

**THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EMERSON RECREATION COMMISSION WAS
HELD ON WEDNESD MAY 6, 2019, AT 8:00 P.M.**

This meeting of the Recreation Commission of the Borough of Emerson was be held via the teleconferencing app GoToMeeting on May 6, 2020 at 8:00 p.m. due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

ACCESS INFORMATION

Recreation Commission Meeting Wednesday May 6, 2020 8pm

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

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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 8:01 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, Steve Paino,

Mayor Danielle DiPaola and Councilwoman Jill McGuire were also present

Apologies Joe Vigna

IV. Reports of Officers

Presiding Officer-Nothing to report

Alternate Presiding Officer – Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Paul had been talking to vendors about producing spirit wear for the town that is not sports related. Bauer Sports were going to provide some ideas and logos. This will be picked up again when the current crisis is behind us.

Borough Liaison – The Mayor and Council discussed possible Open Space grant opportunities. The Borough Administrator is currently drafting a proposal for a review by the Mayor and Council.

Secretary- A list of coaches for the spring sports was available by mid-March to allow background checks to be done. Because most spring sports were cancelled, these were not done as there is a cost associated with running the checks. In future, the production of the ID cards could be done relatively inexpensively as the blank cards are 15 cents each. Also, the Fire Chief has offered to print these cards for the Recreation Commission. As they have the template, all they need to print the cards is a picture of the coach and expiration date for the card. The secretary has most of the pictures so this should be relatively straightforward.

III. Reading and Approval of Minutes of the closed session of the February 5 meeting, regular meeting February 19 and closed and regular meeting of March 4

February 5, 2020 closed session meeting. Present at the meeting; Bob Quinones, Anthony Gismondi, Paul Coombes, Phil Gianatasio, Steve Paino, Eilish Viggiani Joe Vigna. Motion to approve the minutes from closed session of February 5 meeting made by Paul Coombes and seconded by Anthony Gismondi. Motion passed with members of the Recreation Commission who were not present abstaining.

February 19, 2020 meeting. Present at the meeting; Bob Quinones, Anthony Gismondi, Paul Coombes, Steve Paino, Eilish Viggiani, Joe Vigna. Motion to approve the minutes of February 19 meeting made by Paul Coombes and seconded by Anthony Gismondi. Motion passed with members of the Recreation Commission who were not present abstaining.

March 4, 2020 closed session meeting. Present at the meeting; Bob Quinones, Anthony Gismondi, Willie Ortiz, Eilish Viggiani, Phil Gianatasio, Steve Paino, Joe Vigna. Motion to approve the minutes from closed session of March 4 meeting made by Willie Ortiz and seconded by Steve Paino. Motion passed with members of the Recreation Commission who were not present abstaining.

March 4, 2020 regular meeting. Present at the meeting; Bob Quinones, Anthony Gismondi, Willie Ortiz, Eilish Viggiani, Phil Gianatasio, Steve Paino, Joe Vigna. Motion to approve the minutes from closed session of March 4 meeting made by Willie Ortiz and seconded by Steve Paino. Motion passed with members of the Recreation Commission who were not present abstaining.

VI. Unfinished Business

Fall Sports

Football and Cheer-Eilish Viggiani The President and Board have decided to postpone the registration for flag football because it is not known what will be happening in the fall. That seemed a better decision than sending out registration and then having to refund registration fees if the season is cancelled. The decision will be reviewed at the June 1 meeting. Park Ridge will be sending grade 3-8 registration notifications in 2 weeks.

Adam Lang is stepping down as president and Joe Moss will take over from him. Adam will stay on the board to help with the transition. There is another new board member, Craig Buckley who has young children so should stay on the board for a while.

Baseball-Phil Gianatasio. Little League did not officially cancel the spring season just the world series and tournaments. Teams will be eligible to start playing again May 11 depending what is happening with the coronavirus. Refunds are available for families who are not comfortable with their children playing. Currently only 10-12 kids have been withdrawn from around 240 players. First refunds will go out this week and every subsequent 2 weeks so they are not mailing them every day. Talking to surrounding Little League towns some have opted to cancel, issue refunds with a view to a quick registration when it is possible to play baseball again others are taking a wait and see approach. Emerson Little League are thinking about playing in the summer leagues (NEBUS and Suburban) and have registered so if individual teams want to play in them, they can.

All coaches were background checked through Little League. However new coaches would not be able to be background checked because there would not be able to have their fingerprints taken in the current situation. Coaches who have been fingerprinted will have an annual check done if necessary and then cards can be issued.

The fields are not currently open for organized sports so until the governor lifts the ban on organized sports no games can be played. The view was that spring sports will not happen and summer sports are unlikely. The Little League have not cancelled and have said that towns can organize games if it is allowed by their municipalities.

Baseball have cancelled their fundraiser.

Softball-Mike Graham They have cancelled all spring and summer programs and refunded parents. Chris Sassi has worked with the CFO and the first refunds should be arriving today. Softball have cancelled their fundraiser which was scheduled for the first week of June.

Track- Joe Vigna was absent so there was no update. There is discussion on a Facebook page about when the refunds will be sent out. Bob will email Joe to see what the situation is.

Soccer-Bob Quinones Soccer cancelled the spring season for the club teams and Pre-K with Red Bulls. NCSA cancelled the season. Only tournaments are played in the summer and most of these have been cancelled. Soccer registration for the fall has been opened up and refunds will be issued if the season has to be cancelled. NCSA are optimistic that the fall season will be played. A comment was made that the late fee which is associated with not registering in time is a little high, particularly with so many people being out of work. Bob's view was that this was a technology oversight and the date would be put back.

A general comment was made that all sports could waive the late fee and that the Recreation Commission should suggest that they do this. Football and cheer have already decided that when they do open up registration there will be no late fee. Bob will reach out to soccer and find out what their policy is. It's not clear whether there will be any fall travel baseball and softball teams but if there are, the late fee will not be requested.

The sports boards will be contacted to see if any are planning to charge a late fee. If they are this can be revisited at a future Recreation Commission meeting.

Summer kick off

Summer kick off is scheduled for June 13 but with all the issues surrounding the coronavirus epidemic this is no longer a viable option. The meeting was asked to provide suggestions as to what options exist for a rescheduled Summer event or a replacement of some sort, perhaps late summer early fall

Paul suggested the weekend before Labor Day, August 29th with a rain date of August 30th. His view was that there is no downside to publicizing the date even if it then has to be cancelled because the Covid-19 situation has not resolved itself.

Willie agreed with the idea but suggested that the weekend after Labor Day would be a better option because residents may be at the shore the week before Labor Day. Paul said that the hope was to keep the event a summer celebration. Holding it in September moves away from that idea and his view was that people would go away Labor Day rather than the week before. Willie was happy to go with the consensus of the meeting.

In response to a question from Bob, Councilwoman McGuire confirmed that the Mayor and Council had not discussed the Summer Kick Off and Bob opened the discussion to the meeting.

Willie Ortiz made a motion to move the Summer Kick Off from Saturday June 13th (rain date Sunday June 14th) to Saturday August 29th with a rain date of Sunday August 30th. Motion was seconded by Paul Coombes.

The meeting then discussed this motion under Roberts Rules.

There was a concern about asking local businesses for donations when there are close to a million people unemployed in New Jersey especially as social distancing is going to be in effect for the foreseeable future. The meeting agreed that small businesses should not be approached but asking the supermarkets for their usual donation was acceptable. There was a discussion about finding money from the existing budget or using surplus from previous years. Councilwoman McGuire offered to check with the CFO to find out what the surplus was but also pointed out that the Borough currently has a spending moratorium. Bob said he thought he had the amount but that it was not a surplus but in a trust fund. Anthony told the meeting that he had a couple of donations from local businesses totaling \$300-400. He has spoken to ShopRite and they are not considering

any donations until June/July. Other supermarkets seem to have the same policy. Businesses that have donated have said that the Recreation Commission can keep the funds towards another event later in the year or it can be returned. The sports boards are unlikely to be able to donate if their sports are not played this year.

Anthony also commented that he did not think that there would be enough time between now and the end of August to receive sufficient donations. He suggested a fall or winter event may be preferable.

Paul replied saying he felt it was important to do something for the residents and town that was linked to the summer. He said there are people still willing to donate to the event. His view was that the event should be scheduled for the proposed date and if it has to be cancelled a fall or winter event could be planned to take its place.

It was suggested that a survey could be done on the Recreation Facebook page to gauge the public opinion of holding an event at the end of August. The view was that it is too soon to ask because there is so much uncertainty about how the pandemic will develop in the future. Additionally, the result of the poll may not be reflective of the town wide view of the suggestion.

There was a discussion about if such an event could be run safely. School personnel are already discussing how different school may be in September. The meeting agreed that if the Recreation Commission does proceed the event would probably not be on the same scale as the June events that have been held in past years. There was no consensus on what this would be but just a fireworks show may be a possibility. It was agreed that the Recreation Commission would probably need to meet over the summer to organize the event.

Mayor DiPaola told the meeting that the surplus was not available because there is a spending moratorium which is currently indefinite. Also, in discussion with the OEM coordinator it has been decided that the Borough will not organize any events until September at the earliest. Her suggestion was to have something late September/early October, perhaps a Fall Funfest or Oktoberfest. She also said that other towns are not planning events for safety reasons. The choice of the last weekend in August may not be the best as the weather may be too hot for an event like this. Also committing to deposits which may not be returnable could be unwise. Up to 50% of Emerson businesses are closed and those that are open are working at around 25% capacity. Putting all these factors; safety, ability to fund the event and unpredictability of the weather, the suggested date does not seem to be the best.

There was some discussion as to whether the funds are actually available as they are in trust and not a surplus. The Borough Attorney may be contacted to confirm whether this is the case. Bob will confirm with Lauren what type of account the funds are held in.

The Mayor was asked to confirm whether the Recreation Commission would be prohibited from organizing an event because of safety concerns. She re-iterated that the

Borough is not currently planning any events and one of the main reasons is the use of fields where are groups of 15-22 year old residents are gathering in groups on the field and not observing social distancing. She also commented that it was premature to be voting on a date for a summer event when the State and Borough are under a state of emergency and it is not known when that will be lifted. She had discussed the possibility of fireworks on the Fourth of July with the OEM coordinator, Lt. Savino, and he would not sanction this. His feeling was that with a large crowd even when social distancing is mandated, children are unlikely to be stopped approaching their friends.

Some members of the Recreation Commission still felt they would like to agree a date accepting that this may need to be cancelled.

The motion made by Willie Ortiz to cancel the current Summer Kick Off date of Saturday June 13th (rain date Sunday June 14th) and to Saturday August 29th with a rain date of Sunday August 30th which was seconded by Paul Coombes was voted on by regular members and the first alternate as one regular member was absent.

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| Bob Quinones | No |
| Paul Coombes | Yes |
| Willie Ortiz | Yes |
| Anthony Gismondi | No |
| Mike Graham | No |
| Phil Gianatasio | Yes |
| Steve Paino | Yes |

Motion passes.

There was a discussion about how the results of this should be communicated to Emerson residents. Initially it was suggested that an announcement that the June 13th date had been cancelled and a new date would be forthcoming was suggested. However, the point was made that the Recreation Commission meetings were public and so it was not mandatory to communicate this. The presiding officer has the authority to say the date does not have to be released at this time. Currently the date of the summer kickoff is on the Recreation Facebook page as June 13th. The commission discussed what would be the optimal message and whether announcing the August 29th/30th date was a good idea when announcing the postponement was a good idea.

There was also a concern about announcing anything before the funding issue had been clarified with the CFO. It would not be prudent to go out to vendors and sign contracts when there is a spending moratorium.

The consensus was that an announcement should be made on Facebook that the Summer Kickoff currently scheduled for June 13th will be postponed. The tentative date is August 29th/30th. After Bob has spoken to the CFO, he will let Anthony know that this announcement can be posted on the Recreation Facebook page or if it needs modifying.

Summer Recreation Camp

Bob has been speaking with Kris Lechman who has reached out to Park Ridge and Westwood and asked what they are planning for Summer Recreation Camp. Kris has not heard back from them yet. Northern Valley have refunded all the deposits for their camp held in Harrington Park as they don't see anything happening. Northvale has put theirs on hold. Kris's view is that the town should go ahead with some form of Summer Rec camp. The expectation is that people will be going back to work in June and will want camp for their children. Emerson has not done any registration or collected any deposits so far this year.

Mayor DiPaola told the meeting that she was hearing from other Mayors/Governing Bodies/Recreation Commissions about half the towns in the Pascack Valley have cancelled their summer camps often because they have town pools. The remaining towns are adopting a wait and see approach. This is the Emerson approach because so much is not known even though she agrees that people will be going back to work in June probably at only a 50% rate. Her suggestion was not to vote on anything at this meeting particularly as the funding situation is not clear. The recreation camp is usually self-funding. This year the registration and payment will be done on line through Blue Sombrero which will streamline the process.

One issue with the wait and see approach is the ability to recruit staff quickly if a decision is taken to hold the summer rec camp. That said, the day of the meeting Governor Murphy had extended the State of Emergency by 30 days which makes waiting till June 7th to take any decision a good approach. The Borough has stated it is not currently planning any events until the State of Emergency is lifted.

In answer to a question the Mayor reviewed the actions that the Borough had taken in March which included shutting the Senior Center, Library and Recreation Center on March 18th and this has contributed to the situation that Emerson has not been hit as hard as other towns.

Bob agreed and suggested that the Summer Rec Camp discussion should be revisited at the end of May. Kris Lechman will be asked about staffing arrangements. This prompted a question about employing teenagers and whether they would be given any training/information on how to keep the children socially distanced. The Mayor commented that minors probably should not be recruited and perhaps individuals who have lost their jobs because of the pandemic could be employed on a part-time basis. The structure of the camp will probably have to be different with less emphasis on sports and other close contact activities where social distancing will be difficult.

There was a discussion about whether or not the numbers of children allowed each day should be capped at a certain level. Last year the camp had thirty to forty campers each day which is less than in previous years. Prior to the coronavirus pandemic Bob and Paul had met with Kris Lechman to discuss how the camp could be improved to attract more children. Later after care was one possibility

Bob will discuss these issues with Kris Lechman.

VII. New Business

Committee Reports

Fundraising – Anthony Gismondi Nothing to report

Events – Paul Coombes Nothing to report

Field Scheduling – Bob Quinones/Eilish Viggiani Nothing to report

Communications –Liz Morris asked for confirmation that the meeting currently scheduled for May 20 would still be going ahead. Bob confirmed that it would.

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.

The Mayor thanked the meeting for allowing her to comment on earlier items and she had no further comment.

There being no public comment, a motion to close the meeting to public comment made by Willie Ortiz and seconded by Steve Paino. All were in favor.

IX. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Willie Ortiz, seconded by Paul Coombes. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Morris
Recreation Secretary