

**WYCKOFF DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
November 16, 2015**

Ed Pettit opened the Recreation Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the Ladderback Conference Room of Town Hall at 340 Franklin Avenue 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: Ed Pettit, Heather Alnor, Rob Lahue, Moe Ismael, Rich Sica, Doug Arone, Jeff Eischen, Chris Beane

Members Absent: Sue Buchanan, Tom Valente

Staff Present: Recreation Director Andy Wingfield, Township Committeeman Brian Scanlan

Guests Present: Brian Latz, Chris Cosgrove, Mike Sclafani, Elias Scoropanos, Greg Van Cleef, Julie Begli, Debra Donellan, Stephanie Knight, Andrew Basa, Roger Schnorrbusch

The Recreation Director asked Ed Pettit to substitute as Chairperson for the meeting in the absence of Chairperson Valente. Mr. Pettit agreed. The minutes of the October 19, 2015 meeting were discussed. A motion to approve the minutes of that meeting was made by Doug Arone and seconded by Chris Beane. The motion was carried.

Football Update:

Chairman Pettit welcomed the several guests to the meeting and having been informed that they were there to express concerns about the football program, established the ground rules for speaking, and invited the audience to speak. Several residents expressed concerns over two main issues at the PeeWee level this year. First, the concern that one of the football coaches ran a particular football drill during a practice in October called the “Oklahoma” drill with some of the 3rd graders was brought up and that the drill a) should not be run with younger children and b) that the drill was run as a retaliation against some parents who had voiced concerns over the coach’s decision to not allow some of the players to run with the ball during B games. An email from a 3rd grader’s father was read to the Board and audience about this situation specifically. Regarding the drill being appropriate for children of this age, it was communicated by the Board and Recreation Director, as well as some of the coaches in attendance, that the “Oklahoma” drill is run every year at this level and higher as a preparation for contact for the players. It was then alleged by a speaker, as it was in the email that was read, that the drill was run inappropriately with kids of lesser abilities and smaller statures protecting the ball carriers and kids of higher abilities tackling the ball carriers. It was stated during the meeting by an audience member that, in his opinion, a “culture of fear” exists in the football program in that parents that complain fear that their children will suffer consequences and that this drill involving the players of the parents that complained was evidence of that “culture.”

The second primary concern that was addressed by members of the audience was that football coaches on the PeeWee White teams were playing 3rd graders over 4th graders during the A games and that the primary reason was that the 3rd graders were either the coaches sons or the coaches' sons' friends. The prevailing understanding of the audience members with this concern was that 3rd grade/B players were not allowed to fluctuate between B and A games. The Board communicated to these parents that as long as children were receiving a half game of playing time on either offense or defense during the games, the coaches were adhering to the fundamental policies of the football program. Parents in the audience then relayed to the Board that some 4th graders did not receive a half game of playing time at games as they rotated into games on either offense or defense with others while 3rd graders who would play an entire B game on Sundays were playing in positions where these 4th graders could be playing and getting their half a game of playing time.

Finally, other members of the audience spoke about their positive experience with the football program this year and specifically thanked the Football Boosters for creating an incredibly positive atmosphere at football games this year while others spoke in support of the program's volunteer coaches.

Upon the conclusion of hearing the audience's concerns, Chairman Pettit thanked the residents in attendance for their input and advised them that the Board would discuss the two issues and decide on an appropriate course of action on each. It was agreed by the Board that the Coaches Code of Conduct Sub-Committee would investigate the allegation involving the "Oklahoma" drill and report back with their findings at the next meeting. It was also agreed by the Board that the drill, in and of itself, is an appropriate and regularly run drill at football practices but that the allegations of retaliation needed to be investigated. Regarding the concern about B players/3rd graders playing in 4th grade/A games, it was unanimously agreed upon by the Board that communication between the Recreation Board/Department and our coaches as well as between our coaches and the parents needs improvement. This particular issue could have been resolved before it started had the parents understood the potential for movement between the two teams and the fundamental playing time rule that each player should play a minimum of half a game on offense or defense. The new league that we entered this year gave the program so many positive changes but also came with its share of growing pains that the Board, Recreation Department, and coaches will look to reduce next season. Some suggestions by the Board included asking the League to have our Green and White teams play at different times of the weekend next season so that our Head Coaches could attend all of the games rather than just the Green or White games. It was also suggested by the Board that an attempt is made by the program to have coaches continue to not head coach on their child's team and, if necessary, have them coach on either Green or White and have their child participate on the opposite team so that the perception of "Daddy Ball" is reduced. The Recreation Director advised that the effort will be made to that end but that the Department has always attempted to have our volunteer coaches at least be able to attend their own children's games. The Board agreed that this is the right approach since we do not want to take away a parent's ability to see their child play by asking them to volunteer up to 6 days a week. The Board recommended that a meeting be established between the Recreation Director and the coaches prior to every season to discuss all of our rules, policies, and philosophies and that each coach hold a parent meeting prior to the season to review these with the parents to avoid these kinds of complaints in the future.

Recreation Director's Report:

Travel Basketball Tryouts Complete:

The Director advised that our travel basketball tryouts for the 2015-16 winter season are complete. To review, the basketball tryouts, for the first time, were conducted by an outside basketball organization in order to follow the Board's advice in attempting to eliminate the perception of bias or favoritism at our tryouts. The company used is based in New York and offered high school varsity coaches and former college players as evaluators. The company, in addition to its extensive basketball training program, runs summer camps for the New York Knicks as well. Upon completion of each tryout, the owner of the company presented its evaluations to the Recreation Department and the players were notified of their status via mail by the Department. Based on the number of children present at each tryout and the skill level of those children, the organization recommended one team at each of the following grade levels:

- Boys 3rd, 4th, 5th, 8th
- Girls 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th

And two teams at the following grade levels:

- Boys 6th, 7th
- Girls 6th

The organization originally recommended one team of 10 girls at the 3rd grade level but the Recreation Department, after reviewing the results with its Travel Basketball Program Director and the prospective coach, decided it was in the best interest of the girls program to keep all 15 girls that tried out due to the very low numbers this year in girls 4th grade where only 8 girls tried out. The coach of the team will bring two groups of five girls to each game so that only 10 are present for each game and this will give more girls the opportunity to improve their basketball knowledge and skill in the hopes of strengthening our program at the youngest level. The Board agreed unanimously with this approach.

The Director then presented a list of proposed Head Coaches for our Travel Basketball program. The Board reviewed the list and approved all of the coaches unanimously after a motion to approve them was made by Chris Beane and seconded by Rich Sica.

A suggestion was made by Board member Lahue to have a sign on the door of the gym with instructions on what parents should do upon arrival to the tryout. Without the Director being there and the evaluators busy with the ongoing evaluation, some parents were confused on whether to drop the children and go or wait until the previous group was done. The Director advised that this will be addressed at next year's tryouts.

Travel Baseball Head Coach Recommendations:

With baseball tryouts completed in October, the Director presented a list of Head Coach recommendations for the 2016 travel baseball summer season. After reviewing the list, Chris Beane recused himself from the vote since his name is on the list of recommendations for the 12u B team in 2016. Bobby Lahue made a motion to accept the list of head coaches for the 2016 travel baseball season and was seconded by Heather Alnor. All in attendance were in favor.

Travel Baseball Complaint from Resident:

A memo from the Township Administrator was read to the Board by the Director regarding a travel baseball complaint he received over the phone this month from a resident. The complaint was from a resident whose son was selected for the 12u A Travel Baseball team last month. The Township Administrator advised the resident of the complaint process and requested the Director send him the Department's complaint form to be submitted to the Recreation Director or the Recreation Board. The Department emailed the complaint form to the resident.

Specifically, the complaint was that after the team of 12 players on the A team and 13 players on the B team had been announced, a decision was made to move the 13th ranked player from the B team to the A team giving the A team 13 players and the B team 12 players. The complainant cited a new Board policy recommended by the Recreation board and approved by the Township Committee last year wherein travel baseball teams are limited to 12 players. In the complaint, the resident also alleged that the player that was added to the team as the 13th player was given a second tryout and that another player who had a concussion during the tryouts from another sporting event was given a tryout after the tryout process was complete. The Director confirmed that the boy with the concussion was given a tryout at the independent evaluator's facility when he was healthy enough to do so and was selected for the B team. The Board agreed that preventing that child from trying out due to a football injury and taking away his opportunity to play travel baseball would have been wrong. The Board reviewed the policy in question and agreed that the resident was incorrect in his citing of the new policy. The policy that was created last year dealt with players that do not accept a spot on the roster when they are informed that they had been selected to the team but later want to rescind their withdrawal and return to our program. The new policy spells out that the player would be welcomed back but only if the roster contained less than 12 players in baseball and less than 10 players should it happen in basketball. At no time has the Board agreed to limiting our baseball rosters to 12. It was noted that several of our teams this coming year have more than 12 and the higher number of 13 or 14 is actually preferred once the teams graduate to the much bigger 60'/90' field at 13u and 14u due to the increasing odds of arm injuries and soreness throughout the season. The Director confirmed that our current policy dictates that "Each team shall be comprised of a minimum of 11 players and a maximum of 15 players." The Board then questioned if the allegation of granting a second tryout for the 13th player was accurate. The Director advised that no player received a second tryout during the process, nor would any player ever receive an individual second tryout due to the precedent that would set. The Board confirmed with the Director that the player who was moved to the A team was, in fact, the 13th ranked player and that he was within 17/100ths of a point of the 11th and 12th ranked player who were tied. The Director further advised that this information was relayed to the head coach of the team and that the decision to add the player or not was left entirely to the coach. The coach agreed without hesitation to add the player and so the rosters were adjusted. The Board discussed the situation at length and agreed that no policy was violated and no action to adjust the rosters further was warranted.

Open Comment Period:

There was no further comment from the audience.

Report from Board Members:

It was noted for the record by a Board member that the Recreation Board's complaint procedure and online complaint form work well in that residents have a fair, reasonable, and useful method to express their concerns to the Board.

New or Old Business:

Brian Scanlan presented an article to the Board from Northjersey.com about new guidelines that will limit 'heading' in youth soccer going forward. The article outlines the change and that further details would be coming out during the offseason. The Director will follow the progress of the new rule changes and discuss changes in our own Rec Soccer program with the Board as the United States Soccer Federation finalizes the details of the changes in the coming months.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Wingfield
Director, Wyckoff Parks & Recreation