

Borough of Washington, Warren County, New Jersey
Recreation Committee Minutes
March 11, 2009

Call to Order

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Washington Borough Recreation Committee was called to order on Wednesday, March 11th, by Chairman Rick Feldman at 7:31 p.m. Also in attendance were committee members Paula Aron, Candy DeFillippis, Erica Kilkinney, Adam Zimmer and council liaison Patrick Boyle. Rebecca Copenhaver and Beth Uporsky were absent.

Review of Past Minutes

A motion was made by Adam Zimmer, seconded by Paula Aron, to approve the minutes from the February 25, 2009 regular meeting as submitted. Motion carried.

Audience

Jim Chrisafis and Rich Thompson attended the meeting to discuss expanding the street hockey program to high school students and adults. Jim stated there has been much interest from the older children and there is nothing in place. He feels there is enough interest for two teams, each with ten to twelve players. Jim already has permission to use Memorial School's gym twice a week for five or six weeks beginning in May. If need be, they would start the program in the Fall if the gym is available. Candy asked if the teams would be mixed with boys and girls. Jim replied that they would as they would just continue how things are currently set up. Jim plans to advertise at the high school. There seems to be more interest from 9th and 10th graders, but the higher grades aren't aware of this yet. Jim feels there may not be enough for a team if we only do the lower grades, especially if boys and girls are split. Rick asked if there are any other towns in the area that support this level of street hockey. Jim replied he is not aware of any. Rick asked about the rules. Jim stated they are the same as for the on-going street hockey program. There are referees who have been doing this for 10 years. No certification is required. He can supply the committee with copies of the rule book if they would like them. Jim stated he has a call into the NJ Devils to ask permission to use their logo for the shirts.

Rick thanked Jim and Rich for their time and stated the committee will discuss and make a recommendation to the acting Borough Manager. Jim and Rich left at this point.

The committee discussed kids playing with adults and was in favor of keeping the two separate. The committee feels there should be a 9th/10th grade team, an 11th/12th grade team, and an adult team. Councilman Boyle stated an adult would need to be defined and suggested no one over 19 years of age after April 15th. All committee members were in agreement.

Rick stated that last year the hockey parents had an end of season party funded by council. The Commission was against this in the past as they felt things should be fair among all sports. The committee discussed money being spent. Dawn Higgins feels the desires of the committee are not being adhered to by those making the decisions and feels it is a misuse of funds. All kids deserve the same, not selectively given to the children. Candy agrees. Dawn asked Councilman Boyle how this could be stopped. Rick and Candy feel this undermines the committee. Those making decisions are disconnected from recreation.

Park Director Report

There was no park director report at this meeting as there was no park director hired.

Rick stated he spoke to the acting Borough Manager and there is still no information regarding the budget. He asked Councilman Boyle how the pool fees were set. Councilman Boyle stated council is set on the fees as they were presented to the committee, but will take a look at them at the end of 2009. As for the calculation, council felt the out-going manager's recommendations were out of line, so they decreased them. Council did not know how the manager determined the fees; however, they lowered what was submitted. Candy feels this shows no respect to the taxpayers. Rick questioned the recommendations from department heads in regards to the budget. Councilman Boyle stated the Committee Chairperson spoke of the committee's recommendations and council ignored them. Erica feels the pool memberships in 2008 were lower than in 2007 and feels the department will lose a lot of families this year because of the membership fee. Rick asked if council knew the proposal from the manager was not presented to the committee. Councilman Boyle stated he believes most knew.

New Business

Liaison's Resolution

Rick discussed his idea of having a statement or resolution saying the committee supports Patrick Boyle and that all recreation issues should go thru the liaison. This will ensure the committee is aware of all issues. A motion was made by Adam Zimmer, seconded by Candy DeFillippis, to adopt a resolution stating that all recreation issues be brought to the attention of the committee thru the liaison, Patrick Boyle. All committee members were in favor.

Unfinished Business

Baseball Field

Adam stated council has approved renovations for this year. The first practice was yesterday in the outfield due to field conditions. Councilman Boyle asked if a letter has been received from the Fire Department stating their intentions. Adam will get the letter at their meeting next Monday. Rick feels that in regards to the discussion at the council meeting, it is not right to ask for a letter stating how many games are to be played. The council did not demand to know how many games Little League was going to play. It was extortion. The Borough doesn't request that from other teams

Field Usage Fee

Councilman Boyle feels Borough residents should be able to use the fields at no charge. No information has been received from other municipalities at this point.

Ordinance #1-2008 Review

Councilman Boyle stated he proposed to the Borough Attorney that council should follow their own ordinance. It is currently being reviewed and he has not heard anything yet. He stated the fees may need to be done by resolution and asked the committee for comments on the ordinance. Candy stated street hockey is a good example of how the ordinance is not working for the committee. Street hockey was promised something that the committee knew nothing about. The committee is being kept out of the loop. Some people sitting on council want to control recreation in the borough but they don't know what's going on. Adam feels council didn't know what they were taking on and what was going on with recreation when they decided to disband the commission. The liaison didn't report back because he never came to the committee meetings. Erica is concerned with the future of the programs and wants to be sure someone will continue them.

Councilman Boyle will speak to the acting Borough Manager to see where we're at with hiring a Park Director. Rick stated that the job requirements on the website are not what was discussed when the commission was abolished and feels this is another slap in the face towards the committee. Councilman Boyle asked how the meetings worked with the short-term park director. Rick replied the park director was to be responsible for running the meetings, but he never had anything to report. Rick also noted that there were less qualified swim instructors hired this past summer for swim lessons and as life guards. Things happened at the pool that the

committee was never made aware of. No financial reports were given to the committee. Councilman Boyle asked the powers of the committee chairperson. Rick replied it is a title only. Candy stated the person hired wasn't a certified pool operator and told the committee he was only hired to oversee the daily operations of the park and pool. Candy stated the park director was to be there for all of the programs. Adam stated that since the abolishment, there have been no hand-on and supervision of the programs. When they were a commission, they made sure everything was running properly. The commission would make sure the proper amount of lifeguards were on duty. Rick stated that he asked council six weeks ago what was going to happen and he never heard back from them. No progress has been made. Councilman Boyle feels government needs to follow their own ordinance, not just put the ordinance out there for control.

Rick stated an RFP for vending machines is on the website and again the committee had no input. The RFP calls for four vending machines – one for ice cream, one for snacks and two for drinks. He heard that money was lost and council does not want to run a concession stand. Candy stated council is not at the park or the games, yet they are making the decisions. She spoke to some residents who all think this is a bad idea and that part of the pool experience is going to the concession stand to get candy, ice cream, etc. Rick stated council never asked the committee why the concession stand was losing money. Some of the reasons were that the park director never made sure it was staffed and the commission had made the decision not to raise the prices when everything else was going up. Adam feels vending machines will cost the Borough more money due to vandalism. Rick stated this is just another example of the committee being left out and suggested the committee provide a resolution that the commission should exist instead of the committee. Councilman Boyle stated the machines will be replenished daily and council is aware of the vandalism. Mayor McDonald said council will look into a vending machine for the baseball field. The primary reason for the machines is no overhead involved. Candy feels this is cold and impersonal. Rick feels it brings the wrong environment to the pool. Adam asked if Hackettstown Pool has a snack bar. Rick replied that it does. Dawn stated the Borough will be raising the pool rates, yet providing less service with vending machines. Food will be more expensive than the concession stand. Prices will be determined by the vendor. If gas prices go up again, prices in the machine will go up to compensate. Also, part of the negotiations with the swim team is that they couldn't bring what we sold at the concession stand. Swim team shouldn't have restrictions anymore. Rick replied that based on council minutes, the swim team is not allowed to sell anything.

Rick asked for any other comments regarding the ordinance. Candy made a motion which was discussed by the committee. The ordinance doesn't work. A second motion was then made by Candy DeFillippis, seconded by Adam Zimmer, to reinstate the commission. The committee would like Patrick Boyle to remain as the commission liaison. Paula Aron feels the committee should wait until a park director is hired and abstained. Candy DeFillippis, Erica Kilkinney, Adam Zimmer and Rick Feldman were in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Councilman Boyle stated he will discuss this at the next council meeting and if needed, the committee will attend a future council meeting.

Park Director Comments

There were no park director comments at this meeting since there is no park director hired.

Committee Comments

Candy stated she currently has 2000 eggs for the Easter Egg Hunt. She usually ends up with 3,500 all together. This is one of the only egg hunts left in the area that is free. Candy stated her concerns regarding being reimbursed for money spent on the event.

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Adam stated that baseball practices started last night. They will start the renovations to the field when the weather gets warmer. He will provide Rick with a list and timeline by Monday as to what is needed. Adam thanked Councilman Boyle for his help.

Paula asked the committee about fundraising for recreation. Rick stated that in the past it was done for individual sports and explained that both soccer and the swim team have a parent's association to fundraise. Over the years, fundraising has basically stopped. Many parents and organizations don't let kids go door-to-door and felt that if municipalities paid, there was no need to fundraise. Paula suggested a 5K run or golf outing to provide the funds to fix the baseball field. The committee could choose one project each year to fund. Rick feels this could be looked into. Adam feels the park director could be working on this type of thing in the downtime. Candy agreed and stated there is a lot of activity going on in the park at this time and no one is there to look after the park.

Councilman Boyle stated he appreciated the accuracy of the meeting minutes. He stated he received approval to provide the committee with keys to the park. The recreation department will need to purchase their own recycling containers. Rick stated the commission had looked into containers that were aesthetically pleasing and requested money be put in the budget for containers. Candy feels the park is part of the borough and therefore should recycle as well. Se stated the department should have received the old downtown garbage cans for both Borough and Steinhardt Fields, but the commission had never heard anything on this.

For the benefit of Paula and Erica who are new to the committee, Dawn Higgins gave a brief background of why she frequently attends the meetings. She explained how she stepped down as chairperson of the commission and explained that she wants to help with the years of experience she has and feels schools and recreation are important to a town. Dawn wishes the best for this group of volunteers. She, too, would like to see the current committee re-established as a commission and feels it would be OK for council to admit they made a mistake and do away with Ordinance #1-2008.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made at 9:31 p.m. by Adam Zimmer, seconded by Paula Aron.

Respectfully submitted by Ann Kilduff