

Egg Harbor Township Board of Recreation Commissioners
Egg Harbor Township, NJ

SPECIAL MEETING
Thursday, October 24, 2019 5:30pm

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

Toni Rispoli called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Opening Statement Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act

Rick Audet, Director of Parks and Recreation, read the opening statement.

IV. Roll Call:

Toni Rispoli, Chair – Present

William Warrell, Vice Chair - Present

Charles Gallagher - Excused

Paul Weldon – Excused

Kevin Stetser – Excused

Amy Smith – Present

Paul Trinkle – excused

Christine Gras (Alt. 1) – Present

Jonathan Parker (Alt. 2) – Present

V. New Business

Appeal Hearing - EHT Youth Organization Cheer Coach

A complaint was made on an alleged incident between a cheer coach and one of her high school age volunteer coaches. The YO board received the complaint, deliberated as a board, and voted to suspend the coach for two weeks. The father of the coach who was allegedly grabbed filed an appeal to the Recreation Commission to lengthen the suspension. An appeal was also filed with the Recreation Commission by the cheer coach, Nikki Franklin, to reduce the suspension.

Nikki Franklin had provided a letter to the Commission on the complaint made against her. The letter was distributed to the Commissioners prior to the meeting for their review. Ms. Franklin stated that she did grab the volunteer coach by her wrist but the situation between her and the coach has been taken too far out of context. She did not make any aggressive behavior toward her. She grabbed her wrist so that she could speak with her in private on an issue concerning her use of a cell phone during practice. According to Ms. Franklin the volunteer coach cried on her shoulder and Nikki was helping wipe her tears away due to a personal issue the girl was facing. Ms. Franklin stated that she was correct in asking her to put her phone away. Ms. Franklin presented letters from parents who saw the alleged incident. Amy Smith read the letters aloud.

Mr. Raymond is the father of the volunteer coach. Mr. Raymond had filed the complaint to the YO board and subsequently the appeal to the Recreation Commission. Mr. Raymond was asked if his daughter has returned to practice since Ms. Franklin was suspended. Mr. Raymond discussed his attempts to contact the YO board and have a meeting with them. Toni Rispoli stated that the alleged incident occurred on October 3 and discussed the timing of YO's meetings and follow-up actions taken.

Mr. Raymond discussed the alleged incident that took place and how he and his family discussed and addressed the issue.

Christine Gras asked Ms. Franklin if she appealed to the YO board. Christine sought to confirm that we are following the correct process in this matter. The YO minutes allude to the recounting of the alleged incident changing along the way. Christine asked Ms. Franklin, that looking back could she consider this to perhaps be an abuse of power

she had over the girl. Ms. Franklin stated that she did not raise her voice and that she had apologized to her. Ms. Franklin stated that she has two children of her own in the program. Ms. Franklin showed a text she sent to the volunteer coach to the Commission supporting her stance that she was trying to act appropriately and in the interest of the minor. Ms. Franklin acknowledged that she has had past disagreements with the volunteer coach's mother.

Mr. Raymond recounted that while he was at work her was called by his wife and daughter on the alleged incident and was told what happened. He did tell his daughter that she should not have been on the phone. Mr. Raymond further stated how he and his family feel about what took place. When his daughter came out of the bathroom, Ms. Franklin escorted her a short distance away and was yelling at her. The volunteer coach texted coach Jess who contacted the cheer coordinator Jen Shaw. Jen Shaw did not reach out to him according to Mr. Raymond. He stated that his daughter did not have a history of lying.

Amy Smith read a letter from a friend of the volunteer coach aloud to the Commission.

Jonathan Parker asked if the volunteer coach will continue to coach after Ms. Franklin's suspension. Mr. Raymond stated that she would not. Christine Gras stated to Ms. Franklin that if a child who loves the sport will no longer coach under her that speaks volumes. Ms. Gras further stated that YO voted on this and we should not change the decision.

Amy Smith stated that all coaches are volunteers and the perception of the child is important.

Toni Rispoli stated that due to her suspension, she cannot participate as a coach in the upcoming homecoming game. She may attend as a parent only.

Toni Rispoli asked if there was a motion on the floor to change the decision of YO or anything further on this matter.

No motion was presented.

Toni Rispoli stated to Mr. Raymond that this decision may not be what you want to hear but the Commission did not feel the need to change the decision of YO in light of the facts and discussion held tonight.

VI. Closed Session

Authorizing the Recreation Commission to convene into a Closed Executive Session to discuss matters which may involve personnel and/or legal matters.

None

VIII. Public Comment

None

IX. Adjournment

Motion	To adjourn the Special Meeting of the Recreation Commission. Motion made by Christine Gras Seconded by Amy Smith
Vote	All voted in favor. Motion carried 5-0.

(Minutes as heard by Rick Audet, Director of Parks and Recreation)

Toni Rispoli, Chair

Rick Audet, Director of Parks and Recreation

These minutes were approved at the November 13, 2019 Recreation Commission Meeting.
