

**MINUTES**  
**Recreation Commission**  
**October 19, 2022**

A Regular Meeting of the Recreation Commission of the Borough of River Edge was held via Zoom on October 19, 2022 due to the closure of Borough Hall for renovations. The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Interim Recreation Director Michelle Ryan, who read the open public meetings statement: "This meeting complies with the Open Public Meeting Act by notification on January 7th of this location, date and time to the Town News and The Record and by posting of same on the municipal bulletin board and Borough website and filing a notice of the same with the Municipal Clerk. Notice of this meeting by the October 15, 2022 Sunshine Notice was sent to The Record and Town News, posted on the Borough website, and filed with the Municipal Clerk."

PRESENT: Chairperson Lauren Cerullo, Members Alicia Armental, Alphonse Bartelloni (Alternate), Steven Baxter, Maryann Komar (7:22pm due to technical difficulties) and Kevin LoPresti (Alternate, left at 7:50pm)

ABSENT: Chairperson Anna Delia, Members Brianne Etter and Ken Krautheim

ALSO PRESENT: Councilperson Indira Kinsella  
Interim Recreation Director Michelle Ryan

***Update from Recreation Subcommittee on Softball Fields:***

Mayor Papaleo will be joining around 7:30pm to discuss this agenda item.

***Upcoming Community Events:***

- Halloween in the Park – October 29<sup>th</sup> (raindate 10/30) – Memorial Park – 2pm to 4pm

Ms. Ryan advised that the flyer is being sent by the school and is being put on social media and the website. She has sought donations from Trader Joe's (water), donuts from Dunkin and Krispy Kreme, candy from Wegman's, Stop & Shop, BJ's and Costco. Unfortunately, Shop Rite declined. Girl Scouts have 8 tables that they are setting up for the table decorating contest. Ms. Ryan will bring Halloween inflatables and other personal decorations to minimize that expense. The police department has been notified. Several high school students have volunteered to set up/clean up. For next year's event, Recreation may want to consider using Bergen County Park's haywagon.

- Veterans Day – November 11<sup>th</sup> – Veterans Memorial – 11:00am

Unfortunately, the schools are closed that day and are therefore unable to participate this year. Mr. Baxter provided Ms. Ryan with Pete Marion of the American Legion's contact information so she will be coordinating with him.

- Holiday Lighting

The Holiday Lighting will be a combined tree lighting and menorah lighting on Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> with a raindate of the 4<sup>th</sup>. The Rabbi from Temple Avodat Shalom should be invited to give a blessing. As Borough Hall is under renovation, Mayor Papaleo, Councilwoman Kinsella, Ms. Ryan, Business Administrator Aportela, Police Chief Walker, Fire Chief Carriddi, and DPW Superintendent Milito will have a

meeting to discuss this year's location. Mr. Bartelloni suggested that the library be contacted to see if their facility could be used to gather after the holiday lighting if the location is moved to Memorial Park area.

***Update from Recreation Subcommittee on Softball Fields (continued):***

Ms. Ryan provided a background on the Subcommittee's meeting with the community stakeholders on October 13th to Mayor Papaleo and the Recreation Commission. REGAL, Baseball, Little League, River Dell Soccer, Blackhawks Soccer, Men's and Women's Softball, Women's Kickball, Environmental Protection Commission, Shade Tree, Save our Parks, Police, DPW, Ambulance, River Edge PTO's, Cathy Danahy and the River Edge Schools, Green Team and the Land Use Board were all invited. Twenty-two people were in attendance with a majority of the groups sending representatives. Councilwoman Kinsella, Mrs. Armental, Mrs. Etter and Ms. Ryan were also in attendance. It was a positive meeting at which REGAL and Little League spoke about their cooperative relationship and joint efforts. Everyone in attendance was supportive of the goal to provide girls' softball with a similar experience to the boys' program. There were great questions, comments, suggestions, feedback, recommendations, and an overall enthusiasm to make the right improvements. Ms. Ryan went over REGAL's proposal, which includes a sprinkler system, dugouts, solar scoreboards, and a single or double lane batting cage. All in attendance agreed that these are reasonable requests. Luanne Napolitano was in attendance representing the school and participated in the discussion as well. Mrs. Armental shared that her biggest takeaway was that REGAL and Little League had discussions ahead of the first meeting with the subcommittee and are working together, from holding joint opening day to coordinating schedules to joint purchases. They really have a collaborative relationship and want what's best for all the kids of River Edge. She acknowledged the important next step in the process, Mayor Papaleo and Superintendent Danahy discussing an agreement, and shared her hope that this will result in improvements not only at Roosevelt School fields but also Cherry Hill School in the future. REGAL does not want a snack stand after learning of Little League's challenges with staffing it and barely breaking even. Soccer was also a big part of the conversation at the meeting and a sprinkler system in the outfield will also benefit their program.

Mayor Papaleo expressed his support for advocating on behalf of what the majority of REGAL and Recreation Commission members want. He advised that a formal request should be sent from Recreation to the Council specifying what the proposal is. He shared that Ms. Danahy has been very responsive and is receptive to working together. The extent of the lease will need to be at least 15 years, as this is required for funding of capital improvements. While this has been a sticking point in the past, he remains hopeful that an agreement can be reached. Both Mayor Papaleo and Councilwoman Kinsella agreed that while there will be funding challenges in 2023 due to more state mandates, this project is a priority, and the goal is to start in the spring.

Mayor Papaleo thanked everyone for their efforts. Mrs. Armental expressed her appreciation to Mayor Papaleo for his support of and confidence in the Recreation Commission to lead the efforts with REGAL to find the right solution for the girls' softball program. Mayor Papaleo left the meeting at 7:48pm.

Ms. Ryan asked if the Recreation Commission members had any comments, questions, or concerns about the proposal. In response to Mrs. Komar's inquiry, Ms. Ryan confirmed that no changes to the proposed improvements had been made from when it was discussed at September's meeting. Ms. Ryan stated that the only differences for the stakeholders meeting was that she presented pictures of current conditions at the fields and removed the dollar figures on REGAL's presentation until determined by borough professionals. Ms. Ryan confirmed to Mr. Bartelloni that the

next step would be to formally recommend that the Mayor and Council engage the Borough Engineer.

No Recreation Commission member present expressed disapproval with moving forward with the proposal.

***Discussion Items:***

**1. Permitted Use of Memorial Basketball Court**

Ms. Ryan was contacted by a resident whose son was unable to play due to reported basketball clinics being regularly run on the courts at Memorial Park. As the Borough has not permitted this activity, Ms. Ryan will look into this further and report back to ensure that they go through the proper process to seek Recreation's approval.

Ms. Ryan also received a request from the wife of a River Edge employee whose daughter participates in a club basketball program based in Little Ferry. Little Ferry does not offer a program for girls under 6<sup>th</sup> grade so they have started a club program with participants from other Bergen County towns. They were expecting to have use of the gym at Assumption Church in Emerson, but that fell through. They are requesting to use the courts at Memorial Park this coming Friday only from 5pm to 8pm. They have insurance. A thorough discussion took place amongst the members present with Mrs. Armental expressing a concern for setting a precedent by granting out of town groups permission.

Motion by Chairperson Cerullo, second by Mrs. Komar that the request of AAU to use the basketball courts at Memorial Park on October 21<sup>st</sup> from 5pm to 8pm be and is hereby approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Armental:	no	Krautheim:	absent
Bartelloni:	aye	LoPresti:	absent
Baxter:	aye	Cerullo:	aye
Etter:	absent	Delia:	absent
Komar:	aye		

**2. Five-Year Parks and Recreation Plan**

Ms. Ryan informed the members that she has requested needs and wish lists back by November 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Recreation Commission can discuss at the November meeting and then Ms. Ryan will put together a presentation for the December Mayor and Council meeting. Ms. Armental recommended that the Recreation Commission members email their ideas as well.

**3. Purchasing new aluminum tables for permanent placement by library**

Shade Tree Commission has generously offered to purchase tables for the grassy area between the library parking lot and the cultural building that can be used by patrons of the Farmers Market and visitors of the library.

**4. 2023 Program and Permit Fees**

Ms. Ryan suggested that the fees be reviewed for 2023 to make sure that they are sufficient to cover insurance, maintenance, and lighting costs. She will follow up and provide a recommendation to the Recreation Commission.

***Committee Members' Reports and Comments:***

Chairperson Cerullo advised that she will not be continuing to serve after her appointment expires on December 31<sup>st</sup>. She knows someone who is interested. As the Recreation Commission has historically made recommendations, Ms. Ryan will find out the process and advise. Ms. Ryan thanked Mrs. Cerullo for her service.

***Interim Recreation Director's Report:***

Ms. Ryan reported on a matter involving a volunteer coach that she is working with the administration and police department on. She is looking to schedule a meeting with the CAC and Police Chief Walker to go over the volunteer coaching requirements and processes. She also requested that the November meeting be moved from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup>, which was granted.

***Other Business:***

Mr. Bartelloni offered to help with the tree lighting. He also inquired about interest to have the house decorating contest again. Councilwoman Kinsella expressed interest in having an ornament contest as well. It was decided that both contests will be done.

***Adjournment:***

There being no further business to come before the Recreation Commission, on a motion by Mrs. Armental, with second by Mr. Bartelloni, and unanimously carried by those members present, the meeting was adjourned at 8:27p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Michelle Ryan*  
Interim Recreation Director