



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
County Auditorium | 500 San Sebastian View | St. Augustine, FL 32084
April 13, 2022

Board Members Present: Casey Van Rysdam, Chair, Brad Long, Vice Chair, Bill Bowen, Lauren Watkins. Deb Chapin entered at 1:35 PM and Marty McEachean entered at 1:39 PM.

Board Member Absent: Harold Dockins

Also present: Commissioner Paul Waldron, Assistant County Administrator Sarah Taylor, and School Board Liaison Paul Abbatonozzi

Staff Present: Director Ryan Kane via Zoom; Assistant Director Jamie Baccari; Recreation Facilities Manager Teddy Meyer and Project Specialist Diane Gorski

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM and asked for a motion to approve the March minutes. Motion to approve the March minutes was made by Bowen, seconded by Watkins and approved 6/0.

The Chair called for public comment for non-agenda items and reminded everyone that speakers are each given 3 minutes.

Clarence Blaylock, 2100 Thorn Hollow CT spoke to the need for additional mountain bike trails within St. Johns County and his group's eagerness to partner with Parks and Recreation for the development of future trails. He provided an overview of the sport, trail groups and trail locations within NE Florida. He provided information on a successful trail partnership in Kentucky.

The Chair requested the May Agenda include further discussion about the TDC CAT III Grant Application and scoring sheet. He explained that the RAB needed to focus on revamping the application focusing on the key performance indicators of economic development and marketing. He stated that staff was looking into providing the option to use a portal like the TDC to fill out the application. He suggested that the Parks and Recreation Department develops an internal processes to improve the editing and vetting of applications so that they are being presented in a more accurate and complete way. He stated that the RAB needed coordinate and ensure that they are working in sync with the TDC meeting and approval schedule. He said that a post event score sheet that includes Key Performance Indicators so that the RAB can measure the success of the marketing and economic impact needs to be added to the application and that it needs to include the local versus visitor aspect. He added that learning how the funding was applied to improving recreation facilities that host sporting events outside of the grant process should also be explored as well as multi-year agreements.

Commissioner Waldron announced that the county had many projects in the hopper with many undergoing the bid process. He reminded everyone of the upcoming budget workshops in May. He stated that with the growth in the county he didn't think anything would be cut and predicted that there would be approximately 20 million additional tax dollars. He thanked everyone for their kindness and concern relating to the passing of his father Harry who started on the Recreation and Advisory Board and then served as a St. Johns County Commissioner. He shared that these are exciting times for the Parks and Recreation Department moving forward with building new facilities and hopefully adding field space and continuing talks with other groups for more opportunities that may come later.

Paul Abbatinozzi, School Board liaison, provided an update to spring sports, the end of the school year and opening athletic facilities to the public on Wednesday nights in June. He gave a status update for Beachside and Toco High Schools. He stated that the schools had seen 7% increase in student growth this school year.

Meyer provided information relating to the American Junior Golf grant application. Adam Rogers thanked the RAB for their continued support and funding for this event. Discussion regarding grant funding and the Covid-19 funding sweep in 2020 -2021 and prior year grants was had. Van Rysdam requested that the swag bags include information about St. Johns

County. Rogers stated that they would be happy to include this. Long motioned to approve the \$10,000 grant request and Watkins seconded the motion and it was approved 6/0.

Meyer introduced Donna Franz from the Ancient City Gamefish Association. Franz gave historical information about the challenge and provided statistics to the group. She explained that the Gamefish Association sponsored St. Augustine High School and other groups fishing events and provided educational opportunities to children in St. Johns County. Discussion relating to the benefit of the organization to the community followed. Motion by Watkins, seconded by Chapin to recommend funding the full \$20,000 grant request. Approved 6/0.

The chair asked what the impact is to facilities for each application and requested that this be included in the May discussion.

Meyer provided details for the Florida Elite Soccer Tournament grant request. He indicated that the tournament would not interfere with regular sports play on the dates requested August 12-14 at Aberdeen or Veterans Parks. He provided participation statistics for the past three years and mentioned how beneficial having a local tournament is to the parents of children who play soccer and are involved in tournament play. Sean Bubb, 299 Islebrook Parkway mentioned how important it was to parents to have a local tournament. He mentioned the need for hotels in the northwest part of the county. He spoke to the group's commitment to the youth in the county and offered to sponsor children at soccer camps throughout the summer whose families would have difficulty paying for camps. McEachean motioned to approve the grant funding request of \$10,000 and Long seconded the motion. The motion was approved 6/0.

Marithza Ross, Public Affairs Specialist for the St. Johns County Communications Department provided information about the department. She provided data and statistics for digital media and the continued improvements she is working on to increase visibility for the department. She covered the outreach that was being achieved through digital newsletters for Parks and Recreation, Nature Programming, the Beach Brief and Golf Course. She shared that she is committed to providing clean, concise, detailed information about the Parks and Recreation Department to the engage the public. She spoke to spotlighting each recreational facility. She said that she was focusing on increasing visibility through the press, television and radio. She shared her interest in developing plans for community events and growing the community's knowledge about the opportunities available. She was focused on building and promoting internal partnerships. A lengthy and animated conversation about Ross' vision for the future, options for growing access to sports data for department run and association run sports and posting live feeds for events followed and included all board members, Commissioner Waldron and staff.

Kane provided an update on the American Rescue Plan funded projects that included turf replacement at Veterans and Gamble Rogers fields of which the bid had been issued and included the equipment needed to maintain the fields. He said that there was a meeting scheduled at The Players Community Senior Center on April 21 to update the public on the proposed Palm Valley West Boat Ramp project. He said that there would be staff from the Sheriff's office, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation Department present to share information. He said that the departments Strategic Plan was moving forward and that he and Jamie had met with staff to find out their suggestions and concerns.

Baccari announced that the summer camp lottery registration had concluded and that 502 families registered which is the equivalent to 750 children. She said that 454 were accepted, 126 were placed on a wait list and 169 were denied. She explained that the department was working with the GIS team to get a better understanding of where the majority of the families are being denied due to lack of capacity. The lottery process was explained. Discussion relating to the lack of facilities followed.

Long shared that the Park Foundation met on April 12, 2022 and that the 1023 form has been reviewed and will be submitted to the IRS this week. He said that once feedback is received from IRS and they are able to receive funding they will advertise for the Director position. Van Rysdam questioned the funding. Long explained that the paperwork needed to be in place in order to accept the funding granted by the County. He said that a press release had gone out last week announcing their existence and that the Foundation was on schedule.

Bowen shared that a local disc golf group received permission to add a 9 hole disc golf course at Aragon Park in St. Augustine Shores and that the Shores HOA paid for 9 disc golf baskets and that the pads for the baskets will be poured soon. Discussion regarding disc golf followed.

Motion to adjourn by McEachean, seconded by Watkins. The motion was approved 6/0.