

Summary

The Recreation Board held a special meeting to discuss a request from the Strafford Youth Softball and Baseball association to place **advertising signs at the baseball field** for fundraising purposes. The board clarified that under **current bylaws, advertising signs are not permitted** on town property, and any signage requests must go through the **Development Review Board (DRB)** for approval. The board explored various creative solutions including temporary seasonal signage, event-based exemptions, and portable displays, while also discussing concerns about setting precedents and potential legal implications.

The board decided to **remain neutral** on the advertising proposal, providing guidance to the youth organization about the DRB process rather than endorsing or opposing their efforts. Separately, the board approved moving forward with a **donor recognition plaque** to thank contributors who funded recent baseball field improvements without town funds. The meeting concluded with administrative decisions about improving the agenda-setting process and implementing AI-assisted meeting minutes.

Action items

- Jason Loomis: Explain to the youth baseball organization what process they need to follow with the DRB and provide recommendations for a potentially successful appeal to put up advertising signs. [28:00](#)
- Jason Loomis: Research plaque options for donor recognition at baseball field and return with a proposal at the next meeting. [44:47](#)
- Jason Loomis: Transcribe and clean up meeting notes, circulate to board members for review, then submit draft minutes to Select Board. [49:36](#)
- Leslie Berger to send March meeting minutes to board members for review before Monday's meeting. [51:25](#)

Decisions

- Under current bylaws, **advertising signs are not allowed** on town property, including the baseball field. [14:00](#)
- The rec board's role is **not to approve or deny signage requests** - that authority belongs to the Development Review Board (DRB). [27:13](#)
- The Rec Board will **provide guidance to the baseball organization** about the DRB advertisement process but remain neutral rather than endorsing or opposing their efforts. [38:34](#)

- The Rec Board will **pursue installing a plaque** to thank donors who funded baseball field improvements, with Jason Loomis authorized to research and propose plaque options at the next meeting. [40:03](#)
- A **new agenda-setting process** will be implemented where co-chairs Ed and Jason create preliminary agendas and circulate to members before Leslie officially warns meetings. [46:14](#)
- **Draft meeting minutes will be shared with board members** for review before being submitted to the Select Board. [50:23](#)

Topics

Baseball field advertising request

- The issue originated from a baseball mother wanting to create signs thanking donors who contributed materials and labor for **field upgrades over the past 2-3 years**. [04:04](#)
- This became conflated with a separate proposal by the Strafford Youth Softball and Baseball association to **sell advertising space to local businesses** for fundraising, similar to what other towns do. [04:45](#)
- The youth organization **posted an advertisement on the listserv** inviting businesses to purchase placard space, which prompted select board members and the town clerk to contact Jason about proper permissions. [05:10](#)
- The youth sports organizations want to raise money to **pay baseball fees for all families** (some can pay, others can't) and fund uniforms, as managing this has been challenging. [15:59](#)
- A select board member acknowledged that **times are changing** and the town's stance on advertising may need to evolve, especially for nonprofit youth sports organizations trying to raise money in light of the recent loss of Dave Taplin, a major contributor to sports organizations. [11:23](#)
- The board decided to guide the baseball organization toward the DRB process, suggesting they explore the exemption for advertising events with sponsor names, and to report back on fundraising needs if they want advocacy support. [39:04](#)

Regulatory framework and jurisdiction

- The bylaws prohibit **signs larger than 12 square feet** unless approved through the Development Review Board (DRB). Even on private property, only two for sale signs are allowed - the town clearly restricts advertising. [10:00](#)
- The rec board has oversight of several areas including **Varney Field, Pocket Park, preschool playground, Red Barn and parking lot**, and was delegated management responsibility by the select board. [17:49](#)
- Anyone wanting to hang a sign that doesn't meet exemption rules **must apply to the DRB**, which has some discretion in interpreting the bylaws though may be reluctant to exercise it. [19:22](#)

- There are existing plaques in town that commemorate contributions (e.g., the **less than 1 foot by 1 foot plaque** at Newton School acknowledging Vermont Arts Council and National Endowment of the Arts), which are acceptable because they show thanks and meet requirements. [10:41](#)

Creative solutions and alternatives

- Suggestions included **temporary signs only during baseball season** (about 6 weeks, down by Fourth of July) that aren't visible from the road, are aesthetically appealing, small, and only seen by those going to the baseball field or recycling center. [20:41](#)
- Brynn proposed using the **third exemption for temporary signs advertising community organization events** - signs could advertise the event with sponsor names underneath, creating some uniformity while falling within the exemption. [21:38](#)
- The snack shack could be **fully billboarded as a portable pop-up tent** that could go to away games, potentially providing a way to advertise businesses without permanent signage. [22:49](#)
- Traditional **outfield fence panels** (approximately 3 feet by 4 feet, or 12 square feet) were discussed as common in other towns, though many of those fields are privately owned and subject to different rules. [23:46](#)
- Vermont's anti-billboard law was clarified to allow **up to 150 square feet**, much larger than the 12 square feet being discussed for typical baseball field placards. [25:31](#)
- Ed suggested advertising that's **visible only to spectators** at the fields (not from the road) could be acceptable, though emphasized this is his personal opinion rather than an official board position. [30:16](#)

Policy concerns and precedent

- Concerns were raised that allowing advertisements **sets a precedent** - other organizations might want signs, and it would be difficult to limit what products could be advertised (clothing, tobacco, vaping, etc.). [25:50](#)
- Questions arose about whether allowing advertisements would require compliance with **discrimination laws** - if one business can advertise, others selling different products (cigars, bulldozers) might have to be allowed as well. [28:45](#)
- Brynn clarified that **public health and safety regulations** in state statute already create boundaries around advertising for tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis products, which wouldn't require the board to make endorsement decisions. [29:08](#)
- Brynn noted the potential importance of alternative funding mechanisms given that **traditional fundraising sources may diminish** in the future, making this a proactive rather than reactive consideration. [34:38](#)
- Leslie raised concerns about a '**slippery slope**' where allowing some advertisements could lead to pressure from major businesses wanting to advertise across multiple towns, making it difficult to discriminate against certain advertisers. [35:53](#)
- The board reached consensus that their role is **issuing recommendations around bylaws**, especially if they're too restrictive for continuation of sporting events, but final decisions rest with the DRB and concerned community members. [29:53](#)

Donor recognition plaque

- Ed noted the project was on the **10-year capital plan but ended up totally funded without town funds**, making donor recognition particularly appropriate given this accomplishment. [40:29](#)
- Major donors included **Bethel Mills** (lumber), **Pike Industries** (60 tons of jocksand), **Linehan Design Build** (excavator and dump trailer), **Rockbottom Farm** (equipment), **Webster & Donovan** (trucking) and **Cloca Mora Floral** (tractor, operator, labor, coordination). [42:28](#)
- The board has precedent for donor acknowledgment, including plaques for Karen Didrickson and John Linehan (tennis courts), and the **Lions Club sign on the dugouts** from over a decade ago. [41:23](#)
- Jason proposed putting up a plaque thanking donors for baseball field improvements, which would require a DRB permit application, and the board expressed support for this idea. [40:20](#)
- Jason was formally authorized (moved and seconded) to research plaque options and costs, with plans to present a proposal at the next meeting in one week. [44:52](#)

Administrative matters

- Ed proposed a **new agenda-setting process** where he and Jason (as co-chairs) will create preliminary agendas and send to all members for feedback before Leslie officially warns the meeting. [46:06](#)
- Leslie's current process involves keeping carryover items, adding new items throughout the month, and looking back one year for seasonal tasks (like turning off water at Murray Field), with a **Thursday deadline** for the 48-hour warning requirement before Monday meetings. [47:36](#)
- Jason will transcribe and clean up meeting notes using an AI note-taker, with draft minutes to be shared with the board for review before submission to the Select Board. [49:36](#)
- Brynn suggested that for the first AI-generated minutes, everyone should review their own pieces before the minutes go to the Select Board to ensure accuracy. [51:06](#)
- The board will approve both Jason's notes from this meeting and Leslie's manually written notes from the March meeting at the next meeting (one week away, April 13, 2026). [51:40](#)