

THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EMERSON RECREATION COMMISSION WAS HELD ON JANUARY 17, 2019, AT 8:00 P.M. IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE RECREATION CENTER.

Presiding Officer Afrim Hoxha welcomed everyone and called the Regular Meeting of the Recreation Commission to order at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday January 17, 2019.

Roll Call: Presiding Officer Afrim Hoxha, David Cannici, Anthony Gismondi, Paul Coombes, Rich Solimando, Eilish Viggiani.

Apologies: Bob Quinones, Mike Graham, Willie Ortiz

I New Track Program

Following on from the January 3 meeting when a group of parents came to the meeting to discuss the logistics of setting up a track program, a larger group attended the meeting to review the proposal that had been circulated. Afrim congratulated the group on the proposal. In answer to their question about minimum number of required board members, he told them that their board would need a president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary at a minimum and four is a quorum. With these officers in place there is no limit on how many more members that are appointed to the board. They could appoint coordinators and members responsible for particular areas of the program. Once formed the board will need to create by-laws using Recreation Commission by-laws as a template. They will also need to provide an estimated budget for equipment, uniforms and other items that will not be covered by the registration fees. Chris Pesce said that using the Westwood track program as a model they were thinking fees would be around \$125. They also need to secure the school track for training. Dave Cannici will connect with the Dr. Nisonoff at the Board of Education to support this. The track group were hoping for two practices during the week starting between 5:30 and 6 pm and one at weekends sometime in the afternoon. The consensus was that this was not a problem.

Track will start by participating in a spring program but if there is enough interest they will attend summer meets and possibly into the fall. There may be field issues in the fall with soccer and football, however as fall is mainly a cross country program this shouldn't be the case, certainly the Assumption program did not have any problems even when games were being played. Practice for cross country will not be done on local streets. The location of the field event practices should not cause any conflict as they are not held at the high school.

The program will include all sprints and cross country running, hurdles, high jump, discus, turbo javelin, shot put, long jump and triple jump but not all ages will participate in all of these as some are limited to the older children.

Motion by Dave Cannici, seconded by Eilish Viggiani that the Recreation Commission approve the addition of a Track Program to Rec. The motion passed unanimously.

The next step is for the Track group to provide a budget and then the Recreation Commission will review with the Mayor and Council.

Councilwoman McGuire joined the meeting and Afrim welcomed her and brought her up to date on the Track program. She will be the liaison between the Recreation Commission and the Mayor and Council.

II Introduction of Sports Board Round Table and Sport-by-Sport Review

Afrim welcomed the members of the Sports Boards and asked them to introduce themselves

Phil Gianastasio – Baseball
Dave Zimmerman – Baseball
Chris Butler – Soccer
Adam Lang – Football and Cheer
Bryana Paine – Wrestling

There was no representation from softball.

Afrim explained the background behind the request for members of the sports board being asked to attend.

Baseball

Total numbers of players registered are down on where they were last year, they usually have 240-250 players and at the time of the meeting only 190 had registered. This is particularly evident amongst the majors (5th and 6th grade) where there are only enough players registered for one team. If 5 or 6 more registered they could make two teams. It is possible that some players have been lost to soccer. After some discussion it was agreed that members of the Recreation Commission and other sports boards will reach out to families with kids who have played in previous years. One of the reasons it is important to maintain teams at every level is that it opens up the possibility of being a home host for a tournament which is a good fundraiser. It may also increase the interest in baseball.

Soccer

Like baseball, total numbers of recreation players registered are down on where they were last year but not significantly, 250 this year vs. 271 last year. Not many younger girls interested in soccer which may be because they are going to cheer.

In the past there were on average 6 boy's teams and 4 girls in the K-2nd grade age. This means a world cup could be held. However, for the last three years it has been necessary to combine boys and girls to make enough teams to play.

Football

There are 98 kids in the program. They combine with Park Ridge for tackle. In the 3rd/4th grade level, 18 of 38 players were from Emerson. In the Mighty Mites group it is about

50% from each town. Numbers of kids playing flag dropped in last year. In the juniors there are about 6 kids from Emerson and this is similar at the senior level.

Football would like to do more fundraising. The last big fundraiser was 2 years ago so the Board have been discussing events they could do in the spring, summer and into the fall season to change this. They are looking to partner with the high school to do something. Tournament is a fundraiser.

Cheer is doing well.

What do the teams want from the Recreation Commission?

Baseball

Dave requested clarification on the increase in fees from the Borough Ordinance passed in December. This was provided at the meeting. On the basis of this baseball would like to have the option raise their fees by 20%. They wouldn't necessarily do that but would like the flexibility.

Field usage process.

Afrim explained that the Board of Ed wanted one point of contact which is Rich so if a field request is denied that is more likely coming from the Board of Ed than the Recreation Commission. Rich will be heading a three-person group; himself, Bob and Eilish to handle the field use requests for all fields which will use the same program as the Board of Ed.

Background Checks

The background check renewal process has changed from every three years to every year. Rich explained that fingerprinting only had to be done once and that would be done in 2019. He also noted that the location has moved from Paramus to Garfield. Once fingerprinting is complete, volunteers will go on-line to register and a second background check done. The whole process will take 3-4 weeks. When a volunteer has cleared all the background checks they will receive an email from the recreation secretary asking for a photograph. This will then be used to create an ID card for the volunteer. There will be an email sent out with all this information in the next couple of weeks.

Rich pointed out that if a parent doesn't have one of these cards they cannot interact with the players at training or games and need to take a seat in the stands. Sports boards will be asked to provide the names of their coaches and assistants that are up for renewal.

Although this means that some volunteers will be fingerprinted for a second time the benefit is that renewal of the approval will be a simple press of a button on the Averity website. When a volunteer is up for approval the administrator (Recreation Secretary) will receive a reminder from Averity and the background check will be repeated at no extra cost. The Sports Boards will provide a list of new coaches who need a background check every year.

Wrestling

The program is going well with 40 kids signed up including a lot of younger ones. Each year there is a variable number of kids at each grade. At the moment there are 6 kindergarten kids enrolled, five 4th grade and one from 7th grade (compared to 4 or 5 last year). Afrim asked what the board could do for the program to help increase the numbers. Bryana suggested that they help at the tournament January 19 which is being used as a fundraiser.

They had a beefsteak at the start of the season which was more of a camaraderie event. They are hosting district on February 17 which is a fundraiser. The season ends the second week of March.

Softball

Their fundraiser has been switched to June 1st as baseball have their fundraiser on March 23rd at the Knights of Columbus in Westwood.

Soccer

The soccer board held an Octoberfest fundraiser in October. Attendance was good and comparable to previous years.

Facebook

Paul Gismondi mentioned that the Recreation Commission has a Facebook page which can be used by the sports boards if they want to advertise/publicize events and other activities. It must pertain to Rec.

Fields

Soccer submitted their field requirements for the spring and Chris reminded the meeting that they need to submit these to the league by February 21st. Bob will be part of the team that will be doing field scheduling which will help the communication process.

Afrim thanked all the Sports Board members for coming to the meeting and invited them to stay for the rest of the meeting if they wished.

Afrim asked members of the Recreation Commission to introduce themselves to Councilwoman McGuire and explain what they do on the Commission. Councilwoman McGuire told the meeting that she was the liaison for the Land Use Board which meets at the same time as the Recreation Commission. Afrim confirmed that the Recreation Commission meets the first and third Thursday of the month except in July and August when there are no meetings. Afrim congratulated Councilwoman McGuire on her appointment to the Council.

III Field Usage and Booking

Rich informed the meeting that the system, Civic Permits, which had originally been chosen provides more functionality than is required so it is likely that Rec will use a more basic version which is what the Board of Ed use.

V Approval of the 11-1-18, 11-15-18, 12-6-18 and 1-3-19 Minutes

After some discussion it was agreed that these minutes would be approved at the next meeting on February 7, 2019 as the Commissioners had not had sufficient time to review them.

Motion to approve the minutes at the February 7, 2019 made by Paul Coombes, seconded by Rich Solimando and approved unanimously.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by David Cannici, seconded by Paul Coombes, approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Morris
Acting Recreation Secretary