

June 20, 2011 Board Meeting Minutes—Westport Baseball & Softball, Inc.

Present: Beth Cody, John Dexheimer, Carl McNair, Bill Meyer, Jeff Mitchell, Meghan Rice, Phil Ross, Bob Smoler, Keith Stein, Courtney Wall

Absent: Ray Abramson, Steve Axthelm, Jeb Backus, Amy Bauer, Ted Freedman, Mark Giordano, Greg Hawes, Brian, Kurtz, Dave Loffredo, Mike Lustbader, Jack McFarland, Kerry Nowaskey, Paul Rossi, Tom Whelan, Courthney Wilson, Teresa Yokoi

I. Approval of Minutes: May 16th minutes were approved.

II. Chairman's Report:

(a.) Capital and Operating Budget Status: Advanced Baseball could use new L-screens. Carl bought a good one on rollers for Wakeman last year which was stolen but we retrieved it and put it back. Then the Town took it when the "Field Closed" sign was up and said it would put it back when the fields were open but it is still missing. Did they give it to Staples? Bob Smoler said they did not. Bob and Doug Bernstein bought two for the indoor batting cage. He will look around Staples anyway. Keith Stein has portable, medium sized ones at Hillspoint plus Town Farms has three good ones. An ongoing maintenance issue at Wakeman and Staples is the massive amount of vegetation growing over the fences. The visitors' dugout at Wakeman (along 1st base line) is horrible. It collapsed in the snowstorm and it is the Town's responsibility to fix it. We need to spray for bees at the fields. For softball, they have two L-screens, at Meyer and Greens Farms, but would love to have one at Town Hall North. Keith said he may have one in the container. The Big Al Clinics had a make-your-own L-screen lesson. Smoler said that Parks and Rec did a fantastic job getting Wakeman and Staples playable for this past Saturday's games after the rain. As for the potential Greens Farms upgrade, we are waiting to hear what the proposal is and then will weigh the costs against the benefits.

(b.) Sponsorships: Courtney Wall said they raised \$34,750 this spring and has collected \$25,200. She is sending follow-up letters to collect the remaining \$9,550. She is making a list of next year's candidates to sponsor district teams; it is too late for this year. She and Meghan Rice can ask spring sponsors if they'd be interested in summer. Pictures for sponsor plaques will be ready next week. An idea for sponsors would be for them to fund buckets for coaches to sit on during batting practice. Their names would be on the buckets. For next year, we should provide coupon links on the website for sponsors such as Rizzuto's. Keith said that the best logo for the website is JPEG. Tim at ASF likes EPS. Courtney Wall is moving to Boston and will also be away in July. She can help transition her successor. She did a fabulous job and will be missed.

(c.)**Non-Charter Teams' Insurance:** When teams come to Westport to play, we have insurance for them. Do they have insurance that indemnifies WLL and the Town of Westport? If a kid breaks a leg, we cover their insurance. Then we could get a letter that the break-away base didn't work so we're sued for faulty equipment/negligence. Jeff has talked to Dan Devito and he said that as long as a league (for example, I-84 or American Legion) certifies that everyone has insurance, he's comfortable that we're covered. Carl said that, at a minimum, we have to provide for whatever league has insurance. Smoler talked to Jeff White today. He's not concerned with Babe Ruth or Legion because we have insurance. He is concerned with other leagues like Greater New Haven. The older level has to be in Babe Ruth in I-84; the younger level in I-84 is not covered. Carl said that if people come to town to play us, they have to indemnify Westport Little League and the Town of Westport. We need a letter from these leagues that everyone participating has insurance.

III. Treasurer's Report: Ray is out of the country but has sent the financials. We still need to collect from Sr. Legion for Advanced Baseball. There is a lot more financial aid this year. Beth Cody will issue a financial aid report for all three leagues, without using names, so we can determine the total amount we have given. Bob Smoler said he will not tell a kid he can't play at his level because his parents can't pay for it. People have to qualify for financial aid by going to the Dept. of Human Services. Keith said if they qualified for financial aid in spring, he's covering them for summer too.

IV. President's Report:

(a.) Little League Baseball:

--End-of-Season: Keith said that we made it through the playoffs despite the weather. Forty rainout games were made up. No complaints about wood bats. Every 3rd grade team had clinics with Kevin Hlavac, the Staples freshmen baseball coach. If we need to hire any college kids this summer, ask Smoler for contacts.

--50/70 Program: The pilot program for 50/70 was a lot of work for Keith but fantastic. In the 11-12 age group, 30 are on travel teams like the Seals and Ct. Blue Jays. Another 40 played in the pilot program. There were 3 or 4 games a week plus two 2-hour clinics with Kevin Hlavac and Mike Diaz. Phil Ross and Jake Scott coached. The results were extremely positive. They monitored pitching under the LL rules and all pitching was based on availability. They used some pitchers who didn't even pitch in Majors so that helped the regular season since more pitchers were cultivated. Keith is hoping this will encourage more kids to go to the next level instead of dropping out of baseball. It makes the transition to the big field much easier. Keith thinks we should offer it again next year, with parents coordinating it.

--Summer: 160 kids want to play this summer so teams have been formed for all. Since we have one charter now, there are only three district teams---10U, 11U and 12U. District players were selected based on feedback from spring coaches, clinics, district coaches, Teresa Yokoi and Keith. For those who don't make districts, there are very favorable options in I-84 and Friendship leagues, etc. District play starts Saturday.

(b.) Advanced Baseball: We have several travel teams. 14U Koufax, coached by Dennis Accomando, is phenomenal with an 11-2 record thus far. The 8th graders in 14U stayed in town, for the most part. 13U Koufax, coached by Matt Hennessey, had defections to Ct. Blue Jays so they're doing okay, with a .500 record. 16U Mickey Mantle is coached by Anthony Daniello. 17U Junior Legion is coached by Mike Diaz. 19U Senior Legion is coached by Wayne Randazzo and has a lot of Staples Juniors on it because most of the graduating class is either playing out of town or not playing at all. There used to be three elite teams to play for; now there are 15. Having Juniors on Senior Legion is good in terms of them seeing Varsity level play which will help them for next spring. The Juniors are a very cohesive group that play well together. This is the last year Legion will let 19 year olds play; next year will be 18 and under. For Babe Ruth, there are two 13U teams and three 14-15U teams. In other towns, Babe Ruth has the best talent but in our town the best kids are siphoned off. Nevertheless, there is enough depth and talent in Babe Ruth and they are seeing strong competition; this year, some Babe Ruth players made the Staples freshman team. The mission is to keep kids in the program and see how they develop.

(c.) Softball: Steve Axthelm could not make the meeting but gave notes to Meghan Rice. The committee system is working quite well. They used the website to define committee roles. The level of play continues to improve and the pitching clinics are deemed very important. They are holding a tournament here this weekend. Meghan mentioned that there is a sale on for the signs we used to promote registration last winter—we can use generic ones that list the website and say “Now is the time to sign up for baseball and softball.” Carl said to buy 50 generic ones.

(d.) District and National Issues: The District needs feedback on our 50/70 program and we have to discuss how 50/70 impacts us next year. Bob Smoler really wants to pursue 9-10-11-12 year old travel options. Trumbull established a mini-Legion team for 10, 11 and 12's and they were the best in town. Kids had to play LL plus played in 80% of these games. Ridgefield's travel team says a kid has to play LL and can play on their travel team because it doesn't compete with LL. We should rewrite the WB&S by-laws so that a member of our Board can organize a travel program. Right now, nobody on our board can coach these teams. There should be a WB&S umbrella with Advanced Baseball, Travel Baseball and Little League under it. There will, of course, be cooperation among the three entities and it will result in good community relations. Incidentally, our board

meetings are Westport Little League, not Westport Baseball & Softball. Carl would like to set up a meeting within the month with himself, Dexheimer, Smoler, Keith and Jeff Mitchell to talk about how to proceed with travel baseball and how to manage governance as well as execution.

(e.) Miscellaneous: On another note, the Westport News is writing an article on organizations losing tax exempt status and includes Babe Ruth in it. It is incorrect and it is a P.R. issue so Carl will write a paragraph to post on the website saying that an article went out saying that Babe Ruth is losing tax exempt status and it is untrue.

(f.) Website: Bob Smoler needs training on the new website and he's been assured it will take 10 minutes to learn everything. All the summer games and practices have been posted by Jeff Mithcell. Each team can change information and update. They can send emails to everyone. Jeff Mitchell has been the webmaster for Advanced Baseball thus far. Coaches need to spend some time with Jeff. Smoler can log in and click games and change times or update field use and availability and umpire info. Jeff will train Bob. As for registration, each league can post their particular registration whenever they want.

VI. Job Openings: Unfortunately, Keith Stein wants to give up 100% of his operational duties before fall. This includes needing someone to run the fall season—this can actually be four different people. He thinks there should be a Nominating Committee, a la PTA, assigning 10 or so manageable jobs. He's working on a commissioner handbook and thinks commissioners should run their own league. We can hire someone to do a lot of these jobs. Ridgefield has a League Athletics expert, setting up registration and teams. We should do committees like softball does. We need more volunteers. National LL organizes by task while we organize by league. Keith is doing a write-up with job descriptions and will blast it to every parent in order to get volunteers. In exchange for fees for BB and SB, we can ask them to come volunteer for us. We need to identify people who can contribute. Carl said to look within and outside of our organization for volunteers; get tasks and role descriptions from Keith; pick a fall commissioner; and get a person to replace Keith as VP, Baseball. Keith did an amazing job to improve the program greatly and will be hard to replace. Carl will do a write-up to all on the Board asking them to scour our respective leagues for volunteers.

VIII. Umpires: Brian Kurtz and Rick Snyder will meet about umpires, going forward. There were some kinks in the website regarding umpires. This year, the umps were paid after they did games. We want to do more training, in the mid-season too. If you don't show up to training, you don't get assigned. There were a lot of no-shows this season, sometimes due to kinks in the system. An umpire would get a confirmation email and hit "decline" but it didn't go through so therefore the kid was a no-show. We have to fix it so we can see who's assigned on the website. We need a better process to determine who are the better umps. Should we pay adult umps to do Majors games? Right now we have three unpaid adult umpires.

MINUTES SUBMITTED by: Beth Cody

NEXT MEETING: Monday, July 18, 2011/Staples HS Room 186/7:30pm