

THE CITY OF WHITE PLAINS
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS
RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 16, 2023

Attendees

Present

Honorable Jennifer Puja, Chairwoman	Commissioner Wayne Bass
Beth Brickler, Deputy Commissioner	Chris McCants
Leonard Gruenfeld	Michele Schoenfeld
Jonathan Schere	Kevin Scully
Christopher Kent	

Absent

Evelyn Santiago	Charles Morgan
Rose Lovitch	Frank Williams

Chairwoman Puja called the RAC meeting to order on March 16, at 6:30

Minutes

January 2023, Minutes – Motion by Michele Schoenfeld, Second by Leonard Gruenfeld, approved by all. Motion carried.

Old Business - Beth Bricker, Deputy Commissioner

Capital Projects

- Gillie – New basketball courts are going in the parking area as well as the tennis viewing area and retaining wall. Despite the weather delays, the project should be completed by the end of April.

Black History Month Celebration

- Two programs were held at the Community Center for the seniors. A luncheon/speaker presentation was held on Feb. 8. The speaker was John Waller former Director of Music at MCA Records. He presented a tribute to Motown music. On Feb. 22, Pete Malinverni and Sage Myers presented a free concert featuring Gospel and Jazz Standard. Pete is a composer, pianist and Professor at SUNY Purchase. Sage Myers is a student at SUNY Purchase and an Ella Fitzgerald Scholar. Also to the surprise of all that attended, Sia also accompanied them on one of the songs. About 100 seniors attended these events along with great support from the Seniors from the Slater Center. .

Spring/Summer Guide 2023

- The Spring/Summer 2023 Guide has been released. Registration started on March 13th and a few programs have already been closed out. Within the first hour of registration, there was a couple hundred people on line registering for our programs and some came into the recreation office to register for programs as well. We are looking forward to continuing our registration for our programs and classes. Pool memberships will be open on April 3rd. Everything in the Guide like Funny Bunny Morning is available for registration.
- Chairwoman Puja stated that Miriam from the Mayor's office is working on the Spanish translation for the Spring/Summer 2023 Guide and when it is ready to go it will be launched on our website. Deputy Commissioner Bricker stated that upon the yearly review with Community Pass that they found out that the City of White Plains has Google translate feature. Community Pass turned on this feature for community pass registration. This feature will allow community pass users to translate into Spanish and multiple other languages. We will be sending out an eblast to inform community pass members of this feature. Going forward, this feature will help members understand the community pass process.

Camp 2023

- This year, there was an overwhelming response to camp. We received well over 500 applications for camp. We had prepared to accommodate 420 campers this summer. After deliberating and adjusting our budget we were able to increase total number of to approximately 500 children. Taking approximately 80 additional campers over the 4 camps. Camp Condor (Teen) went from 66 to 104 which is almost double the amount, which includes the wait list. We took more campers in each camp but still had a wait list of about 100+ kids. As of today, they are about 90 something kids still on the wait list. We have taken a good amount of kids off the wait list but it is still high. Parents are calling wondering when their kids will be coming off the wait list and be given a spot at camp.
- The City of White Plains in recent memory has never seen such high wait list numbers before. This is a good and bad situation. It speaks well of the camps that so many parents want their kids to attend these camps. The issue is how we get the wait list down. Some parents use this as an option but do not really want to attend because they may have made other plans. The RAC had several discussions about the wait list and one suggestion was to enforce deadlines. They will try to resolve this wait list issue before next year and are looking into online registration and an application fee for camp next year.
- Camp Quarropas will be held at Eastview school. Camp Condor will be held at White Plains High School. The campers at Camp Quarropas will be transported to White Plains High School for swimming.

Parks Bus Tour

- The tour is scheduled for all RAC members and recreational staff on April 20th from 5:30 to 7:30. Please RSVP by April 17th.

New Business - Commissioner Wayne Bass

Championships

- Hockey – The 12u and 14u hockey teams won the Hudson Valley Hockey League. There will be a pizza party celebration for them on March 29th at 6:30 at the Ebersole Ice rink. There will be open skate and there will be given a proclamation. All the RAC members are invited.
- Travel Basketball – The 7th grade boys team won the championship at the House of Sports, Zero Gravity League. This is the first time in all the years that we have been participating, that we have won a championship there. This is especially rewarding for Coach Barry Ferguson who has been coaching with Recreation and Parks since the early 90s. There will be a celebration with a Pizza Party on March 20th at 6:30 at the Highlands Middle School Gym. RAC members are welcome.

Teens

- Several teens have expressed that they don't have a place to hang out, lounge and have a bite to eat with their friends since the Galleria Mall is closed and will be torn down. We are working with the Youth Bureau to come up with a solution for this issue. The residents of White Plains have also expressed this concern. The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner along with Tim Zepyher will attend a meeting at the library called Common Ground conversation. The topic will be Interchanging White Plains – Where is there a place for young people.

Spring/Summer Offering

The following Spring/Summer offerings are not in the Guide, or may have been changed:

Revolutionary 250

- We are working with this group to help us put together a dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence. This will be held on July 11th at Noon at City Hall. This will also include a Fife and Drum band. In 2026, the Declaration of Independence will be 250 years old. Next year there will be a grander event leading up to an even grander event for 2026.

Universal Moms Arts/Dance Class

- This is a new class for preschoolers and we hope that it will take off.

Nights in the Park

- We will be hosting Nights in the Parks in 8 neighborhood parks this year, expanding from last year. There will be 2 nights in the park during the summer for each of the following parks: Battle of White Plains, Mattison, Slater Center, Gillie, Gardella, Turnure and Druss.

Sounds of Summer Concerts

- The concerts will be moved back to Renaissance Plaza from Court Street. It is a better fit and creates a better atmosphere for these concerts.

Lifeguards

- We are looking for lifeguards and counselors. They must be 16 years and older. We are working with Patty Gilmartin at White Plains High school to offer lifeguarding classes.

Retirement

- Beverly Myers retired after 16 years with the City of White Plains Recreation and Parks Department. We celebrated her retirement in the office where one of her relatives attended. We wish her the best in her new stage of life. Her former job title was changed from Office Assistant 2 to Office Assistant 2, Spanish speaking. Please refer anyone who is interested for this full-time position to the Recreation and Parks Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.

Events and Important Dates

- Jump in and Swim will be coming up next week.
- Skate Show – Next Saturday at 5:00 pm
- Basketball/Hockey Celebrations
- Funny Bunny Morning – April 1 at Highland Middle School - Free.
- Farmer's Market will open on April 19th.
- Dance Recital – May 4th, Highland Middle School
- Little League Parade – April 22nd at 11:00 – Major Roach is unable to attend so Chairwoman Puja will represent the Mayor's office and RAC.
- Gillie Tennis Courts – Scheduled to be open on May 8th
- RAC Meeting – Schedule for May 18th at 6:30

Zoom Meeting

- The RAC members had discussions about whether or not to keep all meetings on zoom or to go back to in person meetings. It was suggested that they keep the zoom meetings because of the 6:30 time but meet in person once or twice yearly. Chairwoman Puja suggested the following options: Have the May meeting in person as their end of the year meeting and don't do a July meeting; or do our May meeting on zoom and our regularly scheduled meeting in person in July. She will follow up with RAC members.

Motion to adjourn by Jonathan Schere, Second by Leonard Gruenfeld. Motion carried.