

Proposed Changes for EM Recreation

Since its inception, the East Montpelier Recreation Committee (EMRC) has been responsible for maintaining the facilities known as the East Montpelier Recreation Fields located at 40 Vincent Flats Road and to encourage recreational activities by residents. Currently there are seven members in the group all of which have been approved by the select board for a term of three years. In order to accomplish the objective for which the committee was established, there has been a monetary allocation in the town's budget for field maintenance and operational costs as well as a few other programs (swimming lesson subsidies, baseball support, and an annual Easter Egg hunt). This budgetary allocation has been \$3,000 since at least July 2004.

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. In order to adequately support the sports programs, participant fees have been charged on a per sport per participant basis. Over the years, these fees have fully funded the sports programs and have generated a surplus which has allowed the group (combined with some fundraising funds) to purchase new aluminum youth soccer goals, adjustable basketball backboards for our Kindergarten to grade 2 program, and new uniforms as well as new balls and other essential equipment. Funds have also been used to acquire equipment to help get a youth Lacrosse program up and running.

During the town's most recent audit for fiscal year ended June 30, 2014, the town's auditors included a management letter comment in its report regarding the handling of monetary aspects of the EMRC. Given the EMRC is operating as a function of the town, all monies collected are essentially Town of East Montpelier funds and thus the auditors pointed out that all transactions 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 Kathy Richardson as 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 this requested 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 select board 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 EMRC) in 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 stewards 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. While this approach initially seemed like a lot of work, as the EMRC began looking into it further, the more we realized it would not only clear up any ambiguities that currently exist with our operations and town approvals needed, but more importantly, it would allow us to create stronger youth programs by allowing for collaboration with other communities within our school district. We are excited about the opportunity to make this operational change while still being able to provide access the same or better youth sports programs and would welcome the support of the community.