

**TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MOUNT BETHEL
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2013 - 14
(Duly Adopted September 9th, 2013)**

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF LOWER MOUNT BETHEL TOWNSHIP, NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING THE COMMUNITY RECREATION UPDATE TO THE TOWNSHIP'S 2007 RECREATION, PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

WHEREAS, at its July 16, 2007 meeting, the Lower Mount Bethel Township Board of Supervisors adopted a Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan ("Plan"); and

WHEREAS, in connection with the Township's consideration of an update to its Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, the Township desires to update the Plan to provide a specific focus on active community recreation needs for which the Township may reasonably base recreational dedication requirements or fees in lieu thereof.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ADOPTED AND RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of the Township of Lower Mount Bethel hereby adopts the attached Community Recreation Update to the 2007 Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan.

DULY ADOPTED this 9th day of September, 2013 by a majority of the Board of Supervisors of the Township of Lower Mount Bethel, Northampton County, Pennsylvania, at a duly advertised meeting of the Board of Supervisors at which a quorum was present. As part of this Resolution, the Board of Supervisors has directed that the Chairperson, or Vice-Chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson, execute this Resolution on behalf of the Board.

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MOUNT BETHEL BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

By: *Stuart Gallaher*
Stuart Gallaher
Chair of the Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:

Lori A. Stauffer
Lori A. Stauffer, Secretary

Lower Mount Bethel Township

Northampton County

Community Recreation Update

Introduction

The purpose of this Community Recreation Update is to update and augment the *Lower Mount Bethel Township Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan* adopted by the Board of Supervisors on July 16, 2007. This update provides a specific focus on active community recreation needs for which the Township may reasonably base recreational dedication requirements or fees in lieu thereof. This update is not intended to alter policies for conservation of passive open space or natural resources. The 2007 Plan was less clear in assessing community recreation need in terms of active recreational facilities versus passive open space nor, at this juncture, is the 7-year planning horizon until 2020 adequate to plan for long-term community recreational needs.

Community Park & Recreation Facility Standards

Community park lands and facilities are usually provided by municipal government to serve a variety of local outdoor recreation needs on a regular basis, both active and passive, group and individual. In many municipalities, a system of community and neighborhood parks and/or free-standing recreation facilities might collectively meet local needs in a variety of settings, ideally spreading facilities within walking-distance or a short drive of a broad spectrum of residents.

"**Community parks**" are the larger of local parks, with a service area radius of up to 3 miles and typically encompassing approximately 25 acres or more. Community parks should include a range of recreational facilities: multi-use playing fields and courts, specialized areas/facilities for small children and for senior citizens, picnic areas, space for special events, off-street parking, paths, trails and undesignated open space. No single park need necessarily contain a full range of recreational facilities. The actual number of fields, courts and other recreation facilities included at any one park should reflect a careful analysis of community needs. Facilities for indoor recreation should also be available to the community, but need not be provided directly in conjunction with community park facilities, nor even by local government, if alternatives can be made available (school or community buildings, for example).

Individual community parks often serve a population base larger than that of Lower Mount Bethel Township in its entirety, yet the geography of Lower Mount Bethel suggests that more than one park site is needed to meet the service area radius of 3 miles. It is not uncommon for as much as half the land area in a community park to comprise undesignated open space available for passive recreational pursuit.

"Neighborhood parks" usually are smaller and less complex than community parks. They are specifically intended to provide walking-distance service (roughly one-half mile) in areas where individual "backyard" recreation opportunities are often more limited. Neighborhood parks typically comprise 5-15 acres, although as stated in the 2007 Plan, greater than 15 acres is desirable. They include area(s) appropriate for a variety of informal field sports; basketball, volleyball, and/or multi-purpose court(s); jogging and/or exercise trail; tot play area and apparatus; informal picnic and sitting area. Specific development of neighborhood parkland should be tailored to suit the needs and preferences of local residents, taking into account the availability or lack of "backyard" recreational opportunities and/or other convenient private or community recreational facilities.

"Mini-parks," are even smaller than neighborhood parks, serving more densely populated neighborhoods, villages or developments at walking-distance – ideally no more than one-quarter mile. Mini-parks may be as small as one acre or less and often focus on the daytime recreational needs of senior citizens and pre-school children with supervising adults. Principal facilities would include tot play apparatus and quiet sitting areas. Mini-parks also may include some of the recreational facilities more often found in a neighborhood park, such as basketball courts. As with neighborhood parks, specific facility development should reflect the needs and preferences of the residents of the immediate service area. Mini-park development most logically should be integrated into the township's approval of land developments which, by their nature, generate the need for such recreational facilities. However, provision for mini-park recreational development should not eliminate a developer/applicant's obligation to contribute to broader community park development.

Based on review of National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) sources, the 2007 Plan had recommended a total of 8.38 acres of community recreational lands per 1,000 residents, as the average of a range of 6.25-10.5 acres/1000 suggested by NRPA. This figure is not inconsistent with the recommendations of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's 2030 Comprehensive Plan, which restates the same range. While population-based standards are a relatively crude measure when applied to a modest population base, they offer a general measure of recreational need, and may similarly be applied to sport field and court areas typically provided at neighborhood or community parks. Standards also can be found for recreation facilities like golf courses, camping areas, and water-based recreation facilities which serve a base population far greater than that of Lower Mount Bethel alone and, thus, are not included in the discussion here. For numerous recreational activities/facilities, no population based standards are available. These tend to include primarily "passive" recreational use of open space associated, for example, with: hiking, walking, and equestrian trails; bikeways; picnic areas; fishing; and winter recreation activities.

The following population based standards for selected facilities stem from NRPA publications.

- Baseball/Softball Fields: 0.5/1,000 pop.
- Football Fields: 0.4/1,000 pop.
- Soccer Fields: 0.5/1,000 pop.
- Tennis Courts: 0.5/1,000 pop.
- Basketball Courts: 0.4/1,000 pop.
- Volleyball Courts: 0.3/1,000 pop.

Community Park & Recreation Facility Inventory

The following recreational areas generally meet the roles of community park, neighborhood park or mini-park described above and include the listed facilities:

Bryan Kiefer Memorial Park

- 1 Baseball field
- Concession Stand/storage shed
- Pavilion
- Dug outs
- Playground
- Parking

The Bryan Kiefer Memorial Park is owned by the Township and was designated a Neighborhood Park in the 2007 Plan and is referred to as a Mini-Park in the Lower Mount Bethel Township Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan). At 2.7 acres, the Mini-Park designation is probably more accurate.

Lower Mount Bethel Municipal Center

- 2 Tennis courts
- Basketball court
- Bocce court
- Pavilion
- Playground
- Gymnasium
- Parking

The Lower Mount Bethel Municipal Center comprises the grounds and building of the former Centerfield School and is owned by the Township. While relatively small, at 4.1 acres, both the 2007 Plan and the Comp Plan have designated it as a Neighborhood Park.

Riverton Recreation Complex

- 3 soccer fields
- 2 softball fields
- 3 bleachers
- 2 dug outs
- Walking trail and external trail connections (to Tekening Trail)
- Butterfly garden
- Environmental center
- Pavilion
- Playground
- Lighted and paved parking

The Riverton Recreation Complex is owned by the Township and, at 23 acres, is designated a Community Park by both the 2007 Plan and the Comp Plan.

Additional recreational areas and facilities are located within Lower Mount Bethel Township, most of which can be described as “special purpose” facilities or broad open space areas which do not specifically meet enumerated community recreational needs or do not provide a permanent guarantee of public access. These include the Martins Creek Boat Access (owned by PPL), Sandt’s Eddy Boat Access (owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania), Martins Creek Environmental Preserve (owned by PPL), Mud Run Open Space (owned by Northampton County), and the Martins Creek Ballfield (owned by Easton Industries).

Needs Assessment, 2013-2040

The 2010 US Census reported a population of 3,101 persons in Lower Mount Bethel Township. Consistent with the economic downturn in the later part of the prior decade, this represented a slight decline from the 2000 population figure. A lull in population growth would appear to continue in the short term, such that the 2010 figure can reasonably be viewed as close to the current population in 2013. Over the longer term, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) foresees significant population growth in Northampton County and a renewed economic resurgence due in large part to sheer proximity to New Jersey and New York. LVPC is now looking at a planning horizon to 2040, just over 25 years, and has updated population projections for the two counties through that date. Municipal projections are underway and have not yet been published; discussion with LVPC staff indicates that they foresee up to 20% population growth per decade in Lower Mount Bethel Township, 2010 – 2040, potentially reaching a population of 5,300.

Based on the community recreational standards discussed above, total community parkland needs can be estimated at up to 33 acres in 2013 and 56 acres in 2040. The current inventory

described above accounts for just shy of 30 acres. Generalized need for selected recreational facilities and existing inventories can be summarized as follows:

Facility	Current Inventory	2013 Need	2040 Need
Baseball/softball fields	3 fields	2 fields	3 fields
Soccer fields	3 fields	2 fields	3 fields
Tennis courts	2 courts	2 courts	3 courts
Basketball courts	1 court	1 court	2 courts
Volleyball courts	0 courts	1 court	2 courts

Current municipal park acreage and existing facilities essentially meet recreational needs calculated for 2013. Need based on facility standards alone are nearly met even as projected for 2040. The Riverton Recreation Complex meets basic criteria for a community park. However, given its location in the far northern portion of the Township and the likelihood of population growth through 2040 to be largely concentrated in the Martins Creek area (consistent with Township comprehensive planning efforts and current zoning), the future community parkland deficit should be planned to be addressed closer to Martins Creek. Much of the Township and its likely population growth is beyond the preferable community park service area radius of 2.5 miles.

Future recreational planning should include provision for a new community park of approximately 25 acres (or a combination of conveniently located neighborhood parks), including the following:

- One or two multi-purpose fields
- Two tennis courts
- One basketball court
- Two volleyball courts
- Picnic pavilion
- Playground
- Walking trail(s)
- Parking.

While formal recreational field needs are met until 2040 based on standards, new community park(s) should include multi-purpose field(s) which can be used for informal play, practice use and overflow usage for recreational league play, especially given the relative distance from most residents to the Riverton facilities. Similarly, two tennis courts are recommended in lieu of one additional on the basis of standardized needs assessment, because from a convenience of use perspective, it is better to have two courts to reduce waiting time for prospective users.

The 2007 Plan also made additional recommendations for improvements to the existing community recreation facilities, some of which already have been accomplished. Those

recommendations should continue to be observed from the standpoint of meeting current recreational needs.

Costs of Recommended Recreational Improvements

Costs for recommended new community park acquisition and development to 2040, described above, can be estimated on the basis of current dollar costs, and projected forward on the basis of an assumed modest inflation rate.

Acquisition of 25 undeveloped acres of moderately sloping land, generally free of significant water or slope constraints, might be made for approximately \$5,000 per acre or \$125,000. This represents a modest decline from the \$6,100/acre average value that Snyder Appraisal Associates estimated would result from the adoption of comprehensive agricultural protection zoning in 2006, consistent with a continuing flat real estate market.

Generalized estimates of probable facility development costs can be made for purposes of order-of-magnitude budgeting, based on 2013 prices using union labor, based on all recreational equipment being of commercial grade, delivered and installed, and recognizing that such costs do not reflect a specific park site or design. The costs below have been developed in consultation with Glackin Thomas Panzak, Inc., Land Planning & Landscape Architecture, a firm located in Paoli, Pa. and involved in park development projects. Additional assumptions are noted below:

Multi-Purpose Fields: Work includes grading a soccer-sized field to 2% in each direction, re-seeding, no line painting, no benches, ADA spectator access (10' x 10'), and assumes some erosion control fabric around “edges” – \$180,000 for two fields.

Tennis Courts: Work includes 13,000 sf of 4” thick asphalt over 4” crushed stone, line striping, (2) net assemblies, a 10’ high perimeter fence with (2) gates, and (4) 6’ long aluminum backless benches, not lit – \$50,000 for two side by side courts.

Basketball Court: Work includes 8,000 sf asphalt court (4” paving over 4” stone), painted markings, 2 goals (not adjustable), (4) 6’ long aluminum backless benches, not lit – \$30,000 for one court.

Volleyball Courts: Work includes (2) side by side 50’ x 80’ sand pit courts (12” sand over 12” crushed stone with drainage pipe), 8” high x 4” wide plastic edging, nylon taped outbound lines, (2) net assemblies w/ padded posts, no benches – \$64,000 for two side by side courts.

Picnic pavilion: “Cedar Forest” 20’ x 36’ pavilion with restrooms and a janitor’s closet, including a 4” thick concrete pad over 4” crushed stone, plus 8 picnic tables – \$116,000.

Playground: 100' x 120' playground for ages 2-5 to include \$100,000 of equipment, delivered and installed, including 12" of safety surface mulch over 12" of crushed stone and pipe with a geotextile separating the layers, bordered by 4" x 8" plastic edging, and enclosed with 4' high split-rail fence with wire mesh and (2) gates – \$180,000

Walking Trails: Work includes 8' wide, standard asphalt paving over 4" stone base around the perimeter of an approximately 25-acre area, plus two paths bisecting the park for interior access – \$60,000.

Parking: Work includes 10,000 sf of 4" standard asphalt over an 8" 2A modified base, line striping, and (2) handicapped spaces with signs and paint and ADA ramp at curb cut – \$60,000 for a 30 space lot.

General Grading: Work includes grading 10 acres of land beyond the multipurpose fields to a depth of 3 feet (48,400 cubic yards), erosion control fabric, and re-seeding 10 acres in turf grass – \$500,000.

Stormwater management: Work includes two bio-retention areas (30,000 sf each), planted with perennial plugs, 6" on center and seeded with a wet meadow seed mixture – \$300,000 for two bio-infiltration areas.

Miscellaneous: Additional items that should be considered in costing out recreational development:

- Estimate 15% of construction costs for design fees.
- Estimate 7% of construction cost for mobilization, permits, clearing, survey.
- Park identification Sign = \$5,000
- Park Rules sign (traffic sign size) = \$250
- Trash can with lid, large, embedded in concrete = \$1,400 each, assume 3 = \$4,200
- Loop bike rack, 3 bikes (one loop) = \$500 each, assume 2 = \$1,000
- Park Benches (6' w/ back) on a concrete pad = \$1,500 each, assume 4 = \$6,000

Summary Total Future Recreational Costs (rounded to nearest thousand):

Parkland Acquisition \$125,000

Recreational Facility Development \$1,556,000

Design Fees, Mobilization, Permitting, etc. \$342,000

Total Cost in 2013 Dollars \$2,023,000

As recreational development is projected over a 25+ year planning horizon to 2040, and assuming that it is undertaken over a number of years within that time frame, an average 13 year inflation factor to 2026 is used. Since future inflation is impossible to predict, it is not

unreasonable to use the same inflation rate that has occurred over the last 13 years. In that time frame, the single year inflation rate has varied from a low of 0.1% to a high of 4.1%, a reasonable range looking ahead and averaging 2.43%. Applying the same average rate, compounded annually through 2026, yields a total future cost of \$2,792,000, again rounded.

Calculation of Reasonable Fee-in-Lieu

Section 525 of the 2013 Lower Mount Bethel Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) provides for dedication of recreational lands and offers that, in the alternative, the Board of Supervisors may agree to accept fees-in-lieu of recreational land or facilities. Subsection 525.D.2 of the SALDO provides that the amount of any fee shall be set by resolution of the Board. The discussion herein is intended to provide the justification for a reasonable fee.

Since current recreational facilities and acreage, for which current residents have borne the burden of providing, very closely meet current needs, it is reasonable to assign the burden of future development costs to the future population which will generate its need. While existing residents will benefit from new facilities, so will new residents benefit from existing facilities. The costs for improvements to existing facilities, that had been recommended in the 2007 Plan and not yet completed, should continue to be borne broadly by the taxpayers of the Township. For this reason, such costs have not been included in the analysis above.

Total population increase 2013-2040 is projected at approximately 2,200 persons, which can be equated to 891 households based on an average household size of 2.47, pursuant to the most recent United States Census of 2010. Dividing the cost of recreational improvements described above over 891 future dwelling units results in a fee of \$3,134 per residential dwelling unit.

It should be noted that Section 525 of the SALDO also provides for land dedication from non-residential subdivisions or land developments, based on square footage. Applicants for non-residential land development would also be afforded an optional fee in lieu. The residential dwelling unit fee can be equated to a proportionate fee of \$0.72 (72 cents) per square foot of gross floor area of non-residential land development.

Prepared by John D. Snook, Senior Advisor
Brandywine Conservancy Environmental Management Center
Chadds Ford, PA
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