

TOWN OF DEERFIELD
Parks & Recreation Commission
December 10, 2013
MINUTES

Call to Order

6:00pm: K. Heckman called the meeting to order

Present: Julie DeCosta, Amy Harrington, Jack Hutchinson, and Melissa Robertson Members

Excused: Jeff Shute, Chairman; Ernie Robert Member

Also Present: Joe Manzi, Parks & Recreation Director

Review of November Minutes

Motion: J. DeCosta moves to approve the December minutes as written

Second: M. Robertson

All in Favor – Motion Carries

Citizens Comments

Mike Devine introduced himself and thanked the other citizens in attendance for coming out and supporting him. He explained his history in coaching youth sports and the ways in which he fully enjoys working with and developing the kids that have played for him in multiple sports. He spoke of his surprise to learn that he has been dismissed as a Coach for the Deerfield Parks & Recreation basketball program and his disappointment at it being done through an email that he never received. He is seeking more communication from the Department Director and Commission and asks for an explanation as to why he was dismissed along with an apology for the way it was handled. He went on to speak that there seems to be a disconnect between the Department Director and some of the Coaching staff and he feels there needs to be better checks and balances within the program, he does not feel it is appropriate to have the Director making decisions independent of the Commission, especially if they are based on his own personal feelings.

Michelle Piwowarczyk spoke as a grandmother of an athlete coached by Mr. Devine. She feels Mr. Devine has been a fantastic coach, one who is responsible and cares for the kids. She was devastated to learn that he will not be coaching this year. Jim McKenzie spoke that the citizens in attendance are looking for the reason Mr. Devine was dismissed and would then be able to express their comments accordingly. J. Hutchinson ensured the group that their comments will not be blown off. He finds the feedback is helpful and suggested the issue be put on the agenda at a future meeting. Citizens' comments are typically just that, comments, and the Commission would not necessarily engage in a discussion at this point in the meeting. M. Devine asked if the Commission had a protocol and defined criteria for dismissal of coaches. Jared Woodman spoke that there is a process, as a coach he was called before the Commission last year and had a discussion on areas they wished him to make changes. Traci Moorcroft asked whether the Commission as a whole votes to decide on terminations or is it a decision made independently by the Director, J. Manzi responded that Mr. Devine was not dismissed, but rather he was not selected to coach this particular season.

Maryanne Richards spoke in support of Mr. Devine and his skills as a coach and asked the Commission the reason he was dismissed. J. Hutchinson reiterated that he would like the Commission to work on this issue and schedule a future meeting to address formally as an item on the agenda. Ms. Richards asked that that meeting be published in the Communicator so that everyone can be aware of it. J. Hutchinson recapped that there seems to be two issues, first why Mr. Devine specifically was dismissed and second to develop and communicate the process whereby coaches are selected and/or dismissed. T. Moorcroft agreed and concurred and voiced her opinion that it cannot be one individual person's decision, that it should be handled in a more professional manner. J. McKenzie spoke that he feels the history of the personal relationship between the Director and Mr. Devine, specifically as relates to the Baseball Majors team selection process last year, is what led to this outcome and that there seems to have been a disconnect that has gone on far too long. He stressed that the process for selecting coaches needs to have more transparency.

Barbara Cook expressed her concern with the situation. She has helped to build the Parks & Rec program from the ground level and she feels there needs to be a defined protocol for this type of situation. Issues like this cause her and other Citizens in Town to question the integrity of the Department. She also feels that Mr. Devine is owed the explanation of the reasoning behind the decision to not have him back.

J. Woodman spoke that through his experience he was told last year that the Commission would be putting in place a system for monitoring coaches. He saw a handful of members each attend one of his games, but from there, involvement ceased. He was told he would need to attend a coaching clinic, but never received any information from the Director or the Commission and now is frustrated that a year later the same situation has risen once again. K. Heckman agreed that the Commission's follow up may have

been lacking, he cited turnover on the Commission as one contributor to the problem and said that defining the process is an issue they have had on the radar. He stated the Commission is working on a solution to improve the transparency of the coach selection process as well as coach development and remediation. J. Hutchinson suggested it may be appropriate for Mr. Devine to have a one on one meeting with the Commission and the Director and it would then be up to him personally what information he wants to share with the public regarding the reason for his not being asked back.

Tom Buffington commented that there needs to be emphasis on the process and suggested that, once defined, the process should be put out for public comment and input. Remediation and development should be a priority as he would hate to see the valuable asset of coaches lost. He would expect the Commission make the commitment that it will define for coaches a way to address any issues and to communicate with Joe. J. Manzi spoke that it was his error that the email did not reach M. Devine, it was a mistake and he did not receive a returned email that made him aware of the problem. M. Devine reiterated that he felt it was a disrespect of his time and he would have expected a one on one meeting to discuss any issues, he added there were a multitude of ways to better handle the situation. He thanked the Commission for its time and the Citizens who attended to show their support and noted the whole problem could have been avoided with a better defined process.

Adjourn to Non Public Session

Reconvene – 7:21p

Motion: K. Heckman moves to set up a meeting with M. Devine, J. Manzi and 3 members of the Commission at a date convenient to Mr. Devine

Second: A. Harrington

Discussion: J. Hutchinson feels they should consider having the entire Commission present at the meeting, he does not see it as a combative situation, but rather as people working to resolve the problem. J. Manzi suggested this Thursday as a potential date to meet, he prefers to have the meeting as soon as possible.

Vote: All in Favor – Motion Carries

Youth Sports Code of Conduct

J. Hutchinson spoke that the Commission needs to finalize its policies and procedure for Coaching staff as soon as possible, he described that it should be the Commission's role to define how things are to be done and the Administrations job to execute. J. DeCosta agreed stressing the need to have a clearly defined process that includes face to face communication.

J. Manzi spoke that the Youth Sports Pledges for the Athletes, Parents and Coaches had been drafted and he has been soliciting feedback.

K. Heckman spoke of the importance of working Performance Reporting into the Youth Sports Programs just as anyone might have in their regular job. He feels it is important to document a Coaches performance in any given season and to communicate effectively so that, if there is ever an occasion where a Coach is not invited back, it will not come as a surprise to any of the parties involved. He outlined three steps to the process; to clearly lay out expectations, to develop the skills of the coaches and remediate any issues, and finally to handle the dismissal/removal of a coach if the situation warrants. J. Hutchinson offered feedback on the drafted Coaches Code of Conduct as presented by Joe. He feels the document should state the requirements of the position adding that he is in favor of actionable verbs. J. Hutchinson and J. Manzi agreed to work on finalizing the language for the Coaches Code of Conduct and K. Heckman and J. Hutchinson will work to draft policies on the coach selection, remediation, and removal process. The Commission agreed the policies should be published and they should have a public meeting to review and solicit feedback. J. Manzi wants these in place for the baseball season.

Budget Review & Update

Chairman Shute updated the Board that the MBC approved the Parks & Recreation 2014 budget with very little discussion. They had wanted to know how the revolving fund is spent and how the expenditures are reviewed, the MBC was provided a detailing of the account year to date and Chairman Shute ensured them that the Commission reviews spending by the Department. J. Manzi informed the Board that Town Administrator Leslie Boswak has announced she will resign at the end of this year.

Program Updates

J. Manzi updated the Board that the projects he had hoped to get started with the help of the Highway Department have been put on hold until spring. He will go before the Select Board in the coming months to request approval to go forward as previously discussed. Chairman Shute added that the Town has put a stop to all spending as year-end approaches. The budget is very tight especially not knowing what winter storms may bring.

M. Robertson noted there has been lots of talk about getting adult volleyball up and running, J. Manzi responded they plan to begin after the start of the New Year.

Other Items

M. Robertson asked members to sign up for participation on several sub committees. The result was as follows:

Youth Sports: J. DeCosta, K. Heckman, and J. Hutchinson

Old Home Days (And Special Events): A. Harrington, J. DeCoasta and M. Robertson

Field Projects: K. Heckman, J. Hutchinson, E. Robert and J. Shute

Budget Planning: K. Heckman and J. Shute

The expectation is that subcommittees will do ongoing work on their respective assignments and report back to the Commission at each meeting.

Adjournment

Motion – J. Hutchinson moves to adjourn the meeting of December 10, 2013

Second – A. Harrington

All in Favor - Motion Carries

Meeting Adjourns at 8:00pm

Next Meeting Tuesday, January 14th @ 6:00pm

*The Minutes were Transcribed and Respectfully Submitted by Katherine A. Libby, Recording Secretary.
Pending Approval by the Parks & Recreation Commission*