

Proposed Changes for EM Recreation

Since its inception by town vote at 1966 Town Meeting, the East Montpelier Recreation Board (often referred to as the East Montpelier Recreation Committee – EMRC) has operated as a town committee under selectboard control. EMRC has been responsible for maintaining the town’s recreation fields adjacent to the elementary school and encouraging recreational activities by residents. Currently there are seven members in the group all of whom have been approved by the selectboard for terms of three years. To support the committee’s objectives, the town has allocated funds (\$3,000 annually since 2000) for field maintenance and operational costs as well as support for other programs including swimming lesson, baseball, and an annual Easter Egg Hunt.

Beginning in the fall of 2008, youth sports programs for soccer and basketball, which previously had been organized and operated by East Montpelier Elementary School, were assumed by the EMRC. To support these programs adequately, participant fees have been charged for each sport. Over the years, these fees have fully funded the sports programs and have generated a surplus which, combined with additional fundraising revenues, have allowed the group to purchase new aluminum youth soccer goals, adjustable basketball backboards for our kindergarten to grade 2 program, new uniforms as well as new balls and other essential equipment. Funds have been used also to acquire gear to help get a youth lacrosse program up and running.

During the town’s most recent audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, the town’s auditors included a management letter comment in its report regarding the handling of EMRC funds. Given that the EMRC is operating as a function of the town, all monies collected are essentially town of East Montpelier funds. The auditors point out that all transactions with town funds should be handled by Town Treasurer Don Welch. Currently, the EMRC has its own bank account under the town’s tax identification number and all transactions related to the group are handled by the EMRC. Funds are collected and deposited and checks are written and signed by the treasurer of the EMRC. Annually, the EMRC provides a complete listing of all transactions and detailed support of requested items to the town treasurer and to the auditors.

As a result of the auditor’s suggested change in operations, a dialog between Don Welch and members of the EMRC began in late January, 2015 to explore ways to make the necessary adjustments without over-burdening the town treasurer or making it difficult for the EMRC to function. In exploring various options, an opportunity presented itself that would not only address the auditor’s concern, but would also provide for an opportunity to expand the EMRC’s programs.

At the selectboard meeting on May 18, 2015 Phillip Heinz and Kathy Richardson presented the EMRC’s proposal for creating a new non-profit entity which would assume the historic role of the EMRC (thus eliminating the need for the town committee) with regards to the stewardship of the town fields and would also operate the youth sports programs. A formal agreement would be established between the town and the non-profit entity regarding the new organization’s responsibilities to act as the caretakers of the space in exchange for the right to use the fields for its programs. In addition, the non-profit would continue to present a detailed budget request annually to the town to cover the operational and identified maintenance needs of the space. This approach will not only clear up any ambiguities that currently exist with the committee’s operations and town approvals needed, but more importantly, it would allow the new non-profit entity to create stronger youth programs by allowing for collaboration with other communities within our school district.

The selectboard intends to schedule a special town meeting on this proposal sometime in late summer/early fall. You may see more on this topic on the town website:

<http://eastmontpeliervt.org/boards-commision/recreation-board/>