

**THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE EMERSON RECREATION COMMISSION WAS  
HELD ON FRIDAY JULY 31, 2020, AT 8:00 P.M.**

**This meeting of the Recreation Commission of the Borough of Emerson was held via the teleconferencing app GoToMeeting on July 31, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency.**

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**ACCESS INFORMATION**

Emerson Recreation Commission Special Meeting 7 pm, July 31, 2020

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**I. Call to Order**

Presiding Officer Paul Coombes welcomed everyone to the special meeting of the recreation commission and thanked them for joining at short notice. He called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. Motion to open the meeting was made by Willie Ortiz, seconded by Mike Graham. All were in favor.

**II. Roll Call**

Paul Coombes, Mike Graham Anthony Gismondi, Willie Ortiz, Eilish Viggiani, Phil Gianatasio, Joe Vigna (joined later in the meeting)

Apologies: Steve Paino

Councilwoman Jill McGuire and Councilman Ken Hoffman were also present.

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

High School Covid-19 situation

Paul confirmed that all members of the commission had read the letter circulated by the Emerson High School athletics director which reported that some of the current student-athletes may have been in contact with an individual who may have tested positive for COVID-19. He has been in contact with the Mayor, Dr. Nisonoff and the Borough Administrator. Dr Nisonoff has confirmed that they are closed down till August 18<sup>th</sup> but that their fields are open if recreation programs need to schedule games/practices/scrimmages. However, he was concerned that if the Board of Education has closed the fields for their athletes is it safe for recreation sports to use them. Softball will have finished their season by the end of today. They had no issues with elevated temperatures or lack of social distancing with the players.

Baseball have also have not had any issues with elevated temperatures. Paul commented that he and Eilish had had complaints about residents noticing that some of the kids were not social distancing and being 'all over each other'. There were not many complaints and they were more questioning than complaining. He asked that the coaches were reminded that social distancing is really important and the players and their families should be encouraged to follow the guidelines. All players have signed Covid-19 waivers.

## **VI. Unfinished Business**

### End of Summer Blast & Summer Drive-in Events

The events were discussed together as they both have the same issues. In light of the newly reported positive cases in Oradell, the fact that one Emerson student athlete has had contact with these cases and this will be a big event in which it would be difficult to enforce social distancing Paul was of the opinion that both this event and the drive in should be cancelled with a view to a bigger better event next year. He added that he had checked the contract with the fireworks vendor and the cancellation fee is \$1,250. The contract is with Celebration Fireworks and not UE so Paul will speak to him about our reasons for cancelling and see what he says. There is a big concern about someone getting sick after they have attended the event.

Eilish added that the executive order limiting outdoor gatherings to 500 people is still in effect and it would be difficult to enforce this at the end of summer bash. Whilst barricades could be put up and number of people counted in, it would be hard to turn away the 501<sup>st</sup> person. Social distancing would also be an issue with this number of people. Given what happened in Oradell and the possible exposure of an Emerson student athlete to Covid-19 Eilish agreed that it was probably best to cancel the events.

Phil asked for clarification of the exposure of the Emerson student athlete. Paul confirmed that the student athlete who had been in contact with the Oradell residents had not yet developed symptoms of coronavirus. Phil was of the opinion that this one possible case was not sufficient to cancel either of the events under review. For him, the bigger factor is the possible number of participants in the End of Summer Blast.

Mike agreed that both events should be cancelled. By planning an event that is almost certain to have more than 500 attendees, the Recreation are in direct violation of the governor's Executive Order. He questioned why it was even being planned.

Willie agreed that the End of Summer blast would likely be a problem because of the number of attendees but the drive-in event was more controllable in terms of numbers. He also said that the police chief has said the police department are willing to help out. Paul agreed with this point but had a concern that whilst it would be possible to control the total number of people attending, once they were in the it would not be possible to control social distancing. Willie said that he had already discussed this with the Chief and they would help with that aspect as well.

Anthony commented that Willie made good points about the drive-in but he was not convinced that it would be possible to control social distancing even at that event. He thought both events should be cancelled for 2020 and that people would not be too disappointed if this happened.

Mike added at this point that the virus was now spreading amongst younger people which had not been anticipated in previous months.

Councilwoman McGuire said she couldn't add anything but the event will take a lot to control. It is up to the Recreation Commission to decide. Councilman Hoffman agreed with her and the view that it will be hard to control social distancing. It is a difficult decision but health and safety must come first. He will support whatever the Recreation Commission decide. Paul agreed it was a difficult decision but would rather err on the side of caution than be criticized in the event that anyone gets sick.

Joe said that he thought the fireworks may be a possibility if it is just fireworks Paul reviewed comments made earlier that to do this it would mean one entrance and one exit and denying entrance to residents when 500 people had passed through the entrance. It would also be difficult to enforce social distancing. He added that it is a tough decision. Everyone wants to provide an event for residents but the risk of someone with coronavirus attending and unknowingly passing it on to others at the event outweighs this.

A motion to cancel the Summer Kick Off/Town Picnic was made by Mike Graham and seconded by Eilish Viggiani

Paul Coombes	Yes
Eilish Viggiani	Yes
Phil Gianatasio	No
Mike Graham	Yes
Joe Vigna	No
Anthony Gismondi	Yes
Willie Ortiz	Yes

Motion carries and the event will be cancelled

A motion to cancel the 'Summer Drive-in event' was made by Anthony Gismondi and seconded by Mike Graham

Paul Coombes	Yes
Eilish Viggiani	Yes
Phil Gianatasio	No
Mike Graham	Yes
Joe Vigna	Yes
Anthony Gismondi	Yes
Willie Ortiz	No

Motion carries and the event will be cancelled

Paul expressed his appreciation to everyone who had worked hard to organize both of these events.

## **V. Open Public Comment**

Motion to open the meeting to public comment made by Eilish Viggiani and seconded by Anthony Gismondi. All were in favor.

Eilish Viggiani, 24 Bolling St.

Nicki Wohlrab, a softball coach, had brought to Eilish's attention that currently there are no guidelines for children playing sports when it is hot outside. This is usually left to the coach's discretion, whether it is too hot, too cold, too wet etc. for practices and/or games to be held. Eilish suggested that it might be a good idea for the Recreation commission to create these types of guidelines to take the onus off the coaches. This could be discussed at a future meeting and as Nicki has done some research in the area she could be invited to the meeting to share her findings. Paul commented that he thought this was a great idea. Eilish asked if this was something that the Recreation Commission could do unilaterally or would it need approval by the Mayor and Council. Councilwoman McGuire suggested talking to the Board of Health. The commission should draft something in collaboration with the Board of Health and then submit it to the Borough Attorney and Borough Administrator for review. Councilman Hoffman did not think these guidelines would rise to the level of an ordinance and would fall under Recreation Commission regulations. He did recommend sending it to the Borough Attorney for review. Eilish said that she had obtained guidelines from US Soccer and NJISAA. On reading these it appears they are going off the same original document and the Recreation Commission will follow suit.

There being no further comment by the public a motion to close the meeting to public comment made by Eilish Viggiani and seconded by Anthony Gismondi. All were in favor and none opposed.

Councilman Hoffman asked who was going to contact the Mayor and Council regarding the decisions taken to cancel the End of Summer Bash and Summer Drive-in event. Paul said he would email the Mayor and Borough Administrator after the meeting. He asked Anthony to put a notice on Facebook and the recreation page regarding the cancellations.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Eilish Viggiani, seconded by Anthony Gismondi. All were in favor and none opposed. Meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Morris  
Recreation Secretary