



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 10, 2022

Brad Long, Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

RAB Members present: Vice Chair Brad Long; Lauren Watkins; Marty McEachean; Bill Bowen; and Harold Dockins. Deb Chapin arrived after the meeting minutes were approved.

Also present: Paul Abbatinozzi, School Board Liaison; Ashanti Austin, Assistant to Assistant County Administrator Sarah Taylor; Parks & Recreation staff: Ryan Kane, Director; Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director; Teddy Meyer, Recreation Facilities Manager; Tess Simpson Program Manager; Carrie Miska, Business Manager; Diane Gorski, Project Specialist

Absent: Casey Van Rysdam, Chair and Commissioner Paul Waldron.

Dockins motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by McEachean, and approved 5/0.

Long called for Public Comments and reminded everyone to state their name and address and informed them that they would each be given 3 minutes on the clock to speak.

Stacey Casarico and Pam Hatch, St. Augustine residents, spoke to the popularity of pickleball, and their excitement for the additional courts being added at Treaty Park. They stated that they feel that the county should provide a staff person to monitor court usage during open public play. Discussion ensued.

Roller skating enthusiasts Erica (last name not given) and Carrie Morgan, St. Augustine residents, spoke to the need for roller skating facilities within St. Johns County. They asked the county to consider building a roller skating facility. Discussion relating to the need for new facilities and use of current facilities, such as tennis courts and trails followed.

Vice Chair Long thanked the residents who spoke during public comment.

Paul Abbatinozzi, St. Johns County School Board Liaison, gave a brief overview of the start of the new school year. He said that the school system was starting with approximately 50,000 students and that Beachside High School was opening with full sports activities with home events starting mid-October. Dockins asked about growth. Abbatinozzi said he'd report the count at the September meeting as registrations were still ongoing. Dockins asked about Covid-19 protocols and Abbatinozzi replied that there were none.

Stephen Lightfoot, Recreation Supervisor, shared that he had been with the Parks & Recreation Department since November. He comes from a small town, Bainbridge GA, and explained that Hastings feels like home. He gave an overview of the Summer Camp program that was at full capacity this year. He explained that the Recreation Department partnered with the local disc golf group, park naturalists, rangers, and STEM program providers. He said the STEM project was building with Legos and that teamwork and critical thinking were emphasized and added that the STEM Lego program has been integrated into the afterschool program. Lightfoot reviewed all of the programs, events, social activities, community activities and outreach that are happening in Hastings. Lightfoot mentioned partnering with groups that are providing dance and nutrition classes, a fall football punt, pass and kick event and spring baseball pitch, hit and run event. He excitedly shared his plans for a Homecoming event in the spring that will include all residents and youth in the community. Chapin asked for ages served and Lightfoot replied K-8. Dockins asked about physical fitness programs and Lightfoot explained the open gym schedule and scheduled activities. McEachean stated that he was impressed with Lightfoot and the programming being offered and Watkins and Dockins concurred. Bowen stated that the disc golf clinic was successful and enjoyable.

Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director, covered the request to apply for a Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program grant for the Turnbull Regional Park. Discussion relating to the new facility ensued. Dockins asked about the exercise track on the plan. Kane said that staff would look into it and get back to him. Long asked if everyone was in favor of asking the BOCC to allow Parks and Recreation to apply for the grant and all members present approved 6/0.

Teddy Meyer, Recreational Facilities Manager, spoke about his upcoming meeting with the Cultural Council as they are looking for a new company to create their application portal. Meyer hopes that the Sports Tourism TDC CAT III grant application can be added to the new portal. He will provide an update at the next RAB meeting. Conversation relating to the grant process and FY22 grants issued followed.

Ryan Kane, Director, gave an update on the open house for the Treaty Park improvements. He reviewed the proposed modifications, additions and design concepts. He stated that staff would review the public input gleaned at the open house. Chapin asked about painting pickleball court lines on all tennis courts. Kane said that the tennis community does not like pickleball lines on the courts. Dockins asked about lighting and Kane said all new courts will have lights. Bowen asked about the existing trails and Kane stated that they would be improved by the department and are not included in this project. He shared that the Board of County Commissioners approved county staff entering into a contract for \$17.5 Million dollars to purchase the 31-acre Genovar Property with the intention of adding a boat ramp, parking lot and waterfront park space. He updated the RAB on the status of the 19-acre Turnbull Regional Park and provided the proposed design. He shared that the original bid came in too high and that the project was going to go back out to bid. He announced that the county closed on the purchase of the South Beach Grill Restaurant property and hopes to make this a beach ADA accessible site. The goal is to have a beach ADA accessible location at Mickler's Beachfront Park, Vilano Beach and Crescent Beach. There was a brief discussion about the demolition of the restaurant. Kane provided details about the upcoming Open House on August 25 from 5:30-7:00 PM at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall for the proposed Cornerstone Park Improvements. The open house will include information about the installation of a new playground

and the Ponte Vedra Athletic Association's request for athletic field lighting. He explained the layout and purpose of the open house and stated that staff from Parks & Recreation and Public Works will be present and available to answer questions. He cited the Governor's new mandate that allows government entities to ban smoking in public parks. The City of St. Augustine has passed a mandate to ban smoking. The city parcels that are maintained by the county are affected by this rule. Chapin asked about enforcement. Kane replied that law enforcement would manage violations.

Brad Long, Vice Chair, gave an update on the Park Foundation. He announced that the Foundation was now a member of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and that they have opened a PO Box to use as the corporate address. He mentioned that Board Member Stefan Salzbrunn is working with Google to set up a free non-profit website and Gmail addresses for the Park Foundation Board member. He said that they are still searching for an Executive Director and have discussed the possibility of using a staffing recruitment site. Long promised to give another update next month

Watkins announced that she would not be at the September meeting due to a work conflict.

McEachean motioned to adjourn, Bowen seconded. Approved 6/0