

09 October 2024

Communitiy Concerns with LaPine Parks and Recreation District

I can share with you our recent experience as a group of concerned parents, volunteers, and community members.

After learning about shared concerns regarding the managemnt of LPRD's youth sports programs, we presented a survey to the community, via social media. The number of responses was significant enough that we realized the concerns were widespread. We emailed LPRD on August 20, 2024 to request a meeting to communicate the concerns and to discuss ways we could all work together to benefit LaPine's youth. We did not receive a response.

At that point we reached out to the LPRD Community Liaison who was responsive and equitable. He did not have the authority to convene a meeting with management, but he advised us to document our concerns with specific examples and to present them to the LPRD board at the upcoming board meeting. So that's what we did.

As a group, we collaborated on a document that outlined our concerns regarding conflict of interest, intimidation and retaliation, player safety, communication and program organization.

On Thursday, September 19, 2024, representatives of the group attended the public board meeting. During public comments, we respectfully requested a meeting with relevant parties to discuss more in depth our concerns, and requested copies of financial statements and bylaws. We emphasized that our goal was to start a conversation in hopes of building a better working relationship between parents, volunteers, administrative staff, community, and board members. At that time we provided the board members and the community liaison with our document. Immediately after public comments were over, an employee of LPRD realized that the video recording had been muted and needed to be turned on for the remainder of the meeting. Since you cannot listen to our public comment, here is our statement verbatim.

"My name is [REDACTED] and I am here today with other parents, volunteers and community members who are concerned with the current management of the youth sports programs ran through the LaPine Parks and Recreation District. We attend today's board meeting to formally request three things. The first being a meeting of relevant parties to explain and resolve our concerns. Second, we request a copy of the LPRD bylaws. And lastly, we request a copy of financial statements from the last 12 months. In beginning this conversation, we hope to build a better working relationship between parents, volunteers, administrative staff, community and board members. Thank you."

The board was receptive and the meeting continued without incident. After the board meeting dispersed, a board member approached our representatives and asked whether we wanted a public or privately held meeting. Representatives requested to bring that decision to the group as a whole before deciding, but that we would let LPRD know presently. We have since emailed the board with our response to move forward with a public meeting, and have not recieved a response. Their lack of communication demonstrates an apparent unwillingness to work with us currently.

That brings us to LPRD's Facebook post on Monday, September 23, 2024. We cannot speak to the harrassment that LPRD claims or the legal ramifications they mention. Our actions (as described above) have followed appropriate protocol as communicated by the LPRD liaison, and always emphasized the goal of resolving our concerns peacefully and professionally. We cannot presume to know what else is going on at Parks and Rec, but we can guarantee it is not harrassment from our group of parents.

As I'm sure you know, the LaPine Chamber also made a Facebook post in regards to LPRD's closures on Tuesday, September 24, where correspondance was shared claiming that our group of, "fuckhead concerned parents" are "spreading BS rumors." Since then it has been edited and apologized for. Given LaPine's small town nature, this has caused unrest in the community. Our group of parents would like to see more professionalism and transparency from LPRD. I suspect the majority of the LaPine community wants the same.

Heartbreaking for the youth of LaPine, as of October 01, 2024, LPRD has terminated all youth sports programs due to threats of safety. No specific details have been provided to the public. The board did mention that that they would be reaching out to LaPine Soccer Academy to possibly take over current and future youth sports programming. At the end of the meeting the board inquired whether or not we wanted to proceed with the financial documents request despite the recent employee resignations and the current lack of youth programming. As we replied and as our original concerns have escalated, we will be moving forward with that request.

On Wednesday, October 2, 2024, LPRD annouced their partnership with Southern Oregon Sports Alliance, not LaPine Soccer Academy. SOSA, is an LLC ran by the very people with which the community expressed concerns, the same people who resigned from their positions from LPRD after parents brought those concerns to September 19th's board meeting.

LPRD's decisions outlined above led this group of parents and community members to officially organize as Champions for Communtiy, in hopes to revitalize youth sports programming and reestablish a working relationship with the board and executive director.

The first step we took was to ask for Gary Gordon's resignation of his position on the board. This request was made in hopes to reignite a collaborative relationship between the community and the board, while causing minimal disruption to the functioning of current programming that the community depends upon. It was done professionally and respectfully, keeping in mind our ultimate goal: to work as a community to realign the park's district with it's original mission.

A thriving Parks and Recreation district is still our goal, regardless of what decisions are made at today's emergency meeting.

Thank you,
Champions for Community