

**PARK BOARD**  
**ST. JOHN, INDIANA**  
**June 29, 1999**

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The Park Board of the Town of St. John met on this date with the following members present:

Attendee 1, Eileen Butcher	Attendee 4,
Attendee 2, Joan Millis	Attendee 5, David Wickland, Attorney
Attendee 3,	Attendee 6,

The following members absent:

Absent 1, Mary Anne Koke	Absent 4
Absent 2, Paul Haller	Absent 5
Absent 3, Fred Kish, Council Liaison	Absent 6

**CALL TO ORDER**

The special meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Eileen Butcher announced that Mary Anne Koke would be in attendance later in the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

In the absence of a quorum, no official action could be taken.

**OPEN DISCUSSION**

[St. John Heartland Park / Girls Softball Fields](#)

Bill Sweeney, 9115 Lancer Dr., requested the minutes from the regular June meeting; a set is available from the Clerk's office.

Eileen Butcher referenced an article in today's paper which expressed girls' softball preference to have exclusive access to the fields for four months each year. She reiterated her quoted remarks that the girls should have "first dibs" on the softball fields;

as lights become available in the future and there are four available fields, "it would be nice to have men's and women's leagues." The men and women would be asked to play later at night, allowing the fields to be shared. J. Millis expressed agreement that Heartland is a public park and should not be limited to the use of one activity.

Joan indicated she had tried to find the "99-year lease" mentioned in the article; none of the people with long association with the Town knew of it, nor was any record found in the Clerk's office. Civic Park was founded when the Civic Club family signed a quick claim deed to the Town Council, so that this one park has always been a responsibility of the Town, not the Park Board. There is no mention of exclusive use for any group in the deed. Speaking from the audience, Michelle Haluska felt this was done in the '40's or '50's, according to existing minutes.

Bill Sweeney responded that girls' softball has no concern with Civic Park and asked that the discussion move back to Heartland Park. He reiterated that the league depends on income from the concession stand, so it is essential that they play where there are four fields.

Joan Millis affirmed that bids are out for the fencing and completion of two fields. Kathy Willman, a member of the Town Council, was asked to identify any Town funds that would assist in the completion of two more fields; she found none. There are some funds in the Park Development Fund (\$42,000.00); and the balance of the Park Instruction Fund is \$187,000.00, however much of this is already earmarked for equipment.

Joan Millis confirmed that since the fencing is way behind schedule, David Wickland had prepared a letter to Reeves Fence to initiate work by July 10 and to complete the work within 30 days. If this is not done, he felt the Park Board must re-bid the project.

Eileen Butcher confirmed that the Park Board budget has been allocated an additional \$40,000 this year, beginning in July 1999, provided all taxes are paid. She explained that the budget January-June, 1999 has been \$56,000, with \$30,000 allocated for grass cutting, and \$5,000 for pond treatments. Joan Millis noted that two subdivisions will be contributing impact fees for each single family home building permit (\$723.00/house), i.e., Meyers Addition and Rosewood Estates. However, Eileen Butcher noted that the new income must be divided among the existing parks.

Bill Sweeney inquired whether the girls' softball league was being asked to "develop" the infields. Joan Millis confirmed that they have maintained the fields in the past; Eileen Butcher explained that the Park Board will prepare the fields for softball, i.e., grade and seed. Mr. Sweeney noted that the girls have a gravel infield, not grass. About 5 years ago, it cost about \$2,000.00 to prepare a gravel infield. Mr. Sweeney objected to shouldering the cost for fields that they would not be able to use.

John Taylor requested help (labor, not funds) for the activities going on out at Heartland now. John Homolka responded that if girls softball donates time, he expects the Town to put them first, "not revenue from the parks" (rental income from other leagues). Eileen Butcher reiterated that additional leagues would probably only come when lights are available, and there are no current plans for lights.

Joan Millis discussed a situation from last summer when a Schererville travelling team asked to use Civic Park. She directed him to discuss the request “with a Commissioner” so that they resolved their schedules. She felt it would not be fair not to let others play when girls softball are not using the fields, and was not agreeable to the idea of a “covenant” with girls softball. She and Eileen confirmed that girls softball still gets the highest priority for use of Larimer and East Park Complex. She cited the example of the cooperation of three groups who use the fields for soccer in the fall, and who share the expense for the porta-potty.

A member of the audience objected to the comparison since most boy’s leagues have their own fields. He inquired how many women’s leagues had requested use of the field; there have been none, as there are no lights. He stated that since the girls are organized and here now, and have a strong interest in the fields, they should have some “say so” on the fields. Joan Millis agreed that since they are “St. John Girls’ Softball”, they get priority scheduling, but not exclusive use of the fields. Eileen Butcher felt the discussion was moot, since the problem of competitive scheduling doesn’t exist.

David Wickland reported that ANR pipeline has “given reason to believe” that they will grant St. John’s request for permission to build two additional fields to the north, partly over their property. They have stipulated that a limited number of people can be within X feet of the pipeline which runs through an easement; this should not present a problem for the outfield (no spectators there).

Mr. Sweeney asked if four backstops could be built instead of fencing two fields, since two fields are of no use to the league. John Taylor responded that the land is not ready for the field, as it still needs grading and balancing. In addition, the cost of the outfield fence would not offset the cost of the backstops. David Wickland confirmed that the ANR is requiring that the entire outfield for the two additional fields be fenced.

Mr. Sweeney inquired whether the Park Board would be leasing East Park next year; it expects to renew the 5-year lease until the School Corporation needs it. He stated that the girls would continue to play there until four fields are ready at Heartland because of their dependence on income from the concession stand. Joan Millis explained that the backstops are scheduled for completion in September with funds remaining from the \$1.1 million bond; since grading, seed, backstops, roads and parking must be paid out the remaining funds, it is unclear how much money remains.

Eileen Butcher expressed her preference for the completion of the walking paths, then the two additional fields, perhaps with some financial assistance from the Town Council.

Joe Hero, 11723 South Oakridge Drive, inquired if there is still \$187,000.00 from the bond issue; this is correct. He asked how it is earmarked; Joan Millis explained that \$76,000.00 is for fencing and backstops for 3 fields, a partial bill of \$8,000.00 is for curbs; additional expenses for land balancing (bills not yet received), \$60,000.00 is for walking paths, and \$17,000.00 is for construction of volleyball courts. Some funds have been used to make the first interest payment. Mr. Hero inquired why the project is not finished and suggested the cause was “bad management”. However, the contractor has been unresponsive since the bid was issued last October. David Wickland felt the contractor may have bid too many jobs. Eileen Butcher confirmed that the contract

required the work to be completed in the spring of '99, however the weather has been too wet to do the work.

Mr. Homolka questioned why the girls should believe that the Park Board is giving them first priority, when the 5-year Plan lists an ice rink and multipurpose recreation as the first item, followed by four softball fields. Walking paths are not listed; he asked why the Park Board is going "out of order" to finish other projects before the four softball fields. E. Butcher responded that the Park Board has an obligation to serve other St. John residents besides those interested in the sports activities. She stressed that the Ice Arena is not within the purview of the Park Board.

Joan Millis noted that skateboarders (whose parents pay taxes) petitioned the Park Board to have paths for skateboarding. In addition, the paths are part of the "Intermodal Transportation Plan" to connect all the parks in St. John; these plans are available in Public Works. Joan Millis further explained that the 5-Year Plan was completed when Heartland was just commencing, before its final uses were known; the Plan should be considered as a guideline. Eileen Butcher also recalled that residents were given an opportunity to provide input on the activities to be included in the park.

Joe Gomeztagle, 9477 West Oakridge Drive, inquired about the plan for the revised order of completion for the 5-Year Plan. Joan Millis noted that equipment for two parks is the next priority.

Joe Hero expressed concern over the low attendance of Park Board members and suggested that since this Board is "improperly constituted", it is time for a new park board. Kathy Willman confirmed that the newspaper notice for a 7:30 meeting was in error, so the first part of the meeting has been set aside for informal discussion.

Michael Forbes, 12466 W. 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue asked for clarification on the provision for the two additional fields. Joan Millis confirmed that the ANR easement is one critical component, along with the additional land balancing, grading, seeding, and fencing.

Mr. Gomeztagle inquired what the Town residents could do to assist the project; David Wickland felt that everything was being done, and since ANR are expanding their pipeline, requiring more land and easements, this is a good time to request their cooperation for the fields. The manager in charge of land is working on it now. David Wickland expects a response within 10-14 days.

Regarding the fencing, David Wickland confirmed that if Reeves does not commence work on or before July 10, the fencing would have to be re-bid, probably requiring another special meeting. Mr. Gomeztagle felt the Town people should be informed of the outcome of the July 10 deadline. David Wickland explained that the legal bidding process is "more streamlined" if the cost is less than \$75,000.00; if it's more, then official publications would require another 30 days; he was not comfortable taking the second highest bid. He also noted that state law prohibits dividing up a project to avoid a bidding process. If Reeves does initiate work, then the Board can proceed with the normal bidding process for only two more fences.

Joan noted that if funds can be found for the fencing, the Park Board would re-allocate its budget to find funds to complete two additional infields. Some funds are available

from the rental income from the home at Heartland. David Wickland felt that a quorum of the Park Board could authorize the re-bidding process for four fields, contingent upon appropriations.

A member of the audience inquired about the cost of the backstops. John Taylor responded that the design of the backstops was provided by girls softball. He also confirmed that the walking paths were designed to cross between the backstops of the four fields; the girls softball representatives inquired where the concession stand should go. The intersection of the paths could be widened to accommodate the building, with additional blacktopping for easy access. A diagram of the layout was requested for display. A recent drawing, not including a few changes, was posted. The timing of the construction of a new concession stand is unknown.

A ten-minute break was called at 8:15 p.m. Mary Anne Koke arrived at 8:25 p.m. and the meeting was reconvened.

- Motion by Joan Millis, seconded by Mary Anne Koke, to go out for additional bids, contingent upon Dave Wickland's receipt of comment from Reeves regarding the July 10 work initiation deadline; if there is no response or work, the Park Board will seek bids for 5 ball field fences, i.e., (1) Babe Ruth field and four girls softball fields, including backstops. An additional contingency was placed upon receiving approval from ANR Pipeline for the use of the field, and identifying additional funds.

Discussion: Joan Millis noted that the bid would be in excess of \$75,000.00, resulting in a longer process, including legal advertisement in local newspapers and the opening of sealed bids. After July 10, if there is enough money and ANR has given their approvals, then the advertisements can be placed. If Reeves comes through, the bid can be altered to cover two fences. It was noted that the current fences at East Park complex are designed to be moved.

D. Wickland suggested that if bid properly, the engineer can write the specs to specify alternatives, such as re-using the moveable fences, the quantity of fences, etc.

- Passed unanimously on voice vote.

Joe Gomeztagle inquired whether a special meeting would be held to inform the public about the outcome of the July 10 deadline; interested persons can call the Public Works office, or attend the next regular Park Board meeting on July 27.

### [St. John Heartland Park / Volleyball Courts](#)

Eileen Butcher noted that the volleyball league now has 8 teams playing at Homestead Acres. Additional interested teams were turned away due to lack of space. Only one bid was received from the three letters requesting bids for the courts. Metro's proposal for the cost of construction included two alternatives, one for sand, stone and drainage fabric came in at \$21,630.00; the other method uses sand, stone and cover tile for \$16,950.00.

- Motion by Joan Millis, seconded by Mary Anne Koke, to accept Metro Excavating's bid for \$16,950.00 for sand and stone for six volleyball courts at Heartland Park.

Discussion: Eileen Butcher preferred not to spend \$17,000 on volleyball this year, noting that the bid only prepared the courts and did not include the costs of the remainder of the equipment needed. She felt that the two courts at Homestead Acres were adequate for their needs, and that the funds should be retained to use for girls softball. Motion not passed on 2-1 vote (2 ayes, 1 nay).

**PAYMENT OF BILLS**

1543	J. M. Crist	\$8,000.00 – parking lot entrance
1544	AAA Supply	\$291.84 – volleyball court equipment

- Motion by Mary Anne Koke, seconded by Joan Millis, to approve the bills as read. Passed unanimously on voice vote.

**ANY AND ALL BUSINESS**

Joe Hero expressed his opposition to the Park Board’s method of getting the four fields done. He suggested an alternate motion for separate actions; John Taylor concurred with this view, noting that the project will stretch out an additional 45 days before construction can commence. The fields will likely not be completed this year, and may be jeopardized for next year. Joan Millis responded that David Wickland has already advised the Board to spec it out for five fields so that the alternatives are built in, and East Park will continue to be available.

Mr. Gomeztagle thanked the Board for the opportunity to have a community dialogue.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Joan Millis, seconded by Mary Anne Koke, to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. Passed unanimously on voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Norma R. Yaeger  
Recording Secretary