Florence Township Recreation Committee Minutes 9/14/26

The Florence Township Recreation Committee held a regular meeting on 8/3/26 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 Secretary, Caitlin Motta at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

Present: Mary Pieretti, Don Nemeth, Tom Boracci, Martin Eckert, Cindy Golway, Donna Sadler, Caitlin Motta, Toniann Carroll, Vince Mancuso

Absent: Vince Mancuso, Toniann Carroll, Caitlin Motta, Tony Pastore, TJ Lovenduski, Tom Supey, Councilman Joseph Frappolli

Public: Lisa Frappolli (Call-in during public comment)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of June 1, 2026 (Golway; Sadler)

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT #1

Renaming of Legion Field: The committee welcomed family and friends of Veteran and former township employee, James Pennacchi. The Pennacchi family provided written correspondence that was filtered through the committee for consideration of naming what is referred to as Legion Field to become the James Pennacchi Memorial Field (Or slight variation to the name). Mr. Pennacchi was expressed through family, committee members, past league presidents and coworker/friend, Gino James as a vital component in maintaining fields during work and as a volunteer for most of his 43 years as a township employee. Mr. Pennacchi played in adult league on the field and served in the United States Navy, where as the discussion noted that all parts of naming the field triangulate between work/league participant/veteran & legion member is a perfect fit to appropriately consider the request. Committee member Donna Sadler and Director, Marty Eckert spoke at length about their experience working with Mr. Pennacchi. Mr. Pennacchi's family brought certificates and recognition that James/Jimmy had received during his years with the township and if granted approval their family and the American legion will be an active participant in supporting the work and/or financial needs associated with such a project to renovate and commemorate the field. Both Donna Sadler and Vince Mancuso, presidents of the softball and baseball leagues echoed the same sentiment in supporting this project in any manner possible.

The committee unanimously voted to recommend the renaming of the field and Marty shared that he would draft a memorandum to council for their review. The Pennacchi family shared that they would attend an upcoming council meeting to provide additional information should council have questions. The Pennacchi family expressed gratitude and appreciation to the committee for their support and believe that this will be a tremendous honor to their husband/father/friend as Mr. Pennacchi meant a great deal and is mentioned often when field work is referenced by current staff.

Recreation Football: Lisa Frappolli/Secretary Recreation Football called in to the meeting regarding an open registration for Fall Baseball, which was expressed to have shifted children from football to baseball. Lisa shared that it isn't so much about families making a decision of what program to join, but that it has been an understanding that off-season registrations should not take place without the closing of

the in-season registrations. The football program's 160 lb. squad was not able to field a team to reduced registration. There was a registration fee of $75 for the fall program. The committee inquired what the fee will include and confirmed if this is for recreation versus travel.

Additionally, both Lisa and the committee asked for details on the fall program. Age groups, is it recreation or travel baseball, confirming that field maintenance is not guaranteed due to in-season being a priority and the lack of communication by the program sharing with the recreation committee of the interest to begin a fall offering this year. Rec Baseball President, Vince Mancuso shared that he is not actively involved with the fall baseball program and that Vice President of Baseball, Adam Jackson is handling. It was expressed that it is important as the liaison to the baseball program, that information is needed to flow between the programs and the committee so to be able to respond effectively to inquiries. Vince is going to get updated information on the plans for fall baseball and report back to the committee before the September meeting.

COORDINATORS REPORT

2026 Patriotic Celebration Recap: Marty went over the success of the annual celebration and noted that several recreation and high school programs, along with the members of the Florence Cricket team took part in the parade. One challenge was the threat of weather and guidance to potentially begin the parade earlier that the scheduled start time (Which did not take place), but it caused some concern with pre-event preparations. It was discussed consideration to begin the parade earlier in future years, which may also support cooler temperatures for a mid-morning start. There may be a window for some activity at the park or complex to be considered prior to evening activities.

Fall Sports Registrations and Camps: Marty shared that registration numbers are going well, closing out the fall deadlines. Rec Football numbers took a slight dip, but soccer numbers have increased greatly along with consistent cheer and field hockey totals. It is anticipated that overall fall numbers will exceed that of 2025. There is variation between leagues and though it is a challenge for any program to dip, if the overall numbers are positive then the general consensus is that there remains a draw to the programs and we are gaining more participants. This combined with adult soccer, summer tennis which welcomed over 118 registrations and roughly 20 taking part in pickleball clinics, it's been an active summer and great numbers for fall.

Don Nemeth, Cindy Golway and Tom Boracci were pleased with the turnout with summer camps and a lot of new coaches are background checked and taking part. We do not have specific totals, but the field hockey camp was reported as going well, with volunteers from the high school program taking part as well.

Weather Alerts: Cindy Golway inquired if the township can follow up on options for weather notifications that may be put in place. Marty is setting up a call with a company and looking to see what neighboring towns are doing to establish alert systems. Currently, game officials call or pause games due to weather, however the concern expressed by leagues is having a set system in place so to notify parents and have all leagues understanding the process when inclement or inbound weather causes concern.

CORRESPONDENCE

Renaming Legion Field: Information provided during public comment #1

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FACILITIES

Municipal Facilities

2nd Saturday Events: The committee shared details about the September Event, Country Line Dancing. Numbers are growing for the activity and will promote up through the day of the event. The committee is looking at a Puzzle Event for October and musical event featuring Radio Fiction in November. December will be a holiday orchestra provided through the Roebling Historical Society.

Cheerleading Facility Use: Marty will expand more on the fieldhouse renovation but noted that once the painting contractor is set to work in the building there will be a brief hiatus on use late September. More information to follow.

Board of Education Facilities

Nothing to note at this time. Facility requests for basketball will begin in late September. The committee discussed following up with Board of Education as to future facility usage for other programs. Donna Sadler suggested contacting the superintendent after the school year begins.

OLD BUSINESS

Pickleball: The courts are in use daily and each evening. Clinic sessions have been a lot of fun and helpful, teaching adults the game of pickleball. There has not been discussion in starting a league at this time. Currently it is being used by residents and maintained well.

Fieldhouse: Marty shared that a great deal of progress is being made with the renovation. Current phase 1 work is nearly completed, main entry door is scheduled for install, awning will go up after. Painting contractor has been selected and several other elements are being quoted including heating/air, meeting room renovation (in-house), flooring and more. The goal is for the building to be largely complete by the close of 2026.

NEW BUSINESS

Fall Fest: Currently there are 69 vendors. Planning is going very well. We will be alerting police and fire departments on the event details and will confirm support. Flyers and promoting the event will be taking place to encourage people to attend. There will be an additional push with football home games being scheduled for the same day

PUBLIC COMMENT #2

n/a.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Councilman Frappolli (Provided Notes) – Marty reviewed with the committee items including the importance to consider the structure of the recreation leagues, where as the township had suspended a township "Registration Fee", there needs to be an understanding with each league as to how "League Fees" are being decided. The township provides each league an annual budget to support operations, which in many towns is not an offering. Those towns require leagues to supplement all costs, which leads to their increased fees to participate. Florence Township has maintained that children and families have an affordable option to take part in recreation programs, and it is our responsibility to gauge league fees to determine if we are creating a balanced and manageable option for those families. It is requested that prior to the release of league registrations that fees are reported to the recreation department and reviewed by

the committee for approval. Additionally, we will discuss with leagues optional fundraisers to help families offset costs to allow for participation. The concern is that increased league fees prevent families from registering and they are not aware in the promotion of the leagues that there are mechanisms in place to support need.

Don Nemeth – Noted that parking lot lines have been painted, which is appreciated. The problem is that many have cracks and weeds are growing through the painted areas, which will effect the lines permanence.

Don Nemeth – Thanked Marty for taking over the hand dryer install to be placed at the football concession restrooms.

Don Nemeth – Attended a recent cricket match. Everyone worked well together in setting up, playing and the clean up. The groups appreciate the use of the facility and are having a great season.

Don Nemeth – Provided that the annual West Jersey Youth Football Weigh-in event will take place in late August. Teams from throughout the league visit town and the Florence program does a great job in organizing the event. This also supports local businesses where teams/families visit when in town.

Don Nemeth – Discussed a few football program needs; electric work in the kitchen concession area, player benches, which Marty provided that he is discussing with Dave Traynor and the need to replace faded signage on the approach to the municipal complex fields.

Mary Pieretti – Shared that the pickleball and tennis programs were well attended this summer and everyone enjoyed learning pickleball. Mary noted lights being out at the tennis courts and the need for replacement straps on at least one of the tennis courts and one of the pickleball nets. (Don Nemeth noted that he understands there are discussions about LED transition, but the football practice field has bulbs that remain out)

Tom Boracci – Confirmed the process for background check reimbursements by the league. Tom also shared the excitement towards the season and uptick in overall registrations and support provided by the public works department especially at the Marter Complex. Tom said the crews are doing a great job and they will be using Lower Marter Fields this season, which is another area that has been cleaned by PW.

Marty Eckert – Shared that tennis is going to provide information about a Fall Mommy & Me tennis option during the weekdays. Marty is awaiting information about that program and will share.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Motta, second by Sadler – 9:25 pm