

RED BANK PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Minutes from September 26, 2023, 7 PM – Borough Hall Courtroom

Meeting called to order at 7:05 by Nicole Taetsch, Vice Chair stepping in for John LeFever.

Attending: Maureen Dolan, Melissa Moore, Sarah Corrado, Julie Flores-Castillo, Pat Richter, Nicole Taetsch, Oscar Salinas, Ben Forest

Nancy Blackwood, Town Council person, attended as a special guest.

The minutes from the August 23, 2023, meeting were approved following a motion by Sarah Corrado and a second by Maureen Dolan.

Item 1: Update of current Parks and Recreation activities and events

Fall sports: Recreational soccer started 2 weeks ago. Six out of ten teams won their games. A new league for kindergarten to 2nd grade started. Lots of parent involvement, smaller nets used at Count Basie Park, Field 5. John handles the pre-K group of 30 children. Due to rain, many games were canceled and will have to be made up at the end of the season in November.

Buddy Ball is a program for children on the autism spectrum and has been in place for two years. There is a volunteer who runs it on behalf of the Recreation Department. Participants are of all ages and takes place in the primary school gym.

Adult basketball at the middle school is available for both men and women Monday or Tuesday nights from 7 to 9. There is an 18 to 34 group and a 34 plus group.

Facilities/Parks: Work continues at Eastside Park with some stops and starts due to rain.

Item 2: Upcoming activities and events

Halloween events: The movie winner was Ghostbusters and will be shown Friday the 13th, with the following Friday as the rain date. RiverCenter is a partner and will supply free popcorn. The winners of the 'name the town' contents will get \$5 or \$10 gift cards to Once Bitten.

October 22 is the date for Halloween Parade and other festivities with the rain date October 29th.

Councilman Forest read the Halloween proclamation prepared by the mayor. There was considerable discussion of additional community groups who may want to create a float for the parade. Participants can't walk next to their floats due to safety concerns but can walk behind them. Three Committee members volunteered to help with the line up and judge the 3 best in various categories (floats, pet costumes, family group costumes, etc.).

There will be a Trunk or Treat, hot dog vendor, ice cream vendor, and band in the White Street parking lot.

The committee discussed businesses in town that may be interested in setting up some activities for kids.

Hispanic Heritage Day: Due to rain the event will be September 30th, same day at Octoberfest. So far, any rain is supposed to end by 9 am but the weather will be closely monitored. Committee members can show up the day of and Oscar will give them an assignment.

Item 3: New Business

Red Bank 5K Race: There was considerable discussion about ways to engage more athletes with special needs to participate in the 5K which is the second Saturday in June. The town has received a special wheelchair through a grant which will be available to participants. Some of the barriers to participation might include the cost (\$30) and the big hill that must be run up twice (Tower Hill). There is a volunteer interested in providing training for the athletes interested in competing. The Red Bank Runners Club is active in this effort.

Boy Scout Project: An Eagle Scout will build a kayak launch and rack at the Maple Cove riverfront area. Another Eagle Scout completed painting a graffiti covered container at Count Basie Field.

Open Discussion

Recreation Department Capacity - The idea of the Recreation Committee becoming a Commission was shared, and Councilman Forest pointed out that having the name 'Commission' does not guarantee any additional clout or authority than the Committee currently has.

As the Town Codes are brought up to speed so that they match the new form of government, the Committee/Department has the option to drop 'Parks' from its name to avoid residents assuming the Department/Committee has jurisdiction over the physical conditions of the parks in town. All present were in favor of this change.

There was considerable discussion about how to ensure that the number and scope of programs and events led by the Recreation Department does not exceed its capacity. Right now, the scope does exceed the capacity of a two-person department. There is a Town Events Committee that ensures all events are properly vetted and supported by Town infrastructure (police, fire, public works), have insurance, are coordinated with other events, and follow safety guidelines. Some of the newer events that the Recreation Committee has taken on include Juneteenth, Drag Queen Day, and Hispanic Heritage Day. Sometimes an event is taken over by another community group, for example, Dog Days. Some events are self-funded and do not use funds in the Recreation Department budget. The busiest time period is summer through December. The Committee would like a list of all the events of the last year that the Recreation Department has led. It was also agreed that the Recreation Department does not want to be the lead organization for the Special Events Committee, which meets monthly for about 2 hours.

The Committee can discuss this further and come up with a criteria to balance sports oriented recreation with events, encourage other groups to take on some events, and encourage events to be self-funded.

PorchFest: Councilwoman Facey-Blackwood shared plans for a bicycle corridor during Porchfest next Sunday to improve safety during the event. Several Committee members volunteered to help set them up. Chalk lines will be used. The corridor will make a loop on roads that are wide for about 3 miles.

Committee Scope: Councilman Forest requested that all Committee members look at the current description of the Recreation Committee on the Town website (he will supply a link) and submit any ideas for edits, changes, etc.

A motion to adjourn was made by Julie Flores-Castillo and seconded by Maureen Dolan. The meeting adjourned at 8:09pm.

Next Meeting will be held – Tuesday, October 24th, 2023, 7 pm Court Room

Sarah Corrado____x____ Maureen Dolan____x____ Julie Flores-Castillo____x____

Alberto Garcia_____ John LeFever_____x_____

Melissa Moore_____ Pat Richter__x_____ Nicole Taetsch__x_____

Oscar Salinas (P & R Director) __x___ Ben Forest (Council Liaison) __x_____