



RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

March 13, 2024

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Lauren Watkins, who then took the roll and all seven (7) RAB members were in attendance: Lauren Watkins, Chair, Brad Long, Vice Chair, Bill Bowen, Harold Dockins, Marty McEachean, Marithza Ross and Casey Van Rysdam.

Also in attendance: Commissioner Christian Whitehurst and Parks and Rec Staff: Ryan Kane, Director; Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director; Diane Gorski, Project Specialist.

Long made a motion to approve the February 14, 2024 meeting minutes and was seconded by Dockins. Motion passed 7/0.

Chair called for reports and noted that she had none. Commissioner Whitehurst shared that the Shore Drive Trail passed 4/1 at the March 19th meeting and that public safety played a key role in passage of the project. He then announced that the funding for the four (4) new regional parks would be on the April 2nd BCC Agenda for the BCC to give direction to staff. He asked that all RAB members attend the meeting and speak in support of these parks and funding. He said that he would make himself available to each RAB member to discuss in person if requested. He said that he would ask the Chair to make this item time certain but that the decision was ultimately up to the chair. Staff will provide the RAB with meeting information and staff presentation in advance of the meeting. Van Rysdam asked if there was opportunity to name the Shore Drive Trail after Commissioner Waldron. Whitehurst shared that he had spoken to Stephanie Waldron, to make sure she was comfortable with honoring Paul Waldron in this manner. Mrs. Waldron supports this opportunity if it becomes available. Van Rysdam asked what the Parks & Rec Department can do to help heal the St. Augustine South residents' animosity and quiet the anger of the non-supporters. Kane answered that opening and operating the site effectively so that the community can enjoy the trail and appreciate it. Discussion ensued and resulted in this not being a viable choice. Kane gave examples of other options. Kane shared that there would be a study of the resiliency of the shoreline and this would allow the county to apply for grants to help aid in curing any issues along the shoreline. Discussion relating to the trail arose. Watkins thanked Whitehurst for addressing the concerns of residents who were afraid to speak out in support of the trail.

Chair called for Public Comments for non-agenda items only and reminded all that each speaker would have 3 minutes. S. Clulow expressed her appreciation for Parks and Rec staff and the county. J. Allen spoke about "pop tennis" courts in Treaty Park and his concern that pickleball courts would eliminate pop tennis courts and regular tennis courts throughout the county. He provided the history of the sport and answered questions from the board. Director Kane explained the improvements underway at Treaty Park as well as the ability for pop tennis and pickleball to share court space with adjustable nets.

Director Kane explained the voting process for the chair. He called for nominations for the Chair. Long nominated Watkins for another year as Chair and was seconded by Bowen. Kane called for additional nominations and there were none. Nomination passed 7/0.

Chair Watkins called for nominations for the Vice Chair. Bowen nominated Long for another year as Vice Chair and was seconded by McEachean. Watkins called for additional nominations and there were none. Nomination passed 7/0.

Watkins asked the RAB to review the RAB Annual Report that was provided in the packet and then called for additions or deletions. There was a brief discussion relating to the report and minor corrections were noted. There was a consensus of the RAB to approve the report with corrections and for staff to send to the Board of County Commissioners when finalized.

The Sports Event Funding Cat III Recreation & Leisure Sport Marketing Grant Application Revisions presentation and discussion were moved to the April 10th meeting. Ross stated that she was in favor of the new process but wondered if having limited RAB involvement, specifically with new applicants, was a good idea. The group discussed the potential changes and benefits to aligning the process with the TDC.

Director/Assistant Director Updates

- Kane said that the Shore Drive Trail project expected to start within the next 60 days.
- Kane announced that the Canright House received additional funding from the BCC and will be relocated to Collier Blocker Puryear Park near the Florida Memorial College arch in West Augustine. The community has a vested interest in having the house located within their community. The goal is to have the ribbon cutting on Juneteenth. The house will be a static museum and there will be no entry into the house. Historical signage will be placed and the history of the home will be available on the department's new app. The parking will be shared with the park facility and an ADA sidewalk will be constructed from the parking lot to the museum. Van Rysdam asked for clarification on the impact of using \$250,000 of TDC money. Kane stated that the money would be taken from reserve. Baccari explained that money that is not spent in the TDT process is placed into reserve in the category the overage is in. Van Rysdam requested a report on how much money is available to spend. He would like the beginning balance sheet information with the reserves noted be provided to the RAB in regards to TDT funds. He requested clarification on the TDT funds that are available and how they money is spent. Kane explained that staff could provide the proposed FY25 budget beginning balance information. Whitehurst reviewed the Administrator's Budget Workshops that are available to the public and suggested he attend these budget meetings. Kane stated that he will request the operational budgets for CAT III & 5 and share with the RAB. McEachean asked if the house would be made to current construction codes and how security would be managed. Kane reassured the group that these issues were being managed.
- The Mill Creek Park project is ongoing. Kane explained that the design is a wagon wheel with lighted fields, 2 softball and 2 baseball fields, a concession stand in the center, and an artificial turf field. The project is scheduled for completion by November. Teams will be allowed on the fields in January or February to allow time for the grass to take root.
- Baccari shared that the Vilano Beachfront Park project is currently underway and should be completed prior to Memorial Day in time for summer beach season. The project includes new restroom facilities and beach walkovers.
- Bird Island Park boardwalk replacement is complete. Kane said that this project was built with the Deferred Maintenance budget and completed by the county Facility Maintenance team.
- Kane reminded everyone that the Regional Parks funding options will be on the April 2nd BCC agenda. There will be a status update on the parks and staff is seeking BCC direction.
- Kane asked for clarification on fee schedule request. Van Rysdam asked for site fees for partner organizations. Site fees vs. associations. Are they paying the same fees? Kane explained the policy and shared that travel vs recreational were charged the same but their use is different. Kane said that this data will be provided at a future meeting.
- Enjoy, don't destroy anti vandalism campaign. Kane explained that the purpose of the campaign was to lessen the amount of vandalism in the parks. In FY23 there were 191 reported work orders to repair vandalism in the parks that totaled over \$63,403.43. So far in FY24 there have been 46 reported work orders totaling \$10,948.92. 36 police reports were filed in FY23. This campaign will encourage the public to take pride in where they play. This campaign will launch April 5th. PSA's will be filmed with people from the community, the Sheriff and park users. Watkins asked how people would be chosen. Ross stated that all RAB members should be included in the PSA's. The group discussed the campaign and PSA options at length.

- Baccari announced the annual Easter Egg Hunts at Palencia & Veterans Parks will be held on Thursday, 3/28 from 10am-noon and Easter Egg Hunts at Treaty & Al Wilke will be held on Saturday, 3/30 from 10am-noon.
- Baccari said that there are 825 Summer Camp registrations up from the 669 registrations accepted in 2019. Staff will be drawing names next week and the announcements will be sent out the following week. Those families wanting to be placed on a waiting list will need to register on CivicRec. The need for additional facilities and staffing was discussed. Baccari shared that three of the new regional parks would have summer camp facilities available and the Central Park would have a community center that would also accommodate a summer camp. Van Rysdam asked if the county sought outside funding. Baccari answered that we have not yet done so due to staffing limitations.
- Baccari announced the new website and asked for input.
- Baccari said that the Cornerstone Playground has opened unofficially, but a fence enclosure and sidewalk need to be added before an official opening. Kane reminded the RAB that this project started with community involvement with residents coming to the RAB and requesting it. Dockins asked about parking. Kane explained there was ample parking.

Van Rysdam asked when he and Watkins would be contacted to participate in the Strategic Planning for the Comprehensive Plan updates. Staff assured him that this would be looked into. Kane stated that staff would share the dates and locations for the 4 upcoming public Strategic Planning meetings.

Motion by Bowen to adjourn the meeting was seconded by McEachean. Motion passed 7/0.