

RED BANK PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Minutes from June 25, 2024 - Borough Hall Courtroom

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm

Attending: John LeFever, Nicole Taetsch, Oscar Salinas, Ben Forest, Katie O'Brien, Pat Richter, Melissa Moore, and guest Kate Triggiano.

The minutes from the May meeting were approved unanimously by email and posted on the Township website.

Oscar shared a picture on the back cover of a Recreation magazine of canvas sun blocking temporary shelters mounted on metal posts. He will share it with the Town Manager. Funding is not earmarked at this time for such a purchase, but maybe sponsors can be identified that would like their names on the canvas.

Item 1: Update of current P & R activities & events

Pride

The Pride fest at Riverview Gardens Park was very successful, especially for young people looking for 'safe spaces' to be themselves. While attendance was lower than in past years, enthusiasm was high, and Drag Bingo was a big hit. The DJ was an excellent spinner of tunes and announcer of sponsors and events. Principle sponsors were First Atlantic Credit Union and Resources Real Estate. Goals for next year include securing some inspirational speakers. And engaging some of the school based gay/straight coalitions. The Beacon of Light award will continue. While Fins and Feathers donated a generous gift basket for a dog costume contest, there weren't many participants and so two dogs shared the basket.

Juneteenth

Juneteenth was also very successful, with participation from both Cavalry and Pilgrim Baptist churches. There were about 70 people in the procession to Johnnie Jazz Park. Next year the Committee will consider Count Basie or Riverside Park as the end point as they have more space. There were multiple events in town celebrating Juneteenth, sponsored by the Basie and Two River Theatre. The Committee working on the event worked for months and met weekly as the event became closer. Community organizations participating included the Red Bank Men's Club and the Mobile Pantry operated by Lunch Break. There were many vendors.

Summer Activities

Promotional posters and banners for the Summer Series at Riverside Gardens Park will be available very soon and Oscar distributed the poster listing the movies, fitness classes, and jazz performances with all the dates to the attendees. These programs are possible due to the Recreation Department's partnerships with the Red Bank YMCA and the Jazz Arts Project. Sponsorship was \$11,000 this year (14 sponsors), compared to \$7,000 last year.

Thanks to a grant from Monmouth Arts, the Recreation Department also provides a West Side Jazz series beginning August 4 from 3:00 to 5:00. The last one is special, celebrating Count Basie's birthday, and goes from 1:00 to 5:00.

Committee members will be sending thank-you notes to all the sponsors.

Item 2: Upcoming activities and events

Fall Sports

Soccer registration has gotten off to a slow start, with 120 young people from pre-K to 8th grade registered compared with a capacity of 250. As school has just ended, registration will pick up.

Kate recommended that the Recreation Department send text messages to the primary and middle schools to get the word out about soccer registration.

There is a need for coaches and trainers, and it was suggested that the Recreation Department reach out to the fitness businesses that have sponsored Township events for volunteers as well as FC Monmouth and Alpha Fit.

Update on projects.

There will be upgrades to the baseball field backstops at Count Basie in two weeks to prevent foul balls hitting cars. In January 2025, the turf will hopefully be replaced.

A \$67,000 grant from the NJ Department of Community Affairs Division of Local Government Services will help make improvements at the Municipal Marina at Marine Park. Some of this work is electrical.

Installing security cameras is part of this year's budget, and they will be installed at Count Basie fields and possibly the marina as some boat owners have complained of vandalism.

There is a meeting scheduled between the schools superintendent Dr. Rumage and the Town Manager to negotiate the lease agreement, which will hopefully lead to acceptance of the Green Acres grant proposal.

The Borough schools donated five picnic tables to Count Basie Fields.

The ribbon cutting for the new playground was very nice, and Councilperson Kate Triggiano did a video which may not be posted yet making it clear which partners did what to complete the project. The swings need some rearranging so that there are at least 2 regular swings in addition to one for special needs children and one for babies. Rubberized surfaces for playgrounds are the goal, but the cost would have been an additional \$35,000 so hopefully that transition can be made in the future.

Defibrillators are expiring in various locations and it's not clear yet whether it's only the battery that needs to be replaced or the whole thing. Hackensack Meridian can provide them.

Item 3: New Business

Procedure for media inquiries

If a media representative reaches out to a committee member, that person should be referred to Oscar. Media representatives that attend Committee meetings may quote members if they do a follow up article.

Community Engagement Coordinator

The Red Bank Master Plan recommended that a position be created for a Public Information Officer, a useful job in a modern municipality. Currently there is no chain of command for information that might be important to residents for safety, events, emergencies, sanitation, schedule changes, cancellations, etc. It was decided to create a Community Outreach Coordinator position, preferably bi-lingual, to fulfill this role and recruitment is underway. Once the position is filled, the Parks and Recreation Department will learn how this person can support Oscar in his wide-ranging responsibilities.

Cannabis Tax

All cannabis tax revenue, from both medical and recreational sales, will go to the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund to support youth programs and services. Customers will see on their receipts how much of their purchase went to the Township. The hope is that various recreation projects can be 'branded' as having been supported by the cannabis tax, providing the Township residents with a clear vision for where those funds are going.

Pickleball

Oscar spoke with Pat Pinto because of 100 people showing up for Open Pickleball. The decision is to have open play for two hours and Thursday evening will be added just for the summer.

Count Basie Fields Challenges

There have been some issues with homeless people vandalizing the bathrooms, sleeping there, or just hanging out. The police have been notified and the Township Social Workers are on the case. There was concern due to young children being in the vicinity. The Cooling Center will help on nights that are hot.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm with a move by Nicole and seconded by Kate.

Next Meeting will be held – Tuesday, July 30, 2024, 7pm Court Room