



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

County Auditorium | 1:30 PM | Wednesday, March 9, 2022

500 Sebastian View | Saint Augustine | FL 32084

Board Members Present: Casey Van Rysdam, Chair; Deb Chapin, Harold Dockins, Marty McEachan, Bill Bowen, and Lauren Watkins

Board Members Absent: Brad Long, Vice Chair

Also Present: Commissioner Paul Waldron; Assistant County Administrator Sarah Taylor; Parks & Recreation Director Ryan Kane, Assistant Director Jamie Baccari, Sydney Lindblad, Natural Resources Program Manager, Stacia Cotter, Business Manager, Recreation Facilities Manager Teddy Meyer, Project Specialist Diane Gorski

The chair called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm and asked for a motion to approve the February minutes. Motion by Dockins, seconded by Chapin. Approved 6/0.

There were no public comments.

Casey Van Rysdam, Chairman began his report announcing that the Recreation Department was currently holding a lottery for placement in this year's summer camp program. He shared his concern with the lack of community centers within the community adversely affecting the county residents who need to have access to an affordable summer camp option. He asked staff to provide answers to the following questions once the lottery has ended and the community centers are filled:

- How many applicants applied?
- How many applicants were placed?
- How many applicants are on the wait list?
- How many applicants were denied?
- Which facilities are maxed out?
- How many new facilities need to be constructed to better meet the needs of the community?
- Approximate cost of building a Community Center?

Baccari stated that these questions would be addressed once summer camp was in progress.

Van Rysdam asked if the programming at the Solomon Calhoun center was reaching the residents in West Augustine. Kane explained that the department was aware of the complaint and that the department continues to have dialog with the West Augustine CRA and that programming staff would also be meeting with them to determine how better we can meet the community's needs. He stated that county would be data mining to determine how many residents from each zip code were being reached by the programming at the Calhoun center.

Commissioner Waldron explained that the budget process had begun and that the meetings would be held at the Agricultural Center again this year. He shared that he believed that the budget process was going to be difficult due to inflation, even though there has been 13% growth that has increased the collection of ad valorem taxes. He announced that the Sales Tax referendum being placed on the November ballot was going to be discussed at the March 15, 2022 Commission meeting. He shared that he was against raising taxes during high inflation and increased gas prices.

The Chair announced that next month's April RAB meeting must be over at 3:30 PM. There is a FDOT meeting at 4 PM. He mentioned that the Shore Drive Trail Project located inside St. Augustine South was awarded a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant. Kane explained that \$400,000 in grant money was awarded and that the county intended to add \$840,000 towards the project. He said that the department was working on the grant requirements with the Department of Environmental Protection and also with Public Works to help get the project moving forward and creating the design after which there will be

community outreach. Kane explained that the RAB's role will be to listen to the voices in their communities, attend public meetings and share the data with county. Discussion relating to the process and project occurred.

Lindblad presented the Game On Major Impact Special Event Application for the Mickler's Landing Olympic and Sprint Triathlon. She explained that the event has been successfully run out of Mickler's Landing four times in prior years and that due to the beach renourishment project the applicant needed to have a backup location in place. The backup location that closest meets the race criteria is Vilano Beach. Both options have been vetted by the department and the Game On organization will continue to work closely with staff and the Sheriff's office. She asked that the RAB approve the application with both locations as an option. Prior event activities were discussed. The Game On organization owners addressed the RAB and provided information relevant to the event. They expressed their desire to expand the size of the triathlon in the future and their intention to ensure little impact to the community by working with the county and the Sheriff's office. Registration and the need for approval in order to market and obtain accurate date in regards to participants and hotel stays. Motion by Van Rysdam, seconded by Chapin to recommend approval of this event at either location. A letter of recommendation will be given to the Commission. Approved 6/0.

Meyer gave an overview of the Game On TDC Category III grant application and introduced Brian Huether and Wilma Savoie, Co-Owners and Race Directors who provided a lengthy presentation that included the history of the organization the purpose of the triathlon events, marketing plan and community outreach. The RAB members asked for clarification on the marketing process, including St. Johns County logo, site set up and tear down, economic and environmental impacts, which local hotels would be impacted and registration. Van Rysdam motioned to allot \$5,000 as seed money for this event contingent upon improving marketing through the Tourist Development Council and ties to rentals and police support. Seconded by Dockins. Approved 6/0.

The Chair gave a brief over view of the Senior Softball organization's request to place a sign at Treaty Park. He suggested wording on the Rick Johnson sign for Treaty Park softball field fence to be "In Honor of Richard "Rick" Johnson St. Augustine Senior Softball Founder Est. 2001". There was a motion by Dockins, seconded by McEachean to approve this wording. Motion passed 6/0. The Senior Softball President, Ron Davidson, thanked the RAB for their recommendation.

Baccari provided the park inventory for State, Federal, City of St. Augustine, City of St. Augustine Beach, NE Regional Airport, St. Johns Water Management District Park Inventory within each Commission District within St. Johns County. She explained that the majority of the park space was passive. She explained that staff would continue to work on collecting data with the goal of providing an overview of all of the parks and their size, purpose, type of recreation available, location, and park owner and management. Dockins noted that Fish Island was absent from the list and that Fort Mose has two owners the state and the county. Chapin asked about the Airport Environmental Park and if it was open to the public. Baccari stated that we had no information on that particular park. She explained that staff listed all property identified as recreational on the county map. Van Rysdam asked about regional parks for athletics and requested that the allocation of space be placed on a future agenda. He wants to know how staff decides scheduling at facilities. He requested a process map about how future facilities are being built, the amenities that will be included and the needs of the community. He stated that the public and RAB should be part of the process. Kane reviewed the process and explained that community feedback will be part of the process as will including the athletic associations and RAB in the listening process. The Board of County Commissioners and Administrators will play an active role in this process. Watkins asked for clarification on how marginalized communities are considered during the process and how demand is decided. Kane explained that administration and the commissioners choose locations based on community input and that public meeting are a part of the process. He reminded everyone that county parks are available to all residents. She asked if there was targeting research being done in regards to the marginalized communities. Kane along with Taylor explained that the Community Redevelopment Area represents these residents and provide input. Watkins volunteered to assist in this process if needed.

The RAB discussed the newly updated TDC Scoring sheet. Meyer explained that the scoring sheet was intended for the RAB only and that it was an internal document to be used as a tool for the RAB when reviewing grant applications. There was a consensus by the RAB to include the scoring sheet in the TDC Category III Grant Application so that the applicant will know what recommendations are based on. Meyer said that he would include the Scoring Sheet in future applications.

Baccari reviewed the Summary of February Newsletter Statistics sheet that was provided to the RAB. She explained that our Public Affairs team, specifically our Parks and Recreation Representative Marithza Ross, was working diligently to increase our

social media presence and that she provided these numbers for the RAB. Baccari also mentioned that Ross worked with each division of the department to ensure that the public was aware of everything we have going on. Baccari explained that Ross would continue to promote Parks and Recreation and build our Social Media and Newsletter audience. Baccari stated that Ross was pushing information about programming and events out on Social Media and she is constantly reinventing the newsletter to keep it fresh, up to date and interesting. Discussion relating to the success of the Newsletter and growing Social Media presence.

Director Ryan Kane shared that the Vilano Landing Boat Ramp parking lot project is well underway way. He said that the driving lanes have been paved, the landscaping installed and that delineation of parking spaces would be next. He shared an update about the golf course explaining that the holes and greens had all been shaped and that the pond was being dug on March 18, 2022. They are currently working on drainage improvements. He stated that the Disc Golf RFQ is out for the design of the course and that Public Works was pleased with the qualifications of applicants. Chair asked for confirmation that the design portion of the project was budgeted and Kane replied \$150,000 more or less had been earmarked for design and construction costs. Kane said that once this phase was complete that the Department would go before the Board of County Commissioners to request authorization to move forward with the project and the funding to complete it. Bowen asked for clarification on who can reply to the RFQ Kane explained several scenarios including local and national design companies. Kane explained the DemandStar system used by the County to advertise RFQ's and RFP's. Kane announced that Stacia Cotter, Business Manager had accepted a position out of state and that she was an integral part of the success of the department. He stated that she would missed and that her new employer was going to very happy. The chair thanked Cotter for her service. Kane said that he would continue to add employee highlights to the agenda as time allows as well as adding a park highlights feature. Chair asked about the Cornerstone Park Playground. Baccari answered that it was included in the FY23 requested budget. She said that the playground at DeLeon Shores would be replaced in the fall.

Baccari gave a Park Foundation update on behalf of Brad Long. She said that they continued to work to establish their non-profit status and once that was finalized they will be able to open up a bank account so that they can accept payment from the county. The group is working on the Executive Director Job description and looking for additional board members.

Watkins said that she will be absent in May. Dockins said that he would also be absent in May. Chair confirmed the number needed for a quorum.

Chapin asked about the grant application timeline. She mentioned the group that established the Micklers Wharf is seeking to turn it over to the County as a park asset. Kane said that he received an email from Commissioner Dean requesting the department move forward with the request. He explained that he was leaving it up to administration to decide the best approach to move forward. McEachean thanked staff for everything they do and helping to secure the parks and make them safer. He said the on-site meetings have improved communications and resulted in quite a few accomplishments and expressed how much he appreciated partnering with staff. He stated that he was going to do a better job attending events and hoped that the other RAB members would make an effort to get out and support Parks and Recreation events in the community. The Chair mentioned the Field of Dreams grand opening on April 9, 2022 at 10 a.m. and encouraged everyone to attend.

Chapin motioned to adjourn and McEachean seconded. 6/0

Adjourned