

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

Tom Valente opened the Recreation Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the Conference Room 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, Moe Ismael, Sue Buchanan, Rich Sica, Chris Beane, Township Committee Liaison Brian Scanlan

Members Absent: Ed Pettit, Doug Arone

Staff Present: Recreation Director Andy Wingfield

Staff Absent: None

Guests Present: None

The minutes of the February 9, 2015 meeting were discussed. After a slight modification by Mr. Scanlan, 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:

Online Registration Ongoing:

The Director reported that registrations are currently ongoing for several programs at our online registration site. Residents can now sign up for Summer Day Camp, our wide variety of summer clinics, adult softball, adult Team Tennis, spring Tennis Clinics, and one of our most popular programs, Soccer for boys and girls in grades K-12. It was reiterated that our new online system has made the registration process much more convenient and easy for our residents. To date, over 3,280 registrations have been completed online.

Jeff Eischen expressed a concern that the new online registration system is causing a situation in which the Booster groups are not able to meet the registrants in person and accept their yearly booster fees. To date, both the boys and girls Lacrosse Booster membership is way down from previous years so Jeff was asking if there was a way the fee could be collected on our registration site and then paid to the Boosters from the Township. The Director reported that this is not possible but that he would look into the potential of creating a link on our registration website directly to the Wyckoff Lacrosse Booster website. Jeff agreed this would help and will look into whether or not their website can accept credit card payments.

Coach Training:

The Director reported that the Department is hosting a Rutgers S.A.F.E.T.Y. course for first time Wyckoff coaches at the Wyckoff Library on Thursday, March 12th from 6:30-9:30pm. This course is required one time for all coaches and discusses the basics of coaching and utilizing best

practices for safety. Additionally, a Background Check opportunity for coaches who have not submitted to one yet will be held on April 14th from 6-7pm at the Recreation Department. Since 2013, all of our volunteer coaches must submit to a background check every 3 years.

In addition to these required courses, the Department, based on feedback in the past that our coaches would benefit from additional training, has authorized our Lacrosse Program to utilize an online coaches training tool for the 2015 season. The program has been met with very positive reviews from our coaches and will be used to be better prepared to coach the boys and girls lacrosse participants.

Girls Lacrosse Coach Recommendations & Report:

The Director presented a list of recommended Coaches for our spring Girls Lacrosse program. After a review of the names, Rich Sica made a motion to accept the candidates as coaches and Rob Lahue seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the list of volunteer coaches.

The Director also reported that the Lacrosse program teams have begun practicing in preparation for the spring season on the blacktop at the Memorial Basketball Courts due to the several inches of snow still on the ground. Games for the boys are set to begin on March 28th, and the girls game schedule will commence on April 13th.

Recreation Baseball & Softball Report:

The Director reported to the Board that Recreation Baseball & Softball Opening Day will take place on Saturday, April 18th, weather permitting. The season will start that day with its first games of the year and those games and practices will continue into the following week. On Saturday, April 25th, we will hold the Wyckoff Pitch, Hit, and Run Day at Community Park for all of our Recreation and Travel players. The Travel Baseball Boosters will coordinate and conduct the event and are looking into increasing participation by having additional activities for those that may not want to participate in the Pitch, Hit, and Run Competition. Mr. Scanlan asked if on Opening Day on April 18th, we could have a small ceremony prior to the first games in which the Mayor throws out the first pitch. The Director and Board agreed this was a good idea which would be incorporated into the planning of Opening Day.

Summer Camp Report (Bloodborne Pathogen Training for Staff):

As stated above, the Department has begun accepting registrations for our Summer Day Camp. The Director reported that all of our Summer Day Camp employees, including the Counselors in Training, were previously required to attend a Bloodborne Pathogen Training class at the start of camp to learn how to handle bodily fluids such as blood or vomit during the camp day. The County has initiated a new training class that is 100% online and has eliminated the need for a class. In reviewing the online class, the Director became concerned that the training made mention of certain bodily fluids that were irrelevant to our young campers and possibly inappropriate for young counselors in training to learn about. The Director worked with Town Hall and the County to eliminate the online training requirement for our younger staff and will now only require our 18 year olds and above Management staff to take the online training. Our Camp Director and her management staff will then relay the relevant and appropriate portions to the younger staff.

Travel Baseball Tryouts (8u) Complete:

The Director reported that the 8u Travel Baseball Tryouts were completed on March 4th and 6th at an indoor facility due to snow on the ground. The Travel Baseball Boosters agreed to pay the facility fee for the tryouts so that the Township did not incur an additional expense. This was the first Wyckoff tryout ever that was not conducted by its own coaches/baseball leadership. The tryouts were conducted by an independent baseball company that is not relatively local to Wyckoff and only runs teams starting at the 14u level (no youth levels so extremely unlikely that anyone from Wyckoff would have lessons there or would otherwise know this company). The Director's first communication with the parents of those trying out was an email announcing the tryouts, explaining the new process and the use of an independent company evaluating the children, an overview of the season and the commitment level required, and the fact that several of the 53 boys that registered would not be selected for one of the 24 spots. The Recreation Board Chairman was copied on the letter and he relayed to the Recreation Board that the communication was very informative and appropriate. Out of the 53 children that registered over the past several months, 33 ended up trying out. After meeting with the staff at the facility where the tryouts were being held, the Director welcomed the children to the tryout, distributed their tryout pinnies, and wished them good luck in their efforts to make the team. The Director then met with the parents of the group to discuss the new process, the amount of baseball experience that the evaluators have, the fact that the evaluators have no knowledge of the boys trying out, the fact that some boys would not be selected and that expectations should be set and managed at home, the commitment level required to the program, and finished with questions from the parents. The Director and the parents then left the facility while the tryouts continued. The Director reported that he spoke with the head of the baseball company today and that 10 pages of evaluations, comments, and results were being sent to the Department. Once those results are received, the Director will communicate them with the parents via a letter advising whether or not their child was selected to the team. At the parent meeting, the parents appeared to be very satisfied with the new procedure utilizing an independent company and appreciated the in person explanation.

A discussion regarding the idea of having at least one Recreation Board member at the tryouts to audit the process and evaluate the evaluators ensued. Additionally, it was discussed that a Recreation Board member be present simply in case of injury to one of the children. While it has been discussed at length that the Recreation Board's review of prior year complaints show that the primary concern of parents is the perception of favoritism when Wyckoff residents are involved in any way at the tryouts, the Recreation Board was in favor of having a Board member there to simply observe, audit, and ensure that the evaluators were consistent in their communication with the children, the amount of repetitions each child receives, and that none of the evaluators knows any of the tryout participants. Over the next several months, the Recreation Board will discuss and formulate a plan to have an audit process in place before the next round of tryouts in October.

Recreation and Travel Basketball Seasons Come to a Close:

The Director reported that the Recreation Basketball season came to a very successful end on Saturday, March 7th. Championship games for 5-8th grade boys and girls were completed and the 1st-4th graders ended their seasons with everyone receiving a medal or trophy for their participation. Some minor changes for next year were discussed including substitution

procedures and playing time rules for the older levels and possibly playing less games and having more practices especially at the 1st and 2nd grade level. Some parents have expressed the idea of splitting up the 1st and 2nd graders and concentrating more on developing their skills than playing games. These items will be addressed when planning for the 2016 winter season.

At the travel level, several of our teams including our 5th grade girls, 4th grade boys, 5th grade boys American team, both 6th grade boys teams, the 7th grade National boys team, and both 8th grade boys teams have advanced in the playoffs and are continuing their efforts toward Championship Day on March 14th and 15th. Several positive reports have come in from many of our teams but it was reported that one of our teams was plagued by inconsistent attendance by its players this year due to other sports commitments, vacations, etc. The coach was extremely challenged by this as it was common to have only 6 players at his games. A discussion ensued regarding the Recreation Board's mandatory attendance rules and whether or not they were still appropriate and it was unanimously agreed upon by the Recreation Board that they were but that we need to give the coaches some leeway in adhering to the "miss a game/sit a game" rule when it pertained to family events like weddings, bar/batmitzvahs, etc. and, of course, other religious and educational commitments. The Board was unanimous that coaches need to adhere to the policy of sitting a player for a game missed due to other sports commitments during that season and this will continue to be communicated from the Department to its coaches. The Recreation Board agreed that the "penalty" should not be looked upon or communicated as a punishment for those players that commit to other sports, but more a reward of additional playing time for those that are committed to our program.

Lastly, on February 26th, the referee working one of our travel basketball games requested prior to the game that a police officer stop in at the school to show a presence so that the coaches and parents of the visiting team stayed under control. At a previous game, the coaches and parents of the visiting team were harassing the referees on the game which culminated in the team removing its players from the floor and leaving while the game was still going on. A police officer did stop by the gym and reported later that the referee, in his attempt to explain what happened the evening before, made some inappropriate and offensive remarks about the visiting team's parents. The Director reported to the Board that upon hearing of these remarks from the Chief of Police, he called the referee in question and spoke with him about his comments. The referee was extremely apologetic, offered to write a letter of apology to the Officer, or even to stop by the Police Department to apologize in person. The Director advised him that he would relay the referee's apologies to the Police Department and advised him that he was not to referee any more games in Wyckoff this season. The referee obliged and removed himself from games that had been assigned to him in Wyckoff for the remainder of the winter. The Recreation Board unanimously agreed that the matter had been handled appropriately by both the Police Department and the Recreation Department and that the penalty of not working games in town for the remainder of the season was sufficient.

Safety Communication to Parents Recommendation:

The Director asked the Board for any modifications to the Parent Safety Letter that was presented last month. No modifications of the letter were volunteered but Sue Buchanan communicated an idea that would improve the effect that the letter would have on parents. Her thought was to not only put the Letter into the online registration system to ensure people would

read it prior to registering but also to broadcast monthly “Safety” messages via email to the parents of those registered for particular programs. This would be an extremely easy and effective way of communicating ideas to the parents and by issuing them monthly, residents’ emails won’t be inundated with messages from the Department. The Director will look to finalize the letter this month and initiate the monthly email safety messages in April when our spring sports begin.

Sue Buchanan also made a recommendation that the Director investigate the possibility of adding additional lighting to the Memorial Playground adjacent to the Fire Department on Woodland Avenue. The playground is very heavily used during football games in the fall in the evenings and the lighting could be improved. The Director replied that he will work with the DPW Manager and Town Hall to determine the feasibility of additional lighting being added to the area.

Reciprocal or In-Kind Services Field/Facility Use Arrangements Discussion:

The Director communicated that there are several relationships between the Recreation Department and other groups or schools such as the Torpedoes Soccer Club, Ramapo High School, Eastern Christian Middle School, Cornerstone Christian Church, and Hawthorne Christian Academy in which agreements have been reached either recently or in the past in which our residents benefit from the use of other groups’ fields or facilities in return for the other group’s use of our fields or facilities or providing in-kind services for such use. For example, the Torpedoes Soccer Club, in return for using Community Park and Pulis Soccer fields, maintain (cut, fertilize, seed, repair) those fields at their cost. Their participants can then utilize the fields while the Township saves on the maintenance of two of its playing surfaces. Ramapo High School utilizes the Memorial Baseball Field for its freshman baseball team and, in return, the Recreation Department is able to utilize their turf field on occasion for our boys and girls lacrosse programs and our football program. Because no rental fees or other means of payment are distributed or accepted in these arrangements, it is important that the Board of Parks and Recreation know about these situations and approves them on a yearly basis. The Director devised a policy for approval by the Board in which the arrangements will be reviewed, discussed and either approved or denied by the Board at the first meeting of each year. At this meeting, the Director proposed the “Field Rental Use In Exchange for In-Kind Services/Reciprocal Facility/Field usage” agreements between the Recreation Department and the Torpedoes Soccer Club, Ramapo High School, Eastern Christian Middle School, Hawthorne Christian Academy, and the Cornerstone Christian Church. The Board reviewed each arrangement individually and agreed that these relationships are beneficial to all parties involved and that they create a program in which our residents benefit from the use of outside facilities in addition to the fields and facilities used in town. Rob Lahue made a motion to approve this new policy and all of the relationships contained therein for 2015 and Tom Valente seconded the motion. All were in favor. The Director will send the new policy to the Township Committee for review and anticipated acceptance for addition to the Recreation Policy Manual.

Field/Facility Use Policy Change:

The Director reported that all requests for field rentals will be reviewed and approved/denied by the Recreation Board. All primary documents, including the revised Application for Use and Hold Harmless Agreements, along with the organizations Certificate of Insurance will be

presented to the Board in the future. At this evening's meeting, based on the above information regarding reciprocal or in-kind service arrangements, the Board unanimously approved the use of the Memorial Tennis Courts by Eastern Christian High School in return for the 6 hours of gym use per week for our basketball program in the winter, the use of the Memorial Baseball Field for Ramapo High School in return for several boys and girls lacrosse games on the Ramapo artificial turf field in the spring and football practices and games in the fall, the Torpedoes Soccer Club for Community Park and Pulis Field for their continued maintenance of those fields, the Community Park Softball Fields for the Cornerstone Christian Church in return for the use of their ball field behind the church during the spring and summer, and the Memorial Baseball Field for the Hawthorne Christian Academy's Baseball team in return for 4.5 hours/week of gym use for 10 weeks in the winter for our basketball program.

Passive Recreation Programming Sub-Committee Update:

Rich Sica reported that he has been investigating several ideas for Passive Recreation programming in town. He has spoken with a Zumba Instructor for seniors, looked into the possibility of a "Discover Wyckoff Tour" in which residents could take a bus around town to our many parks, and other ideas such as walking groups, stroller walks for new moms, Movies Under the Stars, and a Roller Skating Night at our roller hockey rink. He will continue to follow up with the Sub-Committee and report any progress at our next meeting.

The Director reported that he has been working with a Chess Instructor to begin Chess Classes in the spring and summer. The Director and the Township Administrator worked together to advertise a competitive bid for this program for children and adults. A contract for this program is estimated to be awarded on March 26, 2015. The plan is to have one hour classes for 8 weeks in the spring starting in April after the spring break for children from 4:30-5:30pm and for adults from 6:30-7:30pm. The Department will begin advertising this new program heavily this month via our email list, the Wyckoff Library's email list, the Township's Facebook page and by sending flyers through the Township schools.

Additionally, the Director reported that he has spoken with a Fitness expert in town who is willing to run an early morning Boot Camp for adults and asked the Board for their approval on this program as well. The Board unanimously approved the start up of this program which would be run as a Wyckoff Recreation program and not a program that would be put out to competitive bid.

Finally, the Director pointed out that a budget is going to be required for many of the ideas that are being presented and discussed. For instance, a Zumba Instructor receives around \$60-\$70/hr, Movies Under the Stars costs \$1200 per event, and proposed outdoor chess tables for our parks cost \$2200. He has requested that funds be made available for our new Passive Recreation programming and should have more information at the April meeting.

Football Program Update:

The Director reported that he attended a Football meeting with leadership from other towns including Paramus, Ridgewood, Paterson, Bergenfield, Dumont, Ramsey, Mahwah, River Dell, and Northern Highlands (Allendale/Upper Saddle River). It was the culmination of the efforts of several towns and many individuals to come together to form a new North Bergen Junior

Football League. This league is now set and the myriad of issues we had last year that caused the league to fold will hopefully be a thing of the past. The smallest towns who struggled with numbers on game days are gone and we have 10 very strong, solid programs participating in this new league. The emphasis at this meeting was on developing rules that promoted fairness among programs of a wide variety of sizes, safety and good sportsmanship. One exciting item that was discussed was the league potentially mandating that each game have a certified athletic trainer on site. While this would increase the amount of our league dues, it would be a significant improvement in keeping the children safe. Important medical decisions would no longer be left up to a volunteer coach but, instead, be placed in the hands of an experienced certified trainer. The league will be soliciting presentations from certified athletic trainer companies and make a decision on this matter within the next two months. The new league (NJBFL) has also lowered some of the weight limits across the different levels to improve the safety of the players (PeeWee running backs are now only allowed to be 96 lbs as opposed to 103 last year). Regarding scheduling, the new league's leadership is 90% complete with the game schedule which took the previous league we were in a few weeks into the season to complete.

Another item which is a major improvement from last year is that the league is mandating one official for the clock on all games, including A, B, and C games. This decision is in line with the decision that was already made by our Recreation Board to ensure that an official would operate the scoreboard at every game in Wyckoff next year. The Director will be communicating this exciting information with the football participants from last year via email within the next month prior to the start of football registration. The Director has not been able to get an update on Booster activity as the last meeting was canceled and has not been rescheduled. A priority for next season will be to ensure that the Concession Stand is operational every night there is a series of two or more games scheduled. The Concession Stand can only be open when the parents of the children on the teams playing volunteer to staff it. The Director will be sure to communicate this with the new Booster leadership and the football player parents as they come together in the upcoming months.

Open Comment Period:

None - no public present

Report from Board Members:

Sue Buchanan reported that the Parks & Recreation Foundation has announced the second year of its raffle fundraiser and that the proceeds will go toward the eventual installation of outdoor sports energy efficient lighting at the new Pulis Artificial Turf Field. All proper permits were applied for with the Township Clerk and approved for the Foundation to operate a game of chance in Wyckoff to benefit the children.

New or Old Business:

None presented

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Wingfield

Director of Parks & Recreation