

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

**May 18, 2023**

**Attendees**

**Present**

Honorable Jennifer Puja, Chairwoman	Commissioner Wayne Bass
Beth Bricker, Deputy Commissioner	Michele Schoenfeld
Leonard Gruenfeld	Kevin Scully
Jonathan Schere	

**Absent**

Evelyn Santiago	Charles Morgan
Rosie Lovitch	Frank Williams
Christopher Kent	

Chairwoman Puja called the RAC meeting to order on May 18, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

**Minutes**

March Minutes – Will wait until there is a quorum to approve

**Program Reports Vincent Celetti, Supervisor**

Vincent Celetti began working for the CWP in September where he took over the basketball duties for our winter season. Overall, it has been a very successful basketball season. The basketball program ran smoothly. This is his first year running this program and he stated that he has great volunteer coaches who are enthusiastic and flexible with the practice schedules and dates. They were 29 teams for the elementary school kids for recreational basketball.

**Travel Basketball** – 5 different teams, boys and girls

- 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade girls
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade boys
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade boys
- 7<sup>th</sup> grade boys
- 7<sup>th</sup> grade girls

Each team averaged about 10 to 12 participants each

The 7<sup>th</sup> grade boys' team won the championship this year. This was our 1st championship in our history of participating in the Zero Gravity League. We were very happy for Barry Ferguson who is the coach and a long time- part time R&P employee and also for the boys.

### Instructional I Basketball

They were 5 different sessions and most of them were sold out except for one. Once again Vincent stated that he was grateful to have some good young coaches and we had a lot of great reviews from the comment cards.

### Adult Basketball

The adult basketball league ran without incident. It went very smoothly. They were a total of 5 teams. He is confident that with the year under his belt, that it will continue to run smoothly and grow in the future.

### White Plains Softball League

He stated that he has developed a good rapport with all the managers. The league will run Monday through Thursday and they are 46 teams registered. The categories are as follows:

- Mens C
- Mens D
- Mens E – 2
- 2 separate coed divisions

### Annual Jill Solomon Helmet/Safety Day

This event was held at Ebersole Ice Rink. In the past it was held outside but this year thanks to Deputy Commissioner Bricker, it was held inside the rink. We had 89 registered for the event. Including the adults, they were roughly about 120 people who were there. The residents were pre- registered and did not all come at once which made this event run smoothly. The White Plains Police department participated as 2 of their bicycle officers joined the festivities.

### Corn Hole League

This will be held at the Ebersole Ice rink. 8 teams are registered to date. The program is held on Thursday for 7 weeks which will include the playoffs.

## Tennis Instruction

This started recently with 3 different classes. All of these classes are full with 12 participants in each class. The program is off to a good start and is working well.

Chairwoman Puja, thanked Vincent for joining the R&P team. She said she is very happy that he is part of the team. She thanked him for his energy and the way he works with the children and volunteer coaches. He was Santa Claus during the Santa Drive-by and the MC for the Funny Bunny Morning program.

## **Old Business**

### **Capital Projects – Commissioner Bass**

Gillie – New basketball courts

- The new basketball courts at Gillie are completed. The basketball courts are beautiful and are being well utilized by everyone. The Commissioner stated that he has seen new faces at the basketball courts so people are recognizing that these courts are nice and they are enjoying them.

Gillie – Tennis Viewing Area

- This area has totally been remodeled. It looks like a very different place. It was a challenge to see the tennis players playing before. We had tennis/wind screens that would go around the courts so that when you are outside the tennis at Gillie you could not see the players. Now we have this viewing area that can be opened up if we are having a tournament or the kids having lessons and the parents want to watch. We can now see and see what is going on, on the courts.

### **Kittrell Basketball Courts**

- The courts are being renovated at this moment. We have a program that will begin the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of June so they will be completed by then. We will have another month without basketball courts but when completed we will have 2 new beautiful full size courts there at Kittrell.

### **Gardella Pool**

- We met today with the engineers and architects. We are discussing ideas regarding layouts and designs. This project is moving forward and is on the front burner. We could possibly begin work there after the summer season. The pool has water in it and we are hopeful that it will make it through one more year with no down time. The RAC will be informed as to the designs as we get closer to the approval process. At some point we may have some community meetings in reference to the pool renovations.

### Funny Bunny Morning

Chairwoman Puja said that this event was very well run and an awesome. The kids had a ball. She thanked everyone who put the event together.

- Deputy Commissioner Bricker stated that the event had to be moved because of the weather. The event was moved to the gym at White Plains High School. She had to figure out the logistics to maintain an even flow of traffic throughout the event. She is glad that the event was so well received.
- 500 kids were registered for this event. We provided 15,000 eggs filled with candy. This event also featured a magician and a DJ and the children had an opportunity to take photos with the bunny.
- The Deputy Commissioner said that this was a pretty awesome event and she was happy with the large participation. They received very favorable evaluations for this event.

### Pickle Ball Clinic

Pickle ball is very popular

- We had 24 people who signed up for this clinic. The clinic was held on April 28 at Delfino Park.
- 3 clinics were held. We used the 2 courts and had 24 participants over a 4 hour period. Grandpa's United participated as a group in a session. All sessions were sold out.

### Teen Programs

- With the Galleria closing, many teens have expressed concerns regarding a place that they can go to go get something to eat, hang out and to be with their friends. The Rec Dept is working with the Library, Youth Bureau and El Centro Hispano to help with this issue. The coalition will be offering Teen programs starting in June under the tag "After Hours" which will have programs and events geared toward the high school students. Each of these organizations are contributing programs to the AFTER Hours format. The R&P department will sponsor a roller-skating night at the Ebersole Ice Rink. There will be a family night at an earlier time and a teen night at a later time. We will also sponsor a swimming event at Kittrell pool. The event will take place from 7 to 8 and there will be food and a DJ. They can use the basketball courts there and this will be a place where they can come out and have fun with their friends.

## Farmers Market

The Commissioner is aware of the issues with the Farmers Market which is lack of Farmers. However, it is expected that at least 2 Farmers will be on-site beginning in early June.

## New Business

### Hockey Tryouts

We have 10 different teams with different age groups in the hockey program. The hockey program was opened up to non-residents because over the years we have not have enough White Plains residents to try out for the teams. Preference is given to White Plains players if all things are equal with regards to skill level. If everything is equal then the White Plains resident will get the spot. The tryout is conducted by an independent evaluator.

The Hockey program covers its own costs through registration fees. Non -residents pay a higher registration fee than residents. We hold tryouts for each of the teams in the Spring each year. We are governed by USA Hockey who sets the try out dates. The tryouts are done over a 3-day period at Ebersole Ice Rink. Chairwoman Puja stated the Commissioner shared with her the evaluation process of these players and wanted to have it discuss for our records. The evaluations are done by independent evaluators who have no idea which communities the kids live in. Commissioner Bass is working on an intermediate/beginner program for kids who did not make the team. This will give them some place else to go and will enable them to build up their skills. The age range would be 12 and under.

### Dogs in Park

Commissioner Bass said that this is typically an issue this time.

- In April, the field marshals return to work and begin making rounds by visiting each of our parks, advising residents of the park rules. There are no dogs, no drinking or no smoking in our parks. Our field marshals are advised to approach the residents in a non-threatening way to remind them about the park rules. Unfortunately, some people do not take kindly to being told that they are breaking the rules.
- Currently there are no public dog parks in downtown White Plains. We have been unsuccessful in finding a space for an additional dog park. This is top of the priority list and something we would like to create if the space becomes available.
- The commissioner stated that he has received several emails from residents wanting to petition the R&P Department and the Common Council requesting a rule change to allow dogs in parks. A resident has asked to address the RAC at the next meeting in July to address this issue. There is also a large vocal group of residents who do not want dogs in parks.

- The RAC discussed the possibility of having dogs in the park at certain time of the day and night. All agreed that this will be hard to enforce and who would enforce this rule.

#### Field Marshalls at Renaissance Plaza

Mr. Gruenfeld questioned the means by which a Field Marshal at Renaissance Plaza communicates a problem while working on-site. He is concerned that they don't have any real means of protecting themselves. He suggested that they should wear uniforms. Commissioner Bass said that the Marshals are given a shirt and ID badge and must have them visible while working. The Field Marshals are instructed to call police if a park user is non-cooperative and becomes belligerent. The police response is excellent and we have not had any major incidents at the plaza.

#### Senior Health Initiative Classes – commissioner Bass.

We have 2 free classes that are offered at the senior center. One of which is called Live to Be Fit. These classes are offered on Monday and Wednesday mornings. These classes have been offered for years and are funded by Westchester County. These classes are always full and always have a wait list. Many of our residents have complained that the classes are always full within a couple hours of them being offered. We reached out to NY Presbyterian Hospital who has agreed to fund additional classes. Additional classes will now be offered on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. We were able to take residents off the wait list and have those all take the afternoon classes. We have approximately 40 participants in the morning classes and about twenty-five in the afternoon classes. Thank You NY Presbyterian Hospital.

#### Picnic Tables – Chairwoman Puja

Chairwoman Puja is the director of Westchester/Putnam Center Labor Body. They started a worker's monument fund about 15 years ago. Every year they host a vigil remembering the workers who were killed or injured on job sites the previous year. The WPCLB partners with various municipalities including White Plains to donate picnic benches to parks. She said now that she is on the RAC and a member of the Common Council she is able to connect more with R&P and the Commissioner. He lets her know the needs of the Parks and which need tables. s.

Additional benches have been approved for the City and she will work with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. The benches will be placed at the following sites.

- One at the new Veteran's Memorial Park which is behind City Hall
- One will be placed at So. Lexington Ave- Open Space park land area known informally as Giraffe Park.
- One will be placed at the open space are on Gedney Way across from Roosters Market.

#### Promotions and New Hires (Deputy Commissioner Bricker)

As of May 1<sup>st</sup>, Helen Lamache was promoted to Office Asst II, Spanish Speaking. Helen has been with the R&P department for about 16 years. There was an opening of Office Asst II, when Beverly Myers retired. We asked personnel to change the title to Office Asst II, Spanish speaking to best fit the needs of the community we are working with. We wanted to guarantee that going forward that we would have one Spanish speaker on our staff. Helen qualified for the position and promotion. She was promoted from Data Entry/Operator Verifier to Office Asst II, Spanish speaking. One of her duties in her new role is to supervise the Office Asst I and the Data Entry/Operator Verifier.

Johanna Solano is our most recent hire. She was hired as a Data Entry Operator/Verifier. She started on May 16 and is also a Spanish speaker. We now have 2 Spanish speakers at the R&P office at Gedney Way. Congratulations to Helen and our new hire Yohanna.

### Events and Important Dates

- Memorial Day Parade – Monday May 29<sup>th</sup> - 10 am – Ceremony at Cemetery.
- Music at the Market - Starts May 31 – until September - Every other Wednesday
- Puerto Rican Flag Raising – June 2 – Renaissance Plaza
- Pride Day – Sunday June 4<sup>th</sup> – Renaissance Plaza
- Juneteenth Parade and Festival – June 10<sup>th</sup> - 11:00am – 5:00pm
- Father’s Day Concert – Sat. June 17, Turnure Park, 7:00 p.m.- The Gentleman of Soul
- Summer Solstice Yoga – Wednesday June 21, 6:30pm – Turnure Park
- Independence Day Celebration Friday June 30, 6:30pm – 10:00pm – WPHS Fireworks
- Neighborhood Nights - Various parks – We have less dates but will be utilizing more parks, the library will be involved, will have magicians and artmobile
- Sounds of Summer – Moving back to Renaissance plaza from Court Street - Wednesday night at 7pm starting in July.

### Minutes Chairwoman Puja

- There was not a quorum present as a result the March Minutes will be reviewed for approval at the next meeting.
- The next RAC meeting is scheduled for July 20 with the meeting schedule to be at Liberty Park. They will be a guest to address the RAC in reference to Dogs in Park.

Motion by Chairwoman Puja to adjourn meeting - carried