

OAKLAND RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
Monday, July 29, 2019

The regular monthly meeting of the Oakland Recreation Commission was called to order at 8:00 pm by Chairman Guadagnino, with the flag salute, at the Danny D'Elia Recreation Center under the public sunshine laws. Commissioners Guadagnino, Saliani, Logatto, King, Nittoli, Coira, and Laterra were present. Councilman Kulmala and Commissioner Walker were absent.

A motion to approve the minutes from the May regular meeting was made by Commissioner Logatto and seconded by Commissioner Coira.

Open Session- A motion to open to public session was made by Commissioner Saliani and seconded by Commissioner Logatto. As there were no topics to be discussed other than the following, motion was made to close the open session by Commissioner Saliani and seconded by Commissioner Logatto.

Discussion with Football Coach

Paul Donohue (15 Fordham Rd. Oakland) stated he had sent an email to the commission saying that he felt he was mistreated and strung along following his suspension for the remainder of the 2018 season for sharing game footage with a coach from Fair Lawn through the Huddle account. Mr. Donohue stated that he attended a meeting in November 2018 regarding the situation and admitted to and apologized for his role. He felt that he was led to believe by Commissioner Nittoli that they would be ok by getting ahead of it and taking ownership of what he had done. Commissioner Logatto asked what his expectations were following the end of the suspension and he stated that he believed that would have been the end of the situation following the suspension and would receive a clean slate as of 2019. Mr. Donohue then stated that he received notice from Commissioner Nittoli that on February 27, 2019 that the League had plans to further his, Greg Babaian and the coach from Fair Lawn's suspension for the 2019 season. During several conversations via text messages, Commissioner Nittoli notified Mr. Donohue that he could appeal the suspension with the league. Mr. Donohue stated that he has knowledge of several other coaches in the league who have shared game film prior to him sharing it. He also stated that during his series of text message conversations with Commissioner Nittoli that he wanted to appeal the decision with the league as he felt the punishment was severe. He received a response from Commissioner Nittoli stating that in his eyes, he has completed his suspension and that he supports him regarding the appeal to the league. He then stated that in March 2019, he was told to write an appeal letter to the conduct committee of Oakland created by Commissioner Nittoli. Mr. Donohue asked if the creation of the conduct committee is allowed. Chairman Guadagnino stated that it is allowed and that Commissioner Nittoli can run the program how he chooses and that this is often done to bring additional eyes in to the situation. Mr. Donohue then stated that he did send in the appeal later to the conduct committee saying that he feels he is being punished twice for the same situation and that the additional suspension is severe and doesn't fit the crime. In addition, the other teams that also film shared were given "time served" with the forfeit of their play off game while they were suspended for the 2019 season. Mr. Donohue stated he was notified that the suspension was reduced to only include games, however he could continue to coach practices. He then states that he met with the conduct committee on April 18th and tells them the situation and cites the NBJFL rule book that says that

any coach that faces disciplinary action will have the chance to appeal and go before the league and plead their case and ask questions. He told them that was the reason he would like to appeal. He never had the opportunity to go before the league. He did not hear back from the committee and followed up with Chuck De Prima who notified him that the conduct committee agrees with him based on the citing of the rule book and that he should have the opportunity to go before the league to appeal.

On May 28th Mr. Donohue, Mr. Babaian and Commissioner Nittoli met to follow up on the decision of the conduct committee as they had not heard anything regarding the appeal. Commissioner Nittoli stated during the meeting that he would email the league and follow up.

Mr. Donohue stated that in June, he was included on an email from Commissioner Nittoli to the league that he read to the Recreation Committee. It said that Oakland has reinstated Mr. Babaian as he was not involved in the situation and was never aware of the game footage sharing. Mr. Donohue said he had told Commissioner Nittoli this from the beginning.

The League replied back with an email to Commissioner Nittoli stating that the situation from the 2018 season was a closed issue and would not be revisited by the league. They also included in the email that the Oakland coaches never appealed the Oakland self-imposed suspension and therefore they were not open to revisiting it. Mr. Dohonue stated that this was false since he sent in his appeal letter to the Oakland conduct committee in March.

Commissioner King stated she deals with similarly run leagues regularly and that after reviewing the details of the case, she felt that the league is wrong to not let him appeal. She also stated that there is a risk going before the league. They can impose a stricter penalty that what was given by Commissioner Nittoli. Mr. Donohue stated he understood, however after speaking with the league president and several other coaches who were at league meetings that the league wanted to clear the situation up prior to reaching this point and that the suspension was fully imposed by Oakland. Commissioner King asked if he felt that his suspension was too harsh and what do you want from the Commission. He stated yes, and felt he should have been allowed to appeal and that he just wanted the opportunity to speak. He also felt that he received no support from Oakland with the league and the self-imposed year suspension was too harsh and didn't understand why Oakland chose it.

Commissioner Nittoli stated that they did go to the league and asked for him to have his day with the league and the league came back and said that the matter is closed and they will not hear Mr. Donohue in regards to it.

Commissioner Logatto asked for clarification on the order of which the suspension was given. He asked if it was the 2 games at the end of the 2018 season and the 2019 season included in the original suspension. Commissioner Nittoli stated that he originally suspended Mr. Donohue for the 2 games at the end of the 2018 season and that the league came back and asked what additional punishment he was imposing. The leagues suggestion was the additional suspension of coaching 2019 games.

Greg Babaian (8 Valley Forge Road) stated that how they were treated following the suspension was not right. After being suspended they were initially told that they had full support by Commissioner Nitolli. They were told that their appeal was in with the league and they were waiting to hear back from the League, however when the email came back from the league president in June asking why they were appealing their own suspension, Messrs. Babaian and Donohue were confused. They had waited for the last five months for a chance to appeal and feel that they were lied to by Commissioner Nittoli. They felt they were led to believe the appeal was in place and that he was fighting for them with the league.

Commissioner Nitolli stated that he wanted to address the issue of not supporting the coaches. He read a letter he sent on April 27th to the league that said, "Bert, Dan and Eric, Good morning. This season Oakland has put together a conduct committee to help with issues that may arise during a football season. Our committee met with Greg Babaian and Paul Donohue to discuss their current suspensions. In addition to not having an opportunity to speak prior to facing a one year or more suspension, please see email below from the conduct committee (where referenced the rule from the league that was cited) new information was revealed that in my eyes changes the level of each coaches' suspensions that were initially recommended by Oakland. In light of what occurred last year with Mahwah and the distraction to the league, I was wondering if we could in lieu of having the coaches speak at our meeting, recommend our revised suspensions to you directly. For additional clarification Greg will be a Jr. B coach and Paul will be a Mighty Might Assistant Coach and potentially a Pee Wee Assistant. Neither would be a head coach. Best Regards, Al."

The league responded saying that it was a closed issue and would not be revisited. After being told it was a closed issue, Diego went to the next league meeting and stated that they were not going to accept the fact that it was a closed issue and would still like Paul Donohue to go to the meeting to speak. The league said at the meeting that they would vote on whether or not to allow Mr. Donohue to appeal to the league and with the exception of Fair Lawn, it was unanimous not to allow him. Commissioner Nittoli then stated that if they still want to go to the league, that Diego would go to the next meeting and push back on the decision.

Mr. Babaian stated that this came too late and they were not supported for the prior 8 months.

Chairman Guadagnino stated that he would go to league president and tell him that they expect to allow them an appeal if that is what they wanted. He stated that the Recreation Commission could write a letter to the league stating that they should have the opportunity to appeal this decision and request an answer. Mr. Babaian's opinion that if they were to appeal that they could end up getting a worse punishment and at this point its not worth it and it could be worse.

Mr. Donohue asked if he has support from the commission and if they agree with the punishment. Commissioners King and Guadagnino both stated that they do agree with the punishment. Commissioner Guadagnino stated his biggest concern with the whole situation was that with sharing the game footage, he also shared personal information of the children in the program which is a safety issue. Therefore he felt the punishment did fit the crime.

Chairman Guadagnino stated they will draft a letter to be sent to the league in support of their right to be heard on the matter if that is what he wants and to let him know via email by tomorrow. He also stated that whenever there is an issue in any sport, that they can always reach out to him for assistance in getting it resolved.

Mike Guazzo (3 Dartmouth Way) Stated his son plays for pee wees and coaches with Diego on the Jr. level. Concern that none of the coaches for the Pee Wees were asked to be on the conduct committee. He also stated that he felt all volunteers should get the opportunity to speak their mind when situations occur through this conduct committee. He also stated that he doesn't agree with the punishment.

Councilman Nittoli responded that the conduct committee was made up quickly for this specific situation. He would be happy to have additional coaches volunteer for the future. Going forward the committee would hear all grievances and bring reports and recommendations to the commissioner and then the recreation commission will discuss and vote on the punishment.

Chris Cortese (9 Rock Ledge) he stated that he understands that he feels you were supported addressing Paul. He stated that this is an issue that goes above and beyond what you realize. The liability of sharing children's and family information is huge. The potential exposure that this town had with data and information that was put out is above and beyond coaching games. The penalty has to take in to account the potential information that could have gotten out (children's pictures, addresses, and additional information).

Commissioner Logatto asked Commissioner Nittoli if he still feels that this is the correct punishment. Commissioner Nittoli said that he felt the punishment for Mr. Donohue was correct but would change it for Mr. Babaian.

Chuck De Prima (44 Grove Street) stated that he shares Chairman Guadagnino's concern about the personal information that was shared about the kids in the program through the huddle account and that the issue goes beyond anything with football and is about safety of the kids and the exposure that they and the town has been put through. Mr. De Prima asked Councilman Nittoli if he felt he led them on? Councilman Nittoli responded that in the beginning he wasn't sure what to think and as everything unfolded, he does feel he made an error in judgements with the way he worded things during the whole situation. However, he still agrees with the punishment

Chairman Guadagnino thanked everyone for coming and asked everyone to contact him if they had anything else.

A member of the public asked how to become a commissioner. Chairman Guadagnino stated that there is a form online to fill out and submit to the mayor who appoints commissioners when an appointment ends. Each appointment last 5 years. The mayor does not assign the sport to the commissioner, she/he only appoints the person to the commission. Chairman Guadagnino then appoints each commissioner to the specific sports and the recreation commission then votes on approving or can challenge the chair's appointments.

Chairman Guadagnino asked for approval of last month's minutes. The motion was made by Commissioner Scalabrini and seconded by Commissioner King.

The following reports were made and in proper motion unanimously accepted.

BASEBALL – Comm. Saliani – The travel season has ended and 4 teams have made it to the championships. Coopers town team leaving is leaving on August 9th. A letter will be sent to Mayor and Council to have a fire truck and police escort.

BASKETBALL – Comm. Walker – No Report

FOOTBALL – Comm. Nittoli – Football registration over and equipment is done. We have a similar number of players as previous years however a different makeup of teams. We have 2 Mighty Might, 1 Pee Wee, 1 Jr. and 2 Sr. teams. There are about 150 players on flag football. We have a pink out event and will be inviting cancer survivors to the game. We also have a salute the service game scheduled against West Milford.

GOLF – Comm. Lattera – The spring season went well. Currently reviewing pricing to update the green. DPW will be doing it. The plan is to start golf in the middle of September.

ROLLER HOCKEY – Comm. King – Registration begins September 1st. Online form has been set up with Tracy. We have received a grant from the county for \$175,000 to re hockey rink. We have rejected the first bid we receive because it came in too high. The rink project is out to bid again. It will close on Aug 15th. Hope to have rink redone in time for the start of the season.

SOCCER – Comm. Saliani – Registration is complete and teams have been formed. Equipment has been ordered for the season. There are 135 kids in the 1st and 2nd grade teams.

SOFTBALL – Comm. Logatto – Travel softball has completed their season. 14u team won the championship.

SPECIAL NEEDS – Comm. Scalabrini – Football and cheerleading are starting sign ups this week. Working with Director for Special Ed at Ramapo College for volunteers for the program.

TENNIS – Comm. Scalabrini – Rec Tennis program should be ending shortly. Team Tennis will be finishing up soon. We will be working on fundraising opportunities for redoing the courts.

WRESTLING – Comm. Logatto – Online registration will be available this year. There will be some in person registrations at Football.

CHEERLEADING – Comm. Walker – No Report

LACROSSE – Comm. Nittoli – No Report

SUMMER CAMP – Chair Guadagnino – Summer camp is running well. Asked if they could create a Facebook page. It would not be an official borough page but it has been doing well for communication with camp.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS – Chair. Guadagnino – Guadagnino asked if keys have been turned in and asked who needed keys. Guadagnino told everyone to talk to Tracy to get keys but the key machine is down right now. Lightning detector will be transferred to new commissioner for the season.

SUMMER RECREATION PROGRAMS – Commissioner Laterra– About 20 kids were signed up right now for the current camp. Volleyball shirts came in a day late. There has been a lot of positive feedback for the Summer Recreation Programs this year.

MOUNTAIN BIKE – Comm. Coira – Season has completed. It went very well.

VOLLEYBALL – Comm. Coira – No Report.

CAPITAL PROJECTS –

Roller Rink – Commissioner Guadagnino stated Freeholders came to the council meeting to present the check from the county. We will also receive \$25,000 from Columbia bank.

Tennis Courts Commissioner Guadagnino- The grant is in to get it resurfaced. People are complaining to DPW about mold and cracks on the courts.

Butternut Corner- More trees have been added and more are coming.

COMMITTEE REPORT – None

COMMUNICATIONS TO COMMISSION – None

OLD BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS – Commissioner Guadagnino wants to put a sign with a map of where the fields are located in front of the D’Elia building and back side would be a notice board. Would like to look into costs.

Commissioner Guadagnino also stated that if a sport is not offering online registration, they must have copies of registration forms available at Borough Hall.

RECREATION AID – No Report.

COUNCIL LIASON – No Report.

Open Session – Commissioner Nittoli motioned to open a second open session. Commissioner Saliani seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Kelly Rooney (67 Mohegan Ave.) Ms. Rooney is attending the meeting as a representative of the Mother's Club. Mother's Club has been receiving complaints about how often the snack stand is open and wants to get a field schedule so they can arrange to be open for busy days.

She also requested having tents from summer camp to remain over picnic table for football season for eating and rain location for parents.

She also wanted to share with the commission that the Mother's Club would like to assist families in need who cannot afford equipment for sports and would like the commission to notify them when they hear about these situations.

The Mother's club is also requesting an additional key once the system is up and running for making new keys.

Absentees: A motion to excuse Commissioner Walker for the meeting was made by Commissioner Saliani and seconded by Commissioner Coira. The motion was passed unanimously.

Adjournment – Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Logatto and seconded by Commissioner Scalabrini. The motion passed unanimously.

**THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE RECREATION COMMISSION WILL BE
HELD Monday, September 23, 2019 AT 8:00PM.**