



# St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

## RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

March 8, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 1:35 PM

**Board Members Present:** Lauren Watkins, Brad Long, Casey Van Rysdam, Harold Dockins, Marty McEachean, Bill Bowen and Deb Chapin

**Staff Present:** Ryan Kane, Director, Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director, Teddy Meyer, Recreation Facilities Manager, Sydney Lindblad, Beaches Operations Manager, Carrie Miska, Business Manager, and Diane Gorski, Project Specialist

**Also Present:** Sarah Taylor, Assistant County Administrator, and Paul Abbatonnozi. St. Johns County Schoolboard Liaison

### Approval of the Minutes

Chair called for a motion to approve the February minutes. Motion by Bowen, seconded by Dockins, and approved 7/0.

### Public Comments

Chair opened the floor for Public Comments for non-agenda items only and reminded everyone that each speaker would be given 3 minutes.

**Mary Watkins, Duval County resident and Master Gardener volunteer at Bird Island Park,** asked how the maintenance and repairs for Bird Island Park were going to be budgeted, specifically the pond aerator and boardwalk painting projects. Kane answered that the pond aerator and boardwalk projects were in the approved FY 23 budget and that Facilities Maintenance is responsible for scheduling the work for these projects. He explained that maintenance for all park and recreation facilities was budgeted annually. There was a brief discussion relating to Parks and Recreation maintenance projects, capital improvement projects and projects that are managed by other departments.

### Reports

**Lauren Watkins, Chair** said that she attended the staff open house at the newly acquired Genovar Park property and stated that the property is beautiful and thanked staff for hosting the event.

**Paul Abbatonnozi, School Board Representative** gave the current enrollment numbers 50,566, spring break dates, list of spring sports in session and mentioned future discussions for public access to school facilities over the summer. Van Rysdam asked about school facility availability for sports. Abbatonnozi stated that there is an agreement for specific school facilities being used for sport and Parks and Recreation manages the maintenance and scheduling of those fields. Dockins asked if the school facilities would be available to the public during spring break. Abbatonnozi said that spring sports was ongoing and there would be no field access outside of the facilities maintained by Parks and Recreation. Kane reported that staff was currently reviewing all school properties in response to last month's request for access outside of the current agreement. He stated that once the report is complete staff would discuss with the school and he would report back to the RAB. Chapin asked who gets the revenues from school fields and Kane stated that these fields are mostly used by partners that pay a seasonal participation fee with occasional field rentals.

**Perry Kale, Beaches Adult Soccer League/Villages Soccer Association** provided an overview of the youth soccer program they offered at Palencia Park. He also touched on the adult soccer programs offered throughout the year at St. Johns County facilities. Field availability needs were discussed. Van Rysdam asked for an up to date list of partner organizations participation numbers and field use and Kane replied that staff was working on it.

**OSPORTS along with its partners Catlayst Design Group and CHW Professional Consultants,** provided a PowerPoint Presentation Master Planning Summary for the proposed St. Johns County Design Services for 4 County Parks. They emphasized public involvement in the process that included 2 public meeting with over 60 in attendance and the

results of a community survey also referred to as Social Pinpoint which had over 33,000 visits and just under 11,000 users that provided a list of assets and facilities desired by the community.

OSPORTS Social Pinpoint results recommended walking & biking paths (paved & unpaved), multipurpose softball and baseball fields, volleyball and pickleball courts, mountain biking trails, picnic pavilions, performance areas, flexible lawns, playmounds, playgrounds, splash pads, pumptracks, aerial walks, disc golf courses, teens & after school features, skate parks, and boardwalks as amenities most needed and desired in the regional parks. The group proceeded to cover the four proposed regional park designs (Central St. Johns Sportsplex, Central Community Park, Northeast Community Park, and Northwest Community Park) in detail.

The Chair called for public comment. Mary Watson, Duval County resident, once again asked how the maintenance for parks was budgeted. Kane explained that maintenance for the park and recreation facilities was budgeted annually and that staffing and maintenance cost needs for each of the new parks would be included in the plan presented to the Board of County Commissioner for their approval. A representative from Shearwater asked if public input would be accepted prior to the park being built and Kane replied that public input would continue to be part of the process. A lengthy discussion relating to the projects and Social Pinpoint ensued.

The Chair asked about best methods for prioritizing the parks and making recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. There was a discussion for best practice and focus for reaching the greatest number of users. Van Rysdam recommended each RAB member write their individual recommendation letter to the Board. Watkins suggested more information was needed and asked the RAB members to send their questions and input to staff so that they can be compiled and answered in one document. Kane shared that staff has met with major athletic facilities users to determine their needs and desires. Long said that the priorities are set by how much money is available. He asked for guidance from the county relating to funding. Sarah Taylor answered that the priorities should be based on what each RAB feels is important to the community and not necessarily on the funding that is available. Kane mentioned that multiple options should be considered in the selection process. Watkins encouraged the RAB to send their questions and suggestions to staff.

***Teddy Meyer, Recreation Facilities Manager***, gave a brief introduction for each of the TDC CAT III Sports Tourism Grant Applicants.

#### **FL Invitational Rugby Showcase (May 20-21, 2023)**

Mike Wright provided an overview of the FL Invitational Rugby Showcase. He stated that the tournament is committed to creating opportunities for young people to grow in life and on the rugby field. He announced that all Florida-based players are exempt from the registration fees contingent on the completion of three hours of community service in their local areas. He said that the registration numbers increase each year and that some of the best boys' and girls' teams from across the nation have committed to the tournament. He said that the rugby showcase provides players another opportunity for a top-level competition and is also another avenue for collegiate recruitment. A brief discussion about the merits of this event followed. FL Invitational Rugby Showcase (May 20-21, 2023) awarded \$15,000. Motion by Dockins, seconded Long, and approved 7/0.

#### **Daily's Old School Kingfish Shootout (June 9-11, 2023)**

Paul and Lauren Dozier explained the economic impact of the annual Daily's Old School Kingfish Shootout to St. Johns County. Daily's Old School Kingfish Shootout (June 9-11, 2023) awarded \$20,000. Motion by Long, seconded by McEachan, and approved 7/0.

#### **Perfect Game Tournaments April 14-16, May 27-29 and June 9-11, 2023**

Angel Natal spoke to benefit of holding tournaments in St. Johns County for both the organization and county. He explained that St. Augustine and St. Johns County were a huge draw for the participants and their families. He shared that Perfect Game would like to hold additional tournaments in St. Johns County if facilities and dates were made available. Perfect Game awarded \$30,000. Motion by VanRysdam, seconded by Long, and approved 7/0 to award \$10,000 to each event.

- 9U-14U North Florida Super Regional NIT April 14-16, 2023
- 9U-14U Battle at the Beach May 27-29, 2023
- 9U-18U Sunshine State Championships June 9-11, 2023

Watkins shared that she would be meeting with Teresa Bishop, Growth Management Manager to discuss the Land Development Code on March 13, 2023 and would share the information with the RAB members at the next meeting.

### Staff Reports

**Sydney Lindblad, Beach Operations Manager** reviewed the Beach Pass preseason sales and compared to them to last year's numbers stating that sales were robust. She said that final numbers will be provided at the end of the season.

**Ryan Kane, Parks and Recreation Director** provided these department updates:

1. North Florida PGA awarded Wes Tucker, Director of Golf, St. Johns Golf Club, the Professional of the Year Award and Tommy Aycok, Head Golf Professional, the Patriot Award
2. Frank Butler West Boat Ramp improvements Open House at the SJC Southeast Library Wednesday, March 15, 2023 from 5-6 p.m. Design for increased parking and boat access.
3. 6 new Pickleball Courts are open at Veterans Park
4. Staff open house at the Genovar property was a success. Three commissioners toured the property.
5. 100 new Park Rules & Policy signs have been ordered. This will help reduce the amount of signage in the parks and place the information in a central location.
6. FY24 Budget planning kicked off February 27, 2023
7. Summer Camp Lottery registration closes March 10
8. Movies in the Park on March 17, 2023 at SJC Pier will be Pirates of the Caribbean
9. Bert Watson commemorative Summer Camp Lottery registration closes March 10
10. Parks & Recreation is partnering with the SJC Library System & Veteran's Administration to offer military veterans art classes.

**Kane** stated that he would provide a summary of the four regional parks presented by OSPORTS so that the RAB had sufficient background information from which to pose questions or make suggestions. Watkins asked the RAB to wait for this information before providing staff with questions and suggestions.

### Board Reports

**Brad Long, Vice Chair** provided an update on the Park Foundation and their search for an Executive Director. He said that they were in the process of vetting candidates and hoped to have someone in place soon.

**Bill Bowen** spoke about the design and plans for the new disc golf course and said that he hoped there would be a restroom available at the midway point on the course.

**Marty McEachean** stated that the grand opening of the new Veterans Park Pickleball Courts was a great success as it was well attended by the community. He enjoyed playing the game with Parks & Rec staff and Commissioner Whitehurst.

Watkins thanked everyone for their input and resolve during the days long meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn. Dockins motioned to adjourn, seconded by McEachean. Motion passed 7/0.