



# WESTTOWN GAZETTE

A Quarterly Newsletter to the Citizens of Westtown Township - Fall Issue #47

## PICKLEBALL ANYONE?

Township amateur athletes who look longingly at the construction in Oakbourne Park will have to wait a bit for their pickleball, tennis, and basketball, but the improvements are well under way and on schedule for next spring.

I have had my concerns about this project because of the high-cost estimates, but fortune has been kind to us. Grants, a low-interest loan and tight budgeting has made this project affordable and a good investment—but only if we can take full advantage of these new facilities with a clear view of how to proceed. To achieve a smooth launch, the Township will have to invest in staff and technology to manage and coordinate the recreation demands that are coming.

There will be a rush for usage of these new facilities. To avoid congestion, unnecessary waiting time, and usage hogging, someone must be responsible for reservations as well as enforcing schedules and prioritizing access for Township residents. We are already looking at online systems to assist in these efforts, but a person must be available to make the system work smoothly.

Earlier this year, I attempted to stimulate individual recreational activity with a program that invited residents to form their own interest groups that could use our parks and other Township facilities. A few self-starter groups are forming, but the feedback from residents clearly indicates that residents want activities run by the Township. They point to other townships that offer scheduled classes for yoga and fitness, card clubs, bus trips, etc.

We also heard from other residents who want to use park grounds for casual team sports such as volleyball. They point out that Oakbourne Park is supposed to be open to the public, but restrictions that the Township has placed on its use virtually eliminate free use for groups of more than 15 people. I suspect there will be additional resident recreational requests that must be considered.

All these recreation needs can be accommodated with a revitalized plan that clearly and comprehensively lays out the Township's recreation responsibilities. We need to consider how our assets should be used, how they can be financially supported, and how best to supervise all these activities.

Two other factors make this planning effort timely and critical. First, our recreation goals must mesh with the Township's mandate to generate revenue from renting Oakbourne Mansion and park grounds to help sustain these assets. These goals cannot be at cross purposes. Second, the Township is getting closer to acquiring 200 acres of Crebilly Farm, but there is absolutely no plan for this property. Now is the time to plan how the land will be used, as well as how it will be maintained, improved, financially sustained, and made available for passive recreation.

In the very near future, the Supervisors will be addressing these issues, and we will be looking for input from our Parks & Recreation Commission as well as our residents. Stay tuned.

*Thomas Foster*

**Thomas Foster**

Chair, Board of Supervisors

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