

**MINUTES OF THE  
RECREATION COMMISSION  
HOPATCONG BOROUGH HALL, 111 RIVER STYX ROAD  
HOPATCONG, NJ  
OCTOBER 8, 2024  
OPEN PUBLIC MEETING 7PM**

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**CALL TO ORDER:** The Recreation Commission Chairperson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT:** This meeting is held in accordance with the 1975 Open Public Meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-6 et seq., annual notice having been forwarded to the New Jersey Herald/New Jersey Sunday Herald and posted on the bulletin board maintained in the Municipal Building for public announcements.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Recreation Commission Chairperson invites all present to salute the flag.

**ROLL CALL:** The Recording Secretary will call the role.

**ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT:** Dave Barella, Darrin DiNapoli, Cheryl Ostman, Wendy Sutton, Kelly Gravatt, Ulla Vinkman

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Recreation Liaison Roseanne Schult, Recording Secretary Nancy McCormack Boehm, Mayor Marie Galate, Councilwoman Jennifer Johnson

**OPEN SPACE UPDATE:** Liaison Dave Barella—There are no updates.

**CELEBRATIONS OF EVENTS UPDATE:** Liaison Wendy Sutton—There are no updates

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Trips:**

Commissioners Vinkman and Ostman discussed how there is no money for buses. Proposed having a Bingo night possibly November 15<sup>th</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> and/or a Holiday Bingo (Recreation Liaison Schult will look into dates and provide at the next meeting) for prizes with a \$10 donation that could be used as a deposit for busing for future trips. Another idea would be to bring canned goods/animal food and get a free extra bingo card. Doors would open at 6:00pm and calling would begin at 7:00pm. Could provide pizza, salad, coffee/tea/water and the rest go to the Recreation trust fund. Might be able to use school buses at \$125 per hour including driver, but used only for local trips since there are no bathrooms on school buses. School buses could accommodate 40 people comfortably. Called 8 theaters, Mayo Clinic in Morristown – showing “Charlie Brown” and the State Theater in New Brunswick – showing “Dr. Seuss” are available Thanksgiving weekend for matinees. Chairperson Sutton felt there is not enough time and should plan for an event in January, February or March and create a flyer to send to the community. Radio City Music Hall does not take a deposit and needs to pay upfront. Byram Township also does trips and maybe we could coordinate with them. Chairperson Sutton will send Commissioner Ostman the information.

**Field Permits:**

Two permits to approve:

1. Next Spring Hopatcong High School, softball team has requested to use Vet's Field for Senior Night on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Little league will be informed of the request.

#### **MOTION TO APPROVE SENIOR NIGHT:**

Commissioner DiNapoli made a motion to approve. Commissioner Vinkman seconded the motion.

#### **ROLL CALL:**

Dave Barella—yes, Darrin DiNapoli—yes, Cherly Ostman—yes, Wendy Sutton—yes, Kelly Gravatt—yes, Ulla Vinkman—yes

2. Hawks Soccer Program request to use Squire Field and Vet's Soccer Field March 15<sup>th</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup> for Spring, Summer and Fall leagues, used Monday through Friday. Saturday for Recreation, Sunday for Travel. Fields are not usually open on March 15<sup>th</sup>, will need to do a field walk in early March.

#### **MOTION TO APPROVE FIELD READINESS AND TOWN EVENTS:**

Commissioner DiNapoli made a motion to approve. Commissioner Barella seconded the motion.

#### **ROLL CALL:**

Dave Barella—yes, Darrin DiNapoli—yes, Cherly Ostman—yes, Wendy Sutton—yes, Kelly Gravatt—yes, Ulla Vinkman—yes

Recreation Liaison Schult questioned if there are signoffs for facilities, why not have signoffs for fields? To know where/when fields are being used and sign off from BA, Police, DPW, etc. so everyone is on the same page. Councilwoman Johnson said it should be and "acknowledgement" of usage and not an "authorization". Chairperson Sutton stated it can be added to each form. Commissioner DiNapoli reiterated that it was just for awareness and not request.

#### **Basketball:**

Registration started September 23, so far 46 kids are registered—11 for clinic; 35 for leagues. Registration will stay open until the end of October or if needed, 2 weeks longer. Most registrations are online, and it seems to be working well. There were 125 registered last year, most people wait until last minute. We have 9 coaches, some are new. There are 15 teams in total, so may need more coaches. Chairperson Sutton had a league meeting last Monday with the other towns, 16 towns in total, 14 were at the meeting. Discussed rules and made updates. The first update is regarding the spectators—if there is an issue, coaches and league officials will try to work out the problem and a discipline committee will be formed. Second, plan a holiday tournament to include a fee from each town to pay for the tournament. Byram/Lenape will do as many background checks as needed for coaches and assistant coaches for \$300. Byram has a safety course training for coaches and will email Chairperson Sutton and Commissioner DiNapoli. Commissioner Gravatt stated that the Hawks have safety training through Safe Sport. Commissioner DiNapoli stated that Rutgers has safety training, take it once and have it for life. Commissioner Barella stated Don Bogardus, the Denville Recreation Director may offer training for free. Practice will begin mid-November if there are enough registered. Chairperson Sutton spoke with Superintendent Hollenbeck about coverage for the doors during games. Games and practices may be held at the High School (gym can be split into 3 courts for practices) and the doors may not have to be locked but waiting to hear back about weekends. There are 4 sponsors so far, but it is still early. One family is unable to pay for the registration and a business has offered to pay for them. Will discuss uniforms and teams at next meeting once there is a roster.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

## **Halloween Costume Contest**

Chairperson Sutton asked where and when it was taking place. Mayor Galate stated that it would take place October 19<sup>th</sup> after the parade which will begin at 12:00pm and include kids, families, dogs, cars and the fire department. The costume contest would begin at 1:00 and last for 2 hours concluding at 3:00pm. There will be 4 prizes per age group and the judges table will be the same location as last year. Mayor Galate said this was all discussed at the last meeting. Recreation Liaison Schult will arrive at 8:30am with vendors arriving at 11:00am. There will be complimentary hot dogs after the parade. Commissioner Barella will have 6 hay bales for costume contest walkway. The DJ will help with the costume contest. Recreation Liaison Schult will email the judges form to Chairperson Sutton to review for changes.

Chairperson Sutton received an email from "Winter for Kids Ski Club" program. Will forward to everyone to review. Not on agenda as it was received today. Commissioner Vinkman suggested a possible snow tubing trip and can use school buses.

Commissioner DiNapoli noticed people walking their dogs at Vet's Field and requested that there be bigger or newer "no dog" signs. Mayor Galate said it might be a zoning issue regarding the size of the signs. She suggested a request go to Pat Masson for zoning approval and if there is a budget for it since it needs to come from someone's budget.

Councilwoman Johnson stated that the women's softball league in Landing is overflowing, and she knows someone willing to help with a league in town that would run through the Recreation Commission. Looking to see if she can attend the November 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. Councilwoman Johnson said there would be a person who would oversee the coaches.

## **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:**

Commissioner DiNapoli made a motion to open the meeting to the public. Commissioner Vinkman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Resident Michael Bermel, Assistant and equipment manager for Street Hockey stated he has been helping for 6 years buying equipment from garage sales, donating items his son had outgrown, lugging it back and forth and cleaning and repairing when necessary. Came with the equipment to hand in at the July Recreation Commission meeting, but it was cancelled. Same for the August meeting which was cancelled. In October, he received an email of "being in possession of stolen equipment". Resident Bermel said that all equipment should be kept in the shed that Barry Comerford's son erected. It was brought to his attention that he can't have access to the shed. Need to make sure Street Hockey has access to the shed with a key. He did not appreciate the heated language of "stolen equipment" and wants the league to run without bureaucracy but uncertain of the rules and regulations.

Chairperson Sutton stated that a request was made in June, end of June, July with no responses. Chairperson Sutton stated again that there was no response to anyone in the email, including Liaison Schult or the previous BA. An email was sent to Councilwoman Johnson and not to the Recreation Commission, that's why there was a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> request. She also stated that the basketball coaches sign for everything and return it. Need the same for Street Hockey. Commissioner Barella agreed that they should have access to the shed and the keys should go through Liaison Schult and that they will have everything they need to run Street Hockey. Commissioner Barella also stated that all this ignoring or not responding because you don't like someone has to stop and emails need to be "replied all" and not to the council or BA. He also asked that Resident Bermel be added to the emails. The 3 points of contact for Street Hockey are Aldo Caprio, Michael Bermel and Barry Comerford. Aldo

spoke up and said nobody will respond to threats and he will not be treated that way. Commissioner Barella stated that the first 2 emails went unanswered and did not contain threats and it's been 3 years of total chaos. Chairperson Sutton stated she is still going to communicate through emails because there are rules that need to be followed and the 4<sup>th</sup> email suggested there was stolen equipment, nothing threatening in the first 3 emails. Aldo continued by saying tonight is not the night to bring up road blocks from last year like the meeting in January discussing new balls and his emails were not responded to 3 weeks into the season. Commissioner Barella requested street hockey let the Recreation Commission know what they need, and they will get it for them and at the end of the day everyone needs to work together. Aldo said emails were ridiculous with Chairperson Sutton responding that the responses were the problem. Mayor Galate said that Pat Mason gets the keys and he will distribute; emails and communications from last year should not be happening now and that Street Hockey is a great program. Mayor Galate stated that she spent a lot of time going through recreation minutes. She also mentioned that for 15 years we had swimming lessons and bowling run through the Recreation Commission. She commented that recreation is getting stronger, and she saw people walking in the parking lot who started a "walking club". Need for people to know who we are and that basketball and street hockey are bigger then last year. She also commented that we don't have time to keep beating the same dead horse. Resident Bermel wants more confidence in communication and to be able to respectfully disagree. While Resident Caprio doesn't want to be continuously frustrated and never came to a meeting until the past 2 years and that he just ran street hockey they way he ran it. Commissioner Barella stated that it doesn't mean it was run correctly and that we need to move forward. Mayor Galate suggested a liaison to go between street hockey and the recreation commission. Resident Comerford stated he wanted to set something straight and that he had stopped by the Beach Club and said he spoke to Chairperson Sutton about equipment. Chairperson Sutton said that didn't happen. Was upset because his son built the shed as an Eagle Project and it was built for 2 reasons—goals in the winter; equipment during the season. Said it is 98% done, needs touch up paint, shelving, solar lights and then will bring the key to Pat Mason. Aldo brought up the email about stolen property and being threatened again, which Commissioner DiNapoli responded, you didn't email anyone back and that it was done. Commissioner Barella asked if there was anything else from the public. Mayor Galate commented that Resident Comerford's son is very dear to his heart and has achieved the highest honor in Scout, the Eagle Scout and he didn't respond to council or attorney because the project wasn't done and he was upset and give him time to complete. Chairperson Sutton felt she was being attacked.

Resident Frank Cappello stated he didn't know what was going on, but he would like to see one person and there are too many people—all have full time jobs, everyone is taxed and he's pissed off. He wouldn't like to receive a letter about stealing either. There should be one person, a recreation director, because the council doesn't have control. He has is own business and goes to other towns and there are 12 people in their snack stands and we don't have snack stands. He also stated that at Vet's Field they need water and that there are water hookups 50 ft from the building. There are no bathrooms, irrigation running through fields and the water department should hook it up. He also stated that facilities are "dog shit" and other towns don't want to come here. The town should be marking fields, cutting grass and maintaining fields. He took his Lil Ice Trike and fixed the field. We don't have a Parks and Recreation Department and Roseanne is all by herself. Chairperson Sutton stated they did a field walk and they reported the water connection, and the town said it was too expensive. Resident Cappello said the water was already there and simple to do. Commissioner Barella commented that they designed the softball field without a fence and to Wendy's point, the recreation commission does a lot, but a lot is out of the recreation commission control and that the Warriors own the concession stand on school property at Hilltop. Resident Cappello stated that this meeting was his first stop, and his goal is to have Recreation Director and that clubs need to conform to the town, and he doesn't want the Recreation Commission because the fields look like garbage, nothing is maintained, and he wants better for everyone. He also stated that there should never be 2 events on one night (Bingo and movie night being same day). Said there should be open

communication between town and commission, need out of the box thinking because what we have isn't working and the chaos never ends, and everything needs to change. Chairperson Sutton said she valued his opinion and appreciated and understands his frustration. Also stated that other towns do have commissions and Tax ID's for sports and that this is the second time he's stated that the recreation commission needs to go. Resident Cappello stated we need to do better. Commissioner Barella agreed but stated that no one came out to any town meetings and that the recreation commission used to run a lot and they no longer do but will continue to bring ideas.

**CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC:**

Commissioner DiNapoli made a motion to close the meeting to the public. Commissioner Barella seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**MOTION TO APPROVE MEETING MINUTES:**

Commissioner DiNapoli made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from September 10th. Commissioner Barella seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Next meeting: November 12, 2024 at 7:00pm

**MOTION TO ADJOURN:** Commissioner DiNapoli made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Vinkman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 9:25pm

Submitted by  
Nancy McCormack Boehm  
Recording Secretary