

August 22, 2011 Board Meeting Minutes—Westport Baseball & Softball, Inc.

Present: Steve Axthelm, Jeb Backus, Scott Bloom, Beth Cody, Kevin Hlavac, Brian Kurtz, Mike Lustbader, Carl McNair, Bill Meyer, Jeff Mitchell, Phil Ross, Paul Rossi, Bob Smoler, Keith Stein

Absent: Ray Abramson, Amy Bauer, John Dexheimer, Ted Freedman, Greg Hawes, Dave Loffredo, Jack McFarland, Meghan Rice, Tom Whelan, Jeff White, Courtney Wilson, Teresa Yokoi

- I. Approval of Minutes: July 18, 2011 minutes were approved.

- II. Election of New Members: After an enormous contribution over the past few years, Keith Stein is stepping down as VP, Baseball. Kevin Hlavac, Staples baseball coach, has been getting more and more involved in Westport Little League, and was asked to assume the position of VP, Baseball. Carl McNair said that we are blessed to have such a strong, passionate, calm individual to continue the great work Keith has done. Kevin was asked why he would want to take this on. He said that he is a high school baseball coach in Westport and his motivation is to make Westport baseball the best experience for all kids coming through, from kindergarten to high school. A second position has opened as a result of Keith's departure, Fall Commissioner. Scott Bloom has been a Little League coach, including summer district coach, and is considered levelheaded and well respected. Keith said he is up and running and doing a great job organizing this fall's program. Scott said he has been involved with Westport baseball over the last six years and his son has had a great experience and this is a perfect opportunity to give back to Little League. All approved the nomination for inclusion of these two to the Board immediately. When everyone else is re-nominated for 2012, they will be up again for approval.

- III. Chairman's Report:
 - (1.) Maintenance: Carl said that the fields were shut down in August. Minor repairs have been done. Sub-contractors have been asked to take a look at what needs to be done at the fields. There is a \$7000 proposal to do work in the parking lot at the main complex, including clean up, Belgian block work, taking picket fence out, building brick terrace, cutting in real path to Meyer, cutting branches, replacing railroad ties in the cage, landscaping and parking lot work. A fence contractor met with Carl about safety issues at Coleytown. There is a 10 foot fence buried ½ foot deep and needs to be taken down and replaced with an 8 foot fence. He's waiting on a price, probably will total \$800-\$1000. He also wants a real gate at the service entrance to the Compo complex to replace the chain, which is often stolen. A soft toss net costs \$250 per set-up at all fields. With the current ones, the pole snaps off and is broken by the end of the season. The plan is to build three more pitching mounds by the three existing mounds and put the soft toss nets there, both at Meyer and White. We need to do repairs on the softball gate too. Steve Axthelm reported that they do not have warm-up pitching mounds in softball and they'd like to set up a similar thing at the end of the tennis courts, by the right field foul pole. Ax asked Dan Devito for power to be made available at Town Hall at 1st base dugout for a PA system and pitching machine. It is a Town issue but they want us to pay. Phil Ross said the fence/gate at 3rd base at Coley Fenced is an issue. Bob Smoler said he asked Dan DeVito to cut out Doubleday

softball field to make it wider so we can put a 50/70 diamond there as a backup to Greens Farms. Dan said it was doable. Someone should tell Dan that the outfield grass behind 2nd base at Greens Farms needs to be cut. The fence is curling up at Coley North and needs to be fixed. The L-screen at Wakeman is still missing and there has not been an answer to the mystery of where it is; the one at Hillspoint can be lent to Wakeman.

(2.) Staples Varsity Softball Field Alternatives: Ax said there has been no progress because they are focusing on replacing the varsity softball coach since Giordano resigned. Ax recommended Sarah Holland, who teaches at IST and runs LL clinics and is considered excellent.

(3.) Sponsorships: Meghan Rice is taking over for Courtney Wall, who moved away. She was not given enough time to really work on getting sponsors for fall but if people asked to sponsor, they can and we can reduce fees, give them banners, etc. Perhaps we should package spring and fall in the future? Keith said that sponsoring fall uniforms are problematic because two days after the draft, play starts so there is no turn around time.

(4.) Conflict of Interest Form: Jeff White emailed the form for board members to review and comment upon. At the next meeting, members are required to sign and submit in order to be included on the Board.

IV. Treasurer's Report: Keith and Bob Smoler said the July financials look reasonable. More expenses are coming in. Ax questioned the softball finances whereby last year maintenance was zero and this year \$11,000 even though they had \$9,000 in major projects last year and \$1800 this year. Ax must speak to Ray Abramson about this.

V. President's Report:

(1.) Baseball:

- (a.) District and Summer Teams: The 10's District team did quite well, making it to Sectional finals and then getting knocked out. 150 kids played summer ball; basically anyone who wanted to play had a team to play on. There were 12 teams in all—3 district teams, 4 I-84 teams and 5 friendship teams, including 8U.
- (b.) Fall: The deadline for registration is 8/23 and then a late fee will be imposed. Scott Bloom said there will be 6-8 teams at every age level and some will have three coaches. Keith sent out a survey about the prior season and has received 80 responses so far for Little League. The draft will take place before Labor Day weekend play. Jeb Backus has been collecting equipment. We are replacing the moldy containers and maybe adding a third. He suggested not storing helmets. An idea was to include a helmet with the uniform for people registering for the first time, perhaps add \$30 on to the initial fee for the helmet and never charge thereafter. Old helmets will be given to each team, one per team. The equipment crew will come back with a recommendation for helmets and containers. We will be donating some equipment to Park City Little League.

- (2.) Softball: According to Ax, there is a favoritism problem among parent coaches so there's talk about bringing in pro coaches. Parents were invited to an info session where they heard how softball works, districts, pony teams, etc. 30 people came and they will be holding more sessions to generate interest in softball. In the fall, there will be 50 teams, 8 towns, and 5 levels. The 8's will be playing competitive softball. There will be a tournament in October where we will host Majors. We won last year. Since we developed the age alignment system, we've had more success.
- (3.) Advanced Baseball:
- (a.) 9-12 Travel: Bob Smoler spoke about the new 9-12U travel league. They are registered in the East Shore League. There will be 4 teams and so far 54 kids have signed up and 70 are estimated. They will jockey with the ages when forming teams. Coaches are Kevin Hlavac, Courtney Wilson, Tim Rogers and Jeb Backus. Tryouts are 8/27. The parents are very excited about this. They will have to register on the Advanced Baseball website for travel teams. This is not under Little League but must be under the Westport B&S Advanced Baseball Travel umbrella. Jeb must decide which mound to use and can store a second mound at Doubleday.
- (b.) 13-18: There will be 5 travel teams for this age group this fall: Koufax (2), Mantle (2) and Connie Mack (1). For Babe Ruth, there will be 5 teams too. Travel tryouts are 8/31. Teams will be selected shortly thereafter. This summer was the best Babe Ruth season ever. 13U won the league, 15U made it to finals and I-84 were in finals. The Sr. Legion team did not do well because a lot of kids didn't show up to games plus lots of Staples players did not participate. In fall, a new coach, Chris Brown, is coaching the 14U Koufax team.
- (4.) District and National Issues: We turned the safety plan in and Lou Bleggi is happy with it.
- VI. Umpires: Kevin Hlavac, Keith Stein and Brian Kurtz met to discuss Umpires. Most towns in our area use patch umpires in spring. Also, we need a new scheduler for umps. Perhaps we can pay an adult to do this. However, the benefit of having a high school scheduler is that they can recruit high school kids and players and even college kids to ump. Perhaps have an adult scheduler with a high school Recruiter Asst. We need to improve training and tracking of our youth umps. In the past we had more complaints about our umps so things are looking better. Brian Kurtz said he is proud we haven't used patch umps. We need more adults umping—proof is that there are rarely complaints in Majors where adults are the primary umpires. If we do use patch umps in Majors, then the better kids can ump at the lower levels. In softball, they use patch umpires for Majors up. They are reliable and no problems occurred. That leaves better umps for the lower levels. AA and AAA sometimes have bad umps, which ruins the game and there have been lots of incidents. We need to keep better track of umps and give more training. To attract more adults, it can be a paid job. Kevin Hlavac is focused on making Westport Little League a better experience. LL is a volunteer organization but all

the towns around us all pay umps at the Majors level. As for training, Kurtz said they can use mid-season training as an incentive—show up to clinic to get paid. Kurtz said he invited umps to watch him ump a game and only one kid showed up. We should have coaches rank umps 1-5 after a game so we can better track who's good and who's bad. To recap, we have to determine whether we hire patch umps for spring. Benefits are their expertise and the fact that an adult can settle down an out-of-control coach. Additionally, younger kids' games will get the better youth umps.

- VII. Miscellaneous: Keith discussed sponsoring a youth sports speaker, Dr. Richard Ginsburg. Westport Y and PTA Council are sponsoring a night with him and they are looking for someone else to pay part of the cost. Ginsburg is the author of Whose Game Is It Anyway? about the pressures of youth sports. It would be \$500 per organization. Board approved spending \$500 and promoting it to our people.

MINUTES SUBMITTED BY: Beth Cody

NEXT MEETING: Monday, October 3, 2011 at Staples HS, Room 186, 7:30 PM