

PRINCETON BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSIONERS

A meeting of the Princeton Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners was held on May 14, 2020 remotely via zoom.com

- Present: Dr. Nosker, Dr. Cahill, Ms. Germaine, Dr. Frawley, Mr. Young, Mr. Williamson, Mr. Koontz, Mr. Burt, & Ms. Rogers
- Also Present: Mr. Stentz, Mr. Moorhead, Ms. Paulucci, Mr. Parker & Ms. Caines
- Absent: Mr. Dries & Mr. Wang
- **Public Comment**
- Deborah Norcross, President of Princeton Special Sports, commented about liability and insurance trends that she is seeing in her line of work as a lawyer, including the amending of waivers to include Covid-19 related health issues for all users.

Activities Report

- In addition to the items in the agenda packet:
- Mr. Parker reported on the following:
 - **Day Camp Contingency Plan:** The plan continues to be updated in real-time while taking into account input from local health and state officials, as well as our colleagues around the state in the recreation field. All employment agreements have been sent out and Mr. Parker continues to be in communication with all staff. In addition, Mr. Parker is working with Ms. Paulucci on a menu of virtual offerings for the summer, in the event that we are not able to run our traditional day camp.
 - **Community Outreach:** Mr. Parker has been driving up to Newark two times per week to collect prepared meals and deliver back to Princeton in order to assist Send Hunger Packing.
- Ms. Paulucci reported on the following:
 - **Summer Planning:** Ms. Paulucci continues to look at different resources and remains in touch with other recreation agencies with respect to the sharing ideas for this summer. At the moment, Ms. Paulucci is researching ideas for virtual activities for all age groups and abilities. Dr. Cahill inquired as to whether the Virtual calendar was in lieu of all in-person camps. Mr. Stentz said it's an option among many that are being considered. *Discussion was held.*
 - **Sports Camp Directors:** Ms. Paulucci has been in touch with the directors of our various sports camps in recent weeks. They all remain very invested in the process and willing to adjust as needed. In addition, they have all expressed interest in running virtual activities if we are not able to run them in-person. Dr. Nosker asked Ms. Paulucci to describe what virtual activities might look like. Ms. Germaine suggested that kids are now sleeping in later as a result of the current situation so staff should consider that when setting start times for virtual programming. *Discussion was held.*

Project Update

- **Hilltop Park Improvements:** The professional services contract for Hilltop Park improvements was awarded to Suburban Consulting Engineers (SCE) at the 4/27/20 council meeting. Mr. Stentz thanked Mr. Williamson for his role in advocating for this important project. The kick-off meeting with SCE was held virtually on 5/11/20 and included the Recreation Commission subcommittee that includes Mr. Stentz, Mr. Moorhead, Mr. Burt, Dr. Nosker, Municipal Engineer Deanna Stockton and 2 representatives from SCE, Bob Gregoria and Joe Perello. The meeting laid the groundwork for scheduling and other logistical considerations. SCE walked through the first two steps in the process (site survey & geotechnical work) which they expect to begin in the next two weeks. Dr. Nosker pointed out that SCE has done a lot of turf fields around the state and have great experience in this type of project. *Discussion was held.*

Director's Report

- Mr. Moorhead reported on the following:
 - **Pool Concession Contract:** Mr. Moorhead reported that following the April Commission Meeting he has been in touch with Ray & Kathy Van Arsdale regarding the CP Pool concession contract. The general consensus of the Van Arsdales and PRD Staff is that it does not make any sense for either party to lock into a contract for the upcoming summer until we know when/if CP Pool will be able to open and what restrictions on capacity and programming may be in place.
- Mr. Stentz reported on the following:
 - **Community Outreach:** Mr. Stentz highlighted the document in the Agenda Packet that details PRD staff's role in assisting our community partners and the Human Services Department with pick-up and distribution of food to Princeton Residents in need. Mr. Stentz thanked Mr. Parker & Ms. Paulucci, in particular for their roles. Mr. Stentz is proud of the PRD staff for being willing to help out whenever and wherever needed when our partners have called for assistance.
 - **Spring Sports:** All youth sports have officially cancelled their spring season at this point with the exception of the two youth soccer clubs.
 - **Community Garden Plots:** Opening on 5/5/20. Mr. Stentz has been working with Mayor Lempert, Police Chief Nick Sutter and Health Officer Jeff Grosser in evaluating each step towards re-opening certain facilities.
 - **Tennis Courts:** Staff is working towards opening the Community Park Tennis Courts next week with a limited drop-in option. Unfortunately, Princeton Tennis Program has had to furlough the majority of their staff and they may not be in a position to staff and program the courts this summer even once they are open.
 - **Princeton Public Schools:** PRD staff is working in concert with PPS staff to make sure we are on the same page with regards to which facilities are open and which are currently closed, as well as to provide some consistent signage across all facilities. Mr. Stentz and Mr. Moorhead took part in a Zoom meeting with PPS Superintendent Steve Cochrane, PHS Athletic Director Brian Dzbenski and Princeton Police Chief, Nick Sutter on 5/13/20 to discuss.

- **Program Refunds:** Mr. Stentz shared details on the roughly \$10,000 in refunds that have been issued since the last Commission meeting and added that the process is taking up a lot of staff time. In addition, he shared the current financial summary of the operating account.
- **Summer Programming:** Princeton Public Schools (PPS) will not be allowing any outside group use of their buildings this summer as things currently stand. PPS is planning to move forward with virtual summer school for the time being. This impacts our basketball camps and possibly our track camp. PRD is effectively going to have to cancel our boys' and girls' basketball camps. Without gym space and with social distancing still in effect it will be impossible to run those programs. Staff remains committed to bringing those programs back later in the summer if the opportunity presents itself. Mr. Stentz expressed his concern over the childcare role that our camps play in this community.
- **Community Park Pool:** Mr. Stentz stated that there is an overwhelming amount of information coming from local, state and national agencies regarding pool operation this summer as it relates to Covid-19. As Mr. Stentz see it, we are quickly approaching a fork in the road on needing to make a decision as to whether we can safely operate our pool this summer. Mr. Stentz raised three questions that need to be addressed:
 - **What will the Governor Say:** The expectation is that the Governor will soon be addressing this topic and provide guidance for local officials regarding community pool operation this summer.
 - Mr. Stentz expressed concern about possibility of guards being mandated to wear face coverings while on the lifeguard stand which he believes to be an unsafe practice.
 - **Can we as a municipality and a Commission operate the pool and maintain the safety of staff and patrons.** There are inherent risks in operating a pool under the best of circumstances but Covid-19 adds a new layer that we may not be equipped to deal with from a risk management standpoint.
 - **How big of a financial hit are we willing and able to take:** With social distancing guidelines, there are likely to be major restrictions on the number of people that are allowed to be in the complex at any one time. Even with scaled back staffing it's difficult to imagine any scenario where we operate our pool and do not lose a significant amount of money in 2020.
 - **Next Steps:** Mr. Stentz is setting up a meeting with the Mayor, Police Chief, local health officials, as well as representatives from the Recreation Commission to have a conversation about the benefits versus community wide risk of operating the pool this summer. He would like to be able to let seasonal staff know sooner rather than later if we will not have summer jobs to offer them. Dr. Cahill and Mr. Williamson volunteered to take part in the conversation. Mr. Williamson expressed concern that individuals may choose to sue a facility/entity over contracting Covid-19. Mr. Stentz reiterated his concern for the well-being and potential hazards to Recreation staff from Covid-19 if our facilities and camps were to open. Dr. Frawley brought up the need to adapt as Covid-19 may be with us for some time. Dr. Frawley, also stated that the risk to each individual can vary by age or underlying health, as well as other factors. He favors a nuanced approach rather than operating entirely out of fear. Mr. Stentz reminded the

Commission that our local Health Officer, Jeff Grosser, has statutory authority to allow or not allow the pool to operate at any time in any given year. Dr. Nosker suggested that if CP Pool were to open, it might be reasonable to expect the town to subsidize the Recreation Department financially. The town is seeking guidance from the JIF (Joint Insurance Fund) as it relates to Covid-19 liability but has received no-response to date. *Discussion was held.*

- Dr. Cahill suggested a third option besides a refund/credit in the manner of a donation to a food bank or other charitable option. *Discussion was held.* Mr. Stentz said any such decision should be a voting item.
- **Mary Moss Sprayground:** It is very unlikely that this facility will be open this summer based on social distancing guidelines. PRD staff is awaiting further directive from the state.
- **Day/Travel Camp:** PRD staff continues to await guidance from the state on camps. Mr. Stentz expressed great doubt that Travel Camp will take place due to having to put youth on crowded buses for transport. He also stressed that it seems difficult to imagine 200 elementary school age youth wearing masks all day in 90-degree heat at our day camp. Ms. Germaine suggested that if summer school is remote, it's hard to imagine that day camp can take place in person. Mr. Stentz reiterated his concern over the working families that rely on our camp for affordable childcare in the summer. Dr. Cahill suggested that the decision on camp should be made relatively quick. Mr. Stentz agreed. Dr. Nosker suggested letting patrons know that, in all likelihood, this is what will happen (closures/cancellations) and if that changes, PRD will let everyone know as soon as possible rather than to continue to draw it out. *Discussion was held.*
- **Municipal offices:** Municipal offices remain closed and there is no clear date for employees to return. Mr. Stentz reminded the Commission that nothing can happen with summer programs until offices are open and the public are allowed back into our buildings.

Old Business

- No Old Business

New Business

- **Virtual Mindfulness for Youth:**
 - Ms. Paulucci presented a proposal for a new virtual program. *Discussion was held.* Mr. Koontz was in support of virtual programming that he's seen and thinks there are creative opportunities for PRD in terms of educational opportunities to add to our program inventory in the future.
 - **Mr. Koontz moved to approve the Virtual Mindfulness for Youth Program, seconded by Dr. Nosker and unanimously approved. Mr. Burt left meeting prior to the vote.**

Communications

Communications shared in agenda packet

Approval of Minutes

- *Mr. Koontz made a motion to approve the Commission minutes of April 16, 2020 seconded by Dr. Nosker and approved. Dr. Cahill abstained. Mr. Burt left meeting prior to vote.*

Approval of Bills

- *Dr. Nosker made a motion to approve the bills, seconded by Mr. Williamson and approved. Mr. Burt left meeting prior to the vote.*

Next Meeting Date

June 25, 2020