

THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EMERSON RECREATION COMMISSION WAS HELD ON THURSDAY NOVEMBER 7, 2019, AT 8:00 P.M. IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE RECREATION CENTER.

I Call to Order

Presiding Officer Bob Quinones thanked everyone for attending and called the Regular Meeting of the Recreation Commission to order at 8:02 p.m. on Thursday November 17, 2019.

II. Roll Call

Anthony Gismondi, Paul Coombes, Steve Paino, Phil Gianatasio, Bob Quinones, Mike Graham

Apologies: Eilish Viggiani, Willie Ortiz

Councilwoman McGuire was also in attendance along with Ken Benkovic who has experience of the financial aspects of Little League from other towns, Cesar Perpetti District Coordinator Little League District 4, Dumont and Tony Lanzolotti, Umpire in Chief Little League for District 4, Bergenfield.

III Reading and Approval of the Minutes of the October 3 meeting

Motion to approve the minutes from October 17, 2019 meeting was made by Paul Coombes, seconded by Anthony Gismondi and approved unanimously.

IV Reports of Officers

Presiding Officer- The Presiding Officer informed the meeting that he had obtained the details of the terms of each of the members of the Recreation Committee which he shared. These will be circulated to the members of the Commission and posted on the Borough website.

Alternate Presiding Officer- Nothing to report

V Unfinished Business

Little League

Phil Gianatasio introduced Ken Benkovic, Coordinator Perpetti and Tony Lanzolotti from the Little League organization.

The review started with a discussion about how the finances work. The consensus of the meeting was that the Recreation Commission does not have a role in allocating Borough of Emerson funds to sports. The Presiding Officer has reached out to the Borough

Administrator to clarify what the Borough's position is on this funding. As the time of the meeting there had not been a response.

Coordinator Perpetti outlined the process for joining the Little League. To join, Emerson Baseball should contact Little League and apply for a charter. The charter would detail the boundaries that it covered which would be the boundaries of Emerson. The charter is applied for by completing an application form, showing proof of insurance by addition of Little League International as additional insured to the Borough policy and writing and getting approved a constitution and by-laws. They should also be able to demonstrate that Baseball has a safety program which covers the 25 different items specified by Little League. All coaches are required to have background checks through the Little League program. The Little League will provide 125 free background checks which need to be done in addition to any that the Recreation Commission requires. This is an on-line process which is completely confidential. Once Emerson Baseball has been approved, it can open registration to join the teams.

Coordinator Perpetti commented that the educational materials provided by the Little League are very valuable. They are available on line and are relevant to many individuals including parents, coaches, Borough Administrator's.

Ken Benkovic commented that the Little League constitution, which would replace the Baseball by-laws, is similar to them. The biggest difference is the number of sub-committees allowed under the Little League constitution. He further commented that the Little League code of conduct is in line with one used in Emerson and recommended that if there are any issues both organizations should know.

The Presiding Officer said he thought that the Recreation Commission would not have any concerns about Baseball joining Little League in principal. However, two things need to be clarified with the Borough Administrator and Borough Attorney. Firstly, if Emerson Baseball join Little League would they still be under the guide of the Recreation Commission. If not and they are longer part of the Recreation Commission would the budget allocated to them by the town still be available.

From the Little League's perspective once Baseball joins they are their own entity, a 501 (c) (3) through little League. That said, the Recreation Commission has some control because they control the field scheduling. Paul commented that in discussions with the Borough Administrator he was told that the Recreation Commission should vote on the matter and if they approve it then the Mayor and Council would then vote on the proposal. Whether the Mayor and Council approve budget for the Baseball after they had joined Little League has yet to be confirmed. The Presiding Officer said that the goal was to get baseball chartered under Little League and to keep the budget allocation for Emerson kids. Currently baseball fees are set by the Ordinance and the budget allocated by the Borough is necessary to keep the program going. Little League will receive the registration fees of teams chartered with them.

There would be an impact if the current \$8,100 budget which is provided by the Borough is withdrawn. If the shortfall in funds is made up by an increase in registration fees the program may lose players.

There was a question asked about why Emerson has not joined Little League in the past. There was no single answer but Ken Benkovic said that the current group on the Baseball Board is totally committed to joining Little League and it seemed like the time was right.

There was a discussion on whether the Recreation Commission should vote on Baseball joining Little League before or after the financial questions had been answered. Phil Gianatasio said the Baseball board were meeting November 13 and would discuss the situation. One of the issues they would look at is whether they could move forward if the Mayor and Council withdraw Borough funding. The consensus was that the Recreation Commission should vote on approving Baseball to proceed with their application to join Little League and then they could discuss this with the Mayor and Council.

There was a discussion about which Code of Conduct took priority, Little League or Emerson Recreation Commission. This is particularly important for Emerson coaches who coach multiple sports and because of this Phil Gianatasio stated that they would report issues with coaches and parents to the Recreation Commission as well as Little League. The Recreation Commission would not have any jurisdiction in baseball.

As part of this discussion the topic of insurance was raised and Coordinator Perpetti recommended that Emerson baseball should take advantage of JIF if it is an option. He asked whether all parents involved with the sport are background checked or is it just the coaches and assistant coaches. At the time of the meeting only coaches have been background checked. Coordinator Perpetti informed the meeting that under Little League rules any parent/volunteer involved with the sport had to be background checked.

Councilwoman McGuire reviewed statements from a recent JIF MEL Safety Institute Bulletin regarding background check requirements for volunteers involved with youth programs. A copy of this is attached to the minutes. Presiding Officer Quinones gave the example of soccer which, in addition to the background checks required by the Borough, also has checks done by US Club soccer. This organization also requires coaches and assistant coaches to have their US Club approved ID with them when they are on the field.

The discussions were summarized and agreed that the issues of finance, background checks and code of conduct need to be clarified with the Borough Administrator.

Coordinator Perpetti and Umpire in Chief Lanzolotti left the meeting. After much discussion it was agreed that a motion should be made to approve baseball's application to join Little League. This will allow Baseball to discuss with the Mayor and Council and then go ahead with registration either as Emerson Recreation or Emerson Little League International.

Mike Graham made a motion to Authorize Emerson Recreation Baseball Program to make an application to Little League International. Paul Coombes seconded. Motion was passed unanimously.

Secretary

The secretary reported on background checks and ID cards for the existing process which does not cover expanding the checks to include snack stand workers, team moms etc. There are still no new ID cards being produced. In a meeting with the Borough Administrator he stated that the cards need to be the plastic credit cards and not laminated paper and have an expiration date. To make the process less labor intensive he proposed that once a coach had received a card then in subsequent years when background checks were received a sticker to change the date would be sufficient to update the card. The stickers would be issued by the Recreation Commission who would give them to the Sports Boards to distribute to the relevant coaches. The secretary recommended that a member of the Recreation Commission agree this with the Borough Administrator and Borough Attorney. The Presiding officer suggested that a meeting be set up between himself, Councilwoman McGuire, the Borough Attorney, the Borough Administrator. It was agreed that this process needs to be set in place before the background check and ID card process is expanded to include all individuals who work with youth sports.

The change in meeting dates and move to the council chambers at Borough Hall will necessitate a change to the by-laws. The original suggestion was to move the meetings to the second and fourth Tuesday of the month but the Borough Clerk said there may be conflicts if the Mayor and Council meetings are moved from their regular dates of first and third Tuesday. She had suggested Mondays. Councilwoman McGuire agreed this was a good day to choose and confirmed that the days chosen by the Recreation Commission do not have to be approved by the Mayor and Council. She also suggested that the in addition to the 2020 dates being approved by the Recreation Commission the date for the first meeting of 2021 is included.

After must discussion it was agreed that Tuesday or Wednesday would work. These dates will be checked with the Borough Clerk.

Councilwoman McGuire

Councilwoman McGuire was going to discuss the JIF notice about background checks and the dates of the meetings. But this had been covered in earlier sections of the meeting.

V. Unfinished Business

Budget

The Presiding Officer suggested that the budget approval should wait until a decision had been made on whether Baseball will be joining Little League. The Recreation budget is \$48,314.65. There will be no increase in the budget but items can be moved around. One area that needs reviewing was Background Checks which was over budget in 2019. Track will go down to \$500 as the 2019 budget of \$2000 included startup costs. As a general

comment here are trusts associated with line items reserved to pay outstanding costs. It is rare for funds from the trust to be used for items not from the original line item budget associated with the trust. The Presiding Officer suggested a plan should be made for use of the budget. He tabled the discussion of the budget to the next meeting.

The Presiding Officer has created a google doc to keep all working documents. It is a private group. Steve Paino pointed out that if personal emails are used they fall under OPRA and requests can be made for information held in them. Councilwoman McGuire also pointed out that more than three people on an email correspondence constitutes a meeting and is subject to OMRA.

Clarification of requirement to vote to approve absences
There is no requirement to vote to approve absences.

VI New Business

Fundraising-nothing report

Events-Anthony has looked into purchasing an ice rink but there currently is nowhere to store it when not in use.

After some discussion the meeting agreed that there was not enough time to put the event together and then break down and store the rink. The suggestion was that planning for a holiday event for 2020 should start immediately after the 2020 summer kick off town picnic. Options for storage for 2020 will be explored.

4th/5th grade dance is the next event usually held in late March/early April. Eilish has taken responsibility for organizing this in previous years.

Field Scheduling-Nothing to report at the moment. The next big scheduling will be for baseball.

Communications-Nothing to report other than the discussion about expanding background checks

VII Open Session (Public)

Nothing to add

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Paul Coombes, seconded by Mike Graham. Approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Morris
Recreation Secretary