

Town of Lee Recreation Commission

Minutes from Special Meeting on 04/24/2018

Call to Order

- Meeting called to order at 6:30PM.
- Larry Kindberg, Annette Brown, Michael Vadaro and James Lonano were in attendance.
- Matthew Glode of ORYA was in attendance.
- Members of the public – Rick Beady, Tonya Carlton, Krista Butts – were in attendance.

Meeting Discussion by Committee Members

- Mr. Kindberg began the meeting with remarks regarding his concern over recent news of misconduct by a baseball coach with ORYA and expressed a desire for the Commission to be out in front on this issue.
- The Lee Select Board discussed the issue on April 23, 2018 and opted to take a wait and see approach, allowing the Town of Durham to take the lead on further investigation of the issue.
- Mr. Glode from ORYA provided an overview of the Association's internal investigation, which included interviews of all nine (9) coaches present for the alleged incident and the ultimate removal of one (1) coach from the programs. This began with a complaint received from the family at the center of this as confirmed by one (1) coach at first; a second coach was questioned and confirmed the allegations. The ORYA Board President created an ad-hoc committee of four (4) to investigate. In addition, a non-ORYA, non-baseball involved person, with prior law enforcement experience, was appointed to oversee the investigation. The overall consensus, in addition to removal of the coach, was that the player involved was safe and there was no safety concern that would warrant moving that player to another league/association. The remaining six (6) coaches were also questioned, but all denied any wrongdoing. While one coach was removed, there was no evidence to take action against the other six coaches. Several improvements will be made across ORYA for all sports programs, including required training for all volunteers from the Center for Safe Sports Initiatives; sensitivity training from NH Listens; training from the Positive Coaching Alliance; and new and clearer paths of communications between families and ORYA.
- Mr. Kindberg expressed concern and needing a "top-down" example of leadership in ORYA and reinforcement of what should be common sense for all adults involved in ORYA. Mr. Kindberg stated that such alleged conduct is unconscionable and that child sports are getting too intense.
- Questions were presented regarding the other six coaches who did not speak out about the alleged conduct and what policies are in place about this.
- Mr. Glode indicated that while the dismissed coach denied the statements/conduct attributed to him in prior media reports, he did admit to a statement that ORYA felt warranted his dismissal. In addition, Mr. Glode indicated that the baseball draft will be reset as well.

- Mrs. Brown expressed concern over parents who only want the best players to participate based on a desire to win. Mr. Glode advised that ORYA policy requires equal playing time for all children involved but admitted that sometimes the policy is not followed.
- Mr. Lonano asked about Durham Police's decision not to open a criminal investigation and what reasons were given to ORYA regarding that decision. Mr. Glode was not given many specifics but did indicate that the family involved did not opt to involve the police. Mr. Glode did confirm that Durham PD did not contact ORYA for information and did not speak to coaches involved.

Meeting Discussion by Members of the Public

- Mr. Beady described some of his prior experiences as a member/coach in ORYA many years ago. He felt that he was not hearing anything new about the training initiatives and felt that it was just new names for the same programs that have already been in place. He questioned the logic of holding the baseball draft in a bar and wanted to know about oversight for the training. He felt the problem lies not with the program or the training but rather the people involved.
- There were questions about the ORYA Board and who its members are selected. Mr. Glode confirmed that the respective Town Governments in Oyster River Community have no input on who sits on the board. Generally, open positions to the board are posted on the ORYA website but many positions for town representatives are often filled by word of mouth referrals. There was concern that meeting minutes are not accessible and agendas should be published in advance of meeting.
- Ms. Carlton shared some personal experiences involving her own family and a prior incident with an ORYA coach. She asked how this incident will impact the other programs, especially with some of the baseball coaches being active in other ORYA sports programs. She felt that more should be done to hold the other six coaches available. In addition, she wants to see a strong commitment from ORYA to support the family involved.
- Further discussion was held regarding training and oversight – whether volunteer coaches have to provide proof they have completed the required training before stepping onto the field. Mr. Glode advised that background checks are completed as well.

Further Handling

- Mr. Kindberg advised that the Town of Durham has decided to withhold its portion of funding for ORYA for the upcoming fiscal year until a more detailed summary of events and investigation has been provided, until a detailed plan on addressing the situation is put forth, and a financial audit completed.
- Mr. Kindberg made a motion that the Commission recommend that the Lee Select Board follow suit regarding withholding funding from ORYA until the additional information and financial audit are provided; second by Mr. Lonano. A further discussion was held regarding the implications of these particularly on how this will affect the children involved in the various programs. It was felt that since ORYA is funded by tax dollars and family fees that more transparency is needed. Mr. Kindberg, Mr. Lonano and Mr. Vadaro voted in favor of the motion; Mrs. Brown voted against the motion. The motion passed 3-1. The Commission will draft a letter to the Lee Select Board regarding its recommendation.

Conclusion

- Meeting adjourned at 7:37PM.
- The next regular meeting of the Commission will be held on Tuesday, May 1, 2018 at 6:30PM at the Lee Public Safety Complex.

New Business

- 2018 Program Schedule:
 - Easter Egg Hunt – to take place on Saturday March 31, 2018 at the Town Field adjacent to Mast Way Elementary. Mr. Kindberg will reach out to Cynthia Navarro to coordinate planning; Mr. Lonano will reach out to Lindt to solicit donations.
 - Fishing Derby – tentatively will take place on Saturday May 12, 2018; Mr. Kindberg will send a letter to the Stevens Family requesting use of their property for this event; it will not be finalized or advertised until we receive permission.
 - Family Movie Night – to take place on Saturday June 23, 2018.
 - Model Rocket Day – to take place on Saturday July 21, 2018.
 - Fall Movie Night – date to be determined based on when the Town Fair will take place, but it is being eyed for early September 2018.
- Potential Projects for 2018
 - Model drone day – this idea comes from Cary Brown and the Commission will follow up with him to discuss further.
 - Music in the Park/Pavilion – this idea comes from Michael Vardaro and he will reach out to potential performance groups to gauge interest.

Conclusion

- The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 6, 2018 at 6:30PM at the Lee Public Safety Complex.
- Meeting adjourned at 7:22PM.