

WYCKOFF DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
May 13, 2024

Doug Arone opened the Recreation Board Regular Meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Wyckoff Recreation Department 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: Doug Arone, Patti DePhillips, Jen Saxton, Moe Ismael, Mike Ferrara, Tom Valente, Chris Perneti, Chris Beane, John Giovacco, Rich Sica, Larry Berger

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Andy Wingfield, Director

Tom Madigan, Township Committee Liaison to the Recreation Board

The minutes of the April 8, 2024 meeting were discussed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Tom Valente and seconded by Rich Sica. The motion was carried.

Recreation Director Report:

Fee Waive Request:

The Director requested a registration fee be waived for a family in need. Tom Valente motioned to approve the request and Doug Arone seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Registration Fee Increase Becoming Necessary:

The Director reported that, with ever increasing costs of equipment, uniforms, and services, our expenses are outpacing our revenue at a greater pace than usual. Registration fees have not been increased in 2 years for some and 3 years for most programs. The Director asked the Board for their approval to look into what programs require an increase in fees and to seek approval from the Township Committee to put them into effect when those decisions have been made.

Examples of some of our very low fees were given along with comparisons to surrounding towns and the Board agreed it is time to boost our registration fees to become more in line with the current economy and surrounding programs. The Director will begin the process of increasing fees where necessary.

Lacrosse & Baseball Discussion:

The Director opened a discussion on two complaints that were received over the last month from the lacrosse program. One was an anonymous complaint regarding one of our assistant coaches and the other was an email from a 4th grade parent regarding the large number of participants in the program causing less playing time and less games for the players. Regarding the anonymous complaint, the Board advised that anonymous complaints are not handled by them and that they would step in if the complaint is ever brought to them using the official complaint form. The Director agreed and advised that he did not respond to the anonymous email for obvious reasons,

he did speak with several people about the complaint in an effort to improve the situation with the specific team involved. He spoke with the boys lacrosse directors who also had their own conversations with the coaches involved, the head coach of the team, and the assistant coach who was being complained about. During these discussions, it was made clear that the complaints were anonymous so no action would be taken but the Director also advised the coaching staff that changes were necessary in their coaching techniques or this complaint will eventually rise to the level where the Recreation Board would have to investigate and potentially take action. The Board agreed with the steps taken and the hope is that the coach being anonymously complained about can change his ways so as not to receive more complaints against him. The Director will have a pre-season meeting in 2025 to readdress the concerns with the coaches in the hopes to have it at the forefront of their minds going into the season next year.

Regarding the playing time and game amount at the 4th grade level, it was reported first that upon the completion of registration for the season, there were 10 less players than where we ended up so when scheduling games in December, our program directors were using 25% less kids as a baseline to determine how many games were needed. This is a long and arduous process and when children sign up after the deadline, it requires adjustments to the game schedule that sometimes can and sometimes can't be made. Additionally, this group had considerably less players the previous year so the sudden jump was a bit of a surprise. That said, the Director and program directors will make the necessary adjustments for next season which will likely include splitting the group into at least two teams. This will likely require an additional head coach for this level but this will be dealt with in the early part of next season.

This complaint led to another discussion regarding attendance. It was alluded to in the email that several players on lacrosse were also signed up for other sports and often choose those other sports when a conflict arises. The Board reiterated its philosophy that it is not their place to choose where the participants go when a conflict arises. However, the Director pointed out that programs like football and lacrosse do have attendance policies. The Board advised that it is up to the coaches, then, to administer the policy and determine playing time based on attendance which will help with these types of complaints. The Director brought up the idea of not allowing 3rd and 4th grade players to sign up for both lacrosse and rec baseball/softball. After a lengthy discussion, the Board agreed to prohibit 4th graders from doing both but to allow 3rd graders an opportunity to try both in their first year.

*Post meeting: The Director spoke with the boys and girls lacrosse directors who advised that they may be recommending that 2nd grade be added as a full lacrosse level so to hold off on instituting any new policies just yet. The Director emailed the Board that this matter will be tabled until such time that these decisions are made.

Spring Travel Baseball and Softball Seasons Winding Down:

The Director advised that the first half of the travel baseball and softball seasons is winding down and teams are gearing up for the summer season. A few of our teams are in the championship games for the spring season and the Director will update the Board at the next meeting on their results.

Men's Softball:

The Director advised that the Men's Softball program is underway and the game schedule has changed again this season. In the past, many complained that the playoffs took place when many of the players would be on vacation. Many requests over the years were made to move the season up to end earlier. It was always explained by the Director that condensing the season would cause issues including too many games in a week which could lead to injury and lower attendance due to other commitments that the guys have. This played out exactly that way last season when we adjusted the schedule to be done by the end of July. This season, we scaled back the amount of games from 19 guaranteed games to 15 to more comfortably fit into a May-July schedule. So now we've accommodated two requests from the program that include ending by August and not playing so many games in a week. So far, a few have mentioned that they don't feel there are enough games now. The Director has advised them that we will play it out this year and solicit feedback at season's end to determine if this schedule worked better for most. Many have also stated that this schedule is perfect so we will see what happens at the end of the year.

Facility Use/Rental Applications Review:

The Chairman requested the Board review the following field use application, based on the Township's procedure of involving the Recreation Board in the approval process for field rental after a review of the paperwork by the Recreation Director and Township Administrator. One application was reviewed and discussed by the Board and approved for use/rental. The application at this meeting included the following:

1. Advance Soccer Training: this group is a training facility that would like to utilize our turf soccer cage for soccer training in the summer. We worked with this group successfully last year.
2. Teel's Ravens Baseball: Teel's is a Wyckoff based baseball training facility and club baseball organization who has worked with us for years and would like to utilize our fields again this spring/summer.

The Director advised the Board that his review of the applications, Hold Harmless and Indemnification Agreements, and Certificates of Insurance for these requests determined the applications to be in order.

Finding the applications in order and discussing the history of successful use by both programs, the Recreation Board unanimously approved all of the above applications after a motion to approve them was made by John Giovacco and seconded by Chris Beane.

Football Equipment Discussion:

The Director shared a new piece of football equipment to the Board that would take the place of something similar that we currently use. The main issue with equipment is the cost. At \$140 each, it might provide value but comes with a \$26,000 price tag if we were to purchase for the entire program. The Director reported that he would conduct an inventory of current equipment but that it's possible no money from the operating budget would be needed and that the possibility exists that the Football Boosters may be able to contribute some of the cost as well. After a robust discussion, questions on testing of the product, and overall mixed reviews, the Board agreed that if no money were to come out of the operating budget, it might make sense to

at least try the product out. Post Meeting: upon receipt of our football helmet reconditioning order and the report that indicates that we will be losing 46 helmets next season due to the age of the helmets (helmets age out after 10 years in use), it was concluded by the Director that the money in the capital account that might have been able to be used for the new equipment, will be needed for the large purchase of helmets coming after this fall's season. At this time, the cost of the new equipment is too high so the decision on this purchase will be put off to a future date.

Friends of TJ 5K Run/Walk:

The Director reminded the Board about the charity 5k for TJ Sullivan, Wyckoff resident and active participant in our program who passed away suddenly last year. The event is being held at Eisenhower Middle School on Sunday at 10am and it appears that over 500 have registered already. Several on the Board are planning on attending.

Report From Board Members:

None

New Business:

None

Old Business:

None

The Board adjourned at 9:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Andy Wingfield
Director, Wyckoff Board of Parks & Recreation