

**The Town of Hilton Head Island
Parks & Recreation Commission
Thursday, February 10, 2011
3:30 p.m.**

Members Present: Daniel Gafgen, Jack Hamrick, John McCann, Robert Moore, Timothy Singleton,

Members Absent: P. Jeffrey North, Marc Stuckart

Town Staff: Anne Cyran, Jill Foster, Julian Walls, Brian Hulbert

Town Council: Bill Ferguson

Other: Frank Soule, *Island Recreation Association*

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McCann called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

III. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT COMPLIANCE

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of January 13, 2011 were approved as presented.

V. APPEARANCE BY CITIZENS

None

VI. REPORTS

- **Update from Island Recreation Association.** Mr. Frank Soule stated that the Snow Day event in January was successful but not as large as a turnout as expected due to the cold weather. Spring sports registration is beginning. Mr. Soule requested to have the Island Recreation Association budget proposal placed on the Parks & Recreation March 10, 2011 meeting agenda.
- **Update from Beaufort County Parks & Leisure Services.** There has been no report since September 9, 2010.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Spring Break Tennis. Mr. Klint Van Aswegen stated that Spring Break Tennis has been on Hilton Head Island for 28 years and he has been in charge of it for the past two years.

Spring Break Tennis (SBT) brings college teams from up and down the east coast to play head-to-head matches with the majority of play on hard courts. Mr. Aswegen stated Hilton Head Island has plenty of clay courts but a limited number of hard courts. Mr. Aswegen stated that SBT has been renting Chaplin courts and Cordillo courts for the last five years. SBT pays a fee each year to the Island Recreation Center.

Spring Break Tennis uses 14 sites on the Island, and Chaplin and Cordillo are the most important because they are hard courts. This past year a group named PTR started an event called Spring Tennis Fest. Mr. Aswegen stated the courts were given to PTR by the Island Recreation Center in a contract without a bidding process. Spring Break Tennis was not given an opportunity to use the courts. SBT starts in March and there are 45 matches unscheduled that will now have to be played on clay courts. Mr. Aswegen asked how this going to be rectified?

Commissioner Singleton asked Mr. Aswegen: 1. Are there other hard courts on Hilton Head Island or in Bluffton that you can use? 2. Can you use the courts at Hilton Head High School as a short-term solution? Mr. Aswegen replied that Spring Break Tennis already uses the high school courts and all other available courts on Hilton Head Island. Mr. Aswegen stated that March 5 thru 17 is the busiest time for the tennis matches – 45 matches are held each day.

Commissioner Singleton suggested collaborating with PTR on scheduling the courts. Mr. Aswegen answered that because PTR has the contract, and they've scheduled all of the available time at Chaplin courts and Cordillo courts, Spring Break Tennis will not have access to those courts.

Chairman McCann asked Mr. Aswegen when he found out that the courts were not going to be available this year. Mr. Aswegen replied that PTR went around to all 14 facilities in April of last year and only 1 out of 14 facilities gave them a contract and that was Island Recreation Center. PTR has 50+ teams whereas SBT has 170 teams.

Mr. Frank Soule responded that the Island Recreation Association is entrusted with the Town facilities to do what is best for the community and for the tennis-playing public which is why Island Recreation signed a contract with PTR. PTR is a not-for-profit organization. Chaplin tennis courts have only been available for spring tennis events for the past six years. The Island Recreation Association works to protect the assets of the community - it is not taken lightly. PTR approached Island Recreation with the proposal of Spring Tennis Fest. The Island Recreation Association has a history working with PTR and trusts them. The Island Recreation Board is working to resolve the issue with the tennis courts.

Commissioner Singleton asked Mr. Soule if there is a way to accommodate SBT. Mr. Soule replied that every year the Island Recreation Association evaluates the play on public tennis courts. Mr. Soule stated that the tennis playing public knows in advance that spring tennis events take place during March and for those two weeks the public tennis courts have limited availability.

The general public has complained about the inability to get on the tennis courts for play.

Commissioner Gafgen asked if there could be a compromise. Mr. Soule replied that the Island Recreation Association has worked closely with PTR. Those two weeks in March are booked. Mr. Soule stated that he has tried to make some courts available to public during those two weeks.

Commissioner Moore stated he hopes that everyone who wants to use the courts can be accommodated. College students coming in will be using island restaurants and hotels and shopping at local businesses. The needs of citizens who live here year round also cannot be ignored.

Commissioner Hamrick asked Mr. Soule if the Island Recreation Center has procedures or processes written or published somewhere. Mr. Soule replied that the Island Recreation Center website has information on court rental and scheduling information.

Commissioner Singleton stated that part of Mr. Aswegen's complaint shows a lack of communication; how did the Island Recreation Center communicate the new contract situation to Mr. Aswegen so he had the opportunity to plan his tennis schedule? Mr. Soule answered that he is guilty of not communicating as well as he should have. Mr. Soule stated he did what was best for our community; this will bring more people to the community to play tennis.

Mr. Aswegen stated that PTR made an offer to buy Spring Break Tennis last year but they were turned down. Then PTR started Spring Tennis Fest and are operating it as a for-profit venture. Mr. Aswegen stated Spring Break Tennis has a large local investment and asked how a contract can be given to one entity instead of another.

Commissioner Singleton asked Mr. Aswegen what outcome he would like to see. Mr. Aswegen stated that he approved of the fact that there will now be a record of the contract process. PTR has a contract with the Island Recreation Center. Mr. Aswegen stated that he wants the Town involved to determine the amount of income generated on those courts by PTR. He stated SBT is offering \$80 per match for courts. Mr. Aswegen wants to know if PTR is using all three available court times and what amount of income are they generating.

Mr. Aswegen stated that PTR has been given all available court times because of possible rain dates. Mr. Aswegen stated that he wants dollar amounts tallied by the Island Recreation Center and shown to Town Council. He stated that his teams are willing to pay for those courts. Mr. Aswegen stated that he won't see the detriment to his business this year; it will be next year.

Mr. Soule stated that the reality is that it is not about dollars and cents. It is about finding an organization to treat Town assets properly. The dollar amount is a small part of the contract.

Citizen: Mary Davenport asked the Commission "Why are you in the tennis business? I don't understand why you people build courts to compete with all the other people on the island who have tennis courts. Biggest majority are home owners that have their own tennis court or are in a plantation with tennis courts. So why take on the expense of taking care of tennis courts?"

Commissioner Moore replied that the Town has public facilities provided on Town property for the citizens of the community; not everyone lives in a gated community. He stated that the issue is whether those facilities continue to be leased to private or for-profit businesses.

Chairman McCann asked Mr. Soule to take a look at the courts and the schedules and see if he could allow SBT to use a few more courts. Chairman McCann stated that even if Mr. Soule has to inconvenience someone, whatever he can arrange would be appreciated. Mr. Soule replied that the Island Recreation Board is working on it.

Chairman McCann told Mr. Aswegen that the Parks & Recreation Commission understands his position, but doesn't understand why it took so long for him to come to the Commission. He said that he knew there were a lot of reasons so he won't go into it. Chairman McCann asked Mr. Soule to come to the April Parks & Recreation Commission meeting with a recommended policy on how the tennis courts will be allocated next year, what the procedure will be for getting a tennis court, what the contract will look like and what details there are on obtaining those tennis courts for next year so that Mr. Aswegen and others don't have the same situation next year. Chairman McCann also asked that the budget include the income from the courts in a line item.

Mr. Brian Hulbert asked the Commissioners to hold off on the policy request from Mr. Soule for the April Parks & Recreation agenda because the Town's agreement with the Island Recreation Center for managing Chaplin tennis courts and Cordillo tennis courts as well as other facilities is up for renewal this year. Town staff will be meeting with Mr. Soule to discuss how we can come up with a policy to address these issues. Mr. Hulbert stated that the Town doesn't want to rush into anything, but instead it wants to do what is best for the community. Chairman McCann asked that when the agreement and policy is complete that it be brought back to the Parks & Recreation Commission and the Commission will inform Mr. Aswegen.

Commissioner Singleton made a recommendation that the need for more tennis courts be brought to Town Council for discussion. Commissioner Singleton stated that the impact of spring break is large and that people shouldn't be turned away from Hilton Head Island based on whatever so-called bias certain people might see.

IX. UPDATES

None

X. PARK COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Eileen Wilson

Approved by: _____
John McCann, Chairman