

Florence Township Recreation Committee Minutes 1/12/26

The Florence Township Recreation Committee held a regular meeting on 12/1/25 at the Florence Township Municipal Building 711 Broad Street, Florence, New Jersey. Members of the public were invited to attend the meeting in person.

The meeting was called to order by Recreation Committee Chairman, Tony Pastore at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

Present: Tony Pastore, Mary Pieretti, Don Nemeth, Tom Boracci, Martin Eckert, Cindy Golway, Donna Sadler, TJ Lovenduski, Toniann Carroll, Tom Supey, Councilman Joseph Frappolli, Caitlin Motta

Absent: Kim Dembowski

Public Attendance: 2026 Recreation baseball Board – Vince Mancuso, Tom Carroll, Adam Jackson, Stephanie Jackson. Additionally, Rob Castro, David Traynor, Risa Schuler, Scott, Schuler, Tara Sandusky

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting of October 6, 2025 (Golway; Sadler)

COORDINATORS REPORT

- **2025 Recreation Basketball** – Marty Eckert provided that the basketball registration period has now concluded. Well over 200 children are registered to participate and coaches have been confirmed along with newly interested coaches completing the background check procedures in order to participate. All facility requests have been prepped. Awaiting the 2026 liability insurance renewal in order to request the 2026 facilities for practices and games.
- **2026 Recreation Baseball** – The rec committee welcomed the members of the 2026 Recreation baseball Board. Each member attending provided insight on plans for the upcoming Spring season, which includes off-season facility maintenance within the concession stand, the upstairs meeting room at Olaff Field, the indoor batting cage and once weather allows, a variety of field improvements. The program will continue to work closely with the recreation softball program organizing Opening Day activity as well as managing a shared use of the batting cages between winter and spring. The program discussed adding lighting that would project around the indoor cages, picnic table and concession area to create better visibility. There is a goal to establish a travel component similar to that of the Florence Flames from the softball program.

The committee interacted with the baseball board offering support and suggestions towards a successful 2026 season. Don Nemeth addressed the bullpen dimensions on the Babe Ruth field. There is also an ongoing discussion between baseball and softball regarding the possibility of playing permanent fencing around Legion Field so that it may be used regularly for games and tournament play. Once the recreation committee reorganizes in January 2026, a liaison will be assigned to recreation baseball to aide in the communication during the year between the program and recreation committee. The recreation committee wishes the new board officers and league a great 2026 season.

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CORRESPONDENCE

- No correspondence received at time of meeting agenda.

FACILITIES

Municipal Facilities

- **Winterizations:** Marty confirmed that now that all of the Fall programs have concluded, public works and water & sewer reviewed shutting off water to recreation buildings until Spring.
- **Board of Education Facilities**

Recreation Basketball practice and game schedules for 2026 are being completed. There will also be facilities requests being prepared for recreation softball and potentially baseball for indoor clinics.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Pickleball Project:** Marty reported that the construction phase of the pickleball court project has moved along well. The excavation and surface preparation was completed internally by the public works department and water department. Asphalt has been applied and temporary lines are now in place. The sleeves for the placement of posts are set as well. Marty has ordered the perimeter fencing, which will be installed in the early Spring of 2026. Once completed, surface painting and permanent lines will be completed and the courts will be open for use. The final component will be the determination of matting for the fence to reduce the impact of the sound during play.

Marty shared that the committee will discuss the tennis and pickleball programs during the winter months to coordinate clinics and monitor open play to determine if increased activity will require scheduling court use (primarily for pickleball).

- **Fieldhouse Updates:** Marty and Councilman Frappolli confirmed that a bid had been released to the public for phase 1 of the renovation project. This phase includes the leveling of the main floor area and the renovation of the former public works locker room to have a widened doorway and complete renovation to include a wash basin and handicapped accessible components. Upon awarding the bid, documents will be reviewed by the township's engineering firm and solicitor then will be awarded. Marty will have more information regarding scheduling in the New Year.

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NEW BUSINESS

- **Youth Painting for the Holidays** – The youth painting activity will take place on Saturday, December 6th at the Florence Township Community Center. The activity will be holiday themed and is being coordinated by Toniann Carroll and Caitlin Motta. This is a great event for families to begin celebrating the holiday season with artistic creations by the children.
- **Roebling Tree Lighting and Orchestra Performance: On Saturday, December 13th the Roebling Historical Society is sponsoring the Roebling Tree Lighting.** This event will take place at the Roebling Circle on Main Street across from Palermo's Pizza. The historical society is coordinating hot cocoa and cookies to be provided by the Girl Scouts along with slices of pizza available as well. Mr. & Mrs Albert Jacoby, Sr are serving as the tree lighters for this event.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tara Sandusky – Ms. Sandusky inquired about the coordination and structuring of the recreation basketball league this season. There were questions relating to coaches being permitted to participate that did not reside in the township. Ms. Sandusky expressed concern about the participation and level of competitiveness in high school sports and that the recreation programs are the feeder for those programs. Recreation Basketball President Tom Carroll provided feedback regarding coaches that inquired to aide in coaching and had dialogue with Ms. Sandusky about coaching opportunities that were offered but declined which has resulted in the elimination of a team in one of the girls' divisions thus creating larger roster sizes. There was a question suggesting it may not be a necessity for the Florence Rec Basketball program to play against other towns but instead focus on the development of the players with in-house play. The feedback to these inquires was that the girl's division in recent years has had a reduced number of teams, which became the reason to expand to allow more teams to play one another by partnering with neighboring towns. These towns had available boys' divisions, which were also combined to create a league that creates a competitiveness as a means to prepare local players for the transition to high school basketball where participants play against other townships throughout Southern New Jersey.

The committee discussed the details of the discussion as well. Some members noted the need to have more of an interaction with the school district to create dialogue about leagues and ways to improve programs for high school preparation, working with junior coaches to develop players and serve as positive mentors and ways to encourage recreation players to continue to develop so that they may be interested in continuing participating in sports in high school. (Attendees Risa and Scott Schuler and Recreation Basketball President, Tom Carroll participating in the dialogue as well).

REPORT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Don Nemeth Shared that on December 11th the recreation football program will honor the 8th grade football and cheer participants.
- Don Nemeth provided that 3 out of the 4 competitive football divisions made the playoffs this season. 1 team advanced to the semi-finals.

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- Don Nemeth – noted that police presence was at the field at the end of the season and that it was well received. Don recommended that the committee communicate with the police department in advance on the fall seasons as well as suggest a presence during spring activity as well. This will make it common during the spring and fall seasons. The committee suggested inviting Officer Shaffer to a committee meeting to talk about community policing or on duty presence during activities on the complex.
- Cindy Golway – shared that the cheer season ended well as did the competitions the squads participated. They were great learning tools for the program to build from. Additionally, since the end of the season nearly all uniforms have been collected. The Kingsway competition the cheer squads had two First Place finishes and two Third Place finishes.
- Cindy Golway – Shared that there will be a December & January Board meeting and that several board positions will become available.

Tom Boracci – shared that the Florence Soccer Association held an end of season fundraiser on November 22nd at Subculture in Florence. It was a very successful event that was well attended. Tom expressed that the soccer association will be looking for new officers for the Fall 2026 season and more information will be provided by the league.

Caitlin Motta – Donna Sadler – Discussed the township tree lighting event. Expressed that many residents observe that the event is becoming stale. With only a tree lighting and visit with Santa, the committee inquired about expanding the offering to create more of a holiday presence to draw residents to participate. Suggestions of a holiday village feel where there are vendors or booths to visit. Maybe a holiday themed contest similar to the scarecrows that would attract people to come to the complex. The committee inquired about having a role to support the tree lighting. (Risa Schuler echoed the same and that several friends no longer attend because it is not a draw for families)

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Motta, second by Sadler – 8:40 pm