



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes Thursday, January 9, 2020

Chair called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM.

Present: Commissioner Harry Waldron; RAB Members: Al Guido, Chair, Casey Van Rysdam, Bert Watson, Deb Chapin; Parks & Recreation Staff: Doug Bataille, Director, Billy Zeits, Assistant Director, Teddy Meyer Recreation Facilities Manager, Sydney Lindblad, Diane Gorski; Paul Abbatonozzi, School Board; Tony Cutright, Veritas Pickleball

Absent: Joy Andrews, Assistant County Administrators; RAB Members: William "Bo" Browne and Jillian McNiff -Villemaire

Guido mentioned receiving an email from Joanne informing him that January was the 30th anniversary of establishment of the Recreation Advisory Board by the Board of County Commissioners.

There was a consensus of the Board to approve the November minutes

Guido requested that the election of new officers be postponed to next month's meeting so that there is a full board. Guido announced that he not standing for re-election and that if nominated he will not run and if appointed will not serve. Al would like to remain as a member for the next year, but would like someone to chair the board that can spare the time and energy needed to make the RAB successful. He has served 19 years and is passing the baton. He asked that the current members give some thought to finding the right person to serve as the new chair. The chair will need to be able to dedicate time and energy to tackle the challenges the RAB is sure to face in the future. Van Rysdam confirmed that Guido was requesting the election be moved to the February meeting. There was a consensus of the Board to move the election to the February meeting.

Guido asked if there was public comment. There was none.

Van Rysdam asked Commissioner Waldron for a summary of the organizational changes within administration leadership.

Commissioner Waldron explained that the Board released Wanchick from his contract and appointed Hunter Conrad as Interim County Administrator and that Conrad had made a few staff changes. Darrell Locklear, Assistant County Administrator and Stacey Stanish, HR Director have resigned.

Commissioner Waldron announced that the Board may address the search for a permanent administrator at the next BOCC meeting. The Board will decide how to do the search and may consider going through the Florida Association of Counties.

Commissioner Waldron stated that the Board of County Commissioners contracts 2 employees, the County Attorney and County Administrator. All other employees go through the normal hiring process. There was a brief discussion on the roles of Assistant County Administrators.

Al asked Commissioner Waldron to have Melissa get the new RAB appointment that was chosen in November, on the next BOCC meeting agenda. Casey stated Harold Dockins had been recommended by the RAB and is awaiting approval from the BOCC.

Gorski gave a quick update on Civic Rec progress.

Lindblad gave an overview on the Veritas Pickleball TDC application and distributed an updated budget sheet to the board. Mentioned that rep for the tournament was present. Van Rysdam was pleased with the packet and looked forward to future applications being presented similarly.

There was a lengthy discussion relating to the upcoming tournament, tourism, costs, staff involvement, budget, advertising and economic benefit. Guido motioned to authorized \$8,000 of funding be approved for the tournament, seconded by Watson approved 4/0.

Guido mentioned how important communication with the RAB is related to new, ongoing and completed projects. Discussion relating to the items on the project summary ensued. Guido appreciated Teddy Meyer providing the Board with a Project Summary.

Bataille mentioned that he was working on establishing a working relationship with Engineering and Facility Maintenance Departments that are also involved with projects and defining who is responsible for keeping the community updated on the status. He explained that he was working on streamlining communications both internally and externally and that the department's goal was to get the project information on the Parks and Recreation website and to the RAB as it is available.

Guido asked about the net installation delay at Ron Parker Park. Meyer explained the tennis nets were installed first as they are standard issue and that adjustable nets for the Pickleball/Paddle Tennis courts were scheduled to arrive on time, but were delayed due to shipping errors. Bataille explained that the adjustable nets were getting difficult to find as most places were switching over to tennis and Pickleball courts due to their popularity. Meyer mentioned that the courts at Treaty Park would be the same color and have the same motif and look on all courts.

Van Rysdam asked what percentage of the total deferred maintenance in the budget the project summary represents. Discussion regarding the deferred maintenance projects and costs within Parks and Recreation. Zeits stated that with Board support the gap was closing. Bataille and Zeits offered suggestions as to this information might be gleaned and shared. Zeits stated that the Board continues to add funding for deferred maintenance projects. Commissioner Waldron concurred. Bataille mentioned bringing the data to the next RAB meeting. Chapin questioned some of the costs of projects as being inflated when county bids out to contractors based on costs that a private entity might incur and wanted to know how to close the gap and get more cost effective projects.

There was a lengthy discussion related to determining the scope of a project, open bid process, purchasing policies and procedures and government requirements.

Bataille mentioned that we were rebuilding the restrooms and modifying one of the pavilions and making it a changing station, adding another shower and a storage unit for the SJSO at Mickler Beach. Picnic tables and benches will be added and the space will be better utilized to meet the needs of the community.

Commissioner Waldron asked why Vilano project hadn't been scheduled. Zeits shared that there were some COT permitting issues and that the improvements will be phased to reduce the impact to the public. He asked when Butler Boat Ramp would open and Zeits replied 1/16/2020. Watson asked for an update on Pacetti Bay Park. Bataille mentioned that Kelly Ussia, County Naturalist was hosting a group two weekends in February to create walking trails at the park and that Kelly was working with the middle school to see if they are interested in using the park as an outdoor classroom. He added that there would be a restroom and parking lot on site. Pacetti Bay Park will be a passive park.

Group continued to discuss the value of the project summary. The Doug Crane Boat Ramp project was briefly discussed. Bataille reiterated that his goal was to get the project summaries up on the website. He stated that in an effort to streamline the process Gorski is the team coordinator for all agenda items and he will be the conduit.

Bataille informed the board that the Rivertown Park Phase ii which is 4 grass multipurpose fields, restrooms and a parking lot, would be on the 1/21/2020 agenda. If the Board approves the property as is, it can be used for younger age group sports only. There is the money in the project to add fencing and netting, but lighting would be a future project due to the estimated cost of over \$800,000.

Guido asked about the Golf Course renovation and Bataille said it was still in negotiations. Bataille mentioned that the Foundation Workshops went very well. Three BOCC members attended. Waldron said that the workshop was very informative and that the speaker was great.

Van Rysdam asked for a financial accounting for FY 2019 and Bataille mentioned that he had compiled a snapshot of the department's total revenues and expenditures for his meeting with Administration and that he could make it available upon request. Van Rysdam asked for a breakdown of funding sources. Guido asked that someone ask the BOCC for authorization to explore the possibility of creating a Park Foundation. Bataille and Watson have met several times to discuss the Foundation. Bataille told the group that he has met with the County Administrator and that he is very supportive. He thanked Watson for his support for the Foundation and stated that he and Watson plan on meeting with Assistant County Administrator Joy Andrews and Interim County Administrator Hunter Conrad to determine a strategy moving forward. Guido asserted his recommendation to garner Board support to explore the option. Zeits mentioned that 8/9 boat ramps are open, the Vilano boat ramp is steadily improving access, Porpoise point is gathering quite a bit of sand, Fort Matanzas and the contract to construct the ramp will be before the board on 1/21/2020 and the Beach Services and Natural Resources Departments are repairing beach walkovers.

Abbatonozzi said that the 6 High Schools were busy ramping up the spring athletic programs. He stated that he would bring an update on growth and numbers to the next meeting. He will be watching the safety related and infrastructure items being introduced in the legislature and would report back to the board.

Chapin announced that the PVAA was willing to pay for lights at Cornerstone Park but that the Cultural Center wanted to purchase the park to merge with the Concert Hall. She wanted to know the status of the project. She stated that the Cornerstone basketball courts were never used. She said that Ponte Vedra residents pay 30% of the tax base and get nothing in return. She said that most things in Ponte Vedra are privately funded and wanted to know why the County would hesitate accepting private money for public projects. Bataille explained that he and staff have had discussions with PVAA but have received no formal request or proposal to pay for lights at Cornerstone Park. Waldron shared that Cultural Arts Center had not approached the BOCC and that the newspaper article was the first he had heard of it. He stated that he would not support giving up parks land for a cultural center. Discussion about building the cultural center as presented to the TDC was briefly discussed. Meyer explained that quite a few months ago with met with PVAA to discuss private/public partnerships. Staff put a packet together for the PVAA Board that included quotes for lighting Davis, Cornerstone and Nocatee Parks, the Davis Park Expansion, the Nocatee Regional Park Expansion and have never heard back from them. Chapin asked if there was a barrier for a private group to install a boat ramp or something else if they were willing to pay for it. She requested Parks and Recreation do a fishing clinic at the private wharf at Canal Blvd. Bataille stated that parking would be a liability issue. He suggested setting something up privately. Chapin said the County posted 2 signs on the right-of-way that the right-of-way people say they don't own and Parks and Rec says it doesn't own. Bataille said that it was County right-of-way. Chapin said she and David are emptying the garbage. Waldron said that he would help if he could.

Van Rysdam mentioned the people in the neighborhood of the Palmetto Board Ramp were very unhappy with the current situation. Bataille shared that staff had created a Boat Ramp Master Plan that identified all of the boat ramps in the County and was currently working with other departments as needed to define the needs of the community, maintenance, public use, and future use. He asked Lindblad to provide the RAB with an updated spreadsheet of the dollars allocated and spent. He asked Commissioner Waldron why the October TDC minutes had not yet been posted online. Waldron explained that the minutes would be on the 1/21/2020 agenda. Watson motioned for the meeting to end at 4:38 PM, Guido seconded. Consensus 4/0.