

Forest Hills Recreation Board Minutes

April 7, 2014

Attendees: Barry Layton, Cheryl Finlay, Ed Galloway, Florence Biscaras, Roseann Litzinger, Nick Ricci, Matt Rodrigues

Absent: none

Guests: Lillie Sipp, John Holmes, Cindy Simm

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Layton welcomed everyone, including two guests. Reminder that two vacancies remain on the Board; please recommend friends and neighbors.

II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes from March 3, 2014

Moved by Biscaras; seconded by Litzinger. Minutes approved.

III. President's Report (Layton)

Layton turned the floor over to two guests who had business to bring before the Board.

Dr. Lillie Sipp has been a resident of Forest Hills for 30 years and is an avid tennis player. As a senior citizen, she was disappointed not to see a senior rate for joining the tennis courts and asked whether any thought were given to providing a senior rate. She asked about the rationale of not providing a rate, what the financial hardship would be to the Borough if one were implemented, and asked what she could do to rectify the matter. Dr. Sipp wrote a letter to Cindy Simm asking that this matter be addressed. Mrs. Simm forwarded her letter the same day she received it to Borough Manager Steve Morus, who then presented it to Borough Council on Wednesday, April 1. It was discussed at the Council meeting that same evening, but because all policies and fees had already been put in place (January 1), it was decided that no changes would be made this year. Discussion of new pricing should be started when budgets for next year are due (August/September 2014). The Board unanimously agreed that there should be a separate senior rate (just like there has been in place for years when you join the pool). Mrs. Simm stated that this wasn't an oversight as much as it was something that was never put in place due to the fact that the majority of residents who bought tennis passes were tennis team members, with only about four others who actually bought family or individual passes since 2005, so the Borough had no record of senior citizens buying passes or any complaints about the costs. The Board agreed that rather than wait one year, Council should act immediately by adding a senior tennis rate at \$65. The Board was grateful to Dr. Sipp for bringing this to our attention, and hope it can be rectified immediately.

Mr. John Holmes, a two-year resident of Forest Hills, addressed the Board about the costs of joining the pool. His contention is the rate to join the pool or pay for daily admissions is very high compared to similar-sized Boroughs. He argued with cost figures he gathered to compare the membership rate at Forest Hills with those at Crafton and Whitehall in particular, boroughs he said are similar in tax base, resident size, and tax subsidized. He claimed he knew of many people in the Borough who think the cost to join our pool is way too high which have prevented them from joining or renewing. Likewise he claimed the daily rates are cost prohibitive too. He based this evidence on responses he received from his Letter to the Editor (published in *The Patch* over a year ago) and from talking to neighbors on Cascade Road, where he lives. When asked how many times he visited the pool last year, Mr. Holmes responded by saying "once." The Board responded to his arguments indicating that in fact the pool membership rate is very reasonable if not considered "cheap" when compared to neighborhood pools, such as Blackridge and Edgewood. Holmes response was that these pools are not fair estimates since they are private and subsidized by their municipality. The Board disagreed since those neighborhoods are in fact exactly who we compare ourselves too. Further the Board stated that the pool already operates at a loss so lowering membership rates raises the financial burden on the Borough to make up the difference. In fact, when the Borough entertained a proposal from Keystone Health Club a few years ago about allowing their non-resident members to join the pool, the response by the community was overwhelming when they packed a Council meeting to voice their displeasure and to indicate they would pay more to be a member than see the pool opened to non-residents. In fact, the following year, Council did raise rates upwards of \$25 and membership levels remained the same; in other words, there was not a loss of members as a consequence of raising rates. Mrs. Simm added that unless the Borough receives a large influx of residents who move in and join the pool, the number of passes sold have been and will be about the same every year which has been the case since 2005. The Board of course would be in favor of seeing any Borough rate drop but the reality is residents we all know are very happy with the pool and the amenity it provides to the community and think it is a very reasonable cost. The Board has experimented with options to provide more variety of pool membership options with evening rates, Pool Plus packages, etc. When the Board asked Mr. Holmes what he would suggest we do, he said either significantly reduce the membership rate or the daily rates...he would be satisfied with one or the other. It was clear during this discussion that the Board unanimously agreed that we thought the pool was not expensive to join and offered no support or solution other than encouraging Mr. Holmes to present his concerns directly to Borough Council.

IV. Marketing and Events Director's Report (Simm)

No word yet from the USTA about receiving a grant for the tennis courts. Summer staff hires are complete. Once the forecast suggest two weeks of good weather, the courts will be painted and lined in preparation for their grand opening.

V. Tennis Report (Biscaras)

No report.

VI. Parks Report (Layton)

No report.

VII. Basketball Report (Layton)

Layton still needs to check with DeGregorio on his plans to teach the clinic during the summer.

VIII. Pool/Swim Team Report (Galloway)

Ricci investigated how a few other pools present their award information and has calls in to a few others. He will present his findings at the next meeting.

Rodrigues will contact a trophy shop about seeing if hardware on the Gabella Award trophy can be replaced rather than re-silvered, but is also investigating that option too as desired by the resident who will fund the work up to \$500.

IX. Old Business

Boy Scouts will spread mulch along the main park trails on Saturday, May 3. Decided not to spread millings as earlier suggested due to additional cost to the Borough for personnel on sight and rental of equipment, plus material really too heavy for the young boys to handle.

X. New Business

None.

XII. Adjournment

Moved by Ricci; seconded by Rodrigues. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 5 at 7:00 pm at the Borough Building.