

Recreation Commission Minutes
April 23, 2014 - FINAL

Chairman Lembeck called the meeting to order at 7.00 PM

Attendance:

Chairman John Lembeck, Commissioners: Mr. Dan Bavuso, Mr. Mike Cecil, Ms. Kerry Chandler, Mr. Jim Dengler, Ms. Sharon Greener, Mr. Bob McGinty; Councilman Ben Day was absent.

Recreation Director Ms. Sarah Orsay was also present.

Public Comment Portion

Akash and Priya Verma were in attendance to ask for the partnership of Rumson recreation soccer in a charity endeavor to collect soccer cleats for impoverished Haitians through their organization, Immortal Souls. Akash and Priya are Rumson residents who are students at Ranney School. They were accompanied by their mother, Monica Logani.

The children did an excellent job presenting their case and describing the success they have had so far with a cleat collection at Ranney School. Their proposal would be to set up bins at borough hall and possibly Forrestdale School and seek donations new or gently worn cleats. They would send the cleats to their partner program, which would then ship them to Haiti. The recipients of the cleats in Haiti will take a photograph of themselves in the cleats and through social media, send the picture back to the specific donor, in this way allowing the Rumson children who donated their cleats to see the power of their charity, personalizing the act.

There was a short Q&A period and the Verma family thanked the Commission for their time and left.

The Commission voted to recommend partnering in this effort. Sharon Green made a motion to approve, Mike Cecil seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously approved.

Based on this recommendation, Ms. Orsay will follow up by seeking approval from the Council Administrator and Council to proceed.

Chairman's Announcements - none

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Lembeck called for a vote to approve the February 2014 recreation commission minutes. Ms. Chandler raised the motion to approve, Mr. Dengler seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Mr. Lembeck called for a vote to approve the March 2014 recreation commission minutes. Mr. McGinty raised the motion to approve, Mr. Bavuso seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Directors Report

Parks - Ms. Orsay gave an update on the parks:

The **Meadow Ridge East** baseball field was closed over the public-school spring break in order for DPW to do maintenance on the field and it is now looking great.

Precise Construction looked over **Forrestdale Field** with DPW, School reps and Ms. Orsay. They agreed there were drainage & other issues. Precise maintains that they built the field to the engineers specifications. Next steps are to take soil samples.

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Meadow Ridge South Baseball - Precise Construction will install concrete dugouts this Spring. They will need to close the field for approximately 3 days during this process.

Ms. Orsay reported that DPW has acquired "Field Closed" signs, which are easy to put in and take out regularly. We anticipate this will help reduce damage to fields during inclement weather by discouraging field use.

Mr. Anderson of DPW has put down crab grass control in the parks, fertilizer and sprayed for ground bees. Awnings for the dugouts should be up by the beginning of May.

Meadow Ridge - Ms. Orsay remarked that overcrowding during peak hours has been a continual problem at Meadow Ridge ("MR"). It seems that there are several Peninsula Soccer teams and soccer trainers operating in MR without permits. This leads to overcrowding and additional wear and tear on our already fragile fields. Also, those without permits are not familiar with our rules (i.e., sandbags on soccer goals; removing soccer goals out of way of baseball; no soccer and baseball at same time), and so there is a safety risk. We have declined to issue permits to non-resident or non-Borough teams as our fields are fully utilized during peak hours with internal demand. Borough Ordinance requires all organized sports and professional trainers to have permits. Chief Paterson of the Rumson Police Department and he agreed to have his officers check for permits during peak hours to help mitigate this problem.

Meadow Ridge Center - After discussing it with DPW, Ms. Orsay made the recommendation to close Meadow Ridge Center from September 2014 - March 2015. For optimal field maintenance, fields should be closed on a rotating basis each year and with the introduction of a Borough sponsored travel soccer program and the increase in popularity of lacrosse, the Borough fields have had significant wear and tear. The field expert who reviewed our fields last Spring recommended closure as a regular part of our field maintenance plan. The RC discussed changes they would make to Fall field allocation in order to accommodate this, including possibly renting fields out of town for travel soccer and applying to Fair Haven for some Sunday field space. Mr. Dengler suggested closing the field from mid-October, in order to reduce the scheduling burden. Ms. Orsay said she would discuss with Mr. Anderson of DPW. The RC voted to approve the recommendation to close MRC in the Fall. Mr. Dengler raised the motion, Ms. Chandler seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Dengler suggested that we put wheel on the goals so they were easier to move. Ms. Orsay said she had discussed with Mr. Anderson and would follow up with him.

Programs

Baseball/Softball/Tball — these programs got a late start this spring due to the weather and the late public-school spring break. For 12U Softball we are combining with Fair Haven for a total of 3 teams. For 14U Softball, all 5 towns have combined to form one team, which will compete with other LL. Rumson has one player on this team. For T-Ball, many coaches have requested a weekday practice time but we cannot accommodate this request due to field space limitations.

Lacrosse and Tournament Team Lacrosse are off to a good start. Giving participants the flexibility to attend any practice that suits their schedule seems to be helping mitigate the problem with conflicts and requests to switch teams.

Travel Soccer—Mr. McGinty has reached out to the coaches to firm up travel soccer try out dates this spring. Ms. Orsay will be reaching out to Fair Haven to ensure that there was eligible participants are aware of our program.

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Preschool spring programs—US Sports Institute is running a variety of spring programming for preschoolers, in conjunction with Rumson Recreation, including tennis, T-ball, and soccer squirts. They have over 140 participants registered for these programs.

Summer Camps – Ms. Orsay reported a successful marketing launch with Camp Night on April 1 at the high school cafeteria. Fair Haven recreation also participated. It was well attended, we received great feedback from parents, and we had high rate of enrollment right away. Some of the smaller specialty camps are already filled to capacity.

Summer Playground—Mr. Wilson completed counselor interviews this week, is now checking references, and will be notifying applicants in the next 10 days. There were 18 applicants. Ms. Orsay is not at all involved in the hiring decision.

Soccer and Flag Football—registration for these fall programs will commence May 1 through May 31.

Committee Reports

Travel basketball—Mr. Cecil recommended that Justin Cupps be approved as the Mid-Monmouth U8 Basketball Coach. Mr. Cupps has his coach certifications through Rumson Recreation and has been a volunteer coach in the past. Mr. Cecil mentioned that Mr. Cupps' child is one year young for U8, but there were no other volunteers. There were no objections to Mr. Cupps.

Crew—Ms. Orsay and Mr. Bavuso updated the Recreation Commission on the transition of the high school competitive crew program to RFH high school from the Borough. This move effectively accomplished the goal of combining the Rumson Borough High School sponsored program, RFH Rowing, with RFH Crew – a parent-run program that had operated independently.

For the benefit and support of the high school crew team, the Borough agreed to provide to the High School full access to the RFH Rowing site on River Road adjacent to Victory Park, as well as its floating dock, 16 person training barge, 3 wakeless coaches' launches, 10 fully equipped crew shells and oars, 11 ergs, boat trailer, portable storage trailer, and all the necessary equipment to run a crew program contained in two large storage containers on site.

The 2014 Spring High School rowing program has approximately 100 participants enrolled and is therefore the largest RFH sport. The program is a club sport and so by necessity entirely self-funded by the team members' community fundraising efforts, spearheaded by the RFH Rowing parent booster group. The boosters conducted a community-wide car raffle through the Rumson Endowment raising approximately \$59K in funds to support the high school rowing program. The parents also held a gala fundraiser resulting in an additional \$11K (approximately) in funds. The Gala funds were not raised through the Rumson Endowment, but a separate entity set up by the High School.

The season is progressing smoothly from the athletes' point of view, particularly considering all aspect of the transition.

From an administrative point of view, there has been no final agreement yet between the parties as to the appropriate financial arrangement between the Borough and the High School. As originally agreed in principle among all parties, the Borough is seeking appropriate financial compensation for use, maintenance and reinvestment of its equipment so it can continue to service the Recreation Summer and Fall programs, which in turn contribute to the support of the High School Spring program.

The Rec Commission members expressed disappointment that the agreement had not been finalized, despite the fact that the program is well underway.

Special Events

Baseball Opening Day Parade—Ms. Orsay reported that the parade was a big hit this year. We had great weather and a great turnout and the cost was significantly less than last year due to a change in food service vendors. Eighth grader Lizzie Bailey did a terrific rendition of the national anthem; volunteer coach Tony Scannell energized the audience with his inspiring story of playing for Little League and then semipro baseball; eighth grader and Little League player Garrett Stratton was the catcher for the Mayor's first pitch. Councilman Ben Day was honored for his decades of work on behalf of Rumson families, including being a Board of Ed member when his own children were in school; long-time service as a member of the Borough Council and Rumson Recreation; and, more recently, a member of the RFH Municipal Alliance. Mr. Day has also added a significant amount of media and technical expertise to these organizations, including the Rumson Education Foundation and Rumson PTO.

Mr. Dengler asked if we should consider combining Opening Day with Fair Haven in the future. This idea was discussed and all were open to the idea, although the events are quite different in scope. That said, Ms. Orsay will discuss with Mr. Rafe Fernandez, head of FH Baseball.

Summer event—as discussed in prior meetings Ms. Orsay suggested that we consider doing a movie night in the park or around some family day or some other family centered activity rather than simply a series of live performances. The concerts are relatively expensive and do not seem well attended by residents. The commission agreed and Ms. Orsay will follow up with Mr. Rogers on council support behind this change.

Projects

PRTP - Ms. Orsay reported that this will likely go forward this year and that the Council working group will discuss next week.

Field and facility fees—at the request of the Rec Commission, Ms. Orsay conducted extensive research of other NJ counties' and towns' field fees and field usage of Green Acres parks. This request was in response to the continued growing demand for our limited field space and the resultant damage to our fields. The benefit of charging modest fees is that it will help compensate resident taxpayers for the use of our parks by non-residents and commercial users and may better balance supply and demand.

Ms. Orsay presented a proposal for 2015 field and facility fees. From the analysis, it does not appear that this will significantly impact most residents as parks will remain open and free to non-commercial public users, but require a permit by non-Borough organized teams, private trainers, and commercial users. Borough sponsored teams will be exempt from permit fees and resident non-Borough teams will have a reduced permit fee. A fee policy will result in non-resident and for-profit users to contribute to park upkeep and field maintenance.

Mr. Bavuso raised that the motion be passed, Ms. Chandler seconded the motion and the motion was passed unanimously. Ms. Orsay will forward the recommended proposal to the Council. If approved at that level, a Borough Ordinance will be written and enacted.

Administrative

Community pass online registration system—Ms. Orsay is very pleased with the online system. It has improved efficiency and measurably. However Ms. Orsay canceled the field schedule and program as she felt the Outlook calendar was superior for Rumson Recreation's field scheduling needs.

NJRPA—Ms. Orsay gave an update on the annual parks and recreation conference she attended in March. She highlighted the topic of "Professionalization of Youth Sports" led by an expert from Rutgers University. With the rise of travel sports and private trainers, this has become an ever present issue in recreation and by all accounts is not in

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the best interest of the majority of children, but is changing the face of youth sports. The seminar attendees shared ideas for both countering this trend and accommodating the demand from parents for more competitive sports at a younger age.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Orsay reviewed the March 31 year to date Treasurer's Report.

Old Business

Community room—Ms. Orsay is still looking into spaces for a community room and other ideas for informal activities for families and teenagers.

New Business

Ms. Orsay mentioned that Mr. Paul Campanella and his wife would like to hold Art Classes for adults at Victory Park. The Commission was in favor. Ms. Orsay will follow up with Mr. Rogers and the Council.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 21 at 7 PM at the Charles S Callman courtroom.

The meeting adjourned at 9:28 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sarah Orsay
Recreation Director