



**RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
October 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Casey Van Rysdam, Chair.

Attendees

Recreation Advisory Board (RAB) Members present: Casey Van Rysdam, Chair; Brad Long, Vice Chair; Bill Bowen; Deb Chapin; Marty McEachean, Harold Dockins; Lauren Watkins

Also present: Commission Paul Waldron; Paul Abbatonozzi, School Board Representative, Assistant County Administrator Sarah Taylor; Ryan Kane, Director; Jamie Bacarri, Assistant Director; Teddy Meyer, Recreation Facilities Manager; Sydney Lindblad Natural Resources Program Manager, Diane Gorski, Project Specialist

Chair asked for a motion to approve the September minutes. McEachean motioned to approve the September meeting minutes and was seconded by Long. Approved 7/0.

There were no Public Comments

Reports

Casey Van Rysdam, Chair announced that he was the Interim Director for the St. Augustine Lighthouse and that he would revisit working with staff on the 3-5 year strategic plan once his replacement was chosen. He asked Baccari for the status of the Bert Watson Memorial plaque and she said that the Creeks Athletic Association Board did not have the funding for the plaque at this time and that they were considering their fund raising options. Van Rysdam stated that he had spoken to **Teresa Bishop, Planning Division Manager** from the Growth Management Division. Bishop agreed to provide a presentation explaining the policies and procedures of the Land Development Code at the **December 14, 2022 meeting** so that the RAB may learn why developers are able to make modifications to existing developments without having to add recreation space. Chair asked Kane to explain the 1 cent tax that will be on the ballot in November. He asked if the November vote was the final vote and Commissioner Waldron confirmed that the election results would decide the outcome. Kane explained that the County Administrators proposed use of the sales tax would be used for 4 additional regional parks and waterway access within the county. The funding was currently set at \$25 million for the Northwest Regional Park, \$20 million for Silverleaf Regional Park, \$7 million for Shearwater Regional Park which is very close to Silverleaf Regional Park and both will be combined in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, \$16 million for the Nocatee Regional Park and \$20 million for Waterway Access in St. Johns County. This funding is fluid and could change. \$88 million dollars for parks and recreation development has been earmarked with the sales tax dollars. Kane explained that funding was in place for the Master Planning of the regional parks and that staff would be bringing it to the RAB for their input in the upcoming months. Chair asked what happens to the projects if the sales tax initiative fails and Kane replied that there is some funding available. He shared the the NW Regional Park has \$10 million available that was allocated in FY22, Nocatee has \$4 million in FY22. He intends to have the company that is helping with the Master Plan identify all funding sources and options. Kane explained that the 1 cent sales tax would be collected over 10 years and that administration and the BOCC will determine the amount of money available for projects and when the projects will commence. A brief discussion relating to how the sales tax money will be distributed and what projects will be prioritized as well as how projects were indentified followed. Chapin asked for the estimated amount of money the sales tax will collect and Kane replied approximately \$500 million over 10 years.

Commissioner Paul Waldron announced that the Palm Valley West Boat Ramp project had been approved by the BOCC and that construction should start soon. Waldron shared his excitement for the Treaty Park renovations that are in the works as well as additional recreation projects that would be cuing up soon. Van Rysdam thanked Waldron for his continued support and shared that the RAB appreciated all of efforts. Waldron said that he voted against Silverleaf because of the lack of additional recreational facilities.

Paul Abbatonozzi, School Board Representative, informed the RAB of the 4.2% increase in disrict school registration that is now at 50,120. He said that the district has grown an additional 100 students since this last count and that registration numbers will continue to increase as more families move to St. Johns County. Abbatonozzi stated that winter sports was starting soon and that Beachside High School would be hosting its first home game this Friday night. He thanked Kane and his team for the support and hard work provided during

Hurricane Ian. Dockins asked if the 4.2% increase included private schools and Abbatonozzi replied that they only tracked the St. Johns County Public School participation numbers. Discussion followed.

New Business

Van Rysdam asked there were applicants from outside the RAB present and there were none. He noted that Dockins was the only applicant present. Chair asked Dockins to share his reasons for wanting to be part of the RAB. Dockins stated that it has been a privilege and honor to serve on the RAB. He explained that recreation was an important part of his life. He is involved in bringing the Senior Olympics to St. Johns County. He is working to provide an after school basketball program in Hastings. Attended numerous parks and facilities to review bathrooms and trash cans to assist the maintenance department in identifying issues. Van Rysdam mentioned his disappointment that none of the other applicants were present with no slight intended to Dockins. He asked for a motion to fill the at-large position. Long motioned to retain Dockins and McEachean seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Approved 7/0. Chair explained that a letter of recommendation would be sent to the BOCC following the meeting.

Old Business

Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director spoke on behalf of Carrie Miska, Business Manager due to her attendance in a leadership seminar. She produced a PowerPoint Presentation on the Strategic Dashboard and covered each element of the slides. She reviewed each of the Parks and Recreation divisions and key metrics. Van Rysdam asked who wrote the grants for department and Baccari stated that the grants were written in house and that the county had someone who identified grant opportunities for the department. She shared that in the current FY23 budget the department received 7 additional full-time positions and a 51% increase in budget, Van Rysdam asked if the 7.1 million dollar increase in the budget could be reconciled. Dockins asked about repair and replacement. Chapin asked about expenditures in the budget. Kane attempted to clarify the ask. Chapin asked if the expenditures were all-inclusive. There was a discussion relating to the the importance of the department and the product provided to the public verses the budget. Revenue generating programs and events were discussed. Baccari covered programming, admissions and participation numbers. She explained that the golf course closure due to renovations had affected the golf course revenues in FY22. Staffing changes, and loss of a naturalist resulted in a reduction of services. The department is on the upswing and working on growing the programming. She explained that staff was utilizing CivicRec to help tract participation numbers and mentioned focusing on social media and offering more information to the public. Baccari shared the capital improvement numbers in both FY22 & FY23. Chair asked for an upated project list. Chair asked for a comparison between the amount requested and awarded for projects. She gave a quick overview of the grants awarded to the beaches and natural resources division and the TDC Category III Sports funding through the TDC grant.

Meyer introduced Mark Berman, representative for the PXG Women's Match Play Championship. This grant request was carried forward from last months meeting to allow the RAB additional time to review the material and to give Berman the opportunity to prepare and provide an update on the economic impacts from the previous tournament. Berman summarized the economic impact numbers. He offered to help drive social media as the players have over a million followers. He shared that the membership has grown and that there is now a participation wait list. He discussed some of the players and their impacts. Chair asked if the PXG would offer some clinic opportunities at the newly renovated County Golf Course next year. Watkins asked for visitor participation number clarification and ticket sales. Berman mentioned the Gen W initiative for empowering women. There was a lengthy discussion relating to the funding available through the TDC Grant program, the emphasis on marketing and the importance of getting a tourism video out to the public by partnering with the Visitors Convention Bureau (VCB) tourism. Berman mentioned that the PXG was working closely with the VCB. Watkins requested another TDC funding worksheet from Meyer at the next meeting. Long motioned to award a \$25,000 grant, motion seconded by Chapin, approved 7/0.

Staff Reports

Director Ryan Kane, said that the BOCC asked for the Cornerstone Park Lighting Project to be placed on the next agenda. He anticipates that there could be a large number of attendees. He said that the Golf Clubhouse is complete and that staff is on sight. The Golf Course is slated to open this winter and once the grand opening date is set everyone will be invited. The West Palm Valley Boat Ramp was approved as stated by Commissioner Waldron the additional waterway access is a much needed asset. He said that the Rivertown II lights were installed, the towers are up, everything is ready to go and that the department was waiting for FPL to provide power. He mentioned that the lighting of this facility was going to add to the playability of the site and that new Partners, Prime Sports and Bartram Athletic Group would benefit. Kane stated that the commercial activity at the Vilano Floating Dock is currently being prepared for a RFP or contract. Kane provided an update on the Shore

Drive Trail Open House pm October 19, 2022 from 5 – 6 p.m. at the Royal Road Park Club House. He reviewed the Shore Drive Trail survey. Discussed ensued. Kane said that the Doug Crane Boat ramp will be closed for renovations until spring. He mentioned that master planning for the four new regional parks had begun and that staff along with O Sports toured the proposed park facilities. He said that it was a great relief to be dealing with a group that specializes in sports facilities. He said that this group would present the master plan to the RAB and then the BOCC. Kane reviewed the scope of work staff performed during Hurricane Ian to assist residents that included sand bags, preparing emergency facilities with cots and water and other items as well as assisting with telephones at the Emergency Center. He explained that Solomon Calhoun has been opened as a shelter, and that staff staffed water distribution sites for two days. He said that the department had two teams assessing site damages. He said that 17 beach walkovers have been damaged costing \$500,000 as well as wind screens, netting, shade canopies, and washouts at the golf course. Chair asked Kane to thank his team and to let them know much the work they do is appreciated. He asked for a cost estimate for the loss incurred because of the storm. Chapin asked about insurance and Kane explained that walkovers are not insured but are eligible for FEMA reimbursement. Sarah Taylor, Assistant County Administrator explained what insurance coverage the county carries, the amount and how coverage need is determined, as well as the process of filing insurance claims and FEMA claims.

Sydney Lindblad, Natural Resources Program Manager provided an overview of the beach tolls, permits and revenues for the season. She reminded everyone on the 2020 beach pass sales being extended for 2 years. This year beach pass sales increased 19%. She stated that revenue for FY22 was just under \$1.3 million. Lindblad said that it was an extremely busy year with record breaking attendance. She said that FY23 beaches passes go on sale in November.

Board Member Reports

Brad Long, Vice Chair gave an update of the Park Foundation and stated that they are actively seeking an Executive Director with a job posting on Indeed.com and the Chamber of Commerce. He mentioned that they are also working with real estate for a possible donation of land. He said that the google workspace is up complete with foundation emails. They have an accounting package that includes mass email and text for fundraising. He mentioned working with a local group to raise funds to move a home that Martin Luther King Jr. was scheduled to stay in, but plans changed, however a group fired upon the house thinking he was there. If enough funds are not raised, then historically significant items from the home will be salvaged and placed in the Civil Rights Museum in Lincolnville. They are trying to raise \$250,000 to move and repair the home and additional funds to maintain it. Watkins asked for a link to the Executive Directors job posting. Van Rysdam reminded everyone to not reply to all.

Bill Bowen mentioned cleaning up the disc golf course after Hurricane Ian with help from maintenance staff. He said that the fairgrounds is always being used for functions and that makes playing disc golf a challenge. He asked for an update on the new course. Kane responded that the contract for design has been signed and that the FY23 request for \$750,000 was approved for construction of the course, however, there may be a delay due to funding needs within the department. It may be FY24 before construction starts.

Lauren Watkins thanked Baccari for the information and resolution to the Volleyball Court issues at the pier. She said the players would like to assist in some capacity, fundraising perhaps. Baccari explained that the sand would be sifted this week and that the delay was due to the storm. Watkins questioned the pole height. Lindblad explained the changes in the sand level causes the unevenness. Baccari stated that we would figure out a plan once the sand has been sifted and the project is complete. She stated that the issues were being sorted out and that the landscaping was already paid as we are using the tree bank. Watkins asked who did the project. Baccari explained the bidding process and that a local contract won the bid. Watkins offered insight into the corners needed to be covered. Baccari asked Watkins to meet with her after the meeting. Watkins asked about fundraising for the facility. Baccari stated that we would connect them with the Park Foundation. There was a brief discussion relating to the Park Foundation assisting with these types of fundraisers.

Chapin motioned to adjourn and Van Rysdam seconded, approved 7/0.