

October 3, 2011 Board Meeting Minutes—Westport Baseball & Softball, Inc.

Present: Steve Axthelm, Jeb Backus, Amy Bauer, Scott Bloom, Beth Cody, Kevin Hlavac, Mike Lustbader, Carl McNair, Meghan Rice, Phil Ross, Bob Smoler, Keith Stein, Tom Whelan, Jeff White

Absent: Ray Abramson, Ted Freedman, Greg Hawes, Brian Kurtz, Dave Loffredo, Jack McFarland, Bill Meyer, Jeff Mitchell, Paul Rossi, Courtney Wilson, Teresa Yokoi

- I. **Approval of Minutes:** August 22, 2011 Minutes were approved.
- II. **Discussion of Board Policy:** Carl McNair explained that there has to be a certain decorum that the Board must follow. We represent our constituency, i.e. parents, etc., with ideas that we discuss, argue about, make a decision and then vote upon. The positions on the Board are clear-cut—the Commissioners report to the VPs, the President does not step in and countermand the VPs’ decisions, etc. Each of us has a role and a job and cannot step on other people’s roles and interfere. That would be counter-productive and cannot occur.
- III. **Chairman’s Report:**
 - (a.) Coley Fenced (Don Levy) Scoreboard: It was finally agreed that Coley is school property and so WB&S will have to gift the scoreboard to the Board of Education. It has already been purchased and will be installed by the right field fence line. We are requesting a resolution to the fact that we will contribute the scoreboard, electrical construction and landscaping costs, totaling \$7500. Board voted in favor of gifting it to Board of Ed.
 - (b.) Fall Improvements: Due to safety issues, we recommend a \$5700 improvement to the fences at Coleytown, the softball cages, the baseball field (a cattle gate to entrance by Kowalsky plus a sign saying “Stay Out!”) plus installation of permanent soft toss nets adjoining the pitching mounds. If it works, roll out to softball and other fields. Axthelm asks that soft toss nets be put on top of his wish list, to be installed by the pitching warm-up area near the tennis courts by Meyer. He also said that Coley El softball field is terrible and needs the grass cleared out of the backstop area and 1st base line. He was told that the Town cuts the grass. Tarantino’s can take care of the infield.
 - (c.) 50/70: Bob Smoler said that there is not a true 50/70 field in town and Dan Devito said he will cut out any field for us to create a 50/70. They’ve been making due with softball fields that are 60 feet but the boys’ field should be 70 feet (adults are 65 feet). There are holes in the ground all over the current fields, which is a safety issue. Bob proposes identifying a field such as Coley North baseball field or a softball field but rule out Greens Farms field because it gets too many clients. Burr Farms and Coley North would be okay because they used

to be 50 feet. Bob wants to solve the problem and tell Devito which field he can cut out. Kevin Hlavac said we cannot use Kings Hwy. softball field because there are fencing issues and too many lost balls. He likes Coley North and says we should look at Burr Farms. We would have to put netting at the field plus by the parking lot too. If one field at Burr is 50/70 can the other field hold practice safely? It was determined that it would be okay. Jeff White said that Hlavac and Lustbader should go measure Burr along with Tim Burke and come back with suggestions. Keith said that the 50/70 Little League pilot did well in spring and we may well have four 50/70 LL pilot teams in spring in addition to the four 9-12 non-LL travel teams so 50/70 fields will be in demand.

- (d.) Sponsorship: Meghan Rice is taking over for Courtney Wall and the two will touch base tomorrow. Meghan raised \$3,000 for fall softball sponsors with little effort and it was agreed that she's to be given a bonus this spring if she exceeds what Courtney did last spring. Fall really happens too quickly to get sponsors. Meghan said if they don't have time for logos on uniforms in fall, they can do banners for the sponsors like they are doing at the upcoming tournament.
- (e.) Conflict of Interest Form: This form is seen by Jeff White as a financial disclosure but John Dexheimer pointed out that we should disclose any potential conflicts with children in the league. For example, it should be formalized that one cannot commission a spring league in which one has his or her child playing. This has caused issues over the years. This would be only for board members, not coaches. We want to be completely transparent. Jeff White will add specific disclosures and send out to the Board, to be returned to Beth Cody.

IV. **Treasurer's Report:** Ray is not present tonight. Jeff White reports that there is a \$1,000 loss for softball because he paid insurance for a league that only partially exists. Bob Smoler and Ray have been making progress on financial reconciliation of travel.

V. **President's Report:**

- (a.) Softball: Steve Axthelm said that Staples varsity softball field alternatives have been put on hold since they are focusing on finding a new coach. There are three or four applicants for the job, including Sarah Holland. The fall leagues are shaping up well. It is a bit daunting because the league is so large—8 towns, 54 teams and 5 levels this fall—and we basically run it. Five tournaments take place among the girls and they are not travel-caliber players. Four or five games are played over the tournament. Meghan Rice does a great job providing amenities, snack bar, and fun elements. There are 6-14 teams at each age level. Not all towns abide with the rules for ages and one town has older kids playing in Majors. Enrollment in softball is up—there were roughly 130 last year and roughly 150 this year. The caliber of play is extraordinary. The clinics and

pitching sessions have helped. The 8-9's are tremendous, with great coaches. Mike Lustbader said that 5 years ago we had to figure out how to compete with the surrounding towns and now they have to figure out how to compete with us. Coach clinics, player clinics, and organization of the system have all really helped. Their goal is to link the softball program with the high school program like football and baseball do. One problem this fall is that the high school league was not successful. Stamford and Trumbull conspired to keep Westport out of their league so we had to play a 3-team league, which was boring.

- (b.) Baseball: Spring evaluations will occur Sat., March 10th. Meghan will get registration signs again, with a baseball logo. As for 9-12 travel league, Hlavac and Smoler are in charge. There are clinics for 9-12 travel and 50/70 Little League plus one for general Little League this winter. They are held at the field house, Bedford and IST. Glenn Katz is still administering the clinics and collecting payment. The older kids, 13-18, will have the same programs and times as the past. It was discussed whether we should take winter payment online and have that database for surveys, etc. Glenn has always collected fees for winter and provided the list of registrants to make sure the kids are registered for spring, for insurance purposes. We need to market the winter clinics before the fall season ends. For 9-12 advanced travel, some coaches want to do spring tryouts at the end of fall so that they can work out with their team in winter. For equipment, we are buying chest guards for those at infield positions at \$4 apiece, totaling \$5,000. Everyone will get helmets as well. Resolve by next meeting when we discuss pricing whether we should require a cup and chest guard. Carl said we should have a separate meeting to look over all softball and baseball costs—fields, ump, equipment, helmets and chest guards, etc.—and see if we need to raise fees.
- (c.) Advanced Baseball: Bob Smoler said that 110 players are playing fall ball. There is a weird distribution of players—only twelve 7th graders and twelve 8th graders between Koufax and Babe Ruth. A reason so few is there are many dual sport athletes and there will be huge implications if this holds up in spring. Usually, 7th and 8th have the largest numbers. PAL football is up 18-20 kids in 7th grade. There are 40 freshmen, 25 sophomores, 10 juniors and 10 seniors for advanced travel baseball this fall. The coach training in Keith did in 3rd grade is very important and should be continued. This fall, Bob reports that rain was a big issue and there were lots of cancellations. The East Shore league for the travel 9-12's went well although some teams dropped out. Lots of enthusiasm about it and we should do a survey to know where to make improvements. There were some field issues but Ax was great about giving them softball fields. They filled four 9-12 teams and had to make cuts. We had a 9 year old team but

there was no 9 year old league so they had to play with the 10's. Lots of kids in the 10's and 12's were not elite but made the team because the better kids were playing other sports. The 11's, under Tim Rogers, were very successful. This is essentially the same team as his district-winning summer team. Bob asked that when we decide on a field for 50/70 that we get a storage container because we're using portable 3 x 4 foot portable mounds that need to be stored. There is no adequate metal container available that is big enough. A high quality one costs \$2,500-3,000. For the older advanced boys, we have great coaches in Matt Hennessy, Chris Brown, Dennis Accomando, Mike Diaz and Wayne Randazzo. Bob said we need a new 16u coach for Babe Ruth in the spring. This fall, we included Weston kids to get enough Babe Ruth players for 16U.

- (d.) Website: We have to pay \$1,400 to renew all the sites but otherwise, Jeff Mitchell is up to speed and Keith and Beth Cody have been working on registration issues, etc.

VI. Miscellaneous:

- When entering rosters, if you don't see a player's name, write to Beth Cody.
- Youth Sports speaker that we are helping to sponsor is on October 20th.
- Kevin Hlavac suggested we use the umpire money from rainouts for 6th and 7th grade clinics and pitching clinics for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades.
- We will discuss pricing and program improvements at the next meeting.
- As for the Big Al Clinic this year, he does not have insurance and we had to purchase \$500 in insurance last year, so probably not.
- Financial Aid: There were \$10,000 in scholarships for Smoler's teams this year. Parents subsidize this with their fees but we cannot use Little League money for this. Advanced 9-12 kids are considered Advanced Baseball, not Little League, by the way. Smoler said we should budget in scholarship money. Carl said that concession money and sponsor money help pay for scholarships. We can find sponsors for the 9-12 travel kids.
- NYSCA and Child Protection: Anyone under Westport Baseball and Softball has to take the online NYSCA course and submit forms for background checks. This includes Smoler's coaches; they can be reimbursed the \$25 course fee. Anyone who coaches in Westport must have an NYSCA card and many may have one already from basketball or soccer, etc. Glenn Katz should have his all his guys submit the child protection forms and take the course online.

MINUTES SUBMITTED BY: Beth Cody

NEXT MEETING: Monday, November 14

Staples High School, Room 186 at 7:30 pm