

MINUTES

Westfield Recreation Commission

September 18, 2023, 7:30pm

- OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT STATEMENT - read by Commission Chairperson, Jenn Gilman.
- ROLL CALL
 - Absent from Recreation Commission: Amy Berman, Monica Bergin, Tony Stewart
 - Absent from Recreation Department: Dan Conte
- FLAG SALUTE
- APPROVAL OF MINUTES from previous (July) Recreation Commission meeting
 - as the minutes of July 2023 meeting had not been distributed prior to this meeting, they were not motioned for approval. They will be distributed with these 9/18/23 minutes for review and approval at October 2023 Recreation Commission meeting.
- COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON REPORT - Jenn Gilman
 - Welcomed Lauren Conrad, recent new hire into the Recreation Department. Department now at full staff.
 - Highlighted that the Edison Fields bond issuance approved by Town Council in May 2023 will be on November 7 town-wide ballot as a referendum. Project, initiated in 2019, was formally recommended to Town Council by Recreation Commission. Recreation Commission supports a YES vote. The ballot referendum reads as follows:
 - *To vote upon the public question printed below if in favor thereof mark a cross (X) or plus (+) in the square at the left of the word YES, and if opposed thereto mark a cross (X) or plus (+) in the square at the left of the word NO.*
 - *Shall an ordinance of the governing body of the Town of Westfield Entitled "A Bond Ordinance to Authorize the Undertaking of the Edison School Multipurpose Fields Project In, By and For the Town of Westfield, in the County of Union, State of New Jersey To Appropriate the Sum of \$11,800,000 to Pay the Cost Thereof, To Make a Downpayment, to Authorize the Issuance of Bonds to Finance Such Appropriation and to Provide for the Issuance Of Bond Anticipation Notes in Anticipation of the Issuance of Such Bonds," be ratified.*
 - PAL Flag Football providing a Special Needs mini-camp in October (for Westfield residents only - 10/14, 21 & 28). Volunteer opportunities exist - contact PAL directly. Cost is \$30. Participants receive three sessions, jersey (NFL branded) and flag belt.

- PUBLIC PORTION OF THE MEETING
 - No public comment

- TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT - Scott Katz
 - Reminded all of Nov. 7 Election and that voter registration deadline is October 17. Registration form can be downloaded from <https://ucnj.org/boe/voter-registration-information/> and registration can be done online, in-person and by mail. County Board of Elections office will be open until 9pm on October 17.
 - Addams Fest Update - as in years past, lots of amazing programming throughout month of October. Awesome and comprehensive website at: <https://www.addamsfest.com/>. The very popular Haunt Your House competition is open now. Ticket sales for the very popular Charlie's Ale Garden start next week and early efforts to obtain tickets are recommended. Special thanks to Councilwoman, Dawn Mackey and to Adrian Pastore for their tremendous efforts to make Addams Fest happen. Lots of volunteer opportunities on Signup Genius.

- BOARD of EDUCATION LIAISON REPORT - Rob Bennachio
 - Was a busy summer - new Asst Superintendent of Curriculum, New HR leader, New Arts leader. 5 Year Strategic Plan approved in June (updates being made to fully represent this major initiative and its details on District website are being worked on now). Five key pillars are: curriculum, wellness, diversity, community, facilities & finance with emphasis on inter-connectedness of the pillars. Rob would be pleased to take input / "wishlist" items via email.

- RECREATION DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT - Megan Schaffer
 - Fall programs ramping up.
 - 2024 Planning also in full swing and it's exciting all that is being contemplated and planned across full range of users, from toddlers to seniors. Incorporating as many grant requests as possible. Lauren working on expanding Senior Programming and transportation services (to four days with expanded hours). Lauren and Megan attending Senior Services Fair
 - Thrilled with the major renovation and improvements that have been done at Windsor Park Playground

NEW BUSINESS - *brought forward in agenda to allow presenters option of exiting prior to Committee Reports*

- Girl Scouts 5K - Vicky Paulson and Laura DiGeniero spoke representing local troops and their council (NJ Girl Scouts - Heart of NJ Council), with Melissa Cass also

representing local Westfield troops - stated that there are 1,150 Girl Scout members in Westfield. They are seeking approval to produce a 5K run/walk fund-raising event at Tamaques Park (certified UFTA course) on 9/28/24. They understand success of such events can hinge on having support of a certified Race Director, which they are committed to hiring. All proceeds will be allocated to GS programming within this council. Emphasis on STEM, Life Skills, Entrepreneurship, Outdoors experiences/skills. Input from Commission members was that Saturdays in the fall at Tamaques are heavily scheduled. The requestors agreed to move the event to a Sunday morning in September 2024 (likely 9/29). Jenn Gilman moved to approve, seconded by Tim Simon. The Commission voted unanimously to approve.

- Friends of Brightwood Park (FOBP), represented by FOBP VP, Jim Lewis, requested permission to plant two areas near the parking lot in native plants. Emphasis on areas that have recently been cleared of invasives and now have erosion risk. Hand-out provided to all Commissioners. Area 1 is approx. 9500 sq ft between parking lot and pond. Area 2 is approx. 3000 sq feet near trailhead off parking lot. FOBP will fund the plant purchases and provide needed labor for planting and on-going watering, including provisioning of on-site water storage tank(s) as needed. Planting will included wrapping the saplings in protective material. Jeff Perrella moved to approve, seconded by Joe Schaefer. The Commission voted unanimously to approve.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **POOL: See email from Tony Stewart** - It was a very successful season, even if rainier than we would have liked. Memberships were sold out. Staffing went well and Megan felt the team was stellar. Rain did affect day/guest pass sales. May consider another shade structure for next year. Filtration replacements and plastering also needed. Membership renewal packets intended to be sent in early January, with wait-list initiated in early February.
- **PARKS - Megan gave update** - Windsor Park & Playground renovation and improvements are 98% complete. Just dealing with supply chain issues for picnic tables, benches and some landscape features. Park looks amazing, shade shelter is major improvement. Grant submission for Memorial Park Playground renovation and improvements, which are intended to be made in 2024. ADA improvements intended. Structure will be expanded toward park drive.
- **FIELDS: Russ Howell** - thanked Commission members for email vote to approve the joint initiative with Girls Softball League of Westfield, Westfield Soccer Association

and the Westfield Green Team - Clean Parks initiative pilot at Memorial Park fields - banners to be placed at both "entrances" (both ends of tennis courts) to playing fields, encouraging youth and all users to leave the Park "better than you found it" and to eliminate single-use plastics use.

- **FINANCE: Amy Berman** - Amy was not in attendance but had emailed update on Trust accounts to Commission members prior to the meeting.
- **PROGRAMS: Jeff Perrella/Linda Johnson** - 45 Reported that it has been a good year thus far. Program fees covering all costs of programs. Always looking for new programs, as Megan highlighted in Director's report. One new program is Music & Movement. The Fall Programs brochure (catalog!) has been published and looks amazing in form and in breadth of content.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Refund Cupid Race - the organizer who ran this last February has applied again, for February 10, 2024). Jeff, Megan, Dan, Jenn met with them recently and gave feedback that last year's race organization was lacking and gave the organizer information about certified race directors who can be hired (as Girl Scouts will do... see New Business). The feedback was deemed to have been taken and applied. Russ Howell made motion to approve, seconded by Jeff Perrella. The Commission unanimously approved. Commission also discussed that Parks Committee should discuss Parks rental fee for future races, as well as possibility of establishing a maximum events capacity for sanctioned events and/or specifically for 5K races.
- Recreation Kids' Trust Grant - was discussed in Parks Committee report - being sought for Memorial Park Playground renovations in 2024.

CORRESPONDENCE: All Correspondences were e-mailed to the Commission.

Meeting adjourned 8:50 pm

Dates to Remember:

Scheduled Commission Meetings - 7:30pm

Monday, October 2, 2023

Monday, November 6, 2023

Monday, December 4, 2023