

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE  
READINGTON RECREATION COMMITTEE  
April 24, 2024 7:30pm**

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

B) ATTENDANCE:

Emmanuel Bola – present  
Bill Quinn - absent  
Keith Mitchell - absent  
Stephanie Panico - present  
Allison Quintard - present  
Lisa Routel - present  
Carolanne Sherwood - present

TC Liaison Vincent Panico - present

Recreation Director Gabrielle Bolarakis - present

C) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES –

Ms. Sherwood motioned to accept the meeting minutes of March 27, 2024. Ms. Quintard seconded. Ms. Panico abstained. In favor, Ms. Routel, Mr. Bola, Ms. Sherwood, motion passes.

D) Community Communications & Correspondence

Director Bolarakis informed the Recreation Committee that the committee received a communication from Keith Mitchell resigning from the committee. He is no longer able to attend Wednesday meetings.

Mr. Bola reported to the committee that the township web site is being updated. Goals and objectives have been posted. The Bylaws have not been posted yet as there is an issue with the web site which needs to be fixed. As soon as the web site issue is fixed the bylaws will be posted.

E) OLD BUSINESS

i) Update Spring Programs – The season is up and running successfully with 48 programs. Luckily the rain held off on Saturday, and Recreation Soccer and pre-k clinics were able to start with no issues.

ii) Memorial Day Parade – The Memorial Day Parade Committee met, and plans are coming along nicely for the event. The Recreation Department has secured rentals of tables, chairs, and grills for the event. Port-a-johns have been ordered, and posters are in production. More cooks are needed to man the grills day of. Mr. Quinn and Mr. Bola have volunteered to cook, we need four more people to help with food prep.

iii) Cornhuskers Master Plan Update – Van Cleef Engineering is scheduled to be at Cornhuskers Park on Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup> to take measurements and samples for the Environmental Constraints Map.

F) NEW BUSINESS

i) Summer Brochure – The Summer Brochure will be distributed digitally this week and posted to the Recreation and Township Facebook pages.

ii) Summer Registration – Summer programs are being loaded to the web site. Three additional Adult Art Classes were added to the schedule, which is a great addition since the classes consistently sell out.

iii) USTA Adult Tennis Social 6/12/24 – The Department received good news from the USTA. They will be back to host another Adult Tennis Social this year on 6/12/24. The event will include professional instruction, food,

and give-a-ways all sponsored by the USTA. The event is free to residents; however, registration is required. Registration for the event will be open before the Summer Brochure is distributed this week.

iv) Fall Programs – The Recreation Department is already busy planning for Fall/Winter programs. Registration for Fall will open in June. Travel Basketball Try Outs will be in September. Information about the Travel Basketball program will be included in the fall brochure.

v) Facility Update – Pickell Park renovations will commence next week. The work should be completed in two days. New Tennis nets have been received and installed on the tennis courts. New Batting cages for Cornhuskers Park have been ordered.

## G) COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Ms. Becker inquired what the process was to serve on the Recreation Committee since there is now an open seat. Mr. Bola said he would review and make a recommendation to the Township Committee to fill the vacancy. Ms. Becker indicated that she would be willing to serve on the Recreation Committee.

Wendy Hall inquired whether the meeting minutes are posted on the web site. Liaison Panico explained that meeting minutes are posted on the web site after they have been approved by the Recreation Committee.

Jennifer Ziembra asked to follow up about the Bylaws discussed at the last meeting. Ms. Ziembra had questions about attendance requirements and the renewal process for Recreation Committee members at the last meeting and asked if there are any updates. Mr. Bola stated that no changes had been made at this time. There is a broken link on the township web site. When the link is fixed the bylaws as approved will be posted. Revisions are still under consideration.

Ms. Ziembra mentioned that her family lives near Summer Road Park and wanted to commend the township for the work that had been done to upgrade the park. Ms. Ziembra questioned with the popularity of the park and the amount of activity whether lights could be added to extend the hours of operation during the early spring and fall. Township Committee liaison Panico indicated that township parks are open dawn to dusk. The Township Committee might consider the safety lighting in the park, which is included in the master plan, but there is no plan at this time to light playing surfaces. Ms. Ziembra asked the Recreation Committee to consider recommending to the Township Committee updating the master plan to include lighting of sport surfaces and the walking path enabling residents use of the park during the early spring and fall evenings when it gets dark early.

Matt Doherty mentioned that it would be nice if there was an option for vegetarians at the Summer Spectacular. Director Bolarakis mentioned that cheese pizza will be available at the concession stand as an option for those who prefer not to have a hot dog. Mr. Doherty inquired whether the length of the kindergarten soccer sessions could be shortened a little. Director Bolarakis indicated that shortening the session is an option, and suggested there are a variety of ways to keep the children engaged. She suggested that Mr. Doherty speak with Assistant Director Fornataro-Healey who could easily help them come up with a workable solution.

Michael Jones inquired whether musical entertainment had been secured for the Memorial Day Parade. Liaison Panico indicated that the Immaculata Marching Band will be playing in the Readington parade. Mr. Jones mentioned that the Readington Schools are well known for their music program and questioned whether they had been asked to participate. Liaison Panico indicated he was unsure whether they would be participating this year.

Mr. Doherty inquired whether there was any follow-up on the Volunteer Handbook. Liaison Panico stated that the handbook that was approved and distributed to volunteers was the wrong version. The shorter Volunteer Handbook is on the Township Committee meeting for approval on Monday night. After approval at the Township Committee meeting, the handbook will be circulated to all the township volunteers. Mr. Doherty asked if there is

any language in the new version of the volunteer handbook about cyber bullying and harassment. Liaison Panico responded he did not know as he learned the handbook would be on the meeting for approval this morning and had not yet seen a copy of the handbook.

Jenn Ziemba requested a correction to the March Recreation Committee meeting minutes in the public comment section. The statement "it was done by a Recreation Committee" is inaccurate. Ms. Ziemba indicated she was at the meeting, and the statement was "it was done by someone in this room". Mrs. Quintard made a motion to correct the March meeting minutes to reflect the requested change, second Mr. Bola. In favor Ms. Sherwood, Ms. Routel, abstention Ms. Panico.

Christina Albrecht thanked the Recreation Committee for having the meeting in the courtroom. She stated that she feels it is much more comfortable than the small conference room. Ms. Albrecht asked whether there a reason that tonight's meeting was being held in the court room? Mr. Bola indicated that no information was being shared on the screen.

Mr. Jones inquired if the Recreation Committee chair schedules the room. Mr. Jones indicated he thought that all committees having meetings should be in the larger space and videotaped for transparency. Liaison Panico stated the Township Administrator sent out a policy which indicates which rooms committee meetings will be scheduled in and which committee meetings will be videotaped. Mr. Jones indicated that there are clearly benefits for transparency to videotaping the meetings that are not achieved with an audio recording for people who are unable to personally attend the meeting.

Mr. Doherty expressed how appreciative he was when meetings were videotaped. With work and his children's activity schedule, attendance at meetings is difficult, and he really appreciated being able to watch the video of meetings he could not attend in person.

Ken Becker questioned whether the committee would commit to videotaping the meetings for the public. Liaison Panico responded that the committee must follow the Township Administrators policy. Mr. Becker said what he heard was the residents would appreciate it if the meetings were videotaped and asked if the Recreation Committee will volunteer to videotape the meetings. Mrs. Sherwood said no she would not, that it was a recreation meeting and there was no need to videotape the meeting. Meetings are being recorded and posted on Facebook which is a disgrace. This is a circus, I don't know if you are the ringleader, they are the clowns; I don't want anything to do with this committee. Mr. Becker asked if Mrs. Sherwood was speaking for the entire committee, and Mrs. Sherwood indicated she was speaking for herself. Mr. Becker asked if the other committee members were willing to have the meetings videotaped. Liaison Panico indicated that the committee could not opt to not follow the policy established by the Township Administrator.

Michael Jones asked Director Bolarakis if it was more or less work to transcribe the audio recording than the videotape. Director Bolarakis indicated that it is easier for accuracy and transcribing minutes when there is a large group of people if the microphones are used. Mr. Jone stated the video system must be integrated with the township computers and was surely less time consuming and cheaper to video the meeting than using the audio recorder.

Melissa Adams commented that in the past Recreation Committee meetings never needed to be recorded but unfortunately what happened in January when the committee became politicized. Mrs. Sherwood indicated that was Mrs. Adams' opinion. Mrs. Adams indicated she wished we had had this much public participation at previous meetings. Mrs. Sherwood stated that people in the town knew nothing about the Recreation Committee before January.

Ms. Becker stated that she strongly disagreed with Ms. Sherwood's statement. Ms. Becker stated that she believes that residents were well aware of the Recreation meetings and many residents volunteered their support for recreation activities as witnessed by participation at this meeting. Mr. Bola welcomed public participation at

the Recreation Committee meetings and expressed his hope that those in attendance would volunteer to help with recreation activities and attend other township committee meetings. Mrs. Forte said that the room was filled with people who regularly volunteer. Mr. Jones stated the Committee Liaison and Chair were responsible for bringing nominations for the Recreation Committee to the Mayor for approval. The Township Committee should be held responsible for the huge changes made to the Recreation Committee. Director Bolarakis said the names of the Recreation Committee members up for reappointment were submitted to the township Clerk for the Mayor's approval in the late fall. In the past committee members up for reappointment would receive a letter from the township before the January meeting. The Mayor is responsible for making committee appointments.

#### H) COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD

#### ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Panico made a motion to adjourn at 9:00pm. Ms. Routel seconded. All in favor.

Next Meeting May 22, 2024 at 7:30pm