

**WYCKOFF DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**December 17, 2018**

Doug Arone opened the Recreation Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the Courtroom 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: Hayley Rooney, Rich Sica, Jeff Eischen, Doug Arone Moe Ismael, Chris Beane, Sue Buchanan, Heather Alnor, Mike Ferrara

Members Absent: Ann Smith, Tom Valente

Staff Present: Andy Wingfield, Recreation Director  
Tim Shanley, Township Committee Liaison

Guests Present: John Giovacco, resident

The minutes of the November 12, 2018 meeting were discussed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mike Ferrara and seconded by Jeff Eischen. The motion was carried.

**Recreation Director’s Report:**

**Policy Updates:**

The Director reported that, based on recent events, our Township Administrator is developing a new policy regarding Township volunteers’ use of electronic devices. Volunteer coaches will be required to only utilize their cell phones and other electronic devices for “routine procedural tasks” such as schedules and availability for practices. The new policy will prohibit volunteers from communicating any messages that “discriminate, harass, bully, disparage, denigrate or threaten in any way youth sports participants, volunteers, or any other members of the public.” Further, if any volunteers receive such messages, they will be required to report the inappropriate message to the Recreation Director immediately. Additionally, both the Coach and Parent Codes of Conduct have been updated to be explicitly clear that if any parent or coach observes harassment, bullying, or intimidation of a parent or child participant, they are required to immediately report the incident to the Head Coach and the Recreation Director or Recreation Board. The new “Volunteers Communicating Electronically Regarding Municipal Operations Policy,” along with the updated and improved Zero Tolerance Policy Towards Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) and the Wyckoff Recreation Code of Conduct will be combined into one document for our residents (parents and coaches) to view on our website and when registering for programs on Community Pass. The Director will review these policies with all coaches prior to each season. The Director will share the new and improved policies with the Board when approved by the Township Committee.

**Recreation Basketball Head Coach Recommendations:**

The Director presented the list of volunteer Head Coaches for the 2018-19 Recreation Basketball season for 1<sup>st</sup> Grade through 4<sup>th</sup> Grade boys and girls. After discussion, Rich Sica motioned to approve the entire list of volunteer coaches and Hayley Rooney seconded the motion. All were in favor of approving the entire list of coaches.

### **Cooperative Recreation Equipment Bid Review:**

The Director advised that the Cooperative Recreation Equipment Bid has been advertised and the sealed bids will be opened at 11am on January 3, 2019. This bid promotes healthy competition among sports equipment and uniform vendors which results in the Township benefitting from lower costs for its equipment and uniform purchasing. In 2018, 39% of the items on the bid of approximately 225 items cost LESS than they did in the previous year. That same, or better, savings is anticipated again in this year's bid. The Director also reviewed with the Board that this bid not only benefits Wyckoff, but also Franklin Lakes and Oakland as the three municipalities work together on this project to increase potential quantities purchased which, thereby, reduces the cost of each item on the bid. By maximizing competition and quantity, the three municipalities realize excellent savings across the year in their equipment and uniform purchasing.

### **Winter Recreation and Travel Programs Have Begun – Possible Wrestling Improvements:**

The Director reported that most of our Winter programming has begun including Recreation & Travel Basketball for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through high school, Wrestling for Grades 1-8, and Roller Hockey for Grades K-8. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Basketball and our Chess program will begin in January. The Director also advised the Board that discussions are continuing regarding the improvement of our Wrestling program, specifically the hopeful move of our practices to a more convenient and larger facility. The Director exchanged emails with one of the heads of our wrestling program and the Principal of Eisenhower School this month discussing the possibility of utilizing the Eisenhower Cafeteria for our wrestling practices as early as next year. Moe Ismael explained that we would need new mats for this to occur which cost approximately \$5000 each. After receiving approval from the Board, the Director advised that he would look to budget enough money for the purchase of one mat for 2019. The wrestling boosters are planning a fundraiser for the additional \$5000 for the second mat.

### **Complaint Discussion:**

The Director shared two written complaints with the Board regarding the football program. One complaint is from a group of assistant football coaches, the other from a parent who also has coached in the program for several years. Both complaints address the football head coaches currently in the program, one addressing the Junior and Senior head coaches, the other addressing only the Senior head coach. The complaints revolve around the Recreation policy that requires there to be a change at the head coach level of all travel sports every two years where possible and a concern about the part of the policy that states non-parent head coaches are not subject to this two year rule. The concern is that the complainants feel that the head coaches are “untouchable” and rule the program as if they can never be removed. During this process which started on November 19<sup>th</sup>, the Director has made it extremely clear to one of the complainants that this notion is incorrect. He has advised that all of our volunteer coaches, whether they are coaching a recreation sport, are in their 2 year period of coaching a travel sport, or in their 10<sup>th</sup> year as a non-parent coach, are subject to the same rules and policies, and verified violations of those policies would potentially cause their removal from coaching. The Board opined that while this is true, the language in the policy pertaining to this topic only refers to “travel sports” which are baseball, softball, and basketball, and that football is clearly defined in the policy manual as a “recreational” sport for which there is no two year rule or non-parent clause. Therefore, the very rule that the complainants are citing has nothing to do with football, only travel sports. The Board also expressed that no coaches in our program, whether recreational or travel, are immune

to scrutiny under our policies. Further discussion revealed that the two year rule in question is in place so that the children receive coaching from coaches with different voices, philosophies, techniques, etc. over the course of their recreation “careers” and don’t have the same coach for the duration of their travel sport experience. In football, though, as the players move up through the PeeWee, Junior, and Senior levels, they get a new coach every two years as the head coaches typically remain at the level they’ve been coaching. It was also discussed that since there is no rule or policy in the football program that head coaches are allowed to coach “for life” or for as long as they want, there may not be a need to develop a rule that limits their tenure since every coach in our program must follow the same rules and Code of Conduct. The Board, however, did agree with part of the complaint in that it should be made perfectly clear to all coaches that they are not tenured and are not immune from the Coach Code of Conduct should they violate the Code. The Board also felt that a sensitivity training course seemed appropriate here and perhaps across the variety of programs the township offers.

The complaint from the group of coaches went on to provide a solution which entailed having the current group of coaches nominate and vote on new head coaches every two years. The Board discussed that the football program is free to select its coaches this way and generally agreed that this could be a positive change but that the policy currently states the Program Director brings the recommendation to the Recreation Director for eventual review by the Recreation Board and implementing this procedure would not require a change. The Board was in agreement, though, that provided there was nothing at this time that warranted the removal of any coaches based on violation of the Code of Conduct outside of the situation already addressed, the current coaches would be able to retain their head coaching duties for the time period determined by the football program to be an appropriate period of time to implement coaching changes.

Regarding the complaint by the parent/coach in reference to the head coach at the senior level, the Board recalled addressing the concussion issue in the complaint in December of 2017 and implementing better concussion protocol as a result of the concerns brought to the Board by the Director at that time. The Board also approved the purchase of the Guardian Caps after that incident occurred. This parent also expressed concern over the way this particular coach spoke with him when he had approached him about his son’s playing time when he was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and feels that he deals with parents in a “dictator” like way because he is not impacted by the two year rule addressed above. While the Board agrees that sometimes head coaches have to take a certain tone when dealing with parental issues regarding playing time, position, etc., they agree it may not be the ideal way to handle recreation situations like these and will now require the Director to speak with the coaching staffs about proper ways to handle parental concerns, questions, and complaints.

Hayley Rooney mentioned a course that she took recently that dealt with establishing a comfortable sports environment for kids and one without harassment, bullying, hazing, etc. She is going to find out the name of the course and communicate it to the Director. The Director is also going to investigate different courses that pertain to providing an environment for the players that is free of intimidation, bullying, or retaliation. The Board feels that taking a course prior to the season may force our coaches across our program to see things a different way and demand an environment where the players and parents feel comfortable and free of stress outside of the normal stress that comes along with sports.

Regarding another portion of the group complaint pertaining to a “specific example of the mean-spirited attitude of one particular Head and assistant coach (towards a player) and putting other

coaches in an uncomfortable and compromising position,” the Board agreed that the Township’s labor counsel should interview those involved and report back any recommendations regarding the coaches to the Recreation Board at a future meeting.

**Open Comment Period:**

Hayley Rooney reported that a resident had asked her if the program would consider starting a flag football program beyond 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The Director stated that we have flag football until 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and then our tackle program starts in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Many towns start their football players in pads in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. The Board expressed the opinion that by starting a flag football program at older levels, we would hurt the numbers of the tackle program to the point that we may not have enough kids to play tackle anymore. Running tackle football practices with considerably less players who may opt to play flag football would make it extremely difficult for both programs to exist together. The town simply doesn’t have enough kids to support a full tackle, flag, and soccer program. Hayley will report this back to the parent.

Tim Shanley reported that the County has increased our grant application amount for the turf field project to \$200,000 (from \$150,000) meaning that the County will provide \$100,000 to the project provided the Township provides the same amount. The Board was excited to hear the good news about the increased funds available for the project.

**Report from Board Members:**

None

**New or Old Business:**

None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andy Wingfield  
Director, Wyckoff Recreation & Parks