

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE  
READINGTON RECREATION COMMITTEE  
February 28, 2024 7:30pm**

A) Chairperson Emmanuel Bola called the meeting to order at 7:33pm.

B) ATTENDANCE:

Emmanuel Bola – present  
Ken Groel - absent  
Keith Mitchell - absent  
Stephanie Panico - present  
Alison Quintard - absent  
Lisa Routel - present  
Carolanne Sherwood - present

TC Liaison Vincent Panico - present

Recreation Director Gabrielle Bolarakis - present  
Recreation Assistant Director Dina Fornataro-Healey - present

C) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES –

Ms. Panico motioned to accept the meeting minutes of November 29, 2023 and January 24, 2024 with the caveat that committee members have changed since the November 2023 meeting. Ms. Sherwood seconded. All in favor.

D) Community Communications & Correspondence

i) Website / Social Media (Facebook/Instagram) – Ms. Bolarakis stated the Readington Recreation FaceBook page is back up and was helpful with recent snow storm. There have been 4 – 5 posts per week. A *Search for Spring* contest to win \$100 recreation gift card will be running soon to get the page back up into people’s feeds. Ms. Bolarakis also explained that not everything goes out on both the FaceBook and Instagram platforms.

Ms. Routel asked about posting parental surveys on social media as she only saw a survey from 2008. Gabrielle said a survey was mailed out in 2019. Ms. Rotel asked how parents are notified and Gabrielle explained that parents are notified via email and notifications are also on the Recreation website and sent via social media. Mr. Bola said it may be helpful to do a NPA survey, which is the industry standard, that can be sent out to people about the communication and website. They are simple anonymous surveys that measure the experience from 1-10. They can help quantify the web presence.

ii) Correspondence Ms. Bolarakis said that she and Ms. Fornataro-Healey have returned from the New Jersey Recreation and Park Association annual conference. She also explained the mission of NJRPA and that the Association gives awards in a variety of categories. Readington was honored three times. The first award was in the visual and cultural arts category for the *All-Star Band Camp*. Jessica Richter ran the program and was given the award.

The second award was in the Excellence in Design for a Multi-Use Facility category. The award was given to Summer Road Park. She explained the difficulties in completing the park master plan and implementation process as it happened during COVID. She thanked the Rec Committee members during that time frame for their willingness to work through the pandemic to support the project. She also thanked the Township Committee Liaison from that time period, John Albanese, and all the Township Committee members for approving purchase orders prior in December 2021 which secured lower pricing.

The third award is the Public Servant of the Year and was presented to John Albanese.

Readington Township has received eight awards in 10 years. Ms. Bolarakis thanked the volunteers, staff, and employees of the Township for making this possible.

#### E) OLD BUSINESS

i) Update Winter Programs - There are 36 winter programs with 539 participants. Some end this week and some have been extended due to snow. Ms. Fornataro-Healey instructed a Rutgers Youth SAFETY Clinic for new volunteer coaches. There is a free trial session of Zumba Toning on March 7, 14, 21, and 28. Ms. Fornataro-Healey provided an update of the Travel Basketball program and highlighted the girls 5<sup>th</sup> grade and boys 6<sup>th</sup> grade won their divisions. Three of the six teams are still playing in playoffs.

ii) Spring Brochure Mailing – The spring brochure will be out in the mail this week.

iii) Spring Program Registration – There are 47 programs being offered. They are online and registration is on target. Softball registration is over, but soccer is open through March. There is availability in pickleball and tennis. Girls' lacrosse is beginning practice indoors and will move outside in April.

iv) Summer Camp Registration - Registration is where we expect it to be at this time with 148 in summer camp and 38 in specialty camps. New specialty camps offered this year are the Flute/Fiddle Camp and a new Chorus Camp.

#### F) NEW BUSINESS

i) Local Recreation Improvement Grant - was submitted last Friday. If received, we would like to renovate restrooms/concession stands. Labor costs were submitted as a match. We have been awarded these grants in the past for the survey of Cornhuskers Park and the playground at Hillcrest Park. Mr. Panico explained where the grant comes from and that it is a \$25 million pool. He mentioned that the DCA extended the deadline to April 16.

ii) Park Improvements – Every year it is determined what park or facilities need work. This year Pickell Park will be the focus. Specifically, the batter's box on P3 will be rebuilt, P2 needs major field renovations, and there is a small area of concern on P1. This work will be paid for out of the Recreation Trust.

iii) Memorial Day Parade Committee - Meets in March 2024. The Parade Committee has always had members who have served on the Rec Committee. The main task is to cook and serve 1,000+ hotdogs. Mr. Panico said Mr. Mansdorfer is doing a great job as chair of the Parade Committee.

He is adding a focus to have veterans in the parade. He mentioned that Lowe's is donating materials to make/build floats. Ms. Bolarakis will circulate the meeting date. Mr. Bola, Ms. Sherwood, and Ms. Rotel said they should be able to help.

iv) Bylaws Update – Mr. Bola said this was brought up at the January meeting as some information was incorrect and an update is needed. He shared potential revisions. Mr. Panico clarified that ordinance 462H states bylaws are required. Mr. Bola will share a google sheet and the group can make suggestions and then hopefully adopt at the March meeting.

Mr. Bola said he would like the group to capture their goals or objectives for the year. He shared some of the bullet points he wrote down and he will also share this with the group. Ms. Panico asked Ms. Bolarakis about department goals and could she share them. Ms. Bolarakis said the committee goals were always worked on together.

Mr. Bola said that Mr. Groel has now been absent for two months. Mr. Bola has tried to reach him a few times without a response. Mr. Bola suggested removing Mr. Groel from the committee and adding Bill Quinn. Mr. Bola made a motion to go the Township Committee to remove Mr. Groel and add Bill Quinn. Ms. Rotel second. All in Favor. Mr. Panico said he would bring it up at the Township Committee meeting and Ms. Bolarakis said she would send a memo to Township Administrator.

Mr. Bola said that the Bylaws state that the committee must have a chairperson and a vice chair. Seeing the need, Ms. Sherwood nominated Allision Quintard for Vice Chair of the Recreation Committee, Ms. Panico seconded. All in favor.

Manny asked Ms. Bolarakis to have the website updated with this information.

v) Hunterdon Games – Summer- Mr. Panico said it is the third year in existence and takes place in Union Township. There are a series of activities culminating with one overall winner. Activities include kickball hula hoop, corn hole, a spelling bee, etc. He would like the Rec Committee to spearhead this endeavor. The team consists of 20-30 people 18 and over to participate. There is a \$300 entry fee, and he will find out what the \$300 includes. He said it may take place August 24 or 25. Mr. Panico said he is unsure if this is a Recreation Committee or Recreation Department endeavor and will provide more details next month.

vi) Goals 2024 -New Members and Goals – participation – Manny shared his for committee. He asked that the group add to the document.

#### G) COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Harold Jones of Whitehouse Station – Mr. Jones congratulated Ms. Bolarakis for assembling the staff and items needed to win three awards. Mr. Jones reminded the committee that there is a responsibility to follow ADA guidelines for park improvements including bathrooms and pathways. Mr. Jones stated that he is surprised no one made a comparison of the requirements between the ordinance and the bi laws. The whole reason there are bylaws is to adopt a nominating process to forward nominations to the Mayor. He noticed operationally the attendance requirement has no monitoring process other than the meeting minutes. The committee has no fiduciary, only programmatic responsibilities. He suggested bringing back a marching band to the Memorial Day

Parade. He reminded the committee that Readington is not far from the Washington Rochambeau trail. So perhaps veterans or historical folk would be appropriate for the parade. He was surprised that there were no goals but said because of the information presented there are goals on participation and programmatic.

#### H) COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD

Mr. Panico stated that all the items he intended to address had been discussed.

Ms. Rotel stated that she and Ms. Panico participated in Open Space walk. She suggested that Recreation Department and Open Space collaborate to offer non sport programs. Mr. Panico stated that many groups are participating in collaboration efforts including the schools.

Ms. Fornataro-Healey stated she is putting together a National Walking Day program in April and will circulate the information.

NOTE – at this point the inclement weather caused a brief power outage the recording stopped.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Sherwood made a motion to adjourn at 8:44pm. Ms. Rotel seconded. All in favor.

Next Meeting March 27, 2024 at 7:30pm