

**WYCKOFF DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
February 9, 2015**

Tom Valente opened the Recreation Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the courtroom of Wyckoff Town Hall with the reading of the Open Public Meetings Act. "This Regular meeting of the Wyckoff Department of Parks and Recreation Board is now in session. In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of this meeting has been posted on the bulletin board in the Memorial Town Hall and the Recreation Office; a copy has been filed with the Township Clerk, *The Ridgewood News*, *The Record*, and *The North Jersey Herald and News*, all papers with general circulation throughout the Township of Wyckoff." At least 48 hours prior to this meeting the agenda was similarly posted, filed and mailed to said newspapers.

Members Present: Tom Valente , Jeff Eischen, Heather Alnor, Rob Lahue, Doug Arone, Sue Buchanan, Rich Sica, Chris Beane, Township Committee Liaison Brian Scanlan

Members Absent: Moe Ismael, Ed Pettit

Staff Present: Recreation Director Andy Wingfield

Staff Absent: None

Guests Present: None

The minutes of the January 12, 2015 meeting were discussed. A motion to approve the minutes of that meeting was made by Jeff Eischen and seconded by Sue Buchanan. The motion was carried.

Recreation Director's Report:

Welcome New Board Members:

The Board welcomed new members Richard Sica and Chris Beane who were appointed this month. Each comes with a wide range of volunteer experience in town and the Board looks forward to their input and advice.

Election of Code of Conduct Sub-Committee

The Recreation Director reminded the Board that the function of this sub-committee is to receive complaints from residents, whether they be parents, coaches, or other spectators regarding breaches in the Coaches Code of Conduct or the Parent Sportsmanship Pledge, discuss and hear arguments from all parties involved regarding the complaint, determine whether or not there was a breach of the Code of Conduct or Sportsmanship Pledge, and recommend an appropriate penalty when necessary to the Board of Parks & Recreation. He also recommended that board members without children currently in the program are best suited for this position so that the chances of knowing the complainer or the complainant are far less so any potential bias is limited or removed entirely. After a motion from Rob Lahue and a second from Jeff Eischen, the Board nominated Tom Valente, Sue Buchanan, and Ed Pettit for this sub-committee. The Director noted that since the inception of this sub-committee in 2013, they have only been asked to decide on a matter one time and that matter was dismissed with no penalties being administered after conducting a thorough investigation. The Director has increased his meetings and communication with our volunteer coaches to communicate expectations and proper coaching methods. In fact, on the same evening as this meeting, our boys Lacrosse coaches were meeting

with its Program Director and the Recreation Director to go over our program philosophy, discuss proper positive coaching methods, and receive training on a new educational computer program which contains coaching hints, examples of many various drills for youth lacrosse, and video instruction. In observing several Recreation and Travel level games, the Director reports that the coaches are extremely positive with their teams and compliments regarding our coaches are on the rise.

In the event of a complaint to a Board Member, members should encourage parents to complete the complaint form for the Code of Conduct Committee to review. The complaint form can be found in the Recreation section of the Township website at www.wyckoff-nj.com or paper copies can be picked up at the Recreation Office.

Establishment of Passive Recreation Programming Sub-Committee:

The Director reported to the Board that there appears to be a need to expand our programming beyond the standard recreational & competitive sports programming that we currently provide for children and adults after reviewing the results of last year's survey. A large portion of the township's population does not have children involved in the Recreation Program and has a desire to participate in programs that may or may not be competitive in nature. Examples include walking clubs, outdoor movie events in town, painting classes, chess classes, boot camps, and more. In addition, the Director explained that we have parks in town that are underutilized such as the Gardens of Wyckoff and the Larkin House Park property. By combining the need for passive and non-competitive programming with the underutilized parks in town, the Department could help to bring the community together in different ways from the sports programming we currently run at beautiful parks right in our own back yard. In working with the Wyckoff Library over the past few weeks, the Director and the Library Director are combining efforts to run educational and fun activities for the residents of Wyckoff. Recently, a Concussion Awareness class was held at the Library and plans are underway to coordinate an entertaining Dog Show during the summer at Memorial Field. The Director asked for volunteers to establish this new sub-committee and advised that those elected would be responsible to formulate ideas and new funding sources for new programs for both adults and children that are not sports related and potentially utilizes the wide variety of parks in town and implementing those ideas with any needed assistance from the Recreation Department. Rich Sica, Chris Beane, Heather Alnor and Rob Lahue volunteered and after a motion from Tom Valente and a second from Sue Buchanan, they were unanimously elected as the first members of the Passive Recreation Programming Sub-Committee by the Board.

Potential New Chess Program:

On the heels of the above topic, the Director reported that he had been in touch with a Chess Instructor from Bergen County who would have an interest in teaching chess to both children and adults from beginners to advanced levels in Wyckoff. The Board unanimously agreed that this would be met with enthusiasm from residents and should be investigated further. The Director and chess instructor were scheduled to meet this month and the results of that meeting will be reported at the next Board meeting in March. Additionally, and again to utilize some of our parks, the Director reported that he is looking into having permanent outdoor chess tables and stools installed at Russell Farms Community Park and/or the Gardens of Wyckoff where residents could bring their chess pieces and enjoy the game at one of our outdoor parks.

Registration Fee Increase Recommendations:

The Director reported that he recently met with the Township Finance Committee and recommended a five dollar fee increase in most Recreation programs and a twenty five dollar increase in our travel programs. The five dollar fee increase would cover our increasing costs related to sports officials in some of our programs but primarily would cover field & facility maintenance costs related to the outdoor sports we maintain. A fifteen dollar increase was recommended in lacrosse who will be getting the most use out of the new turf facility at Pulis Field starting in 2015. The Director advised that our Roller Hockey Rink may be resurfaced in 2015 due to large cracks in its surface at a total cost of almost \$50,000 and because Pulis Field will be unavailable for most of the spring, our other fields will be over used and will require more maintenance and repair than usual. After a review of the recommendations, the Board agreed to the increases and the Director will formally request the fee increases to the Township Committee.

Boys Lacrosse Head and Assistant Coach Recommendations:

The Director presented a list of recommended Head and Assistant Coaches for our spring Boys Lacrosse program. After a review of the names, Sue Buchanan made a motion to accept the candidates as coaches and Jeff Eischen seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the list of volunteer coaches.

Recreation Soccer Discussion:

The Director requested the opinion of the Board on whether or not to pull our 5th through 8th grade Recreation Soccer teams from the Northwest Bergen Soccer Association and have them participate in games with Franklin Lakes and Oakland like our 3rd and 4th grade teams did last year. After weighing the pros and cons of each, the Board voted unanimously to continue having our 3/4th graders participate with Franklin Lakes and Oakland and to leave our older teams with the Northwest Bergen Soccer Association. Some members reported that the older children may enjoy competing against their friends from more local towns and even in town friends when the schedule dictated they play against each other while others stated that the younger children and their families look forward to 5th grade when they can begin competing against other towns. In the end, the Board was in full agreement on keeping the program the way it is currently run.

Safety Communication to Parents Recommendation:

In the days following the tragic death of a 7 year old boy in New Milford, Mr. Scanlan, in an effort to make sure our children were safe at the schools, communicated with the Superintendent of Schools and was advised that three of the schools (Eisenhower, Coolidge, and Sicomac) had the same type of fold out tables and while the investigation was still ongoing regarding operator error or a mechanism malfunction, Mr. Kuder advised that the schools have inspected all of its similar tables and have retrained the entire custodial staff on proper procedural inspections of these tables. Additionally, the Director presented a letter that he would like to distribute to the parents of the children in our program to further emphasize the need for safety, including speaking with their children about how to stay safe when they are in one of the schools or at one of the fields. He asked the Board to review the letter in the next few days and get back to him with any suggestions on enhancing the letter. Mr. Beane expressed the idea that it may serve the Department well to post the letter on our online registration system where the parents would

have to read it and confirm with a checkmark that they read it. This idea was well received and will be implemented when the letter is finalized for distribution.

New Social Media Policy:

The Director reported that on Wednesday, February 4th, the Township launched two social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter as another way of communicating Township related information to our residents, employees, and visitors. Prior to the launch, the Township's new Social Media Policy was emailed to all of its employees, volunteers, and Board & Commission members. At this meeting, the Director distributed paper copies of the Policy and asked the Board to review the entire policy. Specifically, it was communicated that employees, volunteers and board members are prohibited from commenting on either the Facebook page or the Twitter account. A document was passed around asking all members to initialize the form confirming that they had received the new Policy.

Football Program Update:

The Director advised the Board that much work and effort continues to ensure that our League is secure and that our teams have a solid league to participate in next year. It was reported at this meeting that several of the smaller towns in the league we participated in last year such as Westwood, Lodi, Bergenfield, and Hawthorne have left the league in search of a league where they thought their chances to win games would improve despite each and every one of those programs committing to remaining together just last month. Smaller town programs are often intimidated by towns whose football numbers are higher than theirs due to a successful program being run there. That has been the case for many years now and it continues to make it difficult to find teams that are willing to play towns such as Wyckoff, Ridgewood, and Paramus. However, over the past month, it was reported at this meeting that very positive things are happening. The league that Mahwah, Ramsey, Northern Highlands (Allendale/Upper Saddle River), and River Dell (Oradell/River Edge) competed in last year is having similar defection in their league and these four remaining larger programs are faced with similar challenges to the five remaining in our league. Smaller towns are leaving and creating leagues of their own in the hopes of winning more games. Those four programs were set to meet this week with the programs remaining in our program (Wyckoff, Ridgewood, Paramus, Paterson, and Dumont) with the primary goal of joining together to form a new league that would include all nine programs. It was also reported that Bergenfield may have reversed course over the weekend and decided to stay with our current league. The Board will continue to be updated as the very challenging work behind the scenes continues for our program. Further information is pending from the Boosters Football Club (Jamie Jaten, President).

Pulis Field Update:

The Director reported that he has visited the field three times over the past 10 days and due to the accumulation of snow, work has temporarily been halted on the construction of the field. The hope is still that the field will be completed by May of this year.

Travel Baseball Tryouts:

The Director advised that our 8u Travel Baseball Tryouts will take place sometime in March, weather permitting. Due to the Board's review of the concerns expressed by residents this year regarding the tryout results and some children not making a team or not making the team of their choice, the Director reported that the tryout process which has remained unchanged since our program began in the 1970s, will be undergoing a major change during the next round of tryouts and that process will start with this year's 8u group. An independent baseball organization, and possibly some local college baseball players and coaches, will conduct the tryouts with no assistance from the Township's volunteer coaches or the Recreation Department other than to schedule and communicate the tryout details with the families that are registered, and this organization will report the results to the Recreation Department. Those results will then be communicated to the families by the Recreation Department. A discussion resulted among Board Members regarding the value of having tryout evaluators who are familiar with our process and our teams as there are instances where children with high skill levels have a bad tryout. The concern that independent evaluators will not be from Wyckoff and will not have the level of concern for the children and/or the results as our own coaches would was discussed. Some members felt that we need to eliminate the perception that the same children make the same teams year after year despite knowing that there has been many instances where children have made a team after not being selected the year before and others have jumped from the "B" team to the "A" team from one year to the next. Other Board Members felt that our teams are extremely competitive year after year and that this is a direct result of our current process being a good one. The issue of cost also came up since our current process has no cost but hiring an independent group will require funds. The Director reported that he has made provisions to be able to pay the company that runs the tryouts for the upcoming year. Finally, the idea of having the new process start this year with the 8u group and continue in the following year with 8u and 9u, and so on. The current 9u-14u teams would continue along with the current process where our own coaches select the teams. In the end, the Board agreed to try the new process of having independent evaluators select our teams for the 2015 8u teams and the 2016 9u-14u teams. As of right now, the Board was informed that there are 45 boys set to try out for 8u travel baseball and that two teams of 12 or 13 children (24-26 total) will be selected. In addition, communication prior to, during, and after tryouts will be increased to better inform the parents about the tryout process, the difficulty of making a travel baseball team in town due to the effort and practice required during the offseason that only a few children and families can commit to, that our Recreation Baseball program is a very appropriate level for most of the children in town, and that many other opportunities exist very locally where the children can play at a higher level than Recreation if they so desire. The Department realizes that the communication and the use of a completely independent tryout organization will not eliminate the disappointment of not making a team, but the hope is that it will at least reduce or eliminate the perception of some that the tryout process is flawed with favoritism. All Board members agreed.

Open Comment Period:

None - no public present

Report from Board Members:

There were no reports from board members.

New or Old Business:

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Andy Wingfield
Director of Parks & Recreation