

RED BANK PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Minutes June 23, 2026 - Borough Hall Courtroom

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

Attending: John LeFever, Oscar Salinas, Dana Ian Farley, Pat Richter, Joe Simon, Kristen Fal, Melissa Moore, and Councilman Forest.

The minutes from the May meeting were approved unanimously with a motion from Joe seconded by Kristen.

The celebratory part of the meeting included awarding the three winners of the Red Bank Garden Tour their ribbons and taking pictures. Winning gardens were at 22 Basset Place, 15 Brown Place, and the Red Bank Primary School. Congratulations to all the winners, and thanks to every participant who helped this this year's Garden Tour be a vibrant celebration of growing things!

A community member, Eric Wokas (member of the Environmental Commission) attended the meeting to bring up two points: the option of lighting Count Basie Fields with LED lighting which would be less expensive over the long term, and the problem of e-cigarette disposal.

Eric shared that there were grant programs from the state or from JCP&L to make the transition to a more energy efficient choice at Count Basie Fields. Right now, metal halide lamps are used, with a lifespan of 3 to 4 years. Due to the amount of usage, they need to be serviced every 18 months. This type of lighting is not made anymore. After turf and bleacher upgrades are finished, the Boro can explore a transition to LED lights.

As for e-cigarettes, they are a pollutant, not recyclable, a fire hazard and are not disposed of properly in most cases. They start fires at recycling centers due to the lithium batteries inside. There is a company called Teracycle that provides recycling options for hard to recycle items including e-cigarettes, but boxes need to be purchased from them and mailed back.

The Committee raised the possibility of Red Bank having an ordinance for sellers of e-cigarettes that they must provide special containers for disposal. Ben can bring this issue to the full Council when it can be included on the agenda. Also, education at the state level is needed and some warnings on the packaging.

Item 1: Current Parks & Recreation Activities and Updates

Post event feedback – Pride, Garden Tour, Watch Parties

Pride in the Park went well with similar numbers of attendees as last year (between 500 and 600), but more vendors.

The Garden Tour went well with about fifty people cycling through the nine gardens participating. A few people contacted Oscar after the event to say they were interested in participating next year. One of them was the Riverside Condominium complex on the river. Many gardeners provided snacks, beverages, information, and plant lists to visitors.

Watch Parties - The most spectacular event of the month was the series of Watch Parties for the World Cup. It was a big lift for the Boro, but it was fun. Turnout was excellent with over 1600 people at the Mexico game and nine hundred people for the US game on Friday. It was the first time doing something like this and many departments were involved. Security was tight and everyone was searched before being admitted. The screen was placed where it needed to be, Wi-Fi was figured out with help from Two River Tech. Many celebratory performances: dancers, the drum line for the US Game, kids' activities, misting fans, bouncy house, and bubbles enhanced the fun. The turf was OK and a professional company is coming to clean it. There was a beer garden. Not many people took advantage of the transportation options offered and many people walked. There were parking challenges. There were no issues, no arrests. The budget was adequate and if there is any surplus there might be a fourth watch party.

The Red Bank 5K race went well with 1,600 runners and some Committee members volunteering. The fastest runner completed the 5K in 14.39 minutes. There was a suggestion to offer a 10K option.

Spring Sports Recap

Baseball/softball season ended a couple of weeks ago. Our softball team made it to the semi-finals, but we lost. The rest of the baseball teams did not do very well. Having beat Little Silver was great though.

Track and Field ended last Monday, and parents put together a relay at the end that was fun.

Flag football ends this Saturday, and this week is the sports camp for kids 6 to 12 which has been extended to two weeks instead of just one.

Camp training is going on now and there is some good news in that five more counsellors can be hired thanks to the state reimbursement program through the county.

Updates on projects

Count Basie Fields – repairs continue including turf replacement and Field Three fence repair. Its 75% done and should be finished by early July. Bleacher work will begin in November.

Eastside Park – end of June the contamination removal process should be done, and sod will be put down. There was some concern about damage to the irrigation system. With new sod, the fields should be protected for a year. The Community Garden will be re-invigorated with raised beds and a water supply.

Green Acres – this \$384,000 grant is dedicated to upgrading Jonny Jazz Park, including walkways, a stage, chess tables, bathroom, new trees, and maybe a new mural. The budget may be augmented with an Open Space grant so LED lights can be installed. It will be done in 2027.

Riverside Gardens – planting some annuals is challenging there as there is no shade and no way to water. We are getting advice from Molson's, perennials are preferred.

Maple Cove – this access point to the Navesink needs another kayak rack. Maybe a boy scout project? It was unclear if the Cove is owned by the Boro. If so, a grant can help clean it up and add it to accessible parts of Boro property bordering the River that eventually will be a Riverwalk.

The Marine Park Grand opening is scheduled for this weekend. (Note: changed to Sunday 11 to

Item 2: Upcoming activities and events

Fall sports.

Recreational Soccer will begin July 13 and end Augst 31 for kids ages 4 to 14. Coaches are needed.

Item 3: New Business

The Committee should send **thank you notes** to the sponsors of summer activities at Riverside Gardens Park. Oscar will bring some for signing and adding personal notes.

Trip to **Candide's Garden** – the home base of Patchwork for Wildlife is Lake Como and it includes a teaching Garden called Candide's Garden. It hosts groups of children for education about pollinators, sustainable gardening, and native plants. This option can be explored for the trips Oscar plans under the grant for special needs young people with their siblings and parents.

On July 2 Parks and Recs will have a **table on Broadwalk** with activities for adults and children celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Pat and Dana will be volunteering along with some of Oscar's summer staff.

The Juneteenth Celebration went really well, including a Freedom March from Pilgrim Baptist to Jonnie Jazz Park. There were many vendors, free food, drinks thanks to JBJ Soul Kitchen, and a keynote speech from Gilda from T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center.

Pretty Good Poetry Competition – a new idea for Poetry Month in April 2027. Middle and High School kids can submit poems to a committee that will select the best 10 or 20 to be displayed in Red Bank businesses or even painted on their windows. There could be a poetry reading at the Senior Center as a wrap up for the Project.

The Senior Center needs more activities after hours, and the town got a grant to do this. Committee members should submit their ideas to Oscar. Joe and Pat are interested in this.

Use of AI for minutes – we are experimenting during this meeting with AI to make meeting notes more efficient.

Jim Gant wrote a nice email to Pat and Mary Livingston (from Patchwork) thanking them for efforts rehabilitating the Westside Garden and the Garden Tour and recognizing Oscar's efforts in making everything work in the best possible!

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm with a motion by Joe seconded by Kristen.

Next meeting will be held July 28, 2026, at 7:00 pm.