance on all of the fields and many are kind of dangerous to the kids.
- Development by the Parks and Recreation Youth Sports Council to meet quarterly to discuss and solve issues together.

Focus Group: Soccer

Present: John Montalbano, Lincroft Soccer
Lisa Borghese, Bayshore Youth Athletic Association (BYAA)
Tom Gorman, St. Mary's Athletic Association
Ben Curci, Middletown Soccer
Pat Monaghan, Men's Soccer
Wayne Bain, BCI
Patrick Hoagland, BCI

Date: March 27, 2007

Comments:

- Middletown soccer has 600 travel players.
- The recreation league plays in the fall only and plays at Fairview and Lincroft.
- MYAA plays in the fall at Bodman Park and has 300 kids in the program.
- They play inner league with Lincroft, BYAA, and St. Mary's.
- Lincroft soccer has 800 kids.
- BYAA has 300-500 kids in the spring and fall and currently has a lack of volunteer coaches and has 150 kids on the waiting list.
- St. Mary's has 550-560 kids including 100+ 4 years olds.
- The adult soccer has two teams at 18 players each.
- Lincroft also offers a challenge sports program for 90 kids.
- There are 4,000+ kids playing soccer in Middletown.

Issues:

- The volunteer base for coaches is shrinking and many of the current coaches are not qualified.
- Coaches are not showing up for practice.
- Many parents use soccer as a babysitting service.
- Most groups are playing on school fields and they are in poor shape and many are dangerous.
- Schools do not allow portable toilets near the fields. No restroom facilities available for kids or parents.
- The principals at the schools have ultimate authority over the facilities and refuse to work with organizations.

Vision:

- Middletown needs large spaces to accommodate 12 – 15 fields to allow multiple age groups, game fields, practice fields, and sufficient parking.
- Stevenson Park has sufficient acres if the Township and Community could be convinced of the need.
- The Board of Education high schools have sufficient space to develop a major soccer complex.
- Review of softball and baseball locations and see if there could be a trade in complexes, soccer in one and baseball/softball in the other.
- Parks and Recreation develop a sports council and meet quarterly to discuss program needs and concerns.

Focus Group: Baseball

Present: Jeff Iapicco, Lincroft Baseball
Mike Hogan, Middletown Travel Baseball
Gary Haliskoe, Middletown Little League
Bob Spinelli, Middletown Babe Ruth
Rob Corin, Middletown Babe Ruth
Wayne Bain, BCI

Date: March 27, 2007

Comments:

- Lincroft has 1,200 kids playing softball and baseball in the spring only.
- Lincroft plays at Middletown Thompson Park.
- Middletown Travel Baseball has 150 kids and 10 – 14 teams, they have 400 – 500 kids ages 8 – 10 that play games at Lincroft, Applebrook, and Thompson Park.
- Middletown Little League was formed in 1960 and play both spring and fall. They have 1,200 registered for baseball and girls softball.
- Middletown Little League plays at nine different locations. They have 24 teams playing on travel teams.
- Middletown Babe Ruth has 600 – 800 kids of 5 – 15 years of age, playing in the spring and fall.
- Middletown Babe Ruth also has a girls softball travel team ages 8 – 15.
- Middletown Babe Ruth plays at McMahon Park and plays on school fields when needed.
- The biggest issue the groups feel is field maintenance on the recreation fields. The group has spent \$20,000 in the last year on the fields at Thompson Park. Group spent \$24,000 on number two and three at McMahon Park for topsoil.
- Middletown Little League has spent as much as \$100,000 on Bodman Park fields two, three and four. They spent \$30,000 for a storage facility this year.
- Middletown Little League has a volunteer ground crew that is experienced to help care for the fields.
- Baseball is losing some its volunteer base, primarily for the snack bars and umpires.
- The groups are concerned how the permit system is managed by the Recreation Department. It was a consensus that the permit process was too rigid and many fields stay empty.
- The group recommends a public posting online listing of the fields being used each week so that teams can sign up for fields not being used.
- Half of the fields are on school property and are in poor condition.

Vision:

- Need additional large baseball fields.
- Need for the Board of Education and the Township to cooperate and develop a program for better organization and maintenance of the school fields.
- There is a need for restrooms at the parks.
- Recommend that Parks and Recreation bring the budget issues to the groups to gain support.
- Recommend that Park and Recreation develop a sports council to discuss issues, budgets, etc.

Focus group: Sandy Hook Little League

Present: Tom Caizza
Patrick Hoagland, BCI

Date: May 1, 2007

Comments:

The Sandy Hook Little League includes residents of Middletown as well as those in the Atlantic Highlands and Sandy Hook area. Games are played at Croydon Hall, Bodeman Park and in Atlantic Highlands. Their area roughly extends from Route 36 North to the Bayshore.

- The age group of participants is 7 to 16 with groups in the following ranges:
 - Girls have 12-14 teams with 4 – 7 to 8 age group, 3 – 9 to 10, 3 – 11 to 12, 2 – 13-16 age group.
 - The Little League Boys have 10 teams which include:
 - 5-6 year old tee ball with 10 teams
 - 7-8 year old Clippers which is coaches pitch or machine pitch with six teams
 - 9-12 year old majors with four teams.
 - Minors with six teams.
 - 13-14 year old juniors with one team
 - 15-16 year old seniors with one team.
 - The juniors and seniors are combined with MYAA and play inter-league games with MYAA.
- The girls play at Croydon, Bodeman and Atlantic Highlands.
- The boys play at the Navasink fire house. The minors play at the Atlantic Highlands Field. Tee ball is at the Atlantic Fireman's field, minors play at Croydon Hall.
- Concern they do not have enough fields and needs lights.
- The field at Navasink drains well but is too small and the grass is poor.
- He understands that new fields are being planned on Route 36 which may have up to three fields.
- This would be a potential site for them to use.

They use a portable mound on their field and have found this to be a very good solution. The mound is about \$1,500 and is shared with MYAA.

Focus Group: Middletown Wrestling

Present: Diane McGowan, Bayshore Youth Athletic Association
John Hockin, Wrestling Commissioner for BYA
Kevin Freshnock, Head Coach for Wrestling
Pat Hoagland, BCI

Date: March 27, 2007

Comments:

- BYAA wrestling uses the building behind the old home and Croydon Hall. The area is roughly 30'x 50 '.
- This group has spent considerable funds improving this building.
- The group currently has 95 kids involved in the program 5 nights per week, so the facility is not large enough.
- They rent schools on Saturdays for matches and host 3-4 matches per year.
- They have been an organization for 20 years.
- They stated that there is a rumor that the building is going to be torn down and that they won't have as much space.
- The building does leak so they cannot keep some of the mats down. They are happy where they are since they have invested so much into this building.
- They have a summer program and added air conditioning.
- A new room that will be for multi-purpose groups and constantly moving the mats will be unacceptable to this group.
- They have 35-50 children involved in the summer.

Vision:

- To leave them where they are and let them operate their own program.

Focus Group: Roller and Ice Hockey

Present: John Naughton, Roller Hockey
George Felice, Ice Hockey
Steve Bodeker, Ice Hockey

Date: March 27, 2007

Comments:

- Roller hockey uses three rinks in the community. Kunkel Park is the worst in the community and should be torn down. There is a lot of vandalism in the area and it does not dry very well.
- McMahon Park which is 180' x 75'. It has wood boards with coated blacktop surface. The other facility at Normandy is 200' by 85'.
- Their schedule goes from October thru December and they have to extend the season out to March due to the weather and many make up games.
- Weather is their biggest problem and they really feel that they need a canopy to cover the facility.
- The program had up to 500 participants, but now there are only 180.
- There are three divisions and 12 teams which include four under 9 teams, five under twelve teams, and five under 15 teams.
- They play full checking NHL rules.
- Ice hockey supports the two JV and two Varsity teams.

Vision:

- Their vision is to desperately develop an indoor ice rink. A good example is in Woodbridge, but it only has one sheet of ice.
- Middletown will develop an indoor ice rink in combination with an indoor pool and other recreation facilities.
- Provide covers on the outdoor roller hockey rinks to help with the weather so that they can get their games in.
- Replace the rink at Kunkel Park because the wood is a problem and the benches are open with no dugouts.

Focus Group: Challenged Youth Sports

Present: Bob Hagen, Trustee

Comments:

- The program started 16 years ago by Paul and Margo Hooker as a part of Little League Baseball. The program was for children with disabilities.
- The program now includes baseball, soccer, basketball and tennis. They offer 2-3 dances per year for the participants such as a Valentine's Dance.
- The cost to play in a sport is only \$25 and they receive a t-shirt and trophy for participating.
- Ages of the participants are 7-20 with 150 being active in the sports.
- Baseball has 8 teams of 106 participants.
- Most of the participants are from Middletown; however, they do open the program to those with disabilities from other communities.
- They currently do not travel and play games against other cities/counties, but they are open to the concept.
- For soccer they use the Fairview Fields, using one regular field with 3-4 games going across the fields at the same time.
- Basketball they use Thompson School and for baseball they use Lincroft Little League Complex.

Vision:

- Parks and Recreation needs an indoor recreation facility that would offer activities for people with disabilities.
- Parks and Recreation should offer programs for people with disabilities in the new Art Center.

Focus Group: Arts

Present: Linda Kish, Middletown Arts Council, Treasurer
Tony Rinella, Middletown Arts Council, President
Jo Fryer, Arts Council Board Member
Wayne Bain, BCI
Pat Hoagland, BCI

Date: March 27, 2007

Comments:

- The Middletown Arts Council is a 501C3 Organization and has worked for five years to help in the development and construction the new Art facility.
- The organization is non-profit and its mission is to develop cultural arts programs in the community, and to help raise funds to support the operation/operating cost of the facility.
- They want the Arts Center to be an art and cultural facility for all to use, artists, youth, senior citizens, etc.
- The Director of the Arts Center is an employee of the Parks and Recreation Department and is responsible for developing the programs with the approval of the Arts Council.

Vision:

- They want this to be a place where children can perform theater and provide children art activities and art camps.
- The Council would like to supplement the core art requirements needed in the schools. They hope to bus the kids from school for programs through the center.

Focus Group: Art Center Director

Present: Maggie O'Brien, Art Center Director
Wayne Bain, BCI

Date: March 28, 2007

Comments:

- She is a visual artist and ran a studio for children's art for 12 years.
- She was originally on the Arts Advisory Council and a board member of the Arts Council.
- She became full-time in 2004 during the construction of the Center.
- She has one part-time secretary and one part-time maintenance person and they also have a contract cleaning service for the facility.
- She is passionate about art and has many connections with local arts and art owners.
- It is her intent to run the Center as a business and hopefully the Center can become self sustaining.
- She hopes to provide free and low cost programs to the community.
- The concern is that the current structure of the Parks and Recreation Department does not allow or encourage creative thinking.
- The Arts Council and the Center have a Business Plan. It is considered a working document and will be ever changing.
- Staff should be involved in the budget process in the Parks and Recreation Department and then be held accountable.

Vision

- Provide quality art programs in the community and allow arts enhancement programs for pre-school age children, seniors, special needs people, and provide arts programs in the recreation centers.
- Provide a facility for performing arts groups.
- Allow staff to think creatively and outside the box so that they feel they are making a contribution to the program and the community.

Focus Group: Seniors

Present: Lolita Sorano, Senior Advisory Board
Nicholas Sorano, Senior Advisory Board
Peggy Flanagan, Senior Advisory Board
Bertha Thompson, Leisure Group
Anne Garvin Leisure Group
Pat Hoagland, BCI
Wayne Bain, BCI

Date: March 27, 2007

Comments:

Leisure Group

- They meet only on Tuesdays and have 20-25 people attend weekly. The program has gone down over the years from over 100.
- The group runs its own program that includes bus trips, lunches and a business meeting.
- They do not get involved with the senior center program except for senior trips provided by the center.
- There is not a lot to do in the group and usually disbands within an hour.
- The current building has hallways that are too narrow and many of the rooms are too small.
- The room they use in the east wing is too big for the group, they suggest switching space with the senior center on Tuesdays if possible.

Senior Advisory Board

- Many programs are provided in the senior center such as health day, flu shots, nurse coming each month, movies on Friday, line dancing, exercise class with a video, computer class, card teaching, knitting and more.
- It is a place for seniors to meet and socialize.
- Buses bring seniors who do not drive to the center daily.
- The center provides great trips for the seniors.
- Currently there is a good number of men attending and many want to play pool. They received a new pool table but they are in separate rooms and the men would like to play in the same room to socialize.
- A lot of young seniors are babysitting for grandchildren and cannot afford the programs.
- The seniors want education programs with a live instructor, not a video.
- Trips with overnight stay do not have the staff to chaperone.

Vision:

- Renovations of the current facility, such as repairing the men's bathroom.
- Consider using the second floor when an elevator is put in.
- Need to advertise the programs more.
- Upgrade landscaping in front of the center and put in a circular drive so that seniors can be dropped off at the front of the building.

Focus Group: Senior Center Staff

Present: Patrice Nugent, Supervisor of the Senior Center
Wayne Bain, BCI

Date: March 27, 2007

Comments:

- Patrice has been working for the Recreation Department since 2003. Prior to that she was an activities director for an adult health care facility and a school bus driver.
- She believes that the center is very important to the seniors in the community as a major source of information.
- The center has 1,200 registered members and averages 600-700 participants per month.
- The participants are from 60-90 years of age and view the usage as a cycle.
- They are currently losing the older seniors in the cycle and the younger seniors in their early 60's are still working, consulting and actively involved in activities such as golf, walking, etc. Many are watching grandchildren.
- Staff includes a full-time secretary, full-time recreation leader, and a part-time outreach worker.
- The younger seniors come primarily to trips, dances, and important speakers.
- The center is open 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday.
- The center plans to open on evenings once per week to draw some of the active seniors.
- She does open on the evenings with special programs several times a year but it should expand.
- The senior vans provide transportation to seniors in the 41 square mile area daily. Tuesdays and Thursdays are the busiest days and Monday, Wednesday and Friday are less when the bus coordinators plan trips for the seniors.
- Nutrition program is separate from the center and they have a good relationship, but she would like to work closer with them to provide better food and event programs.
- Monmouth County SCAT buses seniors to the nutrition site.
- There is no charge to seniors for transportation to the center due to a grant for operation from the Monmouth County Seniors Grant program.
- Yoga is offered in the Croydon Hall gym and seniors can participate free if they want to attend.

Vision:

- Renovate the current senior program and expand the facility in the back and keep it a one floor operation.
- Construct a circle drive in front as convenience to seniors who have problems walking.
- Need a second senior facility or a new central facility to eliminate travel time for senior participants.
- Need a fitness room in the senior building.
- Seniors have been requesting an indoor pool.
- Expand the exercise program in the senior center to include live instructors instead of a video.

Focus Group: Senior Transportation

Present: Peggy Hughes, Transportation Coordinator
Annette Schultz, RBA
Patrick Hoagland, BCI
Wayne Bain, BCI

Date: March 26, 2007

Comments:

- She handles transportation for senior activities
- Partnership with Monmouth Planning Board for the Dock and Roll program for commuters. This goes from the ferry location to the train station and provides access along the Route 36 shopping area.
- 239 seniors belong to the Senior Center.
- The senior building is old
- There is a need to re-organize some of the programs.
- One end of the building is used for Senior Citizen meals. The numbers are down for meal use.
- The other end of the building is used primarily for meetings.
- The section in the middle is used primarily for programs and is not accessible because hallways are too narrow.
- Programs have not changed in 22 years.
- Building does not appeal to young seniors.

Vision

- Renovate the building
- Provide new and exciting programs to draw younger seniors such as creative writing, fitness programs, inter-generational programs, writing, and drama activities.
- Need to advertise and develop programs in time slots to draw new seniors to the program.
- Possible teaming with Brookdale Community College on Programs.

Focus Group: Lincroft Senior Citizen Housing Corporation

Present: Gina Smith, Director of Social Services for Luftman Towers and Luftman Pavilion
Wayne Bain, BCI
Pat Hoagland, BCI

Comments:

- Luftman Towers has 189 units
- Luftman Pavilion has 60 units.
- The facilities are independent seniors 62-102 years of age; they are active, vital and want to be up and out.
- The objective of the program is to help seniors focus on how to spend their days.
- Most of the seniors do not drive.
- The seniors are dependent on transportation for Parks and Recreation and the County.
- Transportation to Croydon Hall is unreliable.
- The buildings they live in do not have facilities to provide recreation programs such as ceramics, etc.

Vision:

- Develop a better transportation system to support the seniors, it currently is not sufficient.
- Develop with Parks and Recreation a variety of education, inspiration and fun programs that are held at the housing sites.
- Make all programs held and parks handicap accessible and user friendly.
- Make water fountains, pavilions, rest areas, trails more senior friendly.
- Parks and Recreation provide programs, music, speakers, on site at the Senior Citizen Centers.

Focus Group: Lincroft Village Green Association

Present: Abe Littenberg, Lincroft Village Green Association
Patrick Hoagland, BCI

Date: March 27, 2007

Comments:

- Lincroft Village Green was obtained in a land swap with Brookdale Community College. There have been plans for a four lane highway in the area and the community has worked hard towards improving this area.
- Mr. Littenberg was also involved in the fight to stop the two field football complex in the Lincroft area because of his concern for the traffic. He understands the need for facilities, but is concerned about traffic and noise. He offered that there is a better site off of Exit 114, at Crawford Corner and Everett and Front Street which is not a traffic problem. There is also a better buffer for the homes.
- He is also involved with Hockey in Middletown (HIM). This group funds two JV teams and the two varsity teams in the community.
- Mr. Littenberg is willing to be on the Steering Committee for the Master Plan.
- The hockey organization has asked for \$500 pledges from the families. They need \$135,000 and they got \$35,000 from the schools for the hockey program.
- Hockey currently uses the Armory and Red Bank facility in Wall. The Armory has 1.5 sheets of ice and the site in Wall has three sheets.
- HIM raises a good portion of funds from a community yard sale.
- The Lincroft Village has plans for two more bocce courts.
- There will be a concert in the Village Green starting Tom Chapin and they currently use Middletown's mobile stage.
- A survey that was done in Lincroft identified that there is a need for teen hangout space in the community.
- The Lincroft Village Green is limited in its parking with people parking in the mall and commons area.
- They have spent \$50,000 on the park so far and they have a line of credit that has been paid off.

Vision:

- Need a new ice rink with three sheets of ice.
- Need more variety of activities such as providing facilities for field hockey, lacrosse and more walking trails.
- The Village Green should have a pavilion and stage for bands, restrooms and other improvements.
- Need well for irrigation and sprinklers and landscaping in the park.

Focus Group: Poricy Park Conservancy

Present: Kathryn (Kate) Kinney
Wayne Bain, BCI

Comments:

- Poricy Park is a 250 acre Nature Conservancy Trail that includes the historical Murray Farm House with a 15 member board. For 37 years, 7 land acquisitions utilizing Green Acre, New Jersey Conservancy Funds to purchase the total of 250 acres.
- The area also includes revolutionary war home and 70 million year old fossil bed.
- The property is owned by the Township and leased to the Conservancy for a nominal fee.
- The PPC provides history and environmental science programs to over 6,000 school children annually. Students come from all over the state of New Jersey, however Middletown students are the primary focus.
- The programs for the students are fee based.

Concern:

- The Board is concerned that the Parks and Recreation understand the purchase agreements with Green Acre funds that the deed restriction require the conservancy be kept as a passive nature preserve.
- The Board is concerned that someone may want to try and divert the property to active area which would require a diversion request through the State of New Jersey.
- The Board wanted to advise us of the funding process and how it was bought with the funds for passive open space.

Vision:

- Expand the education programs to high school and colleges. Currently they only serve students through the 6th grade.
- Need a golf cart to traverse the facility.

Focus Group: Middletown Swim and Tennis Club

Present: Patty Ouellette, Manager
Annette Schultz, RBA
Patrick Hoagland, BCI
Wayne Bain, BCI

Date: March 26, 2007

Comments:

She worked for the Board of Education for 30 years and has been a counselor for the last 13 years.

- She was also a high school tennis coach for 26 years.
- She coaches a tennis team at Normandy Park
- Member of the Middletown Swim Club since she was 12 years old.
- Formerly a privately owned facility which the Township took over in 1997. It is considered a self sustaining program. The swim club was in poor condition and was losing members at the time the Township took over. She was hired to revitalize the program and bring in members.
- They upgraded some cabanas and started renovation.
- The club has 1800 members.
- The club provides swimming lessons for 300 children and a free day camp for members for 150 children of 4 to 8 years old.
- The swim team has over 100 children in the program.
- Hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday thru Friday and 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday.
- The swim club has a real sense of community.
- They provide recreation programs every afternoon.

Concerns:

- Repair bottom of the main pool.
- Need to upgrade the electricity.
- Repair the leaks.
- Need new picnic tables.
- Update the bathroom walls, lights, etc.

Vision:

- Upgrade bathrooms
- Make the pool accessible
- Add new exciting pool features.
- Move the concession facility to a new location near the picnic area to get the food away from the pool area.
- Add more cabanas
- Add a facility to the concession building for program use on rainy days
- Improve the beach front areas in the community

- Add a facility to the concession building for program use on rainy days
- Improve the beach front areas in the community
- Need an indoor walking track.
- Need supervised programs for the children
- Need to fix the tennis courts at Normandy Park for high school matches. Needs a fifth.
- Need indoor recreation facility to house basketball, gym, walking track, fitness facility to keep up with the community life style.
- Youth are asking for an indoor aquatic facility.
- Youth are asking for an indoor ice rink.
- Need additional programs for people over age 40.
- Need to open the high school tracks for public use.

Focus Group: Summer Camp Program

Present: Tracy Osbourne, Summer Camp Director
Annette Schultz, RBA
Patrick Hoagland, BCI
Wayne Bain, BCI

Date: March 26, 2007

Comments:

- The Summer Day Camp program uses schools primarily for the program. Changes were made this year due to construction in the schools. They are held at Croydon Hall, Normandy Park and Nutswamp School and Harmony School/Thompson Middle School.
- The cost is \$20 for a five week program from the end of June through most of July.
- Hours at 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- Last year there were 1,000 children in the program and there is a maximum of 1,200.
- Two years ago there was no fee for this program.
- At one time there were 20 sites and now they reconfigured six years ago to adjust to three sites.
- The overall program has been going on for about 30 years and she has been a Director for 24 years.
- Now this is more of a day camp instead of a drop in recreation program.
- She feels that they could raise the fees without much problem. She feels that they could cut out some of the trips because many groups are coming to them such as the fire house on wheels, library, mad science, county parks naturalists, etc.
- The staff includes 25 people at each site with two teachers and the rest being high school students and some college students.
- Children bring their own snacks and lunches.

Vision:

- The five week program is long enough and the hours are fine.
- If they charge more, then they could provide better programs and provide more money for staff. Could have more teachers that are better trained with additional funds.

Focus Group: Tonya Keller Bayshore Recreation Center

Present: John Kochon, Director of the Bayshore Recreation Center
Stephanie Copper, Assistant Director
Wayne Bain, BCI

Date: March 27 & 28, 2007

Comments:

- Mr. Kochon has worked for Parks and Recreation for 23 years, Assistant Director at Bayshore for 10 years, Director of Hillside for 7 years, and Director of Bayshore for 6 years.
- Ms. Cooper started working for Parks and Recreation in high school then worked with tennis, beach program and miniature golf. She ran the miniature golf program for 16 years and currently she is the Assistant Director of the Bayshore Recreation Center in charge of the office, teens, trips, and after school program.
- Primary program is Just for Toddlers, pre-school which provides for children 18 months thru pre-kindergarten.
- The Mommies and Me program for 18 months to 2 ½ years which meets 1 time a week for 3 – 10 week sessions.
- 2 ½ year olds meet two times per week during 3 – 10 week sessions and two classes per group.
- 3 year olds meet two times a week for 3 – 10 week sessions with two classes per group.
- Pre-kindergarten meets 3 times per week for 3 – 10 week sessions with two classes per group.
- The center has a game room with various table games such as air hockey, foosball, etc.
- The center has a small gym for basketball, kickball, etc. Women's aerobics in the gym on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 7 – 8:45 p.m. The lounge area has computers, television, VCR, etc.
- Ceramics room has classes for the following: 6 – 11 year olds on Monday, 12+ on Thursday and adults on Thursday night.
- Provide after school programs until 5:00 for kids in basketball, kickball, etc.
- Provide nominal cost trips such as basketball, movies, bowling, roller skating, etc.
- Center has one additional full-time staff person, Stephanie Cooper and four seasonal for the Just for Toddlers Program and two 30/hour per week custodians. There is also an aerobics instructor and a ceramics instructor under contract.
- Membership into the center is free to Middletown residents in that they pay only for programs with the fees. They have an option to purchase annual liability insurance for \$3.00 per year.

Vision:

- The Township needs additional baseball and softball fields.
- Township needs an ice rink in the community.
- Township needs a multi-purpose indoor facility for basketball, indoor sports, etc.
- There is a need for additional seasonal staff for various recreation programs.
- Need to upgrade the playgrounds at Bayshore because it has outdated equipment.
- Develop a walking track on the open field behind the Bayshore Recreation Center.
- The Township needs a public outdoor swimming pool where residents can go for a nominal fee.

- The Bayshore Center opened in 1975 and 1976 and could use a major overhaul such as outdoor basketball needs re-surfacing, parking lot could be paved, etc.
- The Townships needs more of its current fields lighted.
- Potential construction of a Just for Toddlers facility since they currently have a waiting list for kids and could expand the program.
- Develop an outdoor public aquatic facility.
- Develop an ice rink in the community.
- Provide funds for training of maintenance staff and other recreation personnel.

Focus Group: Hillside Community Center

Present: Joe Fragale, Hillside Community Center Director
Patrick Hoagland, BCI
Wayne Bain, BCI

Date: March 27, 2007

Comments:

- Mr. Fragale is a former teacher and is in his fourth year running the Hillside Community Center.
- He reports to Ben Curci.
- Two main programs that are offered in the center include the Just for Toddlers which has a 2 year old class and a 3 year old class. This goes from September to May Tuesdays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 - Approximately 33 kids in the program and only one room.
 - There is also a kitchen, gym and a general purpose room.
 - There are a maximum of 12 children per class.
 - There are four teachers and aides that run programs.
 - The program funds itself with the 2 years old that pay \$155 for three 8 week sessions. 3 years olds pay \$175 and pre-kindergarten at \$125 per session.
 - Participants are mostly Middletown Residence.
- Another program is the Pre-school age playgroup which is a two hour program. The program was started in 1980.
- The building siding is old and faded and the building needs some repair work.
- In the summer, the facility has open hours and after school they have an open door from 3 – 4:30 p.m.
- Basketball goals are set at 8'6" for the neighborhood kids since it is not set up as a full size gym. They get approximately 6-18 kids per day in the gym and game room. They also play wiffle ball/dodge ball and other activities. Very few attend the facility on Saturdays.
- Mr. Fragale also helps with Middletown Days which attracts 15,000 people to the Croydon Hall grounds.
- A church uses the facility on Sundays and new policy allows for the rental of the facility.

Vision:

- Most of the buildings are in this area of town and they need a facility in the south.
- Need to improve facilities that they already have.
- Need a real recreation center with a gym.

