

## **Open Forum Meeting—July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

G.L.R.S.A. hosted its first open forum meeting to a disappointingly low number of attendees. Board members in attendance were Jim Bollock, Doug Cupp, Jill Van Allen, Rodney Tucker, Denise Newton, Angela Rainwater, Teri Bugay, and Jennifer Collicott. Other reps in attendance were Steve Harding, Boyd Wheeler, and Rob Rainwater. Beyond that, only 16 others attended. These people were Larry Huba, Bill Lester, Jason Whitten, Roger Strasburger, Frank Arnold, Bob Maxson, Jay Rosen, Jim and Debbie Bryan, Jay Blumling, John Elliott, Michelle Geiger, Andy VanBuren, Jeff Shake, Jeff Martin, and Vic Van Allen. To those 16 people, e-mails will be sent thanking them for their time, input, and suggestions.

Refreshments were served, but due to the large number of leftovers, extra cookies, (which will be frozen) and unopened fruit punch will be brought to the fall coaches meeting.

Thanks to Diana for putting together the program handout, to John Elliott and Andy Van Buren for setting up the use of the Caterpillar facility, to Jim for the nice presentation, and to the board members and reps for making themselves available to answer questions.

This first year of the open forum will be taken as a learning tool, not only from what was gleaned from suggestions made by those in attendance, but also to make improvements for subsequent years' forums, such as how we can improve upon attendance numbers.

The following are some of the items of discussion:

**Q. With respect to the revenues/expenditures, of the \$126,436, where does the remaining \$30,000 go?**

**A.** The Parks Department is working on expanding CAT Park's parking lot to accommodate additional spaces, as well as putting in restrooms and a concession stand. G.L.R.S.A. will contribute \$30,000 for this endeavor. Also, the league is building a facility at Davidson Fields, which will include restrooms, concessions, and be used for storage and a meeting place. The cost for this is estimated to be between \$60,000 and \$70,000.

**Q. Is the amount of revenues fairly consistent year-after-year?**

**A.** Yes, with the exception that the fall season generally has fewer players than does the spring season due to some players opting to participate in other activities than soccer.

**Q. Are sponsorship fees included in that amount (\$126, 436)?**

A. Yes. This includes sponsorship fees as well as player fees.

**Q. Is there a budget for new nets and goals?**

A. Yes. Be mindful that a new set of goals costs \$3500. A new set of nets cost \$400.

**Q. Is there a plan to get an irrigation system in the works at Davidson?**

A. During the construction of the building, contractors will stub in a separate water line for irrigation. As funds permit, we will eventually be able to utilize this.

**Q. Is there any way to increase parking at Davidson? (This inquirer had not visited the fields in a number of seasons.)**

A. We have already added 100 parking spaces as well as added curb stoppers for more efficient parking control.

**Q. I heard you say that this is the first year for an open forum. I believe that we (parents and coaches) should have more of a say in the league's decision-making.**

A. The league has always offered a number of ways to recruit and accept volunteers—by way of indicating on registration forms and signing up on the volunteer sheet available at registration, just to name a couple.

**Q. Who elects the board members?**

A. Board members elect other board members. The By-Laws state that there is no maximum number of board members allowed, so anyone interested in becoming a board member need only express his or interest to a current board member and ask to be nominated. Elections are held once a year each November. The only requirement is that any given party must have been a volunteer with the league in any capacity for at least two seasons (this includes coaching, field lining, etc.). No one is excluded from consideration, regardless of holding unpopular opinions compared to those of current board members.

**Q. Give us an example of one of the issues that has been recently under consideration by the board?**

A. A suggestion was made to have games played on smaller fields with fewer numbers of players; however, due to lack of available fields and referees, this is not do-able at this time.

**Q. What's another example of an issue under consideration?**

A. Due to the sheer number of game schedule requests due to spring break, our game scheduler, Jeff Millikan, suggested that a nominal number of games be scheduled on Sundays in order to still be able to finish the season before Memorial Day.

*This was met with a number of varying suggestions, including those who agreed with this, as well as others who suggested playing games during the week, or lengthening the season into Memorial Day weekend. Jim offered the thought that one problem with scheduling a large number of games during the week would cause the displacement of certain teams who use those same fields for practicing. It was further suggested that it be the coaches who vote on this rather than the board. Jennifer Collicott suggested that the coaches vote on their preferences at the time of arrival at the coaches meeting.*

**Q. Is there any way to keep the website updated more frequently, especially with regard to games scores, and especially at tournament time?**

A. Coaches should call in their respective games scores in order for this to work. Rodney asserted that if an updated results web link is not something that can be updated in an effective manner, than we should consider not offering this at all. *This was some cause of discussion. At issue was who should be the ones to call in scores—the referees or the coaches. Feedback was split on this, so the board will discuss at a future meeting and/or the coaches meeting.*

**Q. Can the By-Laws and/or meeting minutes be posted on the website?**

A. Yes, we can post the By-Laws, but it is necessary to keep the meeting minutes closed due to instances where we may have had to discuss private matters such as disciplinary conduct regarding a coach or parent, whereby those persons' privacy should be protected.

**Q. Can you provide coaches with more places to practice that have goals?**

A. For the West side, all we have are the amphitheater and Salisbury fields.

Additionally, the Northwest Soccer Club has been promised a portion of the fields for their use, but Denise, the scheduler in charge of the Amphitheater, offered open times on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Additional land requires the purchase of land by the league, which is not in the budget at this time. The Tippco travel club will be abandoning the use of its current fields in the near future due to relocation of their game and practice fields, but as we are not affiliated with them, specifics are not available to us at this time.

**Q. What about the idea of expanding the season to say 10 weeks rather than 7?**

A. Again, this is a timing and weather issue, and therefore, would probably not be a possibility.

**Q. What can you tell us about the requirements for hiring referees? Our experience is that the skill levels are too inconsistent from game to game.**

A. We try to place our most experienced and skilled refs in the upper brackets, and the least experienced in the lower brackets. While calls cannot be altered after game play has resumed, we take all coach comments about referees seriously—both the good and the bad. Whenever possible, newer referees are observed during game play.

**Q. Can we get a second referee for the U15 girls games?**

A. Due to the lack of referees available, this is not usually an option. An exception was made for the U15 boys bracket when it was brought to our attention that dirty play was an issue. Since we believe these people have been weeded out, we may not even continue to offer a second referee for even that bracket. We often lose our most experienced referees to the high schools during the fall season, where they receive higher pay.

**Q. My team has arrived to play a game at a field where the field is so wet, that the players are slipping and sliding all over the place.**

A. The Parks Department isn't always at their best with regard to this issue. Sometimes, they have been known to water the fields when it is not needed, and neglect to water them when it is. We encourage you to contact them to express your concerns.

**Q. As a coach, I get frustrated playing teams that seem to have a “staff” of helpers. I, on the other hand, am “on my own.”**

A. I suggest that when you have your first practice, you ask for helpers—whether it be assistant coaches or team moms or dads. In addition, each team is limited to three coaches shirts so that no one team unfairly has a “staff of coaches” out there.

**Q. What is the chance of getting more Port-a-Potties at the fields?**

A. The answer to that is that the trucks that deliver these facilities to the fields simply cannot get any closer than to the edge of the fields. It is our hope that once Davidson and CAT fields become equipped with permanent toilets, this will no longer be a problem.

**Q. There seems to be such a diverse skill level among 6-year-olds and 7-year-olds. Would the league consider having separate U6 and U7 age brackets?**

A. Remember that each and every child will eventually be the oldest child in his/her age bracket. Each child goes through being the youngest, and oldest, at one time or another. Again, due to the limited number of fields and referees, this is not something that we can entertain at this time.

**Q. Can we do try-outs?**

A. This would be a near-impossible task to undertake. Please remember that we are a rec league, and are in it more for the fun of the game more so than for winning.

**Q. Can we roster kids by weight like they do for football?**

A. First, many of the best skilled players are those who are the smallest, so that would accomplish very little. Further, there is a reason why football players are given weight tests: it is not to level the playing field and rosters as much as for the sake of determining what position they play on the football field.

**Q. It has been my experience that some coaches are in it for the sake of winning and therefore don't help out the less skilled players.**

A. This is why we promote two ideologies: equal playing time and the mercy rule. While these cannot be legally enforced, it is our hope that each and every coach abides by these guidelines. However, if it comes to our attention a team illustrates a pattern of winning by a large score gap, that coach will be called and spoken to.

**Q. I continually see the same kids on a team season after season. Why not break them up?**

A. We do and in fact, have done that. However, one of the things that keep some kids playing the game of soccer is their satisfaction in knowing that they will play with their friends. This is why we offer the "special request" line on the registration form. Further, in some instances, this cannot be avoided because we roster kids by school first. For instance, in the upper brackets, there are fewer teams and those teams still need to be grouped by schools, so there is little room to move kids around short of moving kids out of their own school district.

Overall, those who attended this meeting offered a lot of positive insight as to how we might be able to improve the confluence if the G.L.R.S.A. It is our hope and intention to leave any and all of these issues open for discussion at not only the coaches meeting, but at future board meetings.

*Jill Van Allen*

*Scribe*