



RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES MAY 10, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 PM

Present: Lauren Watkins, Chair, Brad Long, Vice Chair, Casey Van Rysdam, Marty McEachean, Bill Bower and Harold Dockins, Sarah Taylor, Assistant County Administrator, Paul Abbatonozzi, School Board Liaison, Ryan Kane, Director, Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director, Nathan Otter, Natural Resources Superintendent, Teddy Meyer, Recreation Facilities Manager, Carrie Miska, Business Manager, Diane Gorski, Project Specialist

Absent: Deb Chapin

McEachean motioned to approve the April minutes and was seconded by Dockins. Motion passed 6/0.

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

James Emert, St. Johns County resident asked the RAB to encourage the County to add a separate fee for those who prefer to walk 9-holes on the golf course. He did not think it was fair to have to pay the current walk rate for 18-holes. Discussion related to the golf course fees throughout the county that included private golf course fees and the process in which fees are determined within the county were discussed. Chair asked the Parks and Recreation Department to continue to monitor fees and propose adjustments annually if the data collection supported it.

REPORTS

Lauren Watkins, Chair encouraged members of the RAB to attend the budget meeting on May 23, 2023 at 9 a.m. Paul Abbatonozzi shared that the May 25 will be the last day for students, May 26 the last day for staff and the school administration offices will be working 4 day weeks throughout the summer months. He said that school camps would start the 2nd week in June and that the School District had finalized the Program for Use of High School Facilities for Summer 2023 for residents. The High Schools listed below will be open to residents Wednesdays from 6-8 p.m. on June 7, 14, 21, 28, July 12, 19, 26 with access to track, tennis courts and outdoor basketball courts only.

Bartram HS

Pedro Menendez HS

Creekside HS

Ponte Vedra HS

St. Augustine HS

Allen D Nease HS

Tocoi Creek HS

Beachside HS

These facilities are not open to any organized practices or games or sport-sponsored, fee-based training. This information is available on the district website.

NEW BUSINESS

RAB Meeting Location Change

Lauren Watkins, Chair announced that starting in June the RAB meetings would be held at the Health and Human Services Building in the Muscovy Conference Room. She stated that staff provided a meeting calendar in the agenda packet. She also reviewed the attendance policy and said that the attendance record that was provided in the agenda packet.

Waterway Access Master Plan (WAMP) presented by Ardurra

Nathan Otter, Natural Resources Superintendent introduced the Ardurra group to help introduce the WAMP that was funded through a FIND Grant. Ardurra provided a PowerPoint Presentation of the WAMP study and findings. The purpose and need for a 5-year Strategic Plan was reviewed. The group addressed the rapid population growth and increased pressure on access facilities. Ardurra reviewed 15 waterway access points within the county to assess the current conditions and needs for improvement. Key points resulted in the development of guiding principles:

- Improve Safe Public Access for All
- Enhance Recreational Opportunities
- Support Economic Development and Working Waterfronts
- Promote Resilience and Environmental Sustainability
- Maximize Benefits and Align with Funding

The group interviewed stakeholders, completed a public community survey and online review and analysis. The data collected provided insights on the community, specifically the area of the county participants reside, the community use of waterway access points and primary challenges and suggested waterway access site improvements. Ardurra completed a speed zone analysis, congestion analysis and identified vessel mobility patterns. The study showed that additional public and commercial access is needed. Boater education is needed to improve safety. Promotion of access site resiliency is necessary. The study included existing waterway access sites, immediate, short term and long term needs and maintenance timeframes for the sites. The study also identified the need for new waterway access points and feasible acquisition areas within the county. Ardurra is in the process of finalizing the results of the study which will include ways to maximize benefits, recommendations and key findings and suggestions that align improvements with funding sources. There was a brief conversation relating to the status and funding of the WAMP. No board action was required

West Augustine Youth Development/N. FL Wildcats Youth Football & Cheer

President Ty Fields Sr., provided an overview of the West Augustine Youth Development Program that includes North Florida Wildcats Youth Football and Cheer. He emphasized that the group was focusing on working with youth to develop life skills, while nurturing positive connections to self and the community through mentoring and partnerships with organizations like Reset. Fields stated that youth development directly correlated to creating successful athletes. Fields introduced Robert Nimmons, Chairperson of the West Augustine Community Redevelopment Agency, he explained that West Augustine Youth Development partners with the programs. Watkins asked Fields to explain what partnership meant for the group and identify the needs of the program. Lengthy discussion relating to partnerships and relationships within the community and program. Fields emphasized the importance of mentorship. Nimmons explained the integration of the school district in the West Augustine CRA and how important it is to find opportunities to alleviate rivalries and create social balance.

Parks & Recreation

2175 Mizell Road, St. Augustine, FL 32080

904.209.0333 | sjcfl.us

Conversation relating to the football/cheer program, mentorships, partnerships and community involvement in the West Augustine CRA District ensued. Baccari shared the programming and resources provided to the community as well as the continued efforts to expand opportunities and strengthen partnerships.

Junior PLAYERS Championship-American Junior Golf Association (8/31-9/3)

Teddy Meyer, Facilities Maintenance Manager provided an overview of the event and grant application. Houston Denney spoke via ZOOM on behalf of the event. He explained that the value of this annual event. A brief discussion about the merits of this event and opportunities for community involvement followed.

AJGA awarded \$10,000. Motion by Dockins, seconded by Long, and approved 6/0.

Ancient City Game Fish – Red fish Bash (5/26-27) Kingfish Challenge (7/13-15)

Meyer provided an overview of the event and grant application. Donna Franz provided a brief history and overview of the organization that included community involvement and past and upcoming fishing tournaments. Ancient City Game Fish awarded \$25,000. Motion by Long, seconded by Dockins, and approved 6/0.

OLD BUSINESS

Proposed Regional Parks Presentation

Ryan Kane, Parks & Recreation Director, shared the top results of the Recreation Master Plan community rankings survey:

1. Walking Trails
2. Passive Recreation
3. Rectangle Fields
4. Softball Fields
5. Pickleball Fields

Kane stated that community recreation opportunities was the number one priority identified in the survey. He gave a PowerPoint Presentation of the four proposed regional parks included in the Recreation Master Plan. Staff ranking recommendations of proposed regional parks was decided through feasibility, social pinpoint results, community and youth athletic partner users and opinion of probable cost of development:

1. Central St. Johns Sportsplex
2. Central Community Park
3. Northwest Community Park
4. Northeast Community Park

Kane reviewed each park location, benefit, demographic, design, social pinpoint results and estimated probable cost to build were reviewed. Kane said that \$12.5 million was earmarked for new park development. He asked the RAB to support the staff recommended rankings noting that the RAB had already chosen the Central St. Johns SportPlex as #1 and a letter of support had already been provided to Chairperson Whitehurst. Kane stated that staff would meet with each commissioner to review the priorities and that building a new park would require capital funding and creative ways funding. Watkins discussed the importance of staff developing a sponsorship policy for potential private/public partnerships and stated that Baccari would be presenting this at the next meeting. Discussion followed. Van Rysdam asked about developing beach volleyball courts in the near future and Kane replied that funding was

Parks & Recreation

2175 Mizell Road, St. Augustine, FL 32080

904.209.0333 | sjcfl.us

earmarked for courts in Nocatee Community Park next year. Comprehensive Plan and future land use changes were discussed. Watkins asked staff to provide information of ongoing lawsuits from developers to municipalities in Florida. Kane shared that the staff recommendation with RAB support will benefit the department. Van Rysdam reiterated the importance of having flexibility with future planning. Kane said that this process was phased and offered flexibility. Long motioned to recommend the parks prioritized in the Parks and Recreation presentation with the understanding that the recommendations remain fluid. The motion was seconded by Dockins and approved 6/0. Watkins said that she would provide a letter of support of county staff ranking recommendation.

Kane mentioned St. Johns County new Branding Initiative and the new logo used in the PowerPoint Presentation. Van Rysdam asked if the new logo could be used in place of the TDC seal. Sarah Taylor, Assistant County Administrator, explained the new branding initiative, and said that the County Seal will continue to be used on official documents and for official business and operations of the board. The branding will be rolled out in phases and will be adopted and or modified based on its use where applicable and will evolve over time.

STAFF REPORTS

Ryan Kane, Parks & Recreation Director provided these updates:

- Millcreek Park project is going back out to bid for the third time. The first time bid costs were too high. The second time the bid winner came in lower, however the company that was unable to meet the county's insurance requirements.
- FY24 Parks & Recreation Budget Workshop is at 9:15 a.m. on May 23, 2023 at the Agricultural Center. RAB members are encouraged to attend
- Pickleball Summary provided that identifies current sites and potential sites
- Results of findings for access to SJC School District Athletic Facilities
- Park Project Updates highlighting Rivertown II Field Lighting project completion and the completion of the Doug Crane Boat Ramp site and adjustments that have been identified to improve the site for the public.
- Beach Access Survey will remain open until May 31, 2023 with 800 respondents to date.
- Sea Turtle nesting season began May 1. Gates close at 7:30 p.m. and reopen at 8 a.m.
- Free Memorial Day Weekend Beach Shuttles May 27-29, 10am-4pm
 - Ocean and Fishing Pier shuttle, from St. Augustine Beach City Hall (2200 A1A South) to Fishing Pier parking lot.
 - Mickler's Landing Beachfront Park shuttle, from Ponte Vedra Concert Hall (1050 A1A N) to Mickler's Beachfront Park parking lot

Jamie Baccari, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director provided these updates:

- St. Johns County Parks and Recreation is asking for community input on the playground option that will be installed at Cornerstone Park on Thursday, May 11, from 5:30-7 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall, 1050 A1A North, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082. Resident will be able to vote for the playground option preferred.
- NW Tower approved the SJC Match of \$20,000 resulting in \$40,000 funding to complete an evaluation of the Switzerland Community Center Study.

Parks & Recreation

2175 Mizell Road, St. Augustine, FL 32080

904.209.0333 | sjcfl.us

- Movies in the Park, featuring Freaky Friday to be held at St. Johns Golf Club on Friday May 12. Gates open at 7:30 p.m. Movie starts at 8:15 p.m. Food and drink are available to purchase.
- Bert Watson Memorial Event is scheduled for June 24, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. at Mills Field

Watkins asked for a schedule of upcoming reports. Baccari explained that reports would be phased due to scheduling and the time needed to complete. She said that the Sponsorship Policy would be presented in June and the Level of Service report will be provided at the July RAB meeting.

Van Rysdam asked about use of the Field of Dreams by the Creeks Athletic Association Softball group. Baccari replied that all parties are actively discussing options.

Bowen asked if the department could grade the beach driving lanes so that 4WD weren't needed to access. Kane explained that grading is done at the entrances and egresses and not the driving lanes. Sand is soft due to continuous beach renourishment projects.

BOARD REPORTS

Long shared that the Park Foundation will be interviewing three Director Candidates on Friday. He announced the MLK Beach House Project has some legislative support in getting the house moved however there was no official timeline yet. He mentioned that the Foundation is working with county staff to obtain the property at Greenbriar and Long Leaf Pine that is a piece of land being donated by a local family. He stated that additional members for the Park Foundation Board are needed and asked for recommendations.

McEachean gave a shout out to Commissioner Sarah Arnold for her tireless dedication to the underserved communities of Hastings and West Augustine and her continued efforts to keep things moving in the right direction.

Watkins called for a motion to adjourn. Van Rysdam motioned to adjourn the meeting with a second by Bowen. Motion approved 6/0.