

**Town Council Special Meeting Minutes  
Morehead City, North Carolina**

**Tuesday, April 11, 2023**

The Honorable Council of the Town of Morehead City held a Special meeting on Tuesday, April 11, 2023, in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 1100 Bridges Street, Morehead City, North Carolina. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss recreation field uses and fees.

COUNCIL PRESENT: Mayor Gerald A. Jones, Jr.; Councilmembers George Ballou, David Horton, Bill Taylor, Harvey Walker, and Diane Warrender.

STAFF PRESENT: City Attorney Derek Taylor, City Manager Chris Turner, Finance Director/Assistant City Manager Jewel Lasater, Public Services Director/Assistant City Manager Daniel Williams, Parks and Recreation Director Jessica Mayo, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director Victoria Ward, Public Information Officer Anna Smith, and City Clerk Cathy Campbell

OTHERS PRESENT: Star Connor of WCTI - Channel 12 News, Dennis Felipe of Seashore Soccer, Lauren Denault Hunt, Gloria McCarther, Elizabeth Riley, Joseph Smith, and Jan Willis.

Mayor Jones called the Special Meeting of the Morehead City Town Council to order at 2:00 p.m. with a quorum present.

**Recreation Field Use and Fees**

On March 14, 2023, the Town Council voted to waive multi-purpose field fees through July 1, 2023, and scheduled this Special meeting to discuss how to approach field usage and reservation fees going forward. A copy of the 2015 Policy and Procedures Manual was provided, and Mayor Jones suggested that staff bring the manual into compliance with local and state laws, which will take several months.

Mayor Jones shared that he asked Mr. Turner to draft license agreements with Seashore Soccer League and Morehead City Little League to provide exclusive access to two (2) of the three (3) fields for one (1) year at no cost to the organizations as an additional option for addressing the issue of reservation fees. Councilmember Taylor suggested that the field reservation fees be suspended through December 31, 2023, allowing time for Parks and Recreation staff to update the manual while allowing the teams to continue playing.

Councilmember Horton stated that Section III, Item 2 of the 2015 Policy and Procedures Manual states that these groups will not be charged fees for the use of the fields; therefore, the Policy would have to be ruled invalid before waiving the fee. Councilmember Walker pointed out that the Policy and Procedures Manual also requires that these organizations must submit a written request for a waiver of fees and to qualify, the organization must be based in Morehead City and/or

that a majority of their registered players must be Morehead City residents. He stated that no such request has been made nor can such be found, and that Seashore Soccer League, Inc.'s Non-Profit Corporation Designation Registration filed with the Secretary of State's Office shows their address to be Newport, NC. Mr. Filipe responded saying that Seashore Soccer's registered tax filing address is a Morehead City address. Seashore Soccer maintained a physical office at 1713 Bridges Street, Morehead City until 2017 when the cost to maintain it became unmanageable. He reported that Seashore Soccer has 542 registered players across the whole county of which 175 are Morehead City residents. This equates to 32% of his players. Mr. Filipe stated that Rotary Park is the home field for Seashore Soccer and all home games are played on these fields. Seashore Soccer has submitted field requests every year by email. In response to a question, Mr. Filipe said that he is the first paid employee of the organization. Prior to his arrival, Seashore Soccer was strictly a volunteer organization.

Councilmember Ballou asked City Attorney Derek Taylor if the license agreement is needed or if the policy was sufficient to remove the organizations from the burden of fees. Attorney Taylor explained that the license agreements deal with two components, fees and exclusivity. Regarding fees, the Council can take action to waive the fees but the motion should include details that identify what fees are being waived, who is exempt, for what period of time, and for what fields as is done in the license agreements. The license agreements also address scheduling priorities for the specified fields based upon tiers. The first tier applies to the second party in the agreement (i.e., Seashore Soccer and Morehead City Little League) and the second tier would apply to City sponsored events.

In response to a question about the simplest way to allow the kids to continue playing while the manual is being updated, Attorney Taylor stated that the Council can either make a motion, in an open meeting, to waive fees for multi-purpose fields until December 31, 2023, or adopt the license agreements. The license agreement gives these organizations priority over all other listed groups. He stated that if it is Council's intention to simply not charge for field use while Staff and the Council continue to work through the process, then it is best to waive fees for all multi-purpose fields until December 31, 2023; however, if Council wishes to address the other requested provisions as well, the license agreements should be considered.

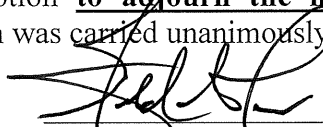
Councilmember Walker asked if the license agreement would affect the Morehead Marlins. Attorney Taylor responded saying that the license agreements are specific to the three (3) multi-purpose fields in Rotary Park and guarantees that these organizations will be able to play on the dates desired. Mayor Jones advised that without the license agreements, fields would be made available on a first come, first serve basis and there will be no exclusivity guaranteed to Seashore Soccer.

Mr. Filipe stated that he was in favor of approving the license agreement because it also provides for the use of signage and food truck vendors as well as providing exclusive field use at no charge. Although he was unable to attend, Mr. Turner stated that he spoke with Chuck Lindner of Morehead City Little League who confirmed that he is also in favor of the license agreement.

Attorney Taylor stated that if it is Council's desire to approve the license agreements, the Regular meeting agenda should be amended to add consideration of the license agreements, and then, when the matter is reached, make a motion to approve the agreements. Mr. Turner requested, if the Council is so inclined, to also add an item to this evening's agenda to accept the benches donated by Seashore Soccer so they can be added to the City's inventory and be set in place.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Councilmember Warrender made a motion **to adjourn the meeting at 3:06 p.m.** Councilmember Horton seconded and the motion was carried unanimously. (5-0)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gerald A. Jones, Jr., Mayor

Attest:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Cathy Campbell, City Clerk

