



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Parks & Recreation Department

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

December 14, 2022

Chairman called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM.

RAB Members Present: Casey VanRysdam, Chair; Harold Dockins, Bill Bowen, Lauren Watkins, Marty McEachean

RAB Members Absent: Brad Long, Vice Chair; Deb Chapin

Also Present: Commission Chair Christian Whitehurst; Assistant County Administrator Sarah Taylor; Parks and Recreation Director Ryan Kane, Assistant Director Jamie Baccari, Recreation Facilities Manager Teddy Meyer, Business Manager Carrie Miska, Natural Resources Program Manager Sydney Lindblad, Project Specialist Diane Gorski.

Chair announced the election of the the Chair/Vice Chair would be postponed until the January meeting due to the size of the agenda and the absence of two RAB members.

Chair asked for a motion to approve the October meeting minutes. Motion by Bowen, seconded by McEachean, passed 5/0.

Chair called for Public Comments for non-agenda items only and reminded all that they would be given 3 minutes to speak.

Public Comments

Andor Gyulai, Co-Founder of Volleyball1on1, St. Johns Volleyball Club and a St. Johns County resident spoke to the need for beach volleyball courts in Nocatee. He shared his background in the sport, his years of coaching experience and programs he currently offers. He asks that the county consider adding beach volleyball courts in Nocatee Community Park. He mentioned needing additional courts for kids in the community as well as competitive opportunities through tournament play. Chair shared his insight and experience in the sport of volleyball and asked staff to come up with a cost analysis and figure out beach courts would fit in the master plan. Kane stated that staff was looking into this option and would provide a cost analysis. A discussion relating to TDT funding followed. Meyer was tasked to provide TDT information to Gyulai.

DiPak Rajhansa also spoke to the need for beach volleyball courts. He stated that there is no beach volleyball access in the northern part of the county. He shared that beach volleyball was now an Olympic sport, a college sport and now offered as a varsity sport in Florida. He shared that the varsity athletes from Ponte Vedra High School are forced to pay for use of a private facility to practice and this also requires students to leave the Nocatee/Ponte Vedra area for training and practice.

Troy Lippi, St. Augustine resident and business owner, spoke to the need for a kid friendly skate park and suggested that the racquetball courts in Treaty Park be torn down and a pump track built in its place. The pump track would keep younger kids and beginners off the more advanced skate park and allow for a safe space for be for younger skateboarders and beginners to learn basic skills. Discussion followed that included the need for this type of park throughout the county and the cost of building a pump track. Kane suggested Lippi meet with Baccari and/or Meyer to discussion options. Alex Diaz, St. Augustine, shared his passion for skating and interest in providing kids with a kid friendly park. The group spoke to the upcoming renovations planned for Treaty Park.

Reports

Casey Van Rysdam, Chair shared that the golf course grand opening was a success. He asked for an update on the Disc Golf project. Kane answered that staff was anticipating 50% design to be presented soon. Chair asked about the departments plans now that the Sales Tax referendum failed. Kane explained that staff was reevaluating budgeted dollars and projects and will make recommendations to administration and the commission for their consideration. He reminded RAB members of the meeting schedule and the importance of notifying staff if they can not be present for a meeting to ensure a quorum as well as requesting all members to respond to staff in a timely manner. Van Rysdam expressed his condolences to the family of Commissioner Paul Waldron for their loss and recognized his passion for St. Johns County, kids and his many accomplishments both as a commissioner, businessman and resident. He introduced Commission Chair Christian Whitehurst as the new RAB Liaison and welcomed him onboard.

Christian Whitehurst, County Commissioner (BOCC Liaison), was pleased to hear finances having been referenced three or four times in the first 10 minutes of the meeting. He said that this was a comfort to him knowing that St. Johns County is one of the lowest taxed counties in a state and that has no state income tax. He said that this leaves the commission and county government in a position where they can do anything but certainly not everything. He shared that he was excited to be a part of the RAB and hopes to carry on Commissioner Waldron's legacy. Whitehurst looks forward to helping find solutions to the communities needs working with the RAB.

Chair noted that Paul Abbatinuzzi, School Board liason, was not present. He explained that Abbatinuzzi has helped build a relationship with the Parks and Recreation Department and that his input has been invaluable.

Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director explained that the department had been tasked to apply for grants to fund some upcoming park projects. She explained that Phases 1 and 2 of the Mussallem Beachfront Park have been completed and that Phase III that includes bathrooms, showers and a pathway to an overlook of the intracoastal waterway. She explained that the department was working with the county grants division to apply for a Land and Water Conservation Grant (LWC) for Phase III of the Mussallem Beachfront Park project. She stated that the project was fully funded, however the LWC grant would allow the county to match the \$350,000 grant funding which would then free up dollars for another project. She asked the RAB for their support for the department to apply for the grant and to provide a letter of recommendation. Chair asked for a motion of approval. Watkins motions, McEachean seconded. Approved 5/0.

New Business

Director Kane explained that there are 4 regional parks planned with \$14.5 million budgeted for the Northwest Park off of Greenbriar, Silverleaf and Shearwater located off of SR 16 and Nocatee Park. He explained that OSPORTS is a high quality design team that will help create parks that are community assets. He said that with the failure of the sales tax referendum the group is tasked with providing a phased construction approach and identifying which parks will give us the most bang for the buck. The OSPORTS team introduced their members. A PowerPoint Presentation providing an overview of the project and design process in correlation with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and public involvement relating to the future 4 Regional Parks projects in St. Johns County was provided. The OSPORTS presentation was provided to to the Board of County Commissioners yesterday and stakeholders this evening. The presentation will be used for a public workshop in January. Discussion ensued. Results from the public workshop and social input will be shared at the January RAB meeting.

Chair introduced Teresa Bishop, Certified Planner, Planning Division Manager, Growth Management Division who provided a Land Development Code Presentation explaining the current policies on park space in land development projects. Bishop reviewed the Parks and Open Space requirement in the Comprehensive Plan. She explained that the Level of Service requirement calculation is based on the county as a whole, not a specific area of the county. The LOS park space requirement can be private or public. There is no requirement to provide public park space in the comprehensive plan. Bishop said the county is doing an evaluation and appraisal report of the comprehensive plan for the state agency due in 2024. She said now is the time to make recommendations to staff. The RAB discussed the process and potential for changes in the updated 2024 comprehensive code level of service requirements. Commissioner Whitehurst requested clarification on how Impact Fees were allocated. Chair requested this discussion be continued at the next few meetings in preparation of making recommendations to change requirements in the Comprehensive Plan to better benefit parks and recreation and the community.

Adam Lauramore, Vice President of Julington Creek Baseball gave an overview of their association. JCB has 936 players and anticipates having 1200 in the spring. He said that they are in need of additional baseball fields, especially the 60 x90 full size fields for youth age 13 and older. Lauramore said that they are at capacity and continue to have to turn families away due to lack of field space. Lighting T-Ball fields would be helpful. JCB is the largest baseball association in Florida with the largest numbers of players in the Cal Ripkin, Babe Ruth brackets. Van Rysdam reminded Lauramore of the value of donating time and equipment to those less fortunate.

Andy Stevenson, Villages Baseball Association provided an overview of the program, tournaments and membership. He stated that they're maxed out and travel to fields outside of Palencia where available. They aren't able to have a softball program due to lack of field space which means the girls travel to the northwest part of the county. The program is at capacity. Palencia needs bleachers, a concession stand and restrooms close to the fields. Van Rysdam reminded Stevenson of the value of donating time and equipment to those less fortunate. Stevenson mentioned scholarships and willingness to work with children in the under served areas of the county.

Meyer reviewed the Florida Elite (FESA) TDC Category III Grant Application and the request for \$10,000. Sean Bubb, Florida Elite reminded everyone of the size of the association, value to the community, willingness to help in the Hastings area, scholarships, successful players and the number of players who earn college scholarships after training and playing for FESA. There was a lengthy discussion about the economic impact of FESA tournaments. Motion to award \$10,000 to FESA by McEachean, seconded by Bowen. Whitehurst questioned the request. Bubb said Parks and Recreation suggested FESA apply for the grant and FESA will continue to invest and reinvest in the community. He mentioned FESA getting involved with Special Olympics. Kane stated that having an internal county association sponsor a tournament results in a bigger economic impact to the county by keeping the money in the county. Motion passed 5/0.

Chair moved Old Business to the January meeting.

Ryan Kane, Director explained that park parcel 7740 Coastal Highway would be coming online soon and needed a name. He reviewed the County's Naming Policy. He offered three suggestions: Tradeside Park (next door to Tradewind Condos), Caretta Park (scientific name for sea turtle), Tortuga Park (Spanish for turtle/tortois), and Seloy Park (Timucuan Chief). The group discussed the options. Motion by Dockins to name the park Tortuga Park, seconded by McEachean, approved 5/0.

McEachean requested for 4 years of history on grant applications. Meyers stated that we request 3 years on the application.

McEachean supported 3 years of history. Van Rysdam explained that staff has to trust but verify the numbers before the applications come to the board. Meyer explained that the grant award spreadsheet would continue to show what is awarded over time. Van Rysdam asked which Commissioner would be appointed to the TDC board and Whitehurst responded that Commission Arnold would fill that spot.

Motion to adjourn by McEachean, seconded by Watkins, passed 5/0.