

## **July 18, 2011 Board Meeting Minutes—Westport Baseball & Softball, Inc.**

**Present:** Steve Axthelm, Amy Bauer, Beth Cody, John Dexheimer, Mike Lustbader, Carl McNair, Bill Meyer, Jeff Mitchell, Meghan Rice, Phil Ross, Bob Smoler, Keith Stein, Jeff White

**Absent:** Ray Abramson, Jeb Backus, Ted Freedman, Greg Hawes, Brian Kurtz, Dave Loffredo, Jack McFarland, Kerry Nowaskey, Paul Rossi, Tom Whelan, Courtney Wilson, Teresa Yokoi

**Outside Attendees:** Richard Harary, Kevin Hlavac, Jake Scott

- I. Approval of Minutes:** June 20, 2011 minutes approved.
- II. Treasurer's Report:** Ray Abramson had distributed the June financials via email. Bob Smoler thinks that revenues and expenses are not correct for his league. He did an audit and sent it to Ray. Revenues looked low. Coach fees have not been paid yet. Should have been \$17,000 less barter but was not. Carl McNair asked about a team-by-team reconciliation. Ray never did it by team, has always done it by league. For Little League, Keith Stein said there are more expenses to come this month and will analyze it next month. Ray sent the Quicken file to Keith and will send it to Smoler who will then audit it for his league. Someone asked if we should post financials on the website and Jeff White said if someone wants to see them that is fine but no need to post. The 990 is available upon request and if it is convenient to post, that is fine. The 990 is the only consistent document and, by its nature, is not subject to the allocations and interpretations inherent in the monthly financials. A parent at the meeting asked if we should do more fundraising to get money but Jeff said there was no need because we use volunteers and don't want to put a burden on them to raise money. We raise \$30,000 in sponsorship money to pay for uniforms and we use concession proceeds to pay for scholarships to people in need. This year we gave \$11,250 in financial aid so far (\$6,700 Advanced BB and \$4,550 LL BB and SB) with more to be dispensed for fall.
- III. Chairman's Report:**
  - (a.) Maintenance:** Carl said that all LL fields are to be shut down 8/1-31 for maintenance. Keith sent an email to the coaches advising them of this. Same shutdown for advanced fields except Wakeman. We will do maintenance like rebuilding mounds. For LL, there is heavy maintenance work to be done, sod work, taking out dead grass. Capital improvement includes installation of new scoreboard for Coleytown that we already purchased.  
Maintenance issues raised at meeting:  
~~3<sup>rd</sup> base falls off dramatically at Coley Fenced and needs to be leveled out. Jeff said we'll look at it and said we should move railroad ties closer to the dugout. ~~Jeff asked if the grass held up at Coleytown and Keith said it is fine, much better than last year. ~~Can Doubleday and Coley North be modified to 50/70? Carl said we're not in a position to fund a renovation and should use Greens Farms. ~~Compo Beach softball field moved dirt back 8 feet—can we have a 50/70 field there? Carl said

Compo Beach is the first field in town that floods and since it is so popular among other groups, would rather not spend any money on this field. ~~The fence is curled up at Coley North. ~~At Greens Farms, there is no overlap in the fences and the Town has to fix. ~~We need to upgrade the port-a-potties to more luxury models. Beth Cody will look into this and the costs involved. ~~Ax said that Coley South is an extra field to use if we have to but it's horrible and needs to be fixed. He should set up a meeting with Tim Burke and bring a proposal to the next meeting. ~~Luciano Field by the Saugatuck train station is back in popularity and should be spruced up. It could be nice for a little amount of money. Put a fence around it to make it a real field for the little kids.

**(b.) Non-Charter Insurance:** Chartered leagues are covered to enable them to play with other leagues and teams. LL insurance covers all leagues all year and covers out-of-town play for approved tournaments and anything approved by the District Administrator. Even if it's a LL scrimmage against a LL town in summer, it must be approved by Lou Bleggi. Send him a 1 -for approval. If it's a LL sanctioned event, it's covered all year. Route 84 teams need supplemental insurance. If a team comes here, they have to show they have insurance. Number of participants we cover: Under 12 years, up to 60 players (4 teams) I-84; 40 for Koufax; 140 for Mickey Mantle, Connie Mack and 16-19 year olds. Cost is \$20 per kid. Softball covers 15 kids under 12 years; 120 for HS fall league and 35 other 16-19 year olds. Bob Smoler takes care of Babe Ruth and Legion himself.

**(c.) Greens Farms/HS Home Field for Softball Discussion:** Steve Axthelm said we should explore improving the Staples JV field to make it a varsity field. This will make it more a part of school athletics. It cannot encroach on the baseball and soccer fields. He feels this could be of significant value to the softball program at all levels. He has asked Marty Lisevick and Pete Romano to take a look at what could be done.

#### **IV. President's Report:**

##### **(a.) Baseball:**

~~**End-of-Season and District Teams:** Keith said that there are 12 teams for 150 kids this summer. Since going to one charter, we have one district team per age group and they are considered much stronger. The 12's district team was coached by Jake Scott and Tom Whelan and had a 4-4 record and went to semis and lost. The 11's district team faced Fairfield American in an elimination round but lost. The 10's team won districts and they then qualified for sectionals and are in finals Wed. night. If they win sectionals, it's best 2 out of 3 for the State title. Tim Rogers is the coach. There are I-84 teams, Friendship teams and home games on our fields. Teresa and Keith fulfilled their promise to get everyone on a team. There is a question whether there is a rule about days off during the district season—are they allowed to practice/play 7 days a week with no day off? Also, did wood bats during the spring season help in summer play? There are more fielding plays with wood bats and they are judged to make one a better hitter.

**~~Travel Programs and Implications for Future:** Keith, Smoler and Carl got together to discuss travel baseball for LL kids who want to play at a more competitive level. They decided to do a fall test that is not under the LL charter but under the giant umbrella of WB&S. It will be a 9/10 and 11/12 year old travel team. Rules: Have to play Westport LL too; have to attend all practices and games for both; have to try out for the travel team--players selected by independent coaches; They will play a 14-16 game schedule over the course of the fall, supplemental to the LL season. The regular season includes one game a week on Saturday plus one practice a week. The travel league will have a fielding practice and a hitting practice during the week. It will be coached by pro coaches, with little or no parental involvement. This will be our version of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party travel league, to compete with Ct. Blue Jays, Cal Ripken, AAU, etc. After this fall test, we will analyze it and decide what to do for spring. We may decide we can't do this. We may find that we are competing with teams that have the best kids from 9 towns which would be problematic. National LL has had some resistance to implementing a travel program but who knows, they can come up with a travel pilot program soon. Bob/Carl will distribute financials and a 1 page description to the Board to vote on. Little League cannot administer this program—it will be under Advanced BB. We will play in the East Shore League on Fridays and Sundays, like the Seals. Half the games will be played here at Greens Farms (40/70 or 50/70 fields) and play by traditional Pony rules. Pitching will be coordinated with LL pitching, played under our safety rules. In fall, there will be a 9/10 year old league and an 11/12 year old league. In spring, the hope is to have 4 teams, one per age group. This team can play against the Blue Jays so kids will have to pick Westport or them. Cost is \$450 per kid, 16 games, 2 coaches, 2 practices per week. Uniform is extra. Practices can be 4:00 or 4:30 in the afternoon since they are with pro coaches plus they won't conflict with regular LL practice. Carl stressed that this is an experiment and if it doesn't work, he will be the first to say so. There is too much pressure from teams like the Seals and Ct. Blue Jays to not do something here. 30-50 kids played travel this past spring but mostly all played LL too. Carl wants to send out a document and budget within 24 hours and get an internet vote so we can add this option to registration for fall. We'll decide by Christmas about implications for spring.

**(b.) Softball:** Ax reports that it was a great season. There were late signups at the young ages. There were 10 K-1<sup>st</sup> grade teams and 14 teams in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades, for the first time ever. They are losing older girls because there's a 3 day commitment vs. 2, there are more options out there, and games require more skill and some can't keep up so they quit. We held two 8U tournaments and Westport won. One tournament was in town and it was big success, covering four days. These 8 year olds just learned to pitch. The 10U district team was eliminated early. The 12U team had mostly 6<sup>th</sup> graders, not 7<sup>th</sup> graders. 17 girls were on the roster. As for our lack of success in districts, Ax doesn't think it's a problem. The real problem is that Fairfield should have two charters but is double the population and has only one charter. Next year, he feels we'll do better because there will be 12 year olds instead of 11 year olds. Historically, we dominated in

LL tournaments. Bill Meyer said that the 9/10's have improved. Last fall, there was a 12u multi-town tournament and Westport won. Some of the better players do other stuff in the summer. There are robust programs in field hockey, lacrosse, rowing plus vacations and sleep-away camps. Our district team is not representative of the best team we can put on the field. Maybe we should get girls at the HS level more involved in our programs. We need to capture district players earlier on and let them know they'll play from end of school to end of July. If you know in December that you'll play some sort of program in July, then don't go to camp. This applies to baseball as well. For this fall, there is a tournament planned with 49 teams at 5 levels across 8 towns. Ax complimented the committee system and said it was a great way to distribute the work among many more people. They had 21 people working on 12 committees.

**(c.) Advanced Baseball:** Bob Smoler said it's been a pretty good year. The highlight was that one of our prep Babe Ruth teams won their championship. Despite the fact that the best 25 kids this age played our travel, Blue Jays, or other travel, these kids wound up winning their championship. As for Koufax, the 13U Koufax team was about .500 and are in Myrtle Beach this week playing a tournament. The 14U Koufax team won the Greater New Haven League and lost in semis in sectionals. Babe Ruth 14U and 15U made it to the finals. The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades are very deep and strong. The 16U team is struggling and there are communication issues. The Legion teams struggled. No seniors from the FCIAC championship Staples team played Sr. Legion. The best kids who graduated either played AAU or were not interested in playing since they're not playing in college. Wayne Randazzo is a good coach but he didn't have a full team for even one game and had pitchers playing outfield some games. Next year, no 19 year olds will be allowed to play Sr. Legion. As for Jr. Legion, they were good at first but then dropped off to below .500. As for fields, Bob said the town did a remarkable job after the rains and that they cleaned up the vegetation at Staples and Wakeman. They fixed Wakeman dugouts too. They are still missing an L-screen. Still need to do backstop at Doubleday and Greens Farms—Bob and Ax will send a note to Bill Meyer.

**(d.) Website:** Coaches are empowered to use the website more. Smoler's coaches are starting to use it. Kevin Hlavac assigned umpires and changed game schedules on the website. Parents can respond to an email as to when their kid can make a practice or game so that we can look at the responses and determine which day/time is best. Keith set up a survey for Ax to distribute to softball parents. There is a statistics program whereby you can enter the scorebook stats (not to be made public.) Umpire scheduling needs to be better. A prospective umpire can decline or accept the assignment and site needs to be updated properly.

**(e.) Miscellaneous:**

~~Should we do sponsorships this fall? We lost Courtney Wall as coordinator. Ax, Jeff, Carl and Stein will discuss.

~~Kevin Hlavac, Staples Freshmen BB coach, has become very involved in our organization. He helped with the 50/70 program this spring plus conducted coaching clinics. He's been umping most of the I-84 games. Worked with the summer teams too and did pitching clinics. He's had exposure to kids from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to Majors, which is fabulous for everyone.

**MINUTES SUBMITTED BY: Beth Cody**

**NEXT MEETING: Monday, August 22, 2011 at Staples HS Room 188 at 7:30pm.**