

Forwarded June 4, 2:15pm
by RIOC President Steve Shane

Director Guerra:

This e-mail is being sent per your request in our phone discussion on June 3.

I am an official of the Big Apple Softball League (BASL), a sports organization who contracted with Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation on April 13 of this year to receive permits for Capobianco Field and Firefighters Field on Saturday afternoons during the spring and summer. The BASL is commonly referred to as New York City's gay/lesbian/bisexual/trans-gendered softball league, but it is open to all adults regardless of age, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or playing ability.

On April 25 and May 2 of this year, our league experienced problems getting on to Capobianco Field at the time our permit begins (1:30pm) because of Little League games that went beyond their assigned time slot. On April 25, one of our team managers called Public Safety to intervene, and we were eventually granted access to the field. On May 2, our team managers negotiated with the Little League to start our games 30 minutes late, and we and did not file a report with Public Safety or RIOC.

Last Saturday, May 30, we had four games planned within our permitted time slot (1:30 to 6pm), so there was very little room to start late. I was present at the field from just before 1 until just after 2pm, and I was the person who made decisions on behalf of the BASL.

Before 1:30, I spoke to a Roosevelt Island Youth Center representative, and I advised him that we needed to take the field at our permitted time of 1:30. The representative said that the game was running a little behind schedule but that we should be able to take the field by 1:35. I told him that if we really could get on at 1:35, that would be acceptable, but that we didn't have any room to go further. I am not 100% sure of the RIYC representative's name. I believe it was Stephen, and I know it was not Charlie DeFino, who I have met in the past. (I did not see Charlie on Saturday.)

At 1:35, the Little League game was still continuing, and I approached one of the coaches and advised him that we now needed to take the field because we had a permit. He politely declined to bring his players off the field.

At 1:39, I called Public Safety to report that we needed their help getting onto the field that we had a permit for. While I was on the phone, I overheard yelling between a BASL player and an adult member of the Roosevelt Island community. The community member was yelling foul language at the BASL player, including "faggot," "nigger," and "fuck," and also said he wanted to fight. I stepped between them (they were at least 15 feet apart and no physical contact occurred) and stayed on the phone with the Public Safety dispatcher to report that I felt that one of our players was being threatened physically.

Very soon thereafter, a Public Safety officer rolled up on a Segway on the alley that runs behind the first base line. I did not get the officer's name or badge number, but he was tall, thin and African-American. At least one other officer arrived not long after that – he was on a bike and he was shorter, Latino, with a thin moustache. I believe there were other officers in the vicinity but I do not remember their appearance. The first officer coordinated the Public Safety response to the incident, and at all times he appeared to be calm, professional and direct.

The first officer listened to my complaint and asked me to show proof that we had a permit for the field starting at 1:30. I gave him a copy of the permit issued by RIOC. He and his colleague walked onto the ballfield and spoke with the managers and umpire. He made it clear that they no longer had a right to be on the field. After that, several adult spectators ran onto the field to argue with the officers, and they also ran toward the sidelines to yell at and argue with BASL players and with me.

At one point during the yelling, a few BASL players yelled back that they did not care about starting the games late. They thought Public Safety was there because of the fact that one of our players had been threatened. That was not true – I had called Public Safety first because we needed help getting on to the field, and then had added the complaint about the threatening behavior while I was still on the phone. But several of the Little League people got the impression that the BASL was giving them permission to finish their game.

The first officer understood that I was the one who filed the complaint, so he came to me and tried to negotiate a compromise between me at the Little League organizers to let them finish their last half-inning, which they estimated to take another 15 minutes. I was the one who, acting on behalf of the BASL, declined to compromise. I did this because our schedule was too full to allow us to start late this past weekend, and because past compromises with the Little League had not resulted in a significant improvement in granting us the field at our appointed time.

The first officer then informed the Little League coaches and umpire that they needed to vacate the field, which they did within approximately five minutes. During this time several adults yelled insults at me and the BASL players, which we attempted to ignore. Also, at least one member of the Roosevelt Island Community, Stacy (I don't remember her last name), spoke with me in a very calm way, trying to use reason to persuade me to go back on my decision. I was much more willing to talk with Stacy because of the rational way she was explaining the Little League and Roosevelt Island community's point of view, but by that time our decision was made and I stuck with it.

As our teams prepared to start the first game, at a few minutes before 2pm, a group of between 10 and 20 adults and children stood in left field, just inside fair territory, putting them at risk of being injured by a batted ball or a BASL player – and also putting our own players at risk of injury.

The tall African-American officer and the shorter Latino officer walked and biked over toward the crowd to make sure they would leave the playing field. I was too far away to hear any of the details (they were in left field, and I was along the first base line), but after a very short period of

time, it appeared that the officers arrested someone. When the officers walked him off the field, the rest of the crowd followed.

I want to reemphasize that I was too far away from that incident to know any of the details, except that visually (from more than 150 feet away), I did not witness any violent acts by anyone – parents, children or police officers.

Around 2pm or so, our first game started. I left the field at around 2:15 as I had another game to attend to. I received a report from several league members that after I left, one member of the community yelled insults at our teams from the window of his apartment overlooking the field, but I did not witness it.

Feel free to forward this statement in its entirety as you see fit. However, I would prefer that no one take part of this statement out of its full context.

Sincerely,
Scott Batten