

## PRINCETON BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSIONERS

A meeting of the Princeton Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners was held on August 26, 2021 remotely via Zoom.

- Present: Mr. Young, Mr. Williamson, Dr. Cahill, Dr. Nosker, Dr. Frawley, Ms. Germaine & Ms. Rogers
- Also Present: Mr. Moorhead, Ms. Paulucci, Mr. Petrucelli, Ms. Caines & Mr. Hvodovic
- Absent: Mr. Burt & Mr. Koontz

### Public Comment

Beverly Shumway (Princeton Resident) – Expressed her disappointment that Princeton Recreation has no special needs programming. She referenced programming offered by Plainsboro Recreation and expressed her opinion that PRD should be offering similar opportunities.

Tracy O’Toole (Princeton resident) – Echoed Beverly’s comments regarding her perceived lack of inclusive recreation programming by PRD. She strongly believes that inclusive recreation should be a top priority for PRD. Presently, she is driving to other towns for programs for her child to participate. There are parents in Princeton that are willing and able to assist according to Ms. O’Toole.

Bernie Hvozdic: Municipal Administrator – Introduced himself and thanked the Recreation Commission for their service.

### Activities Report

In addition to the activities in the agenda packet, Mr. Petrucelli reported on the following:

Summer programming

- US Sports Institute’s (USSI) 7<sup>th</sup> and final week of programming begins on 8/30; The Multi-sports program was our most popular USSI offering this summer
- Mitch Henderson clinic – June 28 make-up scheduled for 9/19/21

Fall Programming

- Registration is now open for USSI programming, as well as boys & girls basketball clinics

Other

- Meeting with instructors about the possibility of chess/fitness classes for youth and adults
- In contact with local schools to see whether indoor space/gyms will be available to PRD this fall/winter for recreation programs/activities.
- Outreach has been made to the Princeton University’s women’s basketball coaches with the hopes of partnering with them on a future clinic. Thus far there has been no response.

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

- Ms. Paulucci shared PRD’s 2021 Summer Programming Summary. She reiterated that all of our youth programming is open to individuals of all abilities. This past summer saw the largest

number of participants ever from the special needs/adaptive community. Staff will work with parents and caregivers to make accommodations for all participants.

- Programs that are on the horizon for the adaptive community include; track clinics, dance, and chair fitness. Ms. Paulucci explained that if PRD had more staffing resources, we would be able to offer more. She has a meeting scheduled with an employee from the Special Olympics office in Lawrence to find out what type of resources/training might be available through them.
- Based off the success of some of the programs offered this summer, we will be offering Princeton Empowerment and Chess Classes this fall

Mr. Williamson thanked Ms. Paulucci for pointing out that our programs are inclusive for youth of all abilities.

Mr. Moorhead commended Ms. Paulucci and Mr. Petrucelli on the menu of programming options offered this summer. Once again, staff had to pivot on short notice when it became apparent that we would not be able to offer day camp or travel camp again in 2021 due to the ongoing pandemic. Mr. Moorhead recognized the amount of time and effort that it took on the part of our programming staff to pull together such a wide variety of options in a relatively short timeframe. Mr. Moorhead also pointed out that between Ms. Paulucci, Mr. Petrucelli and himself, they have worked approximately 300 extra hours (unpaid) beyond their normal work schedules thus far in '21.

### Corner House Student Board

There was no Corner House Student Report.

### Director's Report

Mr. Moorhead reported on the following:

- **Special Needs Programming:** Mr. Moorhead pointed out that PRD has had a long-standing partnership with Princeton Special Sports (PSS) that includes monthly dances and special events. For years, PSS also ran a highly successful and labor-intensive sports program for special needs youth that took place during the fall, winter and spring seasons annually. According to Mr. Moorhead, the recent announcement that PSS would no longer be offering that sports programming is a major loss for the community. Mr. Moorhead reminded the Commission that several years ago, PSS informed PRD staff that there might be a time in the future when they no longer had the necessary staffing to run the sports program. However, they were not specific about a timeframe. Then PRD Executive Director, Ben Stentz, took this information to municipal administration on multiple occasions. Mr. Stentz was clear that the town, in his opinion, had an obligation to be part of the solution, but that as presently constituted, PRD did not have the staffing to absorb the PSS sports operation, which is a massive undertaking.

Mr. Moorhead stated that there are some municipal recreation departments in the state that provide therapeutic recreation (TR) programs in-house, but the departments that do this all have dedicated TR personnel (including Plainsboro Township). PRD does not have anyone dedicated to TR. We are fortunate that we have a current program supervisor, Ms. Paulucci, that has an interest and passion for this work, but she has many other responsibilities on her plate and cannot take on the workload of running the PSS sports operation. Mr. Moorhead also discussed the timing and that there was no warning or advance notice leading up to PSS's announcement this June and, as such, PRD staff was caught off guard. Prior to that, it had been several years

since PSS and PRD had discussions regarding the future of the PSS leadership. In the short-term, Ms. Paulucci has been working hard to put together some adaptive offerings for this fall within the limitations of the rest of her current workload.

Ms. Germaine commended Ms. Paulucci for her diligent and creative work in this area. She inquired as to whether there are partnership opportunities with other towns and pointed out that PSS had many participants that were not Princeton residents. Dr. Nosker asked whether other towns welcome non-resident participants in the same way that PSS always has. Mr. Williamson inquired as to whether there was a written proposal to mayor/council outlining budgetary/staffing needs that would be required to take over PSS programming. *Discussion was held.* Mr. Moorhead stated that it would require, at a minimum, a full-time staff-person dedicated to TR to begin to take on the workload being discussed. Dr. Nosker asked whether there might be the opportunity to share staffing resources with other towns as it relates to special needs programming. Ms. Germaine requested more information about the scope of the PSS operation (how many participants, number of buddy volunteers, most popular offerings, etc). Mr. Young reiterated that seeing something in writing with regards to increased staffing would be helpful.

- **CP Pool Update:**
  - Final day of the season will be 9/6/21 (Labor Day). The recent heatwave has seen an increase in pool attendance. Mr. Moorhead reminded the Commission that we struggle to have enough lifeguards every year at this point of the season as all of the college guards have gone back to school and many of the high school guards are involved with pre-season practices for fall sports. There may be upcoming shifts where we need to close the slide/dive well for certain periods on busy days as we do not have enough guards to cover.
  - Twenty-Four (24) new lifeguards were trained by PRD staff earlier this month. Of those 24, 15 were interested in working at CP Pool and have been offered jobs.
  - There were over 4,400 pool members and just shy of 3,000 daily admission card holders in '21. Financially speaking we are in a much better position this year than in '20 in terms of paying our bills and having money for capital projects.
  - After we close the pool on Labor Day, it is typically a 6-8 week process to get the pool ready for winter, not including any major repairs.
- **Fall Youth Sports Season:**
  - Soccer, flag football, Princeton Little League and Princeton Babe Ruth are all planning to use our fields this fall.
  - Mr. Moorhead remarked that the window of down-time in the summer for the athletic fields seems to get smaller each year as the number of all-star teams and summer camps has only increased. This translates into more work for the PRD maintenance staff to maintain the fields and additional wear and tear on our fields that never seem to get much rest. The season now extends from late March through the end of November.
- **Park Clean-up**
  - PRD Maintenance has been performing clean-up tasks at several park locations around town during the month of August. This work includes weeding, trimming branches, replenishing playground mulch and other general clean-up tasks. Due to the heavy workload in late spring/early summer, we were not able to get to this work as early as we would have liked.
- **Mary Moss Playground**

- The replacement button for the spray feature activator arrived earlier this month and was installed. We experienced additional electrical issues with the internal circuit board within the last week. PRD maintenance was able to troubleshoot the problem with assistance from our electrician and Water Odyssey (spray feature manufacturer). In addition, several plumbing issues were discovered and we have reached out to a plumber to repair. Weather permitting, the spray features will remain on past Labor Day into the month of September. *Discussion was held.*
- **Joint Effort Safe Streets Summer Event (First week in August)**
  - Mr. Moorhead took part in a panel discussion along with representatives from several other youth services agencies in town.
  - Mr. Stentz received the Mildred Trotman Community Service Award.
- **Municipal Budget**
  - Funding has been approved for the 2021 municipal capital budget. Staff has begun to get additional quotes and move forward with purchases/projects that were on this year's list.
  - Mr. Moorhead is working on the '22 capital and operating budgets, as well as the 6-year look ahead on capital budget requests.
- **In-Person Meetings**
  - The plan to return to in-person meetings, originally scheduled for the council meeting on 9/13/21, has been tabled for the time being due to rise in covid numbers. There is no timeline at present to return to in-person meetings.

### Old Business

- **Mercer at Play:** Mr. Moorhead provided an update on the status of Mercer at Play (MoP). Mr. Moorhead reminded the Commission that with Recreation in the middle of our busiest season (summer) while also being down a full-time staff person, there has been little time to concentrate on identifying a new direction for this grant funding. For the last 3 years, all staff resources for MoP had been devoted to the Hilltop turf project, which had been, up to that point, approved by council. With that idea now tabled, staff and the Commission must now identify a new project. Towards that end, Mr. Moorhead would like to reconvene the MoP sub-committee of the Commission (Dr. Nosker and Mr. Burt) to discuss new ideas. Mr. Moorhead invited additional participation from anyone else on the Commission that might be interested. Once the Commission identifies a new project idea, a special work session will take place at a council meeting so that the idea can be discussed in a public forum. *Discussion was held.*

Dr. Cahill suggested that Recreation staff and the Commission consider surveying our users to identify potential areas of interest and priorities moving forward.

Ms. Rogers inquired as to whether the proposed survey would address the need for additional athletic field space and/or improved athletic field space for our user groups. Since the discussion has now pivoted away from using MoP funding for an artificial turf field, Ms. Rogers questioned whether we have abandoned our push to improve athletic field space. *Discussion was held.* Mr. Moorhead stated that the likelihood of a new park property with athletic field space coming online in the future appears to be small given the scarcity and expense of available land. Therefore, CP South is likely our best/only chance to take existing park space and renovate/improve the existing conditions as that park is under-utilized due to the relatively poor quality of the natural grass turf and the uneven terrain. However, that project would have a

multi-million dollar price tag and it is unknown when the funding would be available for such a project. Mr. Moorhead referenced a master plan currently underway by the municipalities planning department and his hope that recreation space would be included in that plan. In addition, Mr. Moorhead reminded the Commission that indoor space for recreation programming is another area in which the municipality is lacking adequate facilities of their own.

### New Business

- **Pool Membership – CP Pool 1,000,000<sup>th</sup> Visitor**

Mr. Moorhead explained that we are approaching the 1,000,000<sup>th</sup> visitor in the history of the new CP Pool and that staff would like to offer a free 2022 pool membership to the individual/family when we reach that milestone before summer's end. Dr. Cahill requested that we notify the local media outlets. *Discussion was held.*

*Dr. Nosker made a motion to approve a free pool membership 2022 for the 1,000,000<sup>th</sup> visitor seconded by Ms. Germaine and approved.*

- **New Fall Programs**

Ms. Paulucci presented a menu of programs for the fall that includes existing options, as well as several new offerings. Among those are several new adaptive clinics/programs. All programs will take place outdoors and several will be held in the open-air community room at the pool. This will be the first time that we have made use of that room for programming opportunities outside of the summer season. Mr. Williamson requested that staff make a point of highlighting that all of our programs are inclusive of individuals of all ability levels.

*Dr. Nosker made a motion to approve the menu and fees for the new fall programs, seconded by Mr. Williamson and approved.*

### Communications

*Communications shared in agenda packet.*

Mr. Moorhead highlighted the emails received from residents requesting the town consider adding Pickleball courts. Mr. Moorhead stated that in addition to budgetary considerations, the primary issue would be one of location. We are not in a position to sacrifice any existing active recreation area at our parks and due to the noise factor associated with this sport, it is not advisable to install courts near residential homes. In some instances, existing tennis courts can be over-laid with Pickleball lines but that also presents a different set of logistical and scheduling challenges. Mr. Moorhead reminded the Commission that we are in year 1 of the current 3-year lease with Princeton Tennis Program where they operate all programming at the courts. No changes to the court operation would be possible at this time. Mr. Moorhead has reached out to PTP to discuss further. *Discussion was held.*

### Approval of Minutes

- July minutes:

*Dr. Cahill moved the minutes, seconded by Dr. Nosker and approved. Dr. Frawley and Ms. Rogers abstained.*

### Approval of Bills

Dr. Nosker requested more information on several of this month's bills. *Discussion was held.*

- *Dr. Nosker made a motion to approve the bills, seconded by Dr. Frawley and approved.*

Next Meeting Date

*October 7, 2021*