

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting - June 1, 2022 via Zoom

Attendees: Tina Maresca, Cindy Fasolino, Heather Castellani Milboer, Brittany Ross, Tim O'Connor, Carlo Reca, Karrie Sergio, Kristen Vetter, Manny Rawlings

Present: Jason Pinto, Jeff Ahne, Nora Lucas

Opening:

Tina made a motion to open the meeting, Karrie seconded. Tina made a motion to approve the May minutes, Heather seconded, all approved.

Recreation Website Subcommittee

Tina said Jerry suggested we create a subcommittee to help Jason upgrade the website. Nora said two people would probably be enough. Brittany and Cindy offered to help; Nora will be a liaison. Updates to enhance the website will not begin before September.

Recreation Update:

Jason wanted to thank Jeff and DPW because the park is paved and the lines are getting painted this week so thanks also to our trustees and village manager for approving the project. Camp is full and beginning 6/27 with 330 campers, 67 staff members. The beach is open and had a tremendously busy holiday weekend. Our first movie night is coming up next Friday in HIP, working with One Mamaroneck on a Juneteenth event on 6/18 in Columbus Park, Firemen's carnival, July 4th, Arts Council movie/concert, Emelin Theater concerts, tennis clinics, kayaking/SUP programs, adult softball/volleyball, all the sports' permits all being done. Brittany asked about the SUP program being pretty limited. Jason said that was due to a lack of instructors, qualified instructors being hard to find. Heather asked if there were any openings left for kids for camp, or a waitlist. Jason said even the waitlist is closed, they pretty much only took residents this year.

Parks Update:

Jeff said they're cutting grass, they planted 36 trees, blacktop and paving done, painting lines now. Helping Jason with cleaning the beach every morning with their new tractor and beach rig. Waiting on 3 donation benches and two swing donations, and taking care of fields every day.

Code Violations in Village Parks:

Jason compiled everything he had from different comments from PRC and Tim on what happened on Clean and Green Day so we could discuss quality of life issues. Tim spoke to the parks in Washingtonville; Columbus, Gianunzio, Bub Walker and Pape's. Two of the parks, Bub Walker and Pape's have issues. Residents all know that after 10pm on warm days people tend to hang out at Bub Walker and drink, smoke and all that stuff in the parks. Pape's is Bub Walker issues magnified. Looking for support from the Village police department as well as park rangers to come around on a regular basis to supervise, manage and close the park down at 10pm. During the day they need visual supervision, show a presence. Give a summons if necessary to show people that what they're doing is not acceptable, it's a code violation. A year ago, they had a meeting with the chief so the chief knows what's going on, this is nothing new and

has been going on for years but things came to a boil on May 14th where volunteers were harassed by park goers all day. Police were called and came down but the constant park goers that visit the park are impacting the residents' quality of life. He thinks it's time for code violations or a summons to be handed out in these parks. Carlo said there were 3 community meetings, he attended the first meeting, and it was not only residents but Shark Tank customers were getting harassed also. Carlo said he asked the police in that meeting if their hands were tied and they said yes. Historically there have always been issues over there, drug dealings etc. but now it's becoming real issue and police need to be able to do their job. There have been discussions about more lighting, putting up cameras etc., but they need to address it. Brittany said this was also an issue in Columbus Park with alcohol bottles, a ton of garbage, people drunk in the park in the evening. Families were telling her they didn't want to go there because they were nervous to be there, she asked aren't there police there and they said not really, the police don't want to go to the park anymore because it looks bad if they get people in trouble but that is the job so we need to be enforcing the rules that make our community safer for everyone. Jeff gave another example of an incident last year at Pape's Park with two his employees picking up garbage there, there was a vigil set up which they will leave for a week or so but they removed some liquor bottles and marijuana plant. The next time they visited the park his guys were approached by a group of people wanting the names of who removed the liquor bottles and plant because next time there would be problems. So, for about 3-4 months they had a police escort at the park to make sure his guys were not put in any sort of danger. After that a couple park goers came up to him asking what was going on and Jeff explained to them that they leave the candles but they couldn't have the liquor bottles or plants out in the open in the park. After that it cooled down. Karrie said she felt that this was a problem that we as the PRC don't have any power to do anything about, this is something that the BOT and the police have to address. If you're looking for support from us that this has to stop, 100% yes it does. Jason said from a Parks & Rec staff perspective they field a lot of these calls and complaints about these different issues that they have no control over and it's great that we're taking about it but ultimately the Board would have to send some sort of communication to the police department as one voice. Karrie said yes but as PRC she doesn't know what we can do to help other than say yes something needs to be done and we're supportive of that but it's out of our hands and if the people whose hands it is in are saying their hands are tied, don't know how to respond to that. Carlo said they need to get out there but this has been going on for years. Tina said you do not understand what it's like to be a police officer unless you're wearing that uniform and doing that job and it's even harder when you're not backed. She agrees with everything we're saying but things need to change all around. Tina also said many years ago the Village had a harassment lawsuit because police were driving through Columbus Park too many times so it's not just what the police can do, it's more than that. Tim said maybe as a collective board we can send a letter to the Board or change things in the park. Tim also said he's also concerned about the high school kids who want to set up the Summer Slide program in Pape's Park and make sure those kids are safe too. Tina asked Nora who the contact was for that because she thought if coop camp was going to be at MAS, they should do it at MAS. Jeff said he brought some of these issues forward to them but they were stuck on doing it at Pape's Park. Nora said they wanted to take it outside of a school environment, Jeff said it was an outside of school program and something for the community. Jeff said that at all the other parks there is no parking in front of the entrance to a park but at Pape's they're parked all the way up to the corner so you can't see in. It also creates a danger when crossing the street so he suggested maybe we could post no parking in front of the

park so it opens the park up, in addition to more police presence and everything else. Tina will send an email to that effect to the Board and the Traffic Commission. Nora just wanted to say that as long as she's been on the Board, they have never directed the police to not do their job, she thinks it's just a stressful time to be a police officer right now but she doesn't think the BOT isn't supportive of the police. Brittany asked if was possible to work with the police department to bridge the gap and work together. Tina said we also need to keep in mind all the other parks and it needs to be an overall discussion to better control all the parks. Jason said there are so many park rules being broken all the time but as a staff member when he reaches out to the police/chief they are very thoughtful and responsive and he couldn't ask more from them what he needs in terms of safety for his program. Tina said to Brittany's point there is ongoing communication between the police department and Jason, Jeff and Nora. Kristen said she knows we have several code enforcement officers so she wanted someone to explain what the code enforcement officers enforce vs what the police do. Nora said the code enforcement officers are not police officers, they enforce Village codes, they can write citations and Jason can also write some tickets in the park. Jason said he could potentially write a ticket and he believes the Village manager has the authority to appoint any employee as a code enforcer but they won't put themselves in a dangerous situation. Tina asked if that was something the Building Dept is supposed to be doing. Nora said code enforcement works through the Building Dept and they have someone who works five days a week, two of them weekend days but there have been staffing issues and she doesn't know if code enforcement officials would enforce those kinds of things in parks. Tina asked about Park Rangers. Jason said they are under the police department and start at 6pm but that would be a question for the police department. Brittany said it sounds like we need to ensure the right people are positioned in the right places to enforce the rules. Laura and Jimmy Abbate joined the meeting as guests to speak more about all the issues in the flats. Tina thought maybe we could come up with additional suggestions that could put together so if anyone has any additional ideas they can email them to Tina.

Closing: Tina made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Heather seconded. Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting is September 7th.