

**THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EMERSON RECREATION COMMISSION WAS
HELD ON WEDNESD MAY 20, 2019, AT 8:00 P.M.**

This meeting of the Recreation Commission of the Borough of Emerson was held via the teleconferencing app GoToMeeting on May 20, 2020 at 8:00 p.m. due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

ACCESS INFORMATION

Recreation Commission Meeting Wednesday May 20, 2020 8pm

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I. Call to Order

Presiding Officer Bob Quinones welcomed everyone to the regular meeting of the recreation commission and called the meeting to order at 8:10 pm. Motion to open the meeting was made by Paul Coombes, seconded by Anthony Gismondi. All were in favor.

II. Roll Call

Bob Quinones, Anthony Gismondi, Paul Coombes, Mike Graham, Willie Ortiz, Eilish Viggiani, Phil Gianatasio, Joe Vigna

Councilwoman Jill McGuire and Councilman Ken Hoffman from the Council and Mr. Kris Lechman and Mr. Franklin Tiberio from the Summer Recreation program were also present

Apologies Steve Paino

III. Reading and Approval of Minutes of the meeting on May 6, 2020.

Motion to approve the minutes from the May 6, 2020 meeting made by Willie Ortiz and seconded by Paul Coombes. Approved by Bob, Paul Willie Mike and Phil. Joe Vigna abstained as he was not at the meeting

III. Reports of Officers

Presiding Officer-Bob confirmed that the funds remaining from last year are held in a trust account and so are not subject to the spending moratorium. As such if the board wishes to use these funds for the summer kick off they would be able to do that.

Alternate Presiding Officer – Paul has been discussing the possibility of the Recreation Commission providing face masks to high school seniors and the Police department. The meeting agreed that it was a great idea. Paul and Eilish will reach out and identify three possible vendors. Their proposal will be reviewed at the next meeting for approval and then the masks should be ready in time for high school graduation.

Borough Liaison – Councilwoman McGuire shared that the Mayor and Council will be holding a Memorial Day ceremony with appropriate social distancing at 11 am on Monday May 25. Residents can also join the ceremony remotely through GoToMeetings the details of which are on the website. Councilman Hofmann did not have anything to add.

Secretary-Nothing to report

V. **Sports Updates and Reviews – Recreation Commission Liaison**

Fall Sports

Football and Cheer-Eilish Viggiani The situation is still the same as reported at the previous meeting. Park Ridge had been considering sending out grade 3-8 registration notifications but have decided to do a survey to see how the players families feel. Emerson football and cheer board are holding a virtual meeting next week to review the position on the Emerson fall season.

Track- Joe Vigna Track are still working with Blue Sombrero to make refunds to people who registered for the track program. Blue Sombrero are not very responsive and as of the meeting no refunds have been made. Bob suggested he reach out to Chris Sassi who did this for softball. All their refunds were handled in 5 days. Blue Sombrero can only make refunds if they still have the money from registrations. If this has been sent to the Borough then they will have to debit the Borough account to make refund payments. That option is preferable to the CFO making the refunds this as that would involve PO's for each family.

Softball-Mike Graham Chris Sassi did a great job working with Blue Sombrero to refund all families who had registered. All the refunds were sent out 3-5 days after the last meeting with a small convenience fee of \$3.25. Softball have refunded all the sponsorship money as they did not think it was fair to keep it. They will be giving out free scholarships.

Baseball-Phil Gianatasio. After the last meeting baseball cancelled the Little League spring season and keep in close touch with the district president and other Little League towns in the area. If the governor relaxes the ban on competitive sports baseball are keen to have a shortened season. They would have a week-long registration with payment, get uniforms together and then have an abbreviated season. Baseball are one of the sports included Phase 1 of restarting competitive sports.

Soccer-Bob Quinones Soccer are meeting at the same time as the Recreation Commission so there is no change since the last meeting. The late fee is being discussed at that meeting and Bob will report back on the outcome.

Wrestling-Paul Coombes. Wrestling did not have their end of season party but board members did distribute gifts, shirts, plaques and a video of the season. They are still looking for a new president and Paul Lauterbeck has been suggested. He is currently vice president of soccer.

VI. Unfinished Business

Summer kick off

Paul has been discussing the Summer kick off with Ue and he will be able to provide fireworks for the August 29/30th weekend. Ue wants to discuss permits next week. Paul suggested that the ideas for what the event will look like discussed should be discussed at the next meeting and the process for getting permits for the beer garden should be started after that. The beer garden could be run safely as long as people social distance but would the sports events like the home run derby, punt, pass and kick and the Red Bull display and the bouncy houses/ rides be acceptable? If not, the event would not have much for the kids.

Anthony suggested the event should be scaled back to a later afternoon/early evening barbeque followed by the fireworks with no other activities.

Phil said if it is OK to hold the event then baseball is happy to do the home run derby.

Willie expressed a concern about having the barbeque because of the potential liability if someone develops Covid-19 after the event. Their illness may not have been contracted at the Summer Kick Off but they could try and hold the town responsible for it. The issue is that someone at the event either running it or attending could sneeze/cough and infect other people.

Whether or not the event can take place will depend on the governor relaxing some of the restrictions. The suggestion was that the commission go ahead and plan for the event to be the same as previous years and then modify as necessary as announcements are made about relaxing rules. The advantage of doing this is there won't be any scrambling at the last minute. The sports boards can be approached to see if they are willing to do their usual events. Eilish was asked to contact football and Bob will ask soccer to reach out to the Red Bulls.

Mike was asked his view and he said that if the high school sports aren't practicing it won't be possible to have any of the sports activities. He pointed that there were over 1000 new cases on the day of the meeting.

Eilish supported the idea of a late afternoon get together maybe with music and snacks followed by fireworks. If people brought their own food this could reduce the likelihood of participants becoming ill. She felt that everyone understands that this cannot be the same type of event as previous years given the current situation.

Bob reiterated that the commission should plan for a full event and modify as appropriate as more information becomes available.

Anthony asked what the longest lead time was on any of the planned activities. Beer garden permit needs to be in place 2 weeks before the event, bouncy houses are 2-4 weeks. The consensus was 4 weeks before the event was the latest that a decision could be made on what the event would look like. Anthony's view was that a bouncy house type attraction should not be considered at all.

It is likely that the Recreation Commission will have to meet over the summer.

Summer Recreation Camp

Bob welcomed Kris Lechman, Camp Director and Franklin Tiburcio, assistant to the meeting. He commented that many surrounding towns and the Board of Education have already cancelled their summer camps but that Emerson had not yet made that decision. He then opened the floor for discussion.

Kris spoke about the uncertainty surrounding holding events like camps because of the potential health risk. He would like to run the camp but when he researches the current position he becomes more doubtful. When he reached out to the 2019, staff, counselors and volunteers to get their views on holding the camp, 10 students responded that they would be willing to work at the camp out of about 50 students contacted.

One issue highlighted was the lack of a facility to bring campers inside. There had been efforts earlier in the year to identify places where campers could do during inclement weather. The library, the church on Main Street and the recreation center were all possibilities but with the Covid-19 outbreak they cannot be used. This type of facility is also needed because of the heat and in past years kids would be brought inside in the afternoon to avoid the heat.

Ideally campers would stay with the same counselor each day. Kris would definitely want to do this for 2020 but it would mean employing more full-time counselors and less part-time counselors. In previous years the maximum number of campers in one day would be between 70 and 80 and this required around 15 full time and 40 part time counselors.

Kris wanted to hear how the town felt before he felt he could make a recommendation on the summer camp. Willie said that the town would like to see the camp happen but if it is unhealthy or unsafe then they would not want that.

Kris outlined some issues:

What is the guidance from the state in terms of what the Borough and recreation Commission? Current. The guidelines talk about levels of mitigation but it is not clear what is meant by this.

If the camp were allowed to open, issues are

- What level of cleaning is required

- The heat in the summertime means that kids should have somewhere to go inside to get away from the sun and heat.
- Should camp hours be modified to 9am – 12 pm to avoid this issue?
- If there are no trips, entertainment, extracurricular programs, comedians, animal shows allowed because of Covid-19 restrictions the camp will be less appealing.

He does have concerns but does not want to take a decision on whether the camp should be canceled at this point. If the decision is to allow the camp to go ahead, it would have to be in a modified format.

Comments made by the commission were:

Paul said a three-hour camp will be of limited help to households where both parents work. Kris said that he agreed, but he couldn't justify keeping 50-70 kids out on a field in 95° heat which is why he suggested the reduction in hours.

Anthony asked whether the Emerson camp would accept applications from kids from other towns. The guidelines are not clear on this and historically the Emerson camp has been for Emerson children only with some limited exceptions for special cases.

Mike asked if Kris was aware of any towns in the Northern or Pascack Valley area that were holding camps. He said he was not aware of any.

Eilish expressed a concern that it is very difficult to keep kids away from each other as they naturally want to be close to other children. Ensuring they wash their hands frequently enough and keep masks on is also going to be challenging. This CDC has said under a certain age level masks are not required but the guideline is not specific. Obviously, counselors would have to wear masks. It's possible that putting restrictions on ages that can attend and not having teenage volunteers may help. Eilish commented that all the restrictions that the campers would have to observe would make it less enjoyable for them. Mr. T asked what the feeling in the town was about holding a summer camp. Eilish said that from talking to people there seems to be a view that paying a local teenager to babysit is a safer option than sending kids to a summer camp. She estimated about 70% of people thought this way.

Kris wanted to know if the Borough could provide help with cleaning and sanitizing bathrooms and other indoor areas and playground equipment. He was uncertain whether he would be allowed to ask the counselors to do the cleaning. Bob asked Councilwoman McGuire whether she could take the question back to the Mayor and Council. She said she could do that but pointed out the apart from passive recreation in the parks all facilities were still closed because of Covid-19 and it was not clear when they would reopen. Kris will also be speaking to the Borough Attorney about any potential liability issues.

Kris asked about access to Personal Protective Equipment and what would be required. Would cloth masks be OK or would they need to wear N95's? The meeting thought that

cloth masks would be acceptable. There are a group of moms in Emerson who are making cloth masks and could probably produce enough for the camp's needs.

There was also a discussion about the timing of the camp. It is not mandatory to start the camp the first week of July as it normally is and it could be put back to middle of July or even August.

The Board of Ed has already cancelled their summer camp as they would prefer to see students safe.

The meeting agreed that a decision about the Recreation camp should be made in a timely manner. Bob thanked Kris and Franklin for their time and input and they left the meeting.

The recreation commission discussed the issue. Willie expressed concerns about safety not just of the campers, staff and volunteers but also their families, particularly if they have elderly relatives living with them. Additionally, there doesn't appear to be a clear plan. He felt that putting peoples lives at risk was not justifiable.

Paul thought that parents would not send their children to the camp, and Eilish agreed. She also pointed out that criticism that there was no plan was a little unfair. The state government is not giving clear guidance and there are constant shifts in policy. She also said that there is a general reticence on the part of parents to send their kids to camps. Paying high schoolers who would have been counselors to babysit their kids is probably a much safer option. The issue of cleaning the bathrooms is also a problem. Who would be able to do this with the frequency needed to keep kids safe?

All towns except Hillsdale have cancelled. The YMCA are still saying they will be running their camps in Dumont and Mahwah.

There is the issue of the mental health of kids who are not being able to see their friends which would be eased if the camp was opened

Bob asked the meeting whether they wanted to vote on the summer camp or wait till the next meeting. The consensus was that the vote should be taken at this meeting.

A motion was made by Mike Graham, seconded by Willie Ortiz that the Emerson 2020 Summer Recreation camp should be cancelled.

Motion was discussed under Roberts Rules

At the start of the discussion Paul said he had just received notification that the Farleigh Dickenson summer camp had been canceled along with all summer classes.

Anthony expressed regret but he thought that it should be cancelled without the possibility of it happening later in the summer.

Bob Quinones	yes
Paul Coombes	yes
Willie Ortiz	yes
Anthony Gismondi	yes
Mike Graham	yes
Joe Vigna	yes
Phil Gianatasio	No

Motion passes.

VII. New Business

Summer Drive in Movie event

As the restrictions on this type of event have been lifted, the commission discussed the possibility of holding a summer drive-in movie event. These are usually done by using a blow-up screen and held in a parking lot so all participants are in their cars with their windows closed. These were the conditions imposed by Governor Murphy. A concern was raised that this would be too hot and the alternative of leaving the engine running so the air conditioning could be run may break anti-idling laws. The fan could be run without the engine but that would just circulate the air and not cool it. A possible solution was to keep the cars 6 feet apart and then windows could be opened. Demarest Farms and the River Edge diner are holding events like this. The Demarest Farms event has much looser guidelines allowing people to sit in lawn chairs next to their car. Mike commented that the laws are being changed so quickly that although it is currently illegal to idle, as more of these types of events are planned that law may change.

Options reviewed included allowing people to sit in lawn chairs at Hillman Field but this was rejected as the governor's order prohibiting gatherings of more than ten people is still in force. The best locations which an in-car event could be held were the parking lots at Stop & Shop, Soldier Hill Golf Course or the High School. The high school option would probably need two screens so that participants could see the screen wherever they parked. A license fee would also have to be paid to show the movie.

The meeting agreed it was a great idea and the idea would be researched further in terms of vendors. The use of the locations would have to be discussed with relevant Stop & Shop, the golf course and the Board of Ed personnel.

Councilman Hoffman has already been in contact with the manager of Stop & Shop and the landlord of the mall and parking lot. The manager of Stop & Shop is willing to take this up with the landlord if the recreation commission provides all the details of what the event would entail. The manager said that if Marshall's do not open over the summer because of Covid-19 restrictions there would be plenty of space. If they are open space would be more limited. There was a discussion about whether or not Stop and Shop would be still open at the time the movie was being shown as stores have to close at 8pm. It was thought this was not an issue. Councilman Hofmann suggested that the movie screen should be at the Marshall's end of the parking lot on the grass opposite and the event use about a third of

the parking lot. One possible issue is that the parking lot will be lit during the showing and Bob and Councilman Hoffman will look at how much of an impact this would have on the movie.

Willie will talk to the county about the golf course parking lot. One of the advantages is that there is little street lighting and the parking lot is an L-shape which means that food trucks could be set up in the smaller area. Also, lighting would not be an issue.

There was some discussion about having a movie shown on a regular basis throughout the summer. Cost may be an issue so this will be reviewed when the cost is known.

The issue of whether to charge a fee to residents was discussed. The cost of the film and a person to set up and break down will be around \$1,000. If the event is held at the golf club the food trucks could be charged a fee for a place. There was agreement that if necessary the residents could be charged a small fee of \$5-10 per family.

Bob will research vendors and follow up with the Stop and Shop Manager. Councilman Hoffman will send Bob his contact details. Willie will look into the Soldier Hill golf club options.

Committee Reports

Fundraising – Anthony Gismondi Nothing to report

Events – Paul Coombes Nothing to report

Field Scheduling – Bob Quinones/Eilish Viggiani Nothing to report

Communications –Mike Graham/Liz Morris

Mike made a comment about tennis in Emerson. The current Covid-19 restrictions allow passive recreation and the Board of Ed. Took a decision to open their tennis courts. They were open only for residents use and Dr. Gatens and Dr. Nisonoff had installed good signage stating this. The signage was blatantly ignored and residents from other towns, counties and even New York state have been using the courts. These individuals were hosting private lessons and tournaments. The police were called but this was not really a police matter and because of the use by non-residents, the tennis courts were closed.

Mike's suggestion was that the Recreation Commission create an Emerson Tennis Recreation Program. One of the many benefits of this would be that it would appeal to all age groups; children, adults and seniors. It may even be more popular with adults and seniors than children. Bob suggested Kevin Rooney from TGA could be involved. That said, the program would need to be led by an Emerson resident. A pharmacy employee at Shop Rite is an Emerson resident who is interested in tennis. He was also upset about the tennis courts being closed because of use by non-residents so may be motivated to start a program. Mike will reach out to him and offer to help him get it started. Dr. Nisonoff has also had emails from residents offering to help out with a program like this.

The meeting agreed that this was a great idea and should be discussed more fully at the next meeting. Further discussion took place in the open public comment section of the meeting.

VIII. Open Public Comment

Motion to open the meeting to public comment made by Willie Ortiz and seconded by Paul Coombes. All were in favor.

Mike Graham 132 Lozier
Paul Coombes 72 Pascack Avenue

Paul Coombes commented that Emerson residents were unhappy when the tennis courts were being used by people from other towns to the extent that Emerson residents were unable to get on the court. Starting a recreation tennis program would be a great thing for the community and would stop this sort of thing happening in future. There was an attempt made two or three years ago to start a program like this but unfortunately it did not get off the ground. If someone can be found to start the program Paul thought this was a great idea.

Mike recapped his earlier comments that the Board of Ed supported the reopening tennis courts as passive recreation and this was taken advantage of by out of town residents who were hosting tournaments. Dr. Nisonoff and another resident were very upset by this. As tennis, baseball, softball and golf are the sports that are likely to be allowed earliest it would be a good idea to try and get a tennis program going in the near or immediate future.

Bob and Phil agreed that this would be a great idea. Bob reiterated that a volunteer to head up the program was needed and Mike said he would reach out to the ShopRite pharmacy employee to see if he was interested. He also thought that there were other people in town who may be willing to join a tennis board and Mike said he would participate just to get the program off the ground.

There was further discussion about the mis-use of the tennis courts and Councilman Hoffman said that the Borough's electronic sign said that Emerson residents and their guests could use the courts. He wondered if this was why there were people from out of town. Mike said that this was not the case and the majority of people using the courts were not guests of Emerson residents.

Councilwoman McGuire suggested that the possibility of starting a tennis program could be publicized on the Recreation Face Book page. This would also give an indication of the interest in town. Anthony said a similar announcement made for a tennis camp aimed at children a couple of years ago did not get a huge response. Mike agreed but said that if this was open to adults and seniors as well he thought there would be a much bigger response. Anthony will put something on the Face book page.

There being no further comment by the public a motion to close the meeting to public comment made by Willie Ortiz and seconded by Anthony Gismondi. All were in favor.

IX. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Willie Ortiz, seconded by Anthony Gismondi. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 10:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Morris
Recreation Secretary