

## PRINCETON BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSIONERS

A meeting of the Princeton Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners was held on April 22, 2021 remotely via Zoom.

- Present: Mr. Koontz, Mr. Williamson, Ms. Germaine, Dr. Nosker, Mr. Young, Mr. Burt, Ms. Rogers
- Also Present: Mr. Stentz, Mr. Moorhead & Ms. Paulucci
- Absent: Dr. Cahill & Dr. Frawley, Aidan McChesney & Andrew DeLuca

### Public Comment

- Jo Butler (Princeton resident): Ms. Butler attended the most recent Princeton Board of Health Meeting and provided her feedback regarding discussion that took place at the meeting. According to Ms. Butler, the Chairman of the Board of Health made a statement that, based on peer reviewed research, the Board of Health has found no evidence that artificial turf poses a health risk. Ms. Butler expressed her dismay that Recreation staff worked on the Hilltop project for over two years and that the Commission did not get an opportunity to go before Council on this matter. Ms. Butler recounted a recent conversation in which she was told by a council member that they found it to be an issue of equity in terms of reducing green space for residents in the Hilltop Park neighborhood and that Hilltop was not a viable alternative for this type of project. Ms. Butler also stated her opinion that Princeton Environmental Commission does not have the authority to ban turf fields (as was discussed at the PEC meeting on 3/24/21). *Discussion was held.*

### Activities Report

In addition to the activities in the agenda packet, Ms. Paulucci reported on the following:

- Princeton Special Sports: Ms. Paulucci is working on plans for the picnic to be held in June at the pool (non-swimming event).
- Wonder of Magic Camp, new program.
- Chess Program, new program.
- Many other new programs will be added as the weeks go on.
- Expanding Sports Programs: offering to the younger ages. More fundamentals focused.
- PRD is excited about offering new opportunities for all ages and grades.

### Corner House Student Board

There was no Corner House Student Report.

### Director's Report

Mr. Stentz reported on the following:

- **NJ Parks & Recreation Association (NJRPA) Awards Ceremony:** Ms. Paulucci will be receiving the NJRPA Bill Foelsch Award on 5/19 at an in-person ceremony in Summit.
- **Recreation Office Hours:** The office is open Full-time, 9-5, Monday-Friday. The office will also be open weekends once the pool opens. As of now, PRD is the only municipal office that is open but others may open up in the next couple of weeks.

- **Program Supervisor Position:** The open position has been offered to our preferred candidate and verbally accepted. May 3 is the tentative start date.
- **CP Pool:** The pool is on schedule for the pool to open Saturday, May 29. It will be open weekends only for the first several weeks. Starting Monday, June 21 the pool will be open daily until Labor Day.
- **Mary Moss Park:** As of now, our Health Officer believes that we can open the spray pad in '21. He is still waiting for more guidance from the state with regards to mask wearing at that facility.
- **State Department of Health:** Staff is expecting updated guidance for pools in the coming weeks. At this time, we are taking steps to return to more normal pool operation than in 2020.

Mr. Moorhead reported on the following:

- **CP Pool Memberships:** PRD will be providing a membership option in 2021 for all Princeton Residents and any non-residents that were members in 2019. Memberships were not available in 2020 due to capacity restrictions. While the state has yet to update capacity guidelines in 2021, staff feels comfortable increasing our capacity number to an extent that we can allow both memberships and daily admission. In 2020, staff took a very conservative approach and set a capacity limit that was well below state guidelines. Staff is finalizing the hours of operation and expects to return to a single, longer block for public swim rather than the two smaller blocks that we had in 2020.
- **Daily Admission Cards (DAC):** Princeton residents will continue to have the option of paying the daily admission fee in 2021. Residents will need to register for a DAC prior to coming to the pool. Non-residents will not have the DAC option in 2021.
- **Bluefish Swim/Dive Team:** Plans are underway to have a Bluefish Swim/Dive Season albeit with some registration caps and social distancing measures in place. These restrictions include capping lanes at four swimmers max, reducing practice time for some age groups to 40 minutes and the potential for virtual meets.
- **Princeton Area Master Swim (PAM):** There will be a registration cap on Master Swim in order to limit capacity in 2021. First priority in registration will be given to returning master swimmers.
- **Project Completion:** The following projects were recently completed:
  - Grover Park Field 2 Retaining Wall
  - CP Tennis Courts Power washing and crack repair
  - Repair of the seams on the main pool and dive well

### Old Business

- **Hilltop Park Project:** Mr. Stentz provided an update on the Hilltop Park Project. Immediately following the Princeton Environmental Commission Meeting on 3/24/21, municipal staff was directed by administration to stop working on the project. Mr. Moorhead conveyed this at the March Recreation Commission meeting. Since that time, the only project communication received by recreation staff has had has been with interim administrator, Bob Bruschi. That communication indicated that council was considering their options as to what to do with the county grant money and exploring alternatives. One idea under discussion is to add the repair and improvement of the asphalt pathways in municipal parks to an existing pathway improvement project that is already underway. At the direction of Mr. Bruschi, Mr. Stentz has called the Mercer County Planning Department to inquire as to whether Princeton can change their plans. The county indicated that they are willing to be flexible but that there several steps the

town must take first, including passing a new resolution by the governing body. Mr. Stentz stated that since the March Recreation Commission meeting, other than a few conversations, 99% of staff time has focused on the parks, athletic fields, programs, pool and summer planning.

- Mr. Koontz thanked Dr. Nosker, Mr. Burt and Recreation staff. Mr. Koontz stated that the agreement between the county and the municipality is clear and detailed and that any change will require a resolution from council.
- Mr. Williamson expressed his thanks to Mr. Stentz and Mr. Moorhead for their handling of the situation and stated that this has been the most confusing and painful issue in his time on Council. Mr. Williamson recognized that the public opposition that arose in the last several months could not be ignored and that it played a major role in what has transpired. The PEC's proposed ban on artificial turf was also a factor. He stated that council never made a decision to kill the turf project but that staff decided to redirect their efforts away from the project. At this time, Mr. Williamson believes the most important question to answer is how do we redirect our efforts and find an alternative for the grant funding. *Discussion was held.*
- Ms. Germaine questioned how a contract, signed and sealed by the municipality, can be discarded simply because there is now opposition to the project. She believes that many youth are out of shape post-covid and need outlets for exercise. The turf field clearly addressed that issue but improving pathways will not.
- Dr. Nosker stated that every time during his extended tenure on the Recreation Commission that we have sought to do a park project in Princeton, it has raised opposition from neighbors that don't want it in their neighborhood. Most recently, this includes Mary Moss Park. He wondered why Council is surprised by this reaction since it happens every time. He stated his disappointment at the misinformation presented at the March PEC meeting including statements that Princeton only needed two multi-purpose athletic fields based on population size of the town.

### New Business

- **No New Business**

### Communications

*Communications shared in agenda packet*

### Approval of Minutes

- Ms. Rogers moved the minutes, seconded by Mr. Burt and approved. Mr. Koontz, Ms. Germaine, Mr. Williamson & Dr. Nosker abstained.

### Approval of Bills

- Mr. Koontz made a motion to approve the bills, seconded by Mr. Williamson and approved.

### Next Meeting Date

*May 27, 2021*