

Recreation Commission Minutes
January 21, 2015

Chairman John Lembeck called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

Attendance:

Chairman John Lembeck – present; Commissioners: Dan Bavuso, Mike Cecil, Kerry Chandler, Jim Dengler, Sharon Greener, and Robert McGinty were present. Recreation Director Sarah Orsay and Shade Tree Commissioner Stephen Barrett were also present. Mr. Barrett left at 8.30pm.

Public comment portion:

The Head Coach of the Rumson Dawgs 2014 9U USABL Baseball team, **Rodney Shenman**, his team and their parents, presented a Championship trophy and signed ball to the Recreation Commission and Borough of Rumson. Mr. Shenman thanked the Commissioners for their support and expressed the team's pride in representing Rumson. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Shenman and expressed delight in seeing the boys clearly enjoying their sport and well supported by their parents and coaches.

Resident **Todd Herman**, the rising 9U USABL Baseball Coach, asked for an exception to Rumson Commission age eligibility policy and to grandfather the younger players on his 2014 team to tryout out again, rather than trying out for the rising 8U team. The Commissioners asked several questions and agreed to consider the request. Separately, Mr. Herman expressed his support for having Travel teams remain under the Rumson Recreation Commission's supervision. He felt that coach selection and supervision by the Commission were essential and an enormous benefit to the community. Mr. Shenman expressed strong agreement with this.

Resident **Katie Johnson** came to express her desire for RFH Girls Rec Lacrosse to run a Select Tournament team again this year. Mr. Lembeck responded by dispelling misinformation about any potential Tournament Team program that had been widely disseminated among the parents. There was then some discussion between Ms. Johnson and the Commissioners. Ms. Chandler reminded Ms. Johnson that the Tournament Team had existed for only the prior two years and was entirely a function of volunteers coming forward with the willingness and commitment to coach the team and handle the Administrative aspects of a Tournament Team. Seeking out volunteers to run an adjunct select Tournament team is not part of her responsibility as the volunteer Rec Lac Coordinator. Until very recently, Ms. Chandler had received little expression of volunteer interest in leading the program. Ms. Chandler said that if volunteers materialized, it was not too late to do a Tournament team.

Resident **Aviva DeVito** was also present to discuss Girls Lacrosse. Ms. DeVito felt that a Tournament Team was too much work and a not a good use of time, but rather would like to see a "Division One" level select team (i.e., highly competitive) in Rumson for her 7th grade daughter, as the existing private programs are not as conveniently located and are more expensive than a Borough sponsored program would be. She also felt that the better lacrosse players did not want to play Rec because it would not be challenging enough for them. Ms. DeVito said she would be happy to organize a select team. Ms. Chandler thanked her, but said it would be too late to do a Select Team this season. In response to Ms. DeVito's comments about the Rec program, Ms. Chandler expressed her enthusiasm for girls Lacrosse, her personal, long-term commitment to the Recreation program, as well as her strong belief in the benefits of the Recreation program for players of all levels. Ms. Chandler believes that Rec provides a fun, low pressure environment, in which even the best players can try new positions and expand their skill set. In addition to weekly practices, the Rec program offers competitive games with local towns, playoffs, and at least one tournament.

Resident **Russell Montalbano** was also in attendance. Mr. Montalbano wished to thank the Recreation Commissioners for their extensive volunteer commitment to our community and our children. Mr. Montalbano is a long-time volunteer Rec coach and he stated that the Commission has done a fantastic job making Rec relevant and fun. He also expressed interest in seeing more Community-wide events and hoped to see the Commission offer programs beyond youth sports. He also expressed his willingness to assist in any way needed toward this effort.

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Mr. Lembeck concluded the public comment session at 8.10pm, indicating that the Commissioners would take all of these comments under consideration.

Chairman's Announcements

None

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. McGinty raised the motion to approve the November 2014 Meeting Minutes, Mr. Dengler seconded, and all were in favor.

REPORTS

Parks

Stephen Barrett, Chairman of the Rumson Shade Tree Commission, was in attendance to update the Commission on several Shade Tree initiatives that have been approved by the Council. First, they are replacing the "Christmas Tree" in Victory Park, which was planted 31 years ago. Mr. Barrett explained that the tree was no longer manageable to decorate and is in decline. It will be replaced with a 20 foot tree planted in the vicinity. There is on-going discussion as to when the current tree will be removed. Second, the Rumson Garden Club is donating ten trees to the Borough. In anticipation of this, 21 trees were removed from Victory Park on the ridge between the RFH Rowing driveway and the Gazebo. These trees were dead or in severe decline and will be replaced with specimen trees in the Spring. Third, The Rumson Garden Club is making a separate donation to Meadow Ridge Park. Working with the Recreation Commission, the Shade Tree Commission will put together an implementation plan for Meadow Ridge that will benefit the town and park users. The Commission thanked Mr. Barrett and all agreed they were excited about the projects and looked forward to working more closely with the Shade Tree Commission in the future. The Commission also expressed its deep appreciation to the generosity of the Rumson Garden Club and efforts of the Shade Tree Commission.

Programs

Crew – Mr. Bavuso presented Chairman Lembeck with a (faux) check for \$15,227 on behalf of the Rumson Boat Race, of which Mr. Bavuso is a Board member, used to purchase a new Vespoli Double for the RFH Rowing program that will be available for the Spring 2015 season. The Commissioners were very appreciative of the generous contribution to the program.

Ms. Orsay announced that Rumson Borough's Director of Rowing, Dan Edwards, was confirmed as the Head Coach of the 2015 RFHRHS Spring Rowing Team. Coach Edwards has over five decades of rowing experience and has extensive experience coaching at the collegiate and high school level. He is one of the founders of the RFH Rowing program and the key organizer of the Rumson Boat Race, bringing top collegiate teams to compete on the Navesink. The Boat Race raises community awareness of the sport as well as financial support for the RFH Rowing program.

A long-term crew parent requested of Mayor Ekdahl and Chairman Lembeck that the Borough consider naming one of the new boats the *Dan Edwards*, in recognition of Coach Edward's significant contribution to the program. The Commissioners were all in favor and Chairman Lembeck will make the recommendation to the Mayor.

The High School Winter Conditioning program is well underway and is at capacity with 64 students (32 max per session) and three coaches. Ms. Orsay had received calls from several Middle School parents disappointed we were not offering a Grade 7&8 program, but we do not have the facility space nor coaching staff to accommodate it, unfortunately.

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Basketball – Rec Basketball is underway with the regular season starting on January 5th. The program registration numbers are significantly higher than last year and is filled to capacity in most divisions. There were a few children waitlisted who registered in January (open registration for this program is October). The Commissioners discussed the trade-offs between overcrowded teams that dilute the quality and reputation of the program and penalize with less playing time those who registered in a timely fashion (i.e., if people register on time, you can make more teams – after a certain date, this is not possible), versus a few children missing the opportunity because they were registered late.

Ms. Orsay has heard positive feedback from parents and children in every division. The March Madness Tournament takes place Feb 23-28. Ms Orsay expressed appreciation that Mike Feerst, the Holy Cross Athletic Director, is allowing Rumson Rec G5/6 to hold their 2/28 games at HC as FD was double-booked. In addition, Paul Campanella, RCDS AD, has also been very accommodating with gym time for both our Recreation and Travel requests.

Baseball/Softball/T-Ball – Open registration for all spring sports runs January 1 – 31. Two River Little League (TRLL), of which Rumson is a part, is strongly encouraging registration by birthdate not grade, to comply with Little League (LL) rules, which will affect post season eligibility and eligibility to compete against non-TRLL LL teams. With the excitement over LL and the renewed enthusiasm for baseball in the younger grades, we expect increased registration this year.

RFH Girls Lacrosse – Ms. Chandler updated the Commission that the program is in a new league this year that will include not only competitive games for Grades 3-8, but playoffs as well as a season-end tournament with Little Silver.

The Commission then discussed the feasibility of a Select Tournament Team. Ms. Chandler reiterated the concerns: 1) we cannot support a select program that will cannibalize the Rec program; 2) any prospective team will be selected from the pool of active Rec participants; 3) we must have coach volunteers (not hired trainers) as well as a volunteer to be the Administrative point person for the team(s); and 4) we must avoid some of the administrative pitfalls experienced behind the scenes in 2014. After some discussion, the Commission agreed that Ms. Chandler and Ms. Orsay would contact the potential volunteers and if feasible, sponsor a tournament team within the Rec program. If a Tournament Team is viable this year, it was agreed that there would be a 65% Rec game participation requirement, similar to Little League. Due to the Administrative burden and cost of providing refunds, it was also agreed that it would be advertised up-front that there would be no refunds for the Tournament team, in accordance with the current Rumson Rec Registration Policy, even if the Tournaments were cancelled, and the Rec participation requirement would be enforced – and again, no refunds if a child is ineligible due to missing Rec games. Ms. Chandler would oversee tryouts and no coaches would be involved in team selection.

Travel Baseball – The 11U tryouts with Coach Ferjentsik are concluded and 10U tryouts with Coach Shenman are this weekend. The Commission discussed Mr. Herman's request for an age eligibility exception for the younger players. While expressing their high regard for Mr. Herman and sincere appreciation for his service as a coach, the Commission felt that an exception of this nature will lead to follow on requests from others, which are ultimately time consuming and distracting. Thus, the Commission unanimously agreed to deny the request, unless Mr. Herman does not have enough eligible players within the proscribed age parameters, in which case he may request of the Commission an exception on that basis.

The Commission unanimously approved two coaches for the 8U travel team, Darren Stumberger and Chris Mauthe. However, the team will not officially be sponsored by Rumson Recreation until 9U (2016), but may operate independently this year. Again, this is to eliminate the possibility of setting a precedence as the Borough and Commission do not have resources to support Travel or Select teams of this age level.

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Travel Basketball – Mr. Cecil reported that the Winter season was underway. He asked for approval of Ms. Kathy Foos as Assistant Coach to the Girls 9U team. Ms. Foos is known the Commission as an excellent coach and was approved.

Travel Soccer – Mr. McGinty distributed to the RFH High School soccer coaches information on a Grade 9 (Travel) Referee certification program for those 16 years and older.

Ms. Orsay reported that she anticipated the Borough would only be able to provide one practice time a week for Travel Soccer in the spring and likely even Fall 2015. The overcrowding on the fields last Fall was both dangerous and too much wear and tear on the fields, plus there was no open field time for passive recreation for the general public. By comparison, Fair Haven and Little Silver provide no field time for travel soccer teams during the week or on Sundays. Recreation programs and the public are the priority. Mr. McGinty affirmed one practice time in the spring was sufficient and that perhaps the Borough could rent time at Maria Gatta fields in Oceanport for the Fall. Mr. Bavuso pointed out that the Maria Gatta option was not well received last Fall by the coaches and parents and so was underutilized. Ms. Greener suggested we could look into Fort Monmouth indoor facilities. If space were rented elsewhere, it was suggested Rumson should allocate field space by seniority, with older teams getting local preference. Related to this, there was discussion of whether or not the Borough could support a new 9U boys' and girls' team and perhaps it would be better to reduce the commitment by two teams, which would help alleviate the field space issue.

Ms. Orsay filled the Commission in on a proposal by Wildcats to partner with Rumson Soccer Club and how this might help alleviate both the field space issue and also some of the concerns surrounding professional trainers. The Commission discussed this and Mr. McGinty pointed out how the current proposal falls short of some of our current program's needs.

Ms. Orsay also reported that Rumson Police Chief Paterson affirmed that trainers must have a fingerprint background check. Chief Paterson had concerns from a safety and oversight perspective about parent coaches themselves hiring private trainers for Rumson Rec sponsored teams that were unknown to the Borough. The Commission was requested to consider ways to mitigate these concerns.

Rec Soccer – Ms. Orsay reported that she had set up the Grade 9 (Recreation) Referee Certification course for Sunday, August 23 at Forrestdale School. Information is available on the Rumson Rec web site. The date was selected to maximize the number of age eligible participants (you must be 14 years old) and also so the information would be fresh in their minds before the season.

Committees

Travel Sports Policies – It was agreed the Commission needed further discussion on the use of trainers and the policies, but due to the late hour it was agreed to postpone until next meeting.

Special Events – Mr. Lembeck confirmed that the **KDM Rumson Run**, of which he is a Committee member, will be held on Saturday, March 6th.

Ms. Orsay asked for input into selecting judges for the **Rumson St. Patrick's Day Parade**, March 7, and Rumson float and invited the Commissioners to email her independently with ideas.

Ms. Orsay announced tentative plans for **Rumson Day** on June 6th as initiated by the Rumson Endowment. Currently, she and Mr. Tom Ridgway were working on putting together a Committee.

Fair Haven Recreation approached Ms. Orsay asking if Rumson Recreation wished to co-sponsor three or four **Summer Movies in the Park** at Fair Haven Fields this summer. The Commission unanimously agreed.

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Projects – Ms. Orsay announced that the Borough had been awarded the maximum \$250,000 in matching funds from the Monmouth County Open Space Grants for Phase I of the Piping Rock Turf Project. The next step is to hear if we are awarded money for Phase II, which will be announced in December 2015.

Personnel – The Commission went into closed session from 9:58pm-10:05pm to discuss a personnel issue.

Administrative

Ms. Orsay handed out the script of the Recreation portion of the Mayor's Annual address and also an article on Lacrosse Club teams recommended by Ms. Chandler.

Ms. Orsay expressed discomfort with the \$50 Late Fee, believing it will lead to a huge number of exception requests, which is very time consuming, and also discouraging people from registering at all if they miss the deadline. The Commissioners confirmed their support of the increase as an incentive to register on time, but felt that the higher Late Fee should be combined with the Early Bird discount and implemented for the Fall 2015 season.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Orsay reviewed the Treasurer's Report. She noted that the balances for Basketball and Travel Basketball are expected to be zero or even in the red due to primarily to renting more gym from Rumson Country Day, which is significantly more expensive than other gyms, and increased security costs at Congregation B'Nai Israel and Forrestdale. Ms. Orsay anticipates that both Recreation and Travel basketball fees will likely increase next year to cover these expenses. In addition, the Travel Basketball teams will require new uniforms next season.

Ms. Orsay reminded the Commission of significant potential projects on the horizon such as refurbishing Victory Park playground equipment, contributing to the Piping Rock Memorial Turf Project, refurbishing Victory Park tennis courts, and contributing to the replacement of the Forrestdale gym floor.

Ms. Orsay noted that the Community Appeal raised \$8784.82 on behalf of Rumson Recreation from their 2013 fundraising appeal. The Commission was very appreciative. The next Community Appeal will be in March 2015, with distributions in December.

Old Business

Code of Conduct / Mission Statement – The Working Group had submitted suggested revisions to the Commission, but this was postponed until next meeting due to the late hour.

Forrestdale Gym Renovation – the Commission agreed to a contribution of between \$10,000-\$20,000, but felt the burden of developing a fundraising committee for the additional funds should be on the BOE and the PTO, not the Recreation Commission. Mr. Lembeck asked Ms. Orsay to contact the Superintendent's office with this information and to determine next steps.

Background Check Policy and Procedures – Ms. Orsay reported that Chief Paterson, Mr. Rogers and she will be considering an easier on-line background re-check procedure for volunteer coaches who have completed an initial fingerprint background check.

New business

Resident Doug Rice requested permission to donate a shower at Victory Park for use of swimmers and race participants. The Commissioners were appreciative Mr. Rice's generous offer and the perceived need, but

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expressed several concerns: 1) ensuring drainage will not leave a constant muddy mess and wetness near the building; 2) children playing with it, getting soaked inadvertently and flooding the area; 3) damage from vandalism. Ms. Orsay indicated she would follow up with the Borough and DPW to see if these concerns could be mitigated.

Ms. Orsay asked for approval of the same summer camps from 2014, which was unanimously agreed to.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 18 at 7 PM at the Charles S Callman courtroom.

The meeting adjourned at 10.40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Orsay