

# THE OBSERVER

## Reconfiguring regatta Passaic River Sprints to get new location, more lanes

By Celeste Regal  
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**KEARNY** — Pat Fearon, board member of The Kearny Crew Association (a booster club) and Multimedia program coordinator at the Passaic Valley Sewage Commission appealed to Mayor Alberto Santos at the last council on July 15 to allow temporary docks to be put up for the annual Passaic River Sprints Regatta that the Association would like to hold in next spring.

Fearon and Kearny High School Athletic Director John Millar along with some of the crew coaches found out that the Commission had floating docks available for their use. The idea was to place the movable docks along the Frank Vincent Marina on Passaic Avenue, where the

widest part of the river is.

The docks allow a gangway where the crew teams can launch their boats at that location so that more schools could be invited to race.

They could be floated up the river from the Newark facility to the Marina during racing season.

"Instead of getting upset about the pollution on the river, people could see the river in a different light through the sport of crew," Fearon said. "People in the crew association are willing to volunteer their time — dads who are engineers and moms who know about what needs to transpire here. It's just a matter of doing the planning. We could really do something here with the docks from Passaic Valley."

Other problems the Association wants to tackle is to increase the racing lanes to more than the current three and move the racecourse from North Arlington to Kearny so parents can see the race from the banks of the river in a safe place.

When Fearon would watch her daughter Bry, who has been on the Kearny High School team for the last two years, she found it was very hard to view the race.

Before the new bridge was put up on the Belleville Turnpike, three lanes could pass under it. The course would start in North Arlington pass under the bridge and finish at the Kearny Boat House on the intersection of the turnpike and Passaic Avenue.

With the design of the new

bridge, only two lanes of rowers can pass through so the racecourse was pushed further up the river. The problem is that there is no good place to view the race now.

The new course would go from the area near the intersection on Central Avenue and Passaic Avenue where the ante bridge is (the old train bridge that sticks up at an angle into the air) north of the Bridge Street Bridge in Harrison to just before Peden Terrace in Kearny.

The move would give the team the ability to have a U.S. certified rowing course — 1500 meters from beginning to end of the rowing course.

"We saw that we could do this. We could enlarge the lanes,

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### Regatta

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hold a bigger venue here on the Passaic and possibly go to five lanes, maybe even six," Fearon said. "We've been out to measure but we will take a boat ride with the Passaic Valley geological surveyor and get an official mark to get it to US Rowing."

The US Rowing standard requires the 1500 meter race and more than three lanes for the crew shells or boats and the Association is working with them to clarify lane widths.

"The new course would be an official US rowing

course with the floating docks and the move. A lot of schools don't have this," Brooks said.

Fearon also said she has spoken with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in Trenton about regulations and permits for river use last week and received positive feedback on the project.

"We're not going to damage the river or any of the lawn area along the riverbanks. It's just for recreational use — we're not doing anything permanent. We just want to float the docks in and have a big race," she said. "The (DEP) is behind us."

The Association would

be doing the planning, raising the funds and coordinating the events. Brooks said the Commission wanted to sponsor the regatta and support them in their efforts.

Not just the teams but parents have also begun to learn to row themselves. Fearon is a teacher at Franklin School and she said when she tells her students that she spends most of the summer rowing on the Passaic River, they are incredulous.

But the increase in activity puts people on the waterway both day and night.

"The crew teams are great for the stewardship of the river bringing exciting



**OLD BUT STILL USEFUL** — The Passaic Valley Sewage Commission is donating these floating docks to the Kearny Crew Association for use during regattas on the Passaic River.

activity to a place that used to be a hopeless dumping ground. This endeavor is all about good this — creating high visibility for the sport. It's really a worthwhile

thing to do," Brooks said.

Regattas had only four teams when the sport started racing on the river 40 years ago. Now the number of teams has in-

creased exponentially.

"A regatta's massive now," Brooks said.

The project is scheduled to be in action by next April.