

UCSSL MEETING MINUTES FOR JANUARY 3, 2018

The following is a summary of our league meeting of January 3, 2018.

40 were in attendance, with all 21 (now 22) teams represented.

League officers for 2018 are again:

Pete Osborn	Commissioner/Treasurer
Rich Grossberg	Director of Operations
Paul Brody	Commissioner of 50s Division
Marty Marks	Coordinator of 60s Division
John Malone	Advisor

Jeff Friedlander is the new team manager of JoeMax Telecom. Gary Schaller is now manager of Cranford VFW #2. Garwood Metal is the new sponsor for Top Line.

Phenomenal Boyz, represented by Kariem Draper and Roy Melvin, have formed our 14th team in the 50+ Division. The team submitted a non-refundable \$100 fee at the meeting as a condition of their acceptance into the league, just as LLG did as a new 60+ team last year.

The final 2017 financial report was distributed and reviewed. Although we operated at a deficit of \$945.33 for the year, officers decided at their annual meeting in November that, rather than increasing fees, the following actions would be taken in an effort to reduce expenditures instead:

- * Advise managers to purchase only that number of shirts that are needed for players that don't already have two or more of the current team color.

- * The league experienced the unusually high number of 15 forfeitures last season, four of them at the field at game time. Because the league paid \$180 to umpires that were present for these games that were forfeited at the field due to insufficient players, each team will be required to put up \$45 in addition to their sponsor's fee. This will be kept by the league only if the team forfeits a game at any time after 3 PM on game day, but will be returned at the end of the season to those teams that have no such forfeits.

Player fees will remain at \$80 (\$65 for playing in both 50+ and 60+) and sponsor fees will remain at \$525 in 2018. If we again have greater expenditures than income this year, one or both will likely increase in 2019.

Further discussion at the meeting resulted in a consensus that managers should only order hats for players who will wear them, rather than over ordering. Also, it was suggested that the cost of admission for the league banquet could be increased if there is a known financial shortfall at the end of the season.

Registration/waiver forms were emailed in late November. Players are requested return them to team manager so you can check them for accuracy, legibility, and completeness, as well as updating team roster information where there are changes in address, etc. As usual, they should be submitted at our remaining league meetings. Players should be encouraged to include their email addresses if they are interested in receiving regular league updates and announcements.

Sponsor letters will be emailed to managers this week. Sponsor fees are due by the beginning of the season.

At the November meeting of league officers, the following decisions were made:

- * To avoid potential roster problems, ALL registration materials MUST be in the hands of the commissioner by the usual May 15 deadline. Final rosters will be disseminated to team leaders via email immediately after the May 15 deadline. NO player will appear on a team's official roster unless his completed registration form and full league payment have been received by that date.

- * Officers agreed that we should have a deadline for completion of regular season makeups that gives us the likelihood of completing the playoffs prior to Labor Day. It was decided to schedule/play all regular season games no later than Thursday, August 9, 2018.

Managers were reminded that any player who expects to transfer from one team to another league team this season must inform both the league commissioner and their 2017 team manager by January 31.

The annual league banquet/awards night, held Friday, October 13, was reviewed. There were 88 paid attendees. Everyone agreed that holding the event upstairs was an improvement.

Managers seeking new players should let the commissioner know so he can direct inquiries to those teams most in need.

Weekly highlights and standings, league schedules and rules, and other UCSSL (as well as other county's) information is available on the NJSSA website:

<http://njsseniorsoftball.com/> , which is updated regularly.

Team leaders are also encouraged to follow the league at the UCSSL Facebook page, Union County Senior Softball League, and to provide photos and short videos from league games. Marty can be contacted at MartinMarks62@msn.com with submissions.

Shirt order forms are to be returned by the March league meeting. As per past practice, Norm Stumpf will be honored with the placement of his initials on all 2018 league jerseys. Teams in need of equipment should let Gary Wiese know. Pitchers are strongly encouraged to wear a protective mask, the cost of which will be reimbursed by the league.

Officers again strongly recommend using a 52/300 softball based on safety due to a higher COR, lower compression. After much discussion, a decision on which ball we will use this season was tabled until the next league meeting in four weeks.

Bat testing will be done at fields as was done last year. Bats with 2017 stickers can be used until a cutoff date TBD in late April or very early May, after testing has taken place at the field for every team. We are seeking a volunteer from the 50+ Division to help test bats in the 60+ Division.

The issue of ADA accommodations was reviewed by officers in November. The ASA/USA Softball rule allows such a person to play offense only or defense only. Our UCSSL rule protects such a player from being thrown out at first base by an outfielder. A "rabbit" from home plate is NOT allowed under either set of rules. After discussion at the meeting, it was agreed that players must submit a valid ADA card or a copy of their driver's license indicating "Person With Disability" to qualify for ADA accommodations. Any such players will be identified to team leaders, just as 70+ players are currently identified as eligible "senior bat" users.

Officers emphasize that rules (whether they be ASA or UCSSL) are rules, and they should not and cannot be waived by managers and/or umpires. This would include, but not be limited to, wearing uniform shirts, start/forfeit times of games, late arriving player rule, rabbit rule, etc.

We have had difficulty finding a suitable 4th field for the 60s, and we will need an additional, 7th field in the 50s this year.

Discussion by officers in November as to how we might get more time on better fields led us to conclude that it would be ideal if we were able to schedule a second, later time slot for two different teams (not a doubleheader) if Linden lighted fields are available to us. This second time slot could also be used to schedule late season makeup doubleheaders if that would enable us to conclude our regular season schedule sooner.

Several suggestions of potential new fields at locations in the county were made. Rich will follow up to determine suitability and availability.

Linden field cost will increase to \$75 per team in 2018, county field cost will increase to \$15 per game.

Teams/Divisions in 2018

By league rule, the following would be the divisional alignment if we had the same teams returning this year:

50's:

<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>
Deegan Roofing	Contact Lens	Nat'l Energy
Linwood Inn	Riverside Inn	Bad Brains
JoeMax Telecom	Top Line Appl.	10th St Live Bar
Roselle Legion	Cranford VFW	A J Jersey
	Linda #2	

With a 12th team, the recommended best divisional structure is 4-6-4 with a 24 game schedule:

- A and C play each team in division 4 times, all others once, with 2 bumpers
- B teams play 3 games against teams in division, 1 against other 8 teams, with 1 bumper

(With no byes, the season would conclude after 24 playing dates rather than the current 27)

According to UCSSL Rule 1.2.: A 50's team will enter the league as an 'A' team unless the league grants a waiver. Thus the new team would join A, with Roselle Legion staying in B. Also, National Energy Network has requested to remain in the B Division and Linda's has requested to remain in the C Division due to the loss of several of their best players to the newly formed team.

60's:

<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>
Kilkenny House	Awnings II
Liberty Lighting	DeBellis Associates
Creative 1	Cranford VFW 2
American Legion	Avengers
	Creative Too

Discussion of where Awnings should be placed to be most competitive and advantageous to the league seemed to reach a consensus that a 5A, 4B structure would be best in 2018.

In both the 50+ and 60+ divisions, multiple managers expressed a concern that our 2017 schedules consisted of an imbalance in which some opponents play each other too many times. There was also a concern that less strong teams should not play the strongest teams too many times. After much discussion, it was agreed that officers would consider how we might schedule several suggested possibilities. Each of these alternatives will be examined, and the schedules that they would necessitate will be presented to managers, prior to the next league meeting so that final decisions can be made at that time regarding the league schedules for 2018.

For the 50s, the following alternatives will be considered --
4-6-4, 6-4-4, 5-5-4, play all opponents twice.

For the 60s, the following alternatives will be considered --
5-4 inverting the 2017 schedule, 5-4 with two levels of difficulty rather than the 4
levels of 2017, play all opponents three times.

2018 UCSSL season begins on Monday, April 16.

Anyone with input regarding the structure of the 2018 NJSSA tournaments 50+, 60+ or
70+ should contact Pete or Marty prior to the first NJSSA winter meeting on January
13.

Remaining 2018 meetings (Wednesdays):

January 31-- Deadline for determining softball, number of teams, schedules.

March 7 -- Discussion and possible revision of rules. Please review current league
rules and begin preparing wording for proposals for change. Shirt orders
due. Field selection, if possible.

April 4 -- Distribution of balls, rule books, scorebooks, umpire checks.