



RECREATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION
September 17, 2020 MEETING 5:30 PM
MINUTES

RECREATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION –

In attendance via WebEx: Lincoln Everest (5:43pm), Anthony Jaskot, Winfred Lee, Philip Pessina, Salvatore Uccello, Jeanette Blackwell (5:51pm), Dan Deconti, Ed Dypa, Kristen Jensen

Absent: Matt Fraulino

Staff: Cathy Lechowicz, Director; Ann Gregg, Manager of Senior Services; Karen Nocera, Manager of Recreation

AGENDA:

Call Meeting to Order:

Meeting called to order at 5:34pm.

Public Hearing:

No members of the public

Approval of the Minutes:

Motion to approve the minutes from the following meetings: January, February and June by Tony Jaskot, seconded by Sal Uccello. Approved unanimously.

Department Reports:

Program Updates

Senior Dept – presented by Ann Gregg

Keep Connected – a program started in late March to stay connected with members.

Through that program it was apparent that seniors were struggling with lack of connection, socialization and exercise. It led the staff to brain storm and create a:

Senior Center without Walls – planned in June, started on July 1 in the North parking lot, offering exercise classes, socialization (5 or less) opportunities and entertainment.

Activity Kits to Go – incredible effort by the staff, demand far outweighs the supply (offered for free to start), arts & crafts, baking projects, brain games. Set up a drive thru system for pick ups. Given out over 1000 activity kits, have about 1000 more ready to go for the remainder of the year.

Food to Go – roughly once a week the staff prepare a homemade meal for pick up

Created a YouTube Channel – 3000 views so far

Majority of members don't have access to the internet or computers, also have programs on Ch 19.

Virtual Bingo and Pokeno – can be done via WebEx or conference call

Mayor did a conference call to give city updates

Re-opening of Senior Center – guidelines provided by the state, very rigorous. We will limit indoor usage to City of Middletown residents.

Concerns include: staff burn-out – it's been an enormous amount of work for 4.5 staff members and hard to sustain this level; funding – everything has been free to this point, we will institute fees in October but want the programming to remain accessible.

Recreation Dept – presented by Karen Nocera

Summer Camp was held at 4 sites, typically it's held at 8 sites. We had maintain specific ratios and staffing. We kept siblings together in groups. All of our staff did a tremendous job following all the protocols.

Fall programs are all being modified to meet new protocols – such as Pumpkin decorating at Crystal Lake – people will sign up for specific time slots.

Fall Festival – not hosting it the way we typically do, instead doing a Candy Car Cruise through Crystal Lake

Hocus Pocus Film night at Crystal Lake

Scavenger Hunt throughout the Parks

Monthly Staff led hikes throughout the City of Middletown

We're offering a variety of other programs: golf, tennis, baking, tennis, and running.

50 mile challenge – have 50 days to complete 50 miles, participants get a t-shirt

Unified Theater – a theater program for youth of all abilities. The show must go on so the group is meeting now with the hopes to have a production in late October or early November.

Building Updates

Hoffman Architects are putting together the bid documents to be able to put the project out to bid to repair the exterior of the building.

We're in transition on the grounds so bear with the state of the landscaping.

OLD BUSINESS:

Sports Grants

All the checks have been distributed except for one league that we were waiting on the certificate of insurance. There was a cover letter with the awards that if COVID impacted their ability to spend money for this year's season, it could impact their award next year.

NEW BUSINESS:

Update on Middle school Annex/Recreation Center

The city hired a firm to lay out all the costs necessary to have the building be up to code and what upgrades would be necessary. The firm will lay out the various components in terms of phases. There is a 21st Century Infrastructure Bond package of \$55 million that will be on the November ballot - \$1.5 million is earmarked for Phase 1 of this building. This building can also serve as a shelter for the south side of the city if needed.

Discussion on Rink Fees for this season

Synthetic rink located at Veteran's Park – Director Lechowicz stated there has been inquiry about whether or not we can make this free. Highest income year was \$3500 and the expenses were around \$10,000.

Question – would you need more staff if you open this year to be in compliance with Covid?

Director Lechowicz stated we could start with 2 staff and if needed, we can increase.

Councilman Pessina stated he would love to be able to make it free.

Karen Nocera inquired whether we make it free for residents and potentially charge non-residents.

Sal Uccello inquired about a sign on Newfield St to help raise awareness of the location of the rink. Councilman Pessina said he can raise it with the Public Works commission. Sal also stated he agreed that it should be free.

Discussion on 2021 Camp Fees

Director Lechowicz presented the idea that we need to come up with a camp fee schedule for the next 5 years. With minimum wage increasing, we need to try to mitigate the budgetary impact and part of that strategy includes increasing fees. Other components include looking at transportation costs and modifying bus routes and looking at field trips and their costs.

Sal Uccello stated to be better informed, he would need information on what the actual cost is, how much it is subsidized, and the anticipated cost with the increase in minimum wage.

The goal is to bring this to the November council meeting.

Councilwoman Blackwell stated that more data would be helpful. She also asked if there was a formula that is used to set camp fees. Director Lechowicz stated that she is not aware that a formula was used. A discussion ensued on when fees were previously increased and that impact. Other fees were discussed such as transportation and field trip fees.

Director Lechowicz will provide details on costs in advance of the next commission and recommended fees. This will allow for greater discussion at the next meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilwoman Blackwell, seconded by Lincoln Everest. Meeting adjourned at 7:04pm.