

**THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EMERSON RECREATION COMMISSION WAS
HELD ON WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 2, 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 September 2, 2020 at 8:00 p.m. due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

ACCESS INFORMATION

Emerson Recreation Commission Meeting, September 2, 2020 8 pm

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I. Call to Order

Presiding Officer Paul Coombes welcomed everyone to the meeting of the recreation commission. He called the meeting to order at 8:00 pm. Motion to open the meeting was made by Anthony Gismondi, seconded by Eilish Viggiani. All were in favor.

II. Roll Call

Paul Coombes, Mike Graham, Anthony Gismondi, Willie Ortiz, Eilish Viggiani, Andrea Lauterback

Apologies: Steve Paino, Phil Gianatasio, Joe Vigna

Councilwoman Jill McGuire, Councilman Ken Hoffman and Memorial and Villano elementary school's PTA President Jenn Cottone were also present.

V. New Business

PTA use of Recreation Center for October book fair, Jenn Cottone, PTA President, Elementary Schools

Presiding Officer Paul Coombes suggested that the item 'PTA use of Recreation Center for October book fair' was brought forward so Jenn Cottone did not have to wait till the end of the meeting. A motion to do this was made by Eilish Viggiani, seconded by Mike Graham. All were in favor.

Jenn thanked the Recreation Commission for inviting her to the meeting. She outlined the PTA proposal to hold the annual elementary school book fair at the Recreation Center. The annual book fair is a big event for the students. They really enjoy being able to look at (and in previous years open) the books and then take them home that night. The PTA have tried a virtual book fair but would really like to be able to provide an in-person event. Because of the restrictions imposed by the NJDOH Covid-19 health and safety guidelines, to ensure that students, teachers and staff at all schools are protected, the PTA are unable to use the school facilities for the book fair. The PTA would like to use the Recreation Center for a one-week book fair event if this is possible.

They have reviewed the NJDOH safety guidelines for Covid-19 and have developed a proposal to make sure these are all met. Students and their parents would have to make an appointment to visit the book fair using sign up genius. The PTA would limit the number of people in the room to whatever the Recreation Commission recommended. As part of the sign up there would be a paragraph explaining the Covid19 policy which would act as a waiver and by signing up through sign-up genius parents are effectively signing this waiver. There would be four volunteers in the room, one at each door (entry and exit), one working the cash register and one helping students and their families with the books. The volunteer on the entry door would take temperatures and keep a count of number of people in the room and the volunteer helping students would be the only person touching any books until they are purchased. They will take the books off the shelves and open them for the students. Ventilation will be improved by having the two outside and one interconnecting door open and the volunteer at the exit will ensure that no one comes in that door. They will ensure that PPE required is available and the volunteer handling the books will wear gloves.

The PTA would envision the book fair happening the week in October when school is closed on the Monday. If they are able to hold the event in the Recreation Center they would hope to have it open the whole week. Hours could be 3-7 pm or 4-8pm with weekend hours as well.

Eilish asked if the PTA had spoken to the Superintendent and school principals about the idea. Jenn said that she had and they all thought it was a good idea. She has also spoken to Scholastic the vendor providing the books and they are happy to deliver the books to wherever they are told to.

Paul asked what reason the Board of Education gave for not allowing the event to take place in the school. This is because the school's Covid-19 policy does not allow volunteers into the school until November at the earliest. He also asked Jenn if she knew roughly how many students would attend. She said she did not but thought that the numbers could be down by as much as 50% on last year because parents would not want their children to visit. Using sign up genius would allow the PTA to limit the numbers.

Councilwoman McGuire commented that any proposal would have to be reviewed by the Borough Attorney and Borough Administrator. Jenn said that they would be happy to do

that and that the PTA have insurance. Willie said the PTA should send the Borough a copy of their insurance to the Borough Administrator as soon as possible to speed the process up. Jenn offered to send this to the Recreation Secretary to forward but Paul suggested that the Recreation Commission discuss the proposal before anything is sent to the Borough Attorney and Borough Administrator.

Andrea asked if the children would be able to touch and open the books if they had the required PPE. She commented that this was one of the best parts of the book fair. Jenn replied that the children could look at the book and if they wanted to have it opened, the volunteer assigned to do this would do it for them. She said they want to keep things moving so the appropriate volunteer will only open a book if the parent is adamant that they want to see the inside. Once the book has been purchased and handed to the parent, it can be handled by the children. She agreed that this was not the best situation but that the PTA felt this needed to be done for everyone's safety

Eilish commented that the typical book fair order from Scholastic comes in book stands and table stands which are quite bulky. She asked if the PTA would be ordering less books than usual. Jenn said they would be ordering about half the amount they ordered last year to fit the available space. She also said that if the weather is good they may have a couple of tables outside with a fifth volunteer. Eilish was concerned that when all the books, volunteers and children/parents were in the room it may get congested even with limited numbers. The PTA have not made any definite decisions, but one of the things that they were considering was having one day for K-2nd grade and another for 3-5th grade so that only the books relevant to those age groups would be put out. The stands will be grouped by literacy level.

Paul thanked Jenn for coming to the meeting and told her that the Recreation commission will discuss the proposal and get back to her. Jenn said that when the Covid-19 pandemic was behind us the PTA would like to work more closely with the Recreation Commission.

The meeting discussed the proposal. Paul voiced a concern that it would be difficult to keep the numbers down and the ventilation in the rec center is not good. Even if parents have booked a specific time slot, they may turn up early and then there would be a group congregating outside the door. Andrea commented that if the children don't have the freedom to touch the books there was little difference between what was being proposed and a virtual book fair, with the latter being a safer option. Eilish said that the cases are cumbersome and as there are four adults in the room before any of the children and parents come, number of attendees may be limited to one or two and it will be tight. Mike added that he thought the room was very small. Anthony thought similarly to other recreation commission members, the logistics will be hard to control and it might not be a great experience. Willie agreed. Andrea suggested delaying the book fair but with the need to have the doors open as soon as it starts to get cold this probably wouldn't work.

Paul asked the meeting for a motion to approve the use of the Recreation Center for the Villano and Memorial PTA book fair in October as proposed by Jenn Cottone, the PTA

president. There was no motion forthcoming so the request will not be approved. Paul will reach out to Jenn and let her know.

III. Reading and Approval of Minutes of the meetings of July 15 & 31, 2020.

Motion to approve the minutes from the **July 15, 2020** meeting was made by Mike Graham and seconded by Eilish Viggiani. Mike, Andrea and Paul were not at the he July 15th meeting and Phil, Steve and Joe were absent at this meeting and Willie abstained. The minutes will be moved to the next meeting for approval

Motion to approve the minutes from the **July 31, 2020** meeting was made by Willie Ortiz and seconded by Mike Graham. Approved by Paul Coombes, Eilish Viggiani, Willie Ortiz, Anthony Gismondi and Mike Graham.

IV. Sports Updates and Reviews – Recreation Commission Liaison

Wrestling-Steve Paino Nothing to report as Steve was absent.

Track- Anthony Gismondi. Anthony reported that track cross country held their first practice yesterday. 25 participants have signed up. Chris Pesce sent out an email with some Covid-19 guidelines. When they arrive at practice the have to sign in and sign the waivers. Children without the waiver form were not allowed to go onto the field and practice. They have their temperature taken and answer a series of Covid-19 related questions before the practice. If the answer to any of these questions is ‘yes’ they will not be allowed to practice. Once practice starts they will practice social distancing and wear masks during the warm up. These procedures will be followed at all practices.

Football and Cheer-Eilish Viggiani Park Ridge have decided to move ahead with their tackle program and now this decision has been made the Emerson Football and Cheer program will create guidelines for the flag football program. They have a football and cheer board meeting on Thursday and where they will discuss their plan for the fall. They hope to open registration on Friday or Saturday at the latest. From the survey that was sent out over the summer there are about 30 children who want to play football and 15 cheerleaders. These numbers are lower than previous years but given the situation they are OK.

Baseball-Phil Gianatasio. Nothing to report as Phil was absent.

Soccer-Paul Coombes The soccer program has 193 players signed up down from 241 from last year. Pre-K registration will open in about a week. There are nine travel teams but no new ones. Club soccer practices have started and games start the weekend after Labor Day. second week in September.

Tennis - Mike Graham. Mike asked if any of the volunteers who signed up for tennis have had fingerprint checks done. The Recreation Secretary will check into this. Mike also asked if volunteers needed to be background checked if they were coaching adults. The Recreation Secretary told him that only youth coaches over the age of 18 are required to have background checks. Because of non-Emerson residents trying to use the courts, Mike

would like to have two signs saying that the courts are only open to Emerson residents. There was a discussion about this.

Paul Coombes made a motion to authorize \$300 for the tennis program to purchase two signs and Willie Ortiz seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Anthony asked if the program could start once the volunteers had passed background checks. Mike said that there are a couple of challenges. The High School volleyball team is using the courts for their practices because they have to be outside. Also, there are no 'recreation leagues' as such for youth tennis to compete in and the volunteers are older and did not show much enthusiasm for getting their background checks done or taking the Rutgers safety and concussion training. Until this happens they can't really set up a youth program. However, it may be possible to set up an adult program.

V. New Business-continued

Inclement weather guidelines for players and coaches

The NJSIAA has a heat participation policy. In Emerson the decision as to whether or not a team should play or practice because of weather conditions is left up to the coach. This means you could have one coach canceling practice/game when another one is letting their team play. Eilish had suggested at the last meeting that Emerson recreation commission provide coaches with guidelines so that there is a consistent policy on playing in poor weather conditions across all recreation sports. The guidelines could be based on those provided by NJSIAA and US Club Soccer. The NJSIAA guidelines are more stringent. Eilish has links to organizations that have developed guidelines that she will send to all members of the commission. Paul suggested that the recreation commission members could read through these and then discuss it at the next meeting.

Andrea asked if it would be up to the individual sports board to write sport specific guidelines. Eilish said that the intention was to have one set of guidelines for all sports. Andrea suggested that there may need to be flexibility depending on the sport. Some sports are higher intensity than others. Eilish agreed that this could be done if the commission thought it appropriate. Andrea said that it may be a good idea to give the sports boards to have some flexibility to tailor the guidelines to their sport. For example, in the event of heat could the sport to something different to allow practice but not at too high an intensity. If this were agreed parents may feel more comfortable sending their kids to practices in inclement weather. The NJSIAA guidelines recognize this and do include different recommendations for different sports. Andrea asked if the guidelines would include recommendation as to how long before a game starts would it be OK for kids to warm up.

Paul reiterated that the recreation commission could read the guidelines that Eilish will send out and then discuss at the next meeting.

Mike added that the guidelines should be right the first time so there aren't multiple revisions.

VI. Open Public Comment

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

There being no members of the public present made a motion was made by Willie Ortiz, seconded by Eilish Viggiani to close the open session. All were in favor.

VII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Eilish Viggiani, seconded by Anthony Gismondi. All were in favor and none opposed. Meeting adjourned at 8:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Morris
Recreation Secretary