

Reading Recreation Commission
7:00PM
3rd & Spruce Recreation Center
Minutes of the March 5, 2019 Meeting

The Reading Recreation Commission was called to order on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 at 7:00PM by Donald Taddei Jr.

The board performed the Pledge of the Allegiance and Daphne took the roll call of the members. There were nine of nine board members present and they included Bernardo Carbajal, Christopher Celmer, Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz, Ralph Johnson, Joseph Kelleher, Donald Taddei, Jr., Brian Twyman, Tyler Washington and Patricia Wright. Ralph Johnson entered the meeting at 7:10PM. Staff in attendance: Heather Boyer, Program Supervisor, Daphne Klahr, Executive Director and Rebecca Swoyer, Business Manager (recording secretary). Guest: Brett Fegley from Hartman, Valeriano, Magovern & Lutz, P.C. Reading Recreation Commission Solicitor.

Executive Session

The meeting went into executive session as 7:02PM. The meeting resumed at 7:45PM. During executive session it was decided that Daphne will inform all board members of any serious injury that requires outside medical attention. There will be additional training on concussion protocols and cardiac training for all staff members. Donald stated that he will get all the information out to the board and Daphne can share it with staff.

New Business

Election of Officers

Nomination for Chairman: Patricia Wright nominated Donald Taddei Jr. for Chairman. Ralph Johnson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Nomination for Vice-Chairman: Donald Taddei Jr. nominated Christopher Celmer for Vice-Chairman. Joseph Kelleher seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Nomination for Secretary: Christopher Celmer nominated Patricia Wright for Secretary. Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Nomination for Treasurer: Donald Taddei Jr. nominated Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz for Treasurer. Brian Twyman seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Minutes

The minutes from the October 9, 2018 & October 18, 2018 meetings were reviewed.

Bernardo Carbajal made a motion to approve the October 9, 2018 & October 18, 2018 minutes. Patricia Wright seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz asked Daphne to summarize. Daphne stated that we received 1st quarter payments from the city and school district. Daphne informed that board that the audit with RKL, LLC will be held at the end of this month. Once the audit is finished they will be at a future meeting to present their findings. Daphne stated that we are in good financial standing at this point. We are coming into our busy season. Playground registration opened March 1st. Christopher Celmer asked Daphne if she is available to attend the school board meeting on April 17th at 6:00PM. She is available and will attend. The following reports were available for review: Balance sheet Previous Month Comparison which compared months September & October 2018; October & November 2018; November & December 2018 and December 2018 & January 2019; Programs Profit & Loss budget vs. actual; Administration Profit & Loss budget vs. actual; Pool Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual; Tennis Profit & Loss budget vs. actual; Income Detail Report & Expense Detail. Marcia asked if there were any questions, there being none,

Christopher Celmer made the motion to accept the Treasurer's report as presented. Tyler Washington seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Old Business

Executive Director's Report

Daphne gave a verbal Executive Director's report for October 2018 – February 2019

Highlights:

1. Daphne discussed a very serious matter that has been happening at the 11th & Pike recreation center. We have had several children with suicidal thoughts and making indications that they want to hurt themselves. We do have a protocol in place to deal with this but our staff are not trained counselors in this area. We work closely with the school district, guidance counselors and parents. Daphne reached out to Council on Chemical Abuse who referred her to Berks County Mental Health. She spoke to Pam Seaman from Berks County Mental Health. They are coming up with two trainings. The first is going to be the QPR training (question, persuade, refer) to tell people how they should talk to someone if this comes up. It is a free training that will be held at 3rd & Spruce. It will be on a week night. The rec centers will be closed early so all staff can attend. The training will be 1 to 1 ½ hours. Once the date has been finalized it will be sent out to everyone. Christopher Celmer asked how often it is coming through our team. Daphne stated we have had 4 cases so far this school year. Christopher stated that maybe we should reach out to Mark Braun at Progressions Behavioral Health Services, Inc. because it is beyond what our staff can handle. Christopher stated that maybe he can provide a resource when those serious cases happen. Daphne also stated that Berks County Mental Health shared that we are first agency to request a training for kids. We are also looking to do this on two separate occasions where we would close the rec centers and hold the trainings for the kids or the kids and their parents. This would be a totally different presentation that they are still working on.
2. Daphne brought up the other issue we have...hygiene. Some of it is tied to homelessness. We did give out bags of deodorant, shampoo, soap but some don't have access. Christopher Celmer told Daphne to refer them to Knight's closet which is a program at Reading High School. Patricia Wright told Daphne to e-mail her with a number of kids that need hygiene items and she will reach out to her church and get kits for them.
3. Daphne informed the board that our new website is just about finished. We will be switching over to the new website soon.
4. She is touring parks in June with the Reading Environment Council which is comprised of individuals in the community and public works employees.
5. The South of Penn Façade Improvement Project is just about to start improvements in the 300 block finally. After Dean Rohrbach passed away, rest his sole, they hired Andy Moeltress to take his place. They have identified the plan of work and are ready to move forward. Our role primarily is to be the contact with the neighbors. We are trying to create safe spaces so they can walk to the parks, rec centers, etc.
6. The Reading Radsport Festival will be held the first weekend in August in West Reading and City Park. They are going to expand the dirt course in City Park which was hugely successful last year. Daphne stated to the board if anyone is interested in volunteering or playing a role in the Radsport to please let her know and she will send an e-mail with what volunteer opportunities are available. She will also need the shirt size of the volunteer.
7. The parks master plan is now in the final draft. We are waiting for the State and our consultant to finalize the plan. On our end everything is complete. Thank you to Ralph for all his help with the master plan. Ralph wanted the board to know that his role in the master plan is not as a board member but as the Public Works Director for the City of Reading. Once the plan is finished it will be sent to city council. Marcia stated that she is interested in the plan and asked if it covers the wooded areas of parks. Ralph stated that it does not get into the mountain. The study scope that was agreed to with DCNR and the consultant did not include the mountain. Daphne stated that they recommended another smaller plan for that.
8. Daphne met with Councilwomen Salnick per her request with JD Turner and the skateboard committee at 3rd & Spruce rec center. They are looking to build a skate park on land that is owned by the Reading Redevelopment Authority across from Canal Street. They have moved along and brought plans about what they have going on now. It is exciting.
9. Daphne stated that the County of Berks also wants to build a hydroponic green house across from Canal Street. Patricia asked what about the greenhouse they already have. Daphne asked the same question to Commissioner Bernhardt in a meeting. It was stated that the greenhouse in City Park needs so many upgrades that they could not get enough funding to repair it. Commissioner Bernhardt and Councilwomen Sihelnik are the lead on this project.

10. Daphne met with the Reading Garden Club. They reached out to the RRC because they have a group of individuals who would like to do some gardening with kids. They have individuals in the community that would like to come out and work with kids. Daphne suggested container gardening and helping with our community gardens at the rec centers. They are really excited about those ideas and are taking it back to their club meeting and deciding on a plan. Patricia Wright asked who runs this program. Daphne stated Mary Kilkka. She stated that they used to do a lot of work at the Reading Public Museum.
11. We are also partnering with the YMCA and the County of Berks for Healthy Kids Day which is held on the Bern fields off route 183. We have participated in the past but have a larger role this year. They are looking for information to provide to children that are nutrition and health based. It is scheduled for Saturday, April 27th.
12. There is a Northeast Task Force that was just formed with Albright College and the Wyomissing Foundation to do improvements in the northeast. It looks like their primary focus is on 11th & Pike. It has just started with only two meetings held at this time. Daphne will send out information to the board. Meetings are open. It is like the South of Penn project which has been going on for several years except this has just started. Brian asked who runs this program. Daphne stated that Jacque Fetrow from Albright College is the lead on this project working with Karen Rightmire from the Wyomissing Foundation. Daphne stated that the meetings are held at the school and are open to the public. When she receives the flyer she will send it out to the board.
13. We are partnering with Reading Area Community College. Daphne met with Auria Bradley regarding ESL and GED classes. They received funding to offer ESL and GED classes for people in the south of penn area. Daphne offered our space and computer rooms for their use for this program on weekends. We are going to distribute their information to the parents of our kids to make people aware of this program. Auria asked if there was any way to reach out to the school district to get a list of kids in the south of penn area that would be interested in the GED classes. Christopher asked Daphne to send him an e-mail and he will get her in contact with someone at the school.
14. There is a career fair at Northeast Middle School on Friday, May 24th. If anyone has career knowledge that you would like to share with kids at Northeast this is the event. Daphne stated that Alex Brown does an amazing job of putting this together.
15. We are partnering with the Junior League of Reading. Daphne made a presentation to them a couple months ago at their meeting. As a follow-up to that we have come up with a career day for all girls in the Girls Leadership Program. We may open it up to additional girls. We did a career survey to find out exactly what girls are interested about. We are meeting with the Junior League this Thursday to nail down those professions and recruit their members to have a career day.
16. We met with the Reading Public Museum today. We are partnering with them again this summer which we have won four state excellence in parks awards for. This year their theme is Smokey Bear. We will be working this summer with the kids to create their own art work.
17. Daphne just applied for a \$50,000 in kind grant for Schlegel Park to upgrade all three of our ballfields. Our ballfields are heavily used by the school district primarily. They come in and do all the work...in field, outfield, back stops, fencing, etc. That would be tremendous. It is a national competition. Brian asked if this is associated with the Eighteenth Wonder. Daphne stated that it is not. They presented at city council and had an interest in a project for Schlegel Park. They talked about sponsoring a swim team and repaving the walk ways. Ralph stated that Daphne should reach out to Sam Loth who is the consultant for the Eighteenth Wonder. Ralph will e-mail Daphne Sam's information. Daphne stated that the Scott's grant gives out \$50,000 every year. We would be one of the smaller cities to ever get it. However, they did reach out to Daphne because there was an error with them processing the grant application. They asked her to resubmit the grant application. So fingers crossed!
18. Daphne also applied to expand our funding from the PA Arts Council who funds us almost every year for our arts programs especially at Pendora Park.
19. We received a camping trip grant for girls leadership to partner with the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club. She just applied for the second part of that grant to send all our girls overnight camping for the whole weekend. She asked if anyone likes to camp and would like to volunteer please let her know. We do not have the dates set but it will be end of April beginning of May. We would have about 85 – 90 girls out camping and having nature experiences.
20. John Gilmore gave us two year's worth of grant funding for Barbey's Playground. So for this year and next year we are guaranteed funding. We are working with the church again so we will have a program there. Patricia asked what the funding covers. Daphne stated that it covers everything....staff costs, offsets

kids registration costs, field trips, art supplies, etc. He has funded the program the last two years so we are looking at four years of funding which is fantastic! Patricia asked if he was fixing the water feature at Barbey's Playground. Unfortunately not, that is a city issue. Ralph reported that he did not have an update on the water feature at this time. A discussion regarding the water feature followed. Daphne is going to get some quotes and get back to the board with the information.

21. Daphne spoke about the playgrounds. She stated last year we had declining numbers at the Hillside Playground location. We feel it is particularly because we do not have an indoor building at that location. So rather than eliminate that program we are lowering our numbers to a minimum of 20 and maximum of 30 kids. We are also adding an additional playground program at 6th & Amity where we do have a building. Last year we had declining numbers at the Hillside playground program. So rather than eliminate it we are lowering it to a minimum of 20 and adding an additional program at 6th & Amity. That will be a new area of the city. We will advertise at Riverside school and the surrounding neighborhoods. This adds a 10th playground program to our list. Ralph stated that there is someone in the neighborhood there already doing things. He asked if Daphne coordinated with this person. Daphne stated that we have coordinated with the mayor's office who assured us there were no problems. Patricia stated that his name is Will Johnson and he does a lot of good things at the playground. A discussion followed. Daphne stated that she will reach out to the Mayor's Office.
22. Brian asked for an update on the plans for Hillside. Daphne stated it was left in the hands of the City. She asked Ralph if the sale went through. Ralph stated there was an issue with the environmental study which is being held in the managing director and the law office. He stated he is not involved at this time. Marcia brought up the storage issue with Christmas on the Mountain and Tim Profit. Daphne stated that there is a storage unit there but it was vandalized. When plans become under way at Hillside we can look into a storage unit.
23. Daphne took a moment to talk about Raycell Diaz. She has been a part of girls leadership since 2013 when the program began. She is a leader at Reading High. She reached out to Daphne stating she would like to volunteer as a junior leader at the Northeast Girls Leadership Program. So now she is co-leading the program and the kids love her! She chose girls leadership because she said it made such a difference in her life and wanted to give back.
24. Daphne stated that the walk in project that we have been talking about has stalled. Daphne received notification from the Clark Foundation that they were withdrawing their offer of support for the program. They stated that the owner did not like that we were publicly funded and did not like the structure of our board. They wanted an organization that is completely community non-profit. They sent us a check for \$10,000.00 to support the project and all the plans for the project. Daphne was disappointed to say the least. She met with them five times and provided all our financial information to them from the beginning. They were on board however the owner was not. She continued to say that another opportunity has presented itself. It just so happens that the camping grant she submitted opened up another opportunity. A gentlemen through the Blue Mountain hiking club works for a company that is based in London. They give out large grants especially health related grants that focus on kids. Daphne spoke to him about this project. He is coming here in April to look at the facilities and the plans and decide whether or not he can support a grant application to his company. You have to get local support in order to go to London to support this grant project. She stated that we do have enough money to complete one of the projects at Pike however the need is here at Spruce. A discussion followed regarding in kind donations and getting the funding for both projects.
25. We won a state excellence in recreation parks award! They award 10 every year. We won for Teachers in the Parks. That awards ceremony is April 4th. If anyone would like to attend it is in State College. It is very exciting for us! We have won every single year since we started submitting.

Patricia Wright made a motion to accept the Executive Director's report as represented. Tyler Washington seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Brian asked Daphne about the Reading Environmental Council. She stated that she was invited by Shelly Katzmoyer to go to their meeting. They asked Daphne to take them on a tour of parks in June. They are going to go to the parks, talk about what the needs are and go from there. Marcia stated it is the EAC (Environmental Advisory Council). The board asked to be made aware of the tour and to attend.

Marcia wanted to follow-up with the discussion about the Pagoda and how the RRC could become more actively involved. As it looks right now the Pagoda would like to have the RRC sponsor some activities. In the past Daphne had some really good ideas. They want to start to look outside the box on how to use the Pagoda even though it is a challenge with the space available. They are looking at having a jazz fest event at the Pagoda...sunset at the Pagoda. The jazz festival will be held Wednesday, April 10th. Marcia stated about the potential to use the 2nd floor or even the whole building that might engage families and children. Donald asked how many people the 2nd floor can seat. Marcia stated you are allowed to have 100 people in the building and on the second floor approximately 50 can be seated. Marcia would like Daphne to come up with some ideas, dates and see if we can make it happen. A discussion followed regarding alcohol being served there.

Ralph discussed the 9th & Marion fire station and the playground. Daphne stated that she was contacted by the fire chief regarding this. She stated that the first thing they needed to review was where the funding came from. Osmer Deming asked her to look into funding. Daphne reached out to DCNR and it turns out it did get funding but not from the land and water conservation fund. It did get State funding a very long time ago. Daphne stated she wants to ensure that it is out in the open and not hidden like Lance place playground. She wants something that is visible to the street, the Fire Company and people coming in and out to keep it safer and drug free. A discussion followed regarding the funding and a need for a playground in that area.

Patricia asked again about Barbey's playground water feature. Ralph stated that it is not even in the budget. Daphne stated that the design is the problem, not the motor. Daphne is going to get a price.

Patricia asked if there was an update on Reading Youth coming under the RRC. Donald stated that there haven't been any more meetings regarding it. He has not been able to talk to his board at this time. Once Donald has talked to the Reading Youth board it will come back to RRC to discuss.

The Council on Chemical Abuse is working with the RRC and The Olivets on this year's problem gambling awareness poster contest and awareness event. The Theme this year is The Good, The Bad, The Ugly which basically looks a gaming and gambling. An internationally renamed speaker is coming in on March 26th @ 6:30 at the Double Tree. Marcia stated that last year the winning poster came from 3rd & Spruce. The winning poster will be displayed on the jumbotron at the Fightin Phils game. Marcia stated she will send out a flyer to everyone

Christopher made the board aware that he reached out to Daphne by the request of the school board regarding kitchen equipment that the school district is disposing of.

Patricia stated that Reading High's play, Hairspray, is March 15th & 16th. It is \$5.00 for kids & \$10.00 for adults.

Daphne reminded the board that we have our Chef Sprout program where we teach the kids how to cook and bring in guest celebrity chefs. Brian Twyman volunteered for March 19th at 11th & Pike. If anyone wants to volunteer or knows of someone please let Heather know.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be brought before the board,

Patricia Wright made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:01PM. Ralph Johnson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Upcoming meetings:

April Recreation Commission Meeting – Tuesday, April 9th at 7:00PM, 3rd & Spruce Recreation Center.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Swoyer
Recording Secretary