

**SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP
PARK AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2023 AT 6:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

1. Call to Order (E. Baiada)

Kerry Boccella	Chair
Adrienne Smythe	Vice Chair
Nick Matteo	Friends of Hillcrest Pond Representative
Lee Abberley	Member
Robert McGrath	Member
Neil DiFranco	School District School Board Representative
Joe Ferraro	School District Representative
Susanna Ratsavong	Commissioner Liaison, Ward 2

Guests:	Emilie Lapham	Resident
	Kathy Hodgkiss	Resident
	Beth Zenuk	Resident

2. Approval of Minutes from December (All)

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee unanimously approved the December minutes.

3. Administrative Report (E. Baiada)

As the President of District III, Mrs. Baiada co-hosted the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society Winter Workshop with Temple University's School of Tourism and Hospitality. The training covered two topics; *How to Run an Effective Internship Program* and *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Best Practices*.

4. Recreation Report (E. Baiada)

Throughout the month of December, programs included Martial Arts, Yoga, Jump Start Soccer Clinic, Magarity Tennis, Recreation Basketball League, Travel Basketball League, Ceramic Tree Workshop, and Jump Start Basketball Clinic. Across all programs during the month of December, 730 individuals participated in recreational programming with 30 individuals on the waitlist.

Contingent upon completed contracts, the Department anticipates the Summer Recreation Guide will be available to the public in mid-February. Summer camp registration will open on March 1 at 9:00 am via RecDesk. Kidz Klubhouse will feature a priority registration window for residents. Kidz Klubhouse Resident registration will open on March 1. Kidz Klubhouse Non-Resident registration will open April 3.

Kidz Klubhouse Summer Camp Counselor and Counselor in Training (CIT) openings will be posted on January 30, 2023. Openings are contingent upon the number of returning employees. Staff from 2022 were contacted regarding rehire on January 2 with a deadline of January 30. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and will remain open until April 4 or until filled.

5. Park Report (E. Baiada)

- **Bysher Park:** No Issues.
- **Connor James McKelvie Community Park:** No Issues.
- **Henry R. Chiaramonte Park:** No Issues.
- **James A. Cisco Park:** Reports of children playing on frozen pond. Gabion repairs continue into January, closer to Hillcrest Pond. Montco CDBG program to replace the wood bridge at Cisco.
- **James R. Fulginiti Park:** No Issues.
- **Laurel Beech Park:** No Issues.
- **Marlow Field:** No Issues.
- **Mermaid Park:** No Issues.
- **Sandy Run Park:** No Issues.
- **Veterans Park:** Water runoff issue resolution - winter project.

Park Report Continued (E. Baiada)

- **Wyndhill Park:** Wood sandbox removal in winter months.
- **Springfield Township Recreation Center A:** No Issues.
- **Springfield Township Recreation Center B:** No Issues.
- **Tank Car:** Abatement schedule for Spring 2023. Potential application for DCED GTRP Program
- **Walnut Trail:** Construction in Fall 2023. Potential application for DCNR C2P2 and Montco 2040

6. Old Business (All)

2023 Sponsorship Form: All forms have been mailed to prospective sponsors. The form will be available on the Township website.

Recreation Center Advisory Committee: Members have been appointed to the RCAC. The objective of the RCAC will be to assist with the creation of a master plan for future use and possible renovations to the recreation center, and to provide technical advice and recommendations on the selection of an architect. The RCAC is comprised of 7 residents with varying expertise. The Committee will also have a Commissioner liaison and two staff liaisons. Ian Hammer will serve as liaison for the Public Works Department, while I will serve as the secretary and liaison for Parks and Recreation Department. The Commissioner liaison will be appointed during the January Board of Commissioners meeting. The PRAC voted unanimously for Kerry Boccella to serve as liaison on the newly formed committee.

7. New Business (All)

Hillcrest Pond – Do Not Feed the Waterfowl Signage: During the November 2022 meeting, the PRAC members discussed hanging signage to remind park guests to stop feeding the waterfowl. Feeding the waterfowl is in violation of the Township ordinances and can have detrimental impacts. Mrs. Baiada showed several samples of signs located in parks across the country. PRAC discussed the verbiage for signage. Dr. Abberley and Dr. McGrath noted the signs should also be hung at Mermaid Park.

Nick Matteo noted the Friends of Hillcrest Pond intend to purchase a beacon for the pond this upcoming Spring. The beacon emits a light which is invisible to the human eye. The light deters geese from landing and is intended to help with population control. PRAC members voted in favor of the Friends of Hillcrest Pond's potential purchase.

Youth Committee Member (Non-Voting): PRAC members voted in favor of adding a student member from Springfield Township (resident) to the Park and Recreation Advisory Committee as well as the new Recreation Center ADHOC Committee. The student member would not serve in a voting capacity but rather provide feedback on discussions. The PRAC noted this student should have an interest in open space, the environment, recreation, health and wellness, sports and overall community development. PRAC noted the ideal student would be outspoken, likely a Junior or Senior in High School.

Youth Sport Programs: Mrs. Baiada provided a side-by-side overview of the Travel Basketball and Recreation Basketball leagues currently running. The Township Travel Basketball league spans 7-days a week from October through March with 126 players. Facilities used are Erdenheim Elementary, Enfield Elementary and Springfield Middle School. The Township Recreation Basketball League spans 8 Saturdays with 374 participants using the gym at the Springfield Middle School. Mrs. Baiada noted that Springfield Township Parks and Recreation is the only municipal organization involved in the Travel Basketball league, all opposing teams are submitted by volunteer athletic clubs.

PRAC discussed the programs at length and noted the time provided to each child is not equal. Dr. Abberley noted that all children should have opportunity to play for equal amounts of time. Mrs. Smythe noted that soccer, baseball and softball have dedicated parent run organizations while basketball does not. The committee discussed the need for a parent group to establish a Springfield Basketball organization to take over operations. Mr. Ferraro of the School District noted that facilities would be available at no cost, as long as the organization met the permit requirements and at least 75% of participants being residents. The Township Parks and Recreation Department would assist with the transition of the program by meeting with volunteers and walking members through the steps of establishing a functional organization.

Youth Sport Programs Continued:

Mrs. Boccella made a motion for Springfield Township to transition the Travel Basketball program over to a volunteer parent run organization within the community. The Parks and Recreation Department will release a notice to the general public calling for proposals from those interested in establishing a not-for-profit Springfield Basketball Club. Proposals would not be open to for-profit-businesses. Organization would be required to have a minimum of 75% resident participants. The PRAC noted that in order for an organization to take over the league for the 2023-2024 season, proposals would need to be submitted and presented to the committee by the June 7, 2023 meeting. In the event the Township does not receive proposals and presentation by the June 7 meeting, the Township will run the Travel Basketball program for one final season, 2023-2024. After the 2023-2024 season, the Township will no longer run the program and the community will have an opportunity to establish an organization independently. The PRAC voted unanimously in favor.

Mrs. Boccella noted that the Travel Softball program should also be considered for reevaluation. During 2022, the program had 12 players in the Spring (10 resident, 2 non-resident) and 11 players in the Fall (9 resident, 2 non-resident). The Travel Softball team competes in the Inter-County Girls Softball League (ICGSL) as does the local Springfield Little League Softball charter (SLLS). The PRAC noted that the Township should not overlap with a volunteer organization within the community that is offering the same program and competes in the same league. The PRAC voted in favor of hosting the Travel Softball program for one more year (Spring and Fall 2023). In January 2024, the Travel Softball league would either be run independently by the coaching staff or merge with Springfield Little League Softball. The PRAC voted unanimously in favor.

The PRAC felt the involvement of the Township in Youth Sports is a misuse of resources that could be better spent on programs that benefit a larger portion of the population. Volunteer parents have shown to be successful in running youth sport organizations within the community for several years. The PRAC noted the Recreation Department should be focusing more on the needs of the general population and less on youth sports.

8. Public Comments (All)

Pickleball: Emilie Lapham and Kathy Hodgkiss expressed that Pickleball is growing in popularity and that there is a significant disparity in program variety within the Township for the senior population. Ms. Hodgkiss expressed that there is an abundance of programs geared toward youth sports. Ms. Hodgkiss noted that the Pickleball community would like to see additional courts, potentially at the Tank Car site, as well as indoors at the Recreation Center. Commissioner Ratsavong encouraged Ms. Hodgkiss to assemble a group and develop a proposal. She also mentioned the Recreation Center Advisory Committee will be interested in the proposal when planning begins. Commissioner Ratsavong also noted the potential use of the green space at McKelvie Park, the former location of the third basketball court.

The PRAC committee noted that Pickleball is a destination sport which drives vehicle traffic. With limited parking, adding courts may pose capacity issues. Mrs. Boccella noted that parking is not available at Wyndhill Park which was a benefit for limiting traffic flow and court use by non-residents. The courts were intended for resident use only. As use of the courts increases by both residents and non-residents, the surrounding area experienced some inadvertent consequences. Several neighbors have communicated displeasure with the noise level produced by the sport, especially while working from home. Additionally, neighbors have had driveways blocked and noted the increase in traffic. Several users have had arguments over court time with one individual hosting paid lessons, which is in violation of Township Ordinance 59-4A. To aid with court etiquette, Ms. Hodgkiss agreed to develop a set of rules for the court. The Parks and Recreation Department would create a sign to hang at the courts with these rules.

Mrs. Baiada added that the Parks and Recreation Department conducted a township-wide recreation needs assessment which produced insightful data. The survey was available via the Township website, monthly e-newsletters, social media and several yard signs posted in the parklands. One of these signs was posted next to the bench at the Wyndhill Park Tennis/Pickleball courts in an effort to capture additional

responses. During the survey, respondents were asked “What are the greatest needs for indoor and outdoor facilities to be added, expanded, or improved in Springfield over the next 5 or 10 years?” The community indicated that other recreation projects should be more immediately prioritized, most notably 64% of respondents wanted to see the addition of trails. Pickleball did not rank in the top priorities with only 17% of respondents viewing it as a priority.

9. School District Report (*N. DiFranco*)

The Property Committee will reconvene on January 10. The School Board will reconvene on January 17.

10. Commissioners’ Report (*S. Ratsavong*)

A storm water workshop will be hosted during Spring 2023 for residents to learn about water management in Springfield Township. Commissioner Ratsavong urged each member to develop a list of goals for 2023 Parks and Recreation. Members were also encouraged to visit each park and create a list of talking points and observations. Commissioner Ratsavong would like the committee to pinpoint one park each meeting and discuss needs and wants for each property. The committee would then develop a rubric to assess which parks are highest priority.

11. Call for Adjournment (*E. Baiada*)

Next meeting: Wednesday, February 1, 2023 at 6:30 pm