

RED BANK PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Minutes from September 24, 2024 - Borough Hall Courtroom

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm

Attending: John LeFever, Oscar Salinas, Ben Forest, Pat Richter, Maureen Dolan, and guest Adriana Medina, Community Engagement Coordinator.

As there was not a quorum, the previous minutes were not approved, and no recommendations could be brought to a vote.

Oscar introduced Ms. Medina, who is newly hired for a new position with the Town. This new position is focused on strengthening the connection between Town residents and Town Government, with a special emphasis on under-represented communities. As a bi-lingual person, trained in diversity and inclusion, and a previous employee of the Count Basie doing similar work, Ms. Medina is especially qualified for this challenge. She shared that she has been attending lots of meetings and talking with many people about their challenges, hopes, and resources that they can bring forward toward the goals of the position. The job responsibilities are broad, from strengthening the three key multi-cultural events of Red Bank (Hispanic Heritage Day, Juneteenth, and Pride in the Park) to improving the content and design of the Town's website and social media. Ms. Medina's contributions may lessen current burdens on various Committees to plan and execute events. Committee members pointed out that many Town events previously led by the Fire Department or the Clerk's Office have been given to the Parks and Recreation Department, which has limited infrastructure to manage so many events.

Based on Ms. Medina's attendance at the Hispanic Heritage Day event (900 people attended), she noted that marketing, audio, the scope of performers, cultural authenticity, and participation by local businesses could all be improved. While the Town may want to grow events like this, capacity also needs to be considered, such as the police and Department of Public Works.

Based on conversations Ms. Medina has had with Town residents, many claim to 'not know what's going on'. The interpreter program needs more volunteers to meet demand at schools, the police station, and Town court.

The Committee looks forward to working with Ms. Medina!

Item 1

Update of current Parks and Recreation activities and events

Fall Sports

Recreational soccer, with 150 kids registered, and mostly volunteer coaches, is off to a strong start as of September 15. Ages range from 3 to 14. In the pre-K group, there are 30 kids. Most of the Red Bank teams defeated neighboring soccer teams in competitions.

Buddy Ball for special needs kids has begun as well as Open Gym basketball starting in October at the Middle School Gym for Adults. About 25 to 30 people show up Mondays and Tuesdays and pay \$10 per person.

Hispanic Heritage Event

There was considerable discussion about Hispanic Heritage Day as part of introducing Ms. Medina. Most of the attendees were Red Bank residents. Next year the date will not conflict with other events honoring Hispanic Heritage at the Basie. This event will get more attention as Ms. Medina and Oscar work together with the Committee to plan next year.

Item 2

Upcoming activities and events

Halloween activities

Boo Bank will be the new name for Red Bank during the Halloween festivities. Prior to the big Halloween parade and party, there will be a Halloween themed movie outdoors at Riverside Gardens Park on October 18th at 6PM with Kid's Activities at 4:30PM hosted by A Time to Kiln. The Town Halloween parade and other activities will be October 20 (rain date October 27). The Parade is always stressful due to the challenge of keeping children and other attendees away from the trucks, motorcycles, and floats in the parade. Oscar would like volunteers to keep the crowds back. Volunteers should report at 12:30 to Parade Lineup. There is a form to apply to enter a float, and some organizations are already committed, including the Charter School, a family, the primary school, and maybe Phoenix Productions. Bagpipes will start the parade, the Red Bank Elks will be on motorcycles, and the kids in costume will be the last part of the parade. The party afterwards will have music by the School of Rock, goody bags, prizes for best costumers (thanks to RiverCenter), and prizes for best float (thanks to the Fire Department).

Holiday events

December 11 and 12 will be the phone calls with Santa day and Oscar is in need of more bi lingual volunteers, preferably male, to make calls to eager youngsters.

December 6 will be the West Side tree lighting.

Mailboxes to receive letters to Santa will be erected after Thanksgiving and the Rotary helps with this project. The boxes, which are getting very old, need to be re-built. It's possible DPW could do this.

Pickleball – Open Play

Open Play sessions (Tuesdays and Thursdays) are over for this season, and implementing a fee next year was discussed, in the \$20 range for residents and higher for non-residents.

Nets have been damaged, and a squeegee and broom are needed to clean the courts. Drainage is still a problem. Having a fee for Open Play could finance miscellaneous expenses incurred in maintaining the courts.

Dogs running around on the courts are still an issue.

Item 3: New Business

FC Monmouth Semi Pro teams

The Fc Monmouth semi-pro Men's Team has added a women's team, which adds to the number of practices and games at County Basie Field. The committee recommended a contract to be drafted to ensure they cover the necessary fees for staff and facility usage. They pay \$50 per hour for usage of the fields and request usage of the locker rooms, snack bar, press box and bathrooms.

AYF Field Usage

American Youth Football has access to the Count Basie Fields from 6 pm to 8:30, but they show up earlier, pushing out the kids that want to use the fields after school. There have been incidents where players have been misusing the facilities. The Town needs to reach out to the President to resolve these issues.

Open Discussion

The Red Bank Regional Board of Education would like to see more Red Bank kids involved in sports and would like the Town recreation department to play a role in this. However, the school teams practice after school and the last bus is 5:00, so some of the kids would have no way home. In the past the Recreation Department van would take them home.

The Committee suggested that the Superintendent be invited to one of the meetings to explain his challenge, the evidence of those challenges, what the school district can do, and what the Recreation Department can do to increase Red Bank student involvement in school sports.

Next Meeting will be held – **Tuesday, October 22, 2024** at 7pm in the Court Room.