

APRIL 20, 2011
ANDOVER TOWNSHIP
RECREATION COMMITTEE

The special meeting of the Andover Township Recreation Committee was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairman Ed Burgio with the following members present: Jodi Halteman, Maechele Alborano and Sabrina Burke. Brian Robinson, Janet Bardello and Mike Morel were absent. Township Committee Liaison, Deputy Mayor Mike Lensak was also present.

OPENING STATEMENT: The Chairman noted compliance with Chapter 231, P.L. 1975 as being met.

FLAG SALUTE

ROLL CALL:

MINUTES: There were no minutes on the agenda for approval.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: No one stepped forward to be recognized.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion regarding 2011 Summer Recreation Program: Chairman Burgio began the discussion by stating that the purpose of this special meeting was to review and comment on discussion that took place at the April 12, 2011 Recreation Committee meeting regarding safety and security issues with the 2010 Summer Recreation Program. Once statements are made at a public meeting either by members of the committee or parents of the children participating with the program regarding safety issues with the children then it is the responsibility of this committee to address the issues, discuss possible remedies and put those remedies into action. By acting in this manner, we are making sure that we have done the very best we can to provide a safe and healthy program for the township children. If this is not handled in this manner, the whole issue becomes a potential liability for the township.

Chairman Burgio apologized that he was unable to be at the April 12th meeting when the prior discussion took place. He was concerned and a bit confused that at the conclusion of the summer program last year when we reviewed the parental surveys and discussed the program that had just ended within days of that meeting, the issues regarding safety and children not under control of the counselors were not presented for discussion. In reviewing the surveys the members were in agreement that we would take some of the recommendations and include them in the future programs such as having a counselor remain with the same children throughout the program so that a closer relationship could develop and the counselor would be more in tune with each child's abilities and behavior.

Member, Sabrina Burke, recalled that she made similar recommendations on her survey last year and was glad to know that it was going to be implemented this year. The one situation that members Sabrina Burke and Jodi Halteman brought up for discussion at the prior meeting related to a child leaving the building during a music program and going off on his own into the park and parking lot. The Arts/Crafts counselors were working in the picnic area and the Fun/Games counselors were down by the field area, all busy doing their job duties. This child basically took it upon himself to leave the building without any counselor giving permission. He was brought back to the building by a mother who was there for her child.

Chairman Burgio and the Recreation Director asked why was this not brought to anyone's attention last summer and Jodi felt that since nothing happened to the child that it was not such a big deal and didn't need to be discussed further. Chairman Burgio wanted to be clear that we all are aware that if this happens in the future, we need to deal with it in a strong manner, right at the exact time it happens because the bottom line is that we are responsible for those children when they are participating with the summer program. The way we need to deal with issues of this type in the future is to take action immediately, make sure the parent is aware of the behavior and if the child is supposed to be under the control of a counselor, then that counselor needs to be admonished for allowing this to happen.

We know that we have a limited budget that dictates the number of counselors that we can have. Adding counselors will mean more money to the tune of \$500.00. The township budget for 2011 was being discussed at the same time that our members were taking note of problems with our program last year. The township was looking into areas and departments that could reasonably have a cut in funding and there might have been the potential for the township fathers to remove the funding for the summer program if there was a question as to the safety and quality of the program vs. other township departments that also need to be funded. We all agreed that this program is valuable and has been a staple of the township for over 25 years. Especially in these hard economic times it becomes necessary for the residents to have options for their children to enjoy that do not cost large sums of money. We want to be able to offer this program, but we all need to be on the same page as to the quality, safety and responsibility that is associated with it or the township cannot take on the liability otherwise.

Everyone agreed that we need to offer this program and we need to find ways to make it safe and fun. If we can add 2 more counselors in each section bringing the total to 6 counselors each, the ratio of kids to counselor will be much better and the issues with not being able to keep tabs on all the kids at all times. We would need approximately \$500.00 for the 4 new counselors. Sabrina and Jodi suggested that we ask for parents or 12-13 year old kids to volunteer each day but you can't always depend upon volunteers since they might have other responsibilities that they need to give their attention to and then you are left with no one.

The idea of having counselors in training was brought up by Jodi and we all thought that was a great idea. We do need to have kids familiar with the program ready to step in to the paying position when they become available. The counselors we have now in both areas have been with us for years and most likely this summer might be their last. If we did add a counselor in training to each area that would give us a pool to take future counselors from. With 2 counselors in training plus 2 more paid counselors in each group that would bring a total of 8 people in each area to keep the children safe and secure.

The Director then brought up the issue of having adult supervisors that are not involved with either the Fun/Games or Arts/Crafts programs to be available to oversee the entire program – sign in; entertainment set up; snack set up; sign out, etc. This way we have more eyes covering the activities as they happen.

The Director reminded the members that it is not possible for her to be at the park for the entire program. She has to return to the town hall each day to deal with other job responsibilities. This summer she will not be here for the first week. At this time, Maechele, Jodi and Sabrina all said they would do their best to be there every day to cover that area of supervision. The idea came up that we should form a subcommittee to oversee the summer program so that there will be no loose ends needing to be tied because there will be at least 3 people in charge. Chairman Burgio asked would it be possible for Jodi, Maechele and Sabrina to make up this subcommittee. They asked what the budget was and they were told that we use \$5,500 for salaries and that would leave us \$2,450 for supplies, entertainment, etc.

Jodi said she would be happy to Chair this subcommittee and would like to have a meeting real soon to get it going. The Director stated that this is a great idea since she will be retiring in 2013 and it will be important that we have continuity in running this program. All three members have young children so they can network with the other parents also. Sabrina did mention that she will be there for the first week and not the second week which will work out with the Director's schedule. This way there should be 3 adult supervisors on hand for both weeks.

At this time, Chairman Burgio made a motion to form the subcommittee; Jodi Halteman seconded the motion, all in favor. Liaison Lensak extended his support for this subcommittee also. We all were reminded that we must all offer our recommendations to improve programs and if in the future another issue should arise, we will discuss it and make recommendations to remedy the situations. This is how a responsible board or committee operates.

The subcommittee will meet with the Director as soon as possible. Once that meeting takes place, the subcommittee will report to the whole Recreation Committee at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

At this time, there being no further business to discuss, Maechele Alborano made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 pm. It was seconded by Jodi Halteman. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ed Burgio, Chair

Jackie Huelbig, Secretary