

RECREATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

December 10, 2015

Present: Mr. Kevin Bodnar (arrived at 7:37 p.m.)
Mr. Michael Breslin
Mrs. Jan McCabe
Mrs. Maureen McEntee
Mrs. Maggie Slawinski
Mr. Jake Cahill (arrived at 7:42 p.m.)
Mr. Gerard Sittmann, Chairman

Karleen Leahey, Recreation Director
Councilwoman Laurie Fu

Absent: None.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Sittmann called the meeting to order. He stated that adequate notice of this meeting has been posted and published in accordance with Chapter 231 of the Public Law of 1975, "Open Public Meetings Act."

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. Sittmann opened the meeting to the public to speak on matters other than those on the agenda.

Mr. Larry Ripley, 17 Academy Road, Morris Plains, introduced himself to the Commission members. He is present at this meeting to provide information about the newly-revived Morris Plains Community Band. Historically, a man named Larry Monahan came from Dover to Morris Plains in 1886 to open a blacksmith shop at 21 Stiles Avenue. At that time a group of young boys would congregate at his shop. However, Mr. Monahan did not believe this was the best use of these boys' time. Mr. Monahan was also a musician, and he decided to teach the boys how to play music and to form a band. Within one year he was able to form the Morris Plains Coronet Band. The band continued from its inception in 1887 until Mr. Monahan's death in 1940. Band members re-named the band in his honor calling it the L. Monahan Memorial Band. The Band continued for another 13 years until disbanding in 1953.

Continuing, Mr. Ripley told how this story has always fascinated him, and it has always been in the back of his mind to find a way to honor Mr. Monahan in some way. He provided some personal information stating he comes from a musical family and that he was a professional musician for 30 years playing music at a wide variety of venues and occasions. As a child he played in community bands – "it's what they [he and his family members] did".

The Morris Plains Band is now seven weeks old. During this timeframe the band has attracted 53 interested people of which 33 have become regular musicians in the band. The nature of the band is very casual and very relaxed. Band members are as young as 11 years old and as old as 80 and all ages in between. The band is strictly for fun. The band is divided into three categories: (1) young children who are learning; (2) "old" people from 30 to 80 years old who have not played since they were in high school; and (3) eight to ten people who are "good" musicians. The band is using the Band Room at the Borough School for their weekly rehearsals. The band's First Annual Holiday Concert Tour is

playing shows at area nursing homes. This schedule is helping the band since they are unable to use the Borough School facilities during the month of December. With the concerts they are able to continue to rehearse. The last concert on December 30 will be at Sunrise Assisted Living in Morris Plains; he invited Commission members to attend at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Ripley advised there is no money involved – they do not charge for the concerts nor do they charge the band members any membership fee. While many community band directors are paid, he does not get paid nor he is looking to be paid – this is his hobby and passion. He suggested that perhaps the Morris Plains Community Band could be scheduled for a concert in the park in the summer and since they cannot be paid for their concert, perhaps there might be a line item in the 2016 budget in the amount that a band usually is paid allocated to the community band providing funds to purchase needed equipment. The band currently needs percussion equipment, a bass drum, and music stands among other items.

Cross discussion about possibly scheduling a summer concert in the park; that Mr. Ripley has no specific agenda or plan for the band; that the band after only several rehearsals can present concerts; the playing of a short clip of one of the band's musical presentations; the future need for equipment storage and for a summertime rehearsal site since the Borough School will not be available – perhaps the Community Center; other municipalities in the vicinity that have community bands; and general discussion of the hoped-for future for the band.

The Commission members thanked Mr. Ripley both for his presentation and for his involvement and willingness in leading the Morris Plains Community Band.

Mr. Sittmann advised that Mrs. Leahey will check the calendar for possible concert dates for the community band and will stay in touch with Mr. Ripley in this regard

RECREATION DIRECTOR'S REPORT – DECEMBER 2015

Mrs. Leahey presented her report:

Halloween Parade and Party – Mrs. Leahey stated she spoke with Art Bruhn about holding this event in the future on a set date rather than on Halloween itself. He will discuss this with the Fire Association and update her after this discussion takes place.

Cross discussion about some new plans for holding this event, primarily to avoid some of the neighborhood complaints that have taken place with trick or treating taking place after the party, but also to address to traffic safety issues.

Breakfast with the Easter Bunny and Egg Hunt – Mr. Sittmann asked Mrs. Leahey if the dates of this event as well as other events were checked with the school to ensure there are no date conflicts.

Mrs. Leahey assured she had checked the dates. She has the Spring Break timeframe on her calendar.

Morris Plains Community Band Summer Concert – Mrs. Leahey and Commission members thought a date in the first week of July would be a good date. The weekend would be the Fourth of July weekend and could be billed as opening the summer Concert Series. The suggestion was also made to have the band playing at the Family Day event while the fireworks were going off.

Councilwoman Fu advised that she can address with the Council the matter of Mr. Ripley's suggestion of allocating a line item providing some funding for the community band in lieu of payment for a concert(s).

Brief cross discussion that perhaps the community band could play at the Senior Picnic in July.

The Commission decided that the community band concert would be held on Sunday, July 3, 2016 with a rain date of Monday, July 4, 2016.

Family Day – Cross discussion about where the community band would be located at the Family Day event. Instead of being on the stage, the band could be in front of the gazebo like one or two other bands in the past did.

At various times during Mrs. Leahey's presentation, Commission members reviewed the proposed dates for different events in 2016.

PRESENTATION – Councilwoman Fu

Councilwoman Fu advised that at next week's Council meeting, there will be a special recognition of six Borough policemen who several weeks ago saved a patron's life at Arthur's. The new Police Department recruits recently graduated from the Police Academy. The Council's Re-Organization Meeting will be held on Thursday, January 7, 2016. The Rabies Clinic will be held on Saturday, January 9, 2016.

There was a brief discussion about school board elections.

Councilwoman Fu advised that Honeywell has moved in and that there are roughly 1,100 employees now working at this location, although there was some discussion as to exactly how many employees were actually now at this location. She advised of a conversation at a

Council meeting about the Bonfire event. The Mayor was concerned about participants driving up the roadway to drop people off and then driving back down. His thought was that there should be a barricade of some sort at the bottom of the roadway to prevent this from happening in the future.

Cross discussion about other ideas that would help provide a safer environment such as flashing lights, flashlights, solar lights and other possible helpful items. Perhaps such lighting should be available for other events held at Community Park, too.

There is peace between baseball and softball. There have been some Board changes. There also were comments about a presentation with Morris Township and that the presenter did a very good job. This led to a cross discussion about softball issues, including coaches, joining teams outside of where a participant lives, practice, regular game schedules, travel teams, use of fields issues, the need for greater competition between teams as preparation for playing in high school, re-purposing of fields, and the number of girls who want to play.

There was a discussion about a recent basketball dilemma – rims snapped. No one knows how this happened, but they were broken. New hoops needed to be bought. There is a receipt for the cost, but Basketball is not asking for the Commission to pay. However, if there is some leftover money in the budget, it would be a good idea to reimburse them for the cost, even though they apparently did get a deal of some sort on the purchase. The cost was \$500 and all Commission members agreed to reimbursement.

Cross discussion about procedures when basketball equipment needs to be moved – it would be best if people associated with the basketball

organization move the equipment as needed so other events can take place.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Sittmann asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the Commission's November 19, 2015 meeting.

A question was asked about soccer playing at Frelinghuysen. It was explained that while most play is at Simon's Park, two games in an eight-week schedule were played at Frelinghuysen.

Mrs. Slawinski moved that these minutes be approved, seconded by Mr. Breslin. Voice vote. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS

Mrs. Slawinski moved the vouchers be approved, seconded by Mr. Bodnar. Voice vote. All in favor (Mrs. McCabe abstained). **Motion carried.**

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion about how the Borough's fields are being used (or not being used). Several members believed it would be helpful to this discussion if the Commission could access certain maps that would display all the fields in an easy-to-see-all-at-once manner. Councilwoman Fu indicated she would most likely be able to assist the Commission in obtaining maps that would be useful. There appears to be a need to consider re-purposing a number of the fields – "everything should be on the table". There are nine softball/baseball fields in the Borough, and these programs currently are some of the smallest programs right now. It

would be best to get the best use of all the fields for youth athletics. All Commission members agreed it would be a worthwhile plan to conduct this field assessment and several members agreed to “spearhead” this effort.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mrs. Slawinski moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Mr. Bodnar. Voice vote. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

Karleen Leahey
Commission Secretary

Maureen Sullivan
Recording Secretary