

MARION SENIOR SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION
Minutes of Monday, November 27th, 2023
Marion County Board of DD Conference Room

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Marion Senior Softball Association was called to order at 5:30 PM by President, Gene Smithberger.

II. ATTENDANCE

Commissioners in attendance were: Don Bentley, Ed Slone, Buddy Lyles, Steve Romshe, Jerry Fagan, Roger Smith, Mike Winders, Bill Finnegan, Steve Zonneville, Sam Grisham and Gene Smithberger.

Absences: None

Guests: Max Gerber

III. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Steve Romshe moved to accept the minutes of the 04/24/23 meeting and Roger Smith seconded. Motion passed.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT

Roger Smith reported \$5691.76 in the treasury as of 11/27/2023. Roger is still waiting on a bill for the championship shirts. Total Income for the year was \$17,492.50 and total expenses YTD \$15,550.77. Income from the concession stand brought in \$2,764.10. There is \$405.58 in the memorial fund and \$960 in the Hall of Fame fund. Marion City Field Rental was \$1,125 which is \$15 a night for the 75 times we had games on the field.

Modern Woodman Tournament Concession Tickets brought in \$507.50.

Mike Winders ordered new softballs for the 2024 season at a cost of \$734.15.

Bill Finnegan moved to accept the financial report and Sam Grisham seconded. Motion passed.

V. OLD BUSINESS

None

VI. New Business

Gene opened the meeting thanking everyone for their service to the MSSA league. He said that he would like to retire from being President of the league at the end of the 2024 season giving him 10 years as president and would like to stay on and maybe handle the draft after he retires.

Gene stated Jeff Crummel resigned as a league commissioner and that Max Gerber has agreed to take his place as a commissioner. Max would be the 50 league commissioner if voted in. Ed Slone made a motion to have Max become a commissioner for the 50 league and Mike Winders seconded. Motion Passed. Ed Slone would take the vacated 60 league commissioner spot.

Sam suggested some ways to increase the Hall of Fame fund. Maybe the Senior Center or the Marion Community Foundation could help. Sam threw out some ideas for Hall of Fame awards such as a T-Shirt or Hat. He also found that ViZual Express can engrave the Hall of Fame placards. Jerry Fagan was also going to check with his brother in law who also does laser etching of placards.

Gene discussed the difficulties working with the City of the Marion City Recreation Department in 2023. A few of the many concerns is they weren't very helpful this year such as shutting off the water on the last night of our tournament and Mr. Ballinger told us everything needed to be out of the building by the following Saturday so the city could do painting which hasn't even started yet. The league was able to obtain a storage unit to put the leagues stuff in such as the refrigerator, kitchen supplies and scorekeeper supplies. Mr. Ballinger also wants Gene to sign a contract for 2024. The MSSA league has always taken care of the field and the building and has made many improvements. Several league personnel have already talked to the new Marion City Mayor Bill Collins and we are planning on trying to meet with the city in Feb 2024 to discuss our concerns.

Gene asked that we discuss and vote on Rule 1A where we decide the minimum age for each league annually. With 12 players on the field for each game it was felt we need to lower the age to what we did for the 2023 season. Buddy Lyles made a motion lower the entry age for the 60 league to 58 years old and the entry age for the 65 league to 63 years old. Sam Grisham seconded and the motion passed.

Gene talked about our league sponsor fees and players' fees. He mentioned that River Edge was bought out and would no longer be a sponsor and asked if anyone knew of any other

changes in our sponsors. Someone stated that Terry Miller's wife would like to be a sponsor in 2024. We agreed that sponsor fees and player fees would stay the same in 2024. Sponsor fees would be \$400 and player fees would be \$25 for each league played. If paid after the draft the player fees would be \$30 per league played. Bill Finnegan commented that prepayment of players' fees before the draft worked well this year and only a few players paid \$30.

Gene stated the draft is scheduled for April 8th 2024 and that he would be updating the player registration form on the MSSA website. The first game of the season would be Monday April 29th.

Gene mentioned that we had 6 rookie coaches in 2023 and asked that we work on getting coaches and helping coaches for the 2024 season.

Roger mentioned that we need to update parts for the defibrillator (Pads and Batteries) and that maybe a training session would be valuable for a select group of people. Roger will purchase the parts.

Gene discussed a possible rule change suggestion from Larry Kelly. Larry umpired for the 65 league and found that a few good batters were never thrown strikes in an effort by the pitcher to walk the batter. Larry counted 8 plus balls thrown to batters before a strike was thrown which caused the games to go longer. Larry suggested that we change rule 5E to state that after a number of intentional balls thrown by the pitcher that the batter be sent to 2nd base and the pitcher be removed for the rest of the inning. After discussion we decided not to incorporate that rule change at this time.

Gene received a suggestion from Scott Roper who coached this year for the 65 league. Scott stated that he had 14 players on his team and that for the whole season all 14 players showed up and that his team was penalized when the opposing team whose players didn't show up were able to get substitutes that were better players for their players that didn't show up. He felt that this was one of the reasons why his team went 0-14 for the season. He suggested that if a team has all their players show up and that if the opposing team has to get substitute players that the opposing team have 2 outs given to their team to try and equalize the situation. There was much discussion on this and we all agreed that coaches should be given help during the draft to try and make all team equal. Don Bentley - 65 league commissioner said a sub list was put together with players that were willing to substitute in the 6 thru 9 draft range and some were outside of that range since he needed additional subs. After discussion we decided not to incorporate that rule at this time.

Keith Thrush said that in 2024 we would have 2 tournaments. One would be an All-League tournament and the other would be the Modern Woodman tournament but we would limit the teams to our league due to the unavailability of Garfield field due to the problems working with the city to try and use Garfield Park. This would allow us to just use Bigford field for the tournament by limiting the amount of teams.

Max asked if we could put netting on the left and center field light poles to prevent so many balls being hit into the farmers' field. Mike Winders stated that the city wouldn't approve that in previous years. We will check with the city at our next meeting with them to hear their concerns why it wouldn't be allowed and maybe we could use the netting that was taken down at Garfield Park.

Gene stated the 70 league is up in air and his suggestion is that players just meet at the field and have practice pickup games. There is no cost to the league if players are practicing on the field.

Max asked about player substitutions and asked if we could just sub players with subs of the same player capabilities. In theory this is a great idea however there is no easy way to make sure this could happen at every game especially during the first games of the night when a team player doesn't show up and doesn't tell the coach in advance. Also if there were 2 'A' subs needed – One for each team - and only one 'A' player was available this would cause uneven teams. We decided to keep the player substitution process the same as 2023.

Tabled items:

Ed Slone said that during the last season some coaches and pitchers objected to a mandatory use of using the pitching screen and we had to vote out the mandatory use after the draft in 2023. He suggested we change the rules for the pitching screen use to get pitchers familiar with it. He suggested that we keep the screen on the field during the whole game and that the pitcher has the option to stand behind it or not depending on the caliber of the batter. Some discussion was the screen could be moved anywhere as long as part of it was in front of the pitchers rubber and that if a hitter hit the screen 2 times the second hit would be their free foul. He asked that we think about the suggestion.

Mike Winders stated that we need a new pitchers rubber and the city probably wouldn't buy a new pitchers rubber and that the league should purchase one.

Someone made a suggestion to add the MSSA logo to each shirt sleeve. Roger said he will obtain a cost for this and we can vote on it in a future meeting.

Ed Slone brought up a discussion of the commitment line (Rule 5J) and that we should change the rules to allow a player to be tagged out unless both feet are over the commitment line. Max suggested we have two commitment lines. If a player passed the first commitment line they could be tagged out before reaching the second commitment line.

Sam passed out information from a new vendor (ViZual Express) on team shirts since we had issues with misspellings of players names on championship shirts with the new owner of Rivers Edge. Sam would check with other vendors also.

Mike stated we need to find an additional scorekeeper for one of the nights. Karen who does a great job would like to only be a scorekeeper for two nights a week.

Mike said he has a hard time getting umpires for the league. Sam brought up a problem during one of the tournament games in the 50 league with a player and the umpire and maybe we could have handled the situation better. Max asked if we could have two umpires during the tournaments to help alleviate problems like this.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion by Buddy Lyles was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 PM and Sam Grisham seconded. Motion passed.

Gene set up the next meeting on Monday January 29th at 5:00 PM at the same location.

Minutes by Steve Zonnevylle