



## RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

July 12, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 1:31 PM and roll call was taken by the Chair.

Present: Lauren Watkins, Chair, Brad Long, Vice Chair, Casey Van Rysdam, Bill Bowen, Deb Chapin, Harold Dockins, Marty McEachan, Sarah Taylor, Assistant County Administrator, Ryan Kane, Director, Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director, Carrie Miska, Business Manager

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

Chair opened the floor for Public Comments. Andor Gyulai, Co-Founder of Volleyball1 on 1, St. Johns Volleyball Club and a St. Johns County resident Beach stated that he heard that the county had proposed a half million dollar budget to build the beach volleyball courts in Nocatee. He wanted to know if there was anything that he could do to push the project over the hurdle. He said that beach volleyball is the fastest growing sport in the NCAA and shared that program participation numbers continue to grow and this results in a big demand for beach volleyball courts. He shared his group's willingness to help in anyway needed. Van Rysdam asked for clarification on fast tracking the project. Kane shared that the funding would become available with an approved Fiscal Year 2024 on October 1. He stated that the Recreation Department coordinates with Public Works to manage the Capital Improvement Projects. He said that the project order would be determined by both groups. Kane shared that we added a new Project Manager position to the department that he will manage the Parks and Recreation Department projects in concert with Public Works. Kane recommended sending an email to all five commissioners expressing support for the beach volleyball project.

Watkins thanked the County, the local athletic association and Jamie for the Bert Watson event and also Casey Van Rysdam for sending in his wonderful comments that were shared during the presentation. She reminded everyone that the August meeting would have several TDC Category III grant applications. Van Rysdam requested as much lead time as possible. There was a consensus of the board for information sooner rather than later. She mentioned her meeting with the West Augustine CRA and that she would update the board after meeting with Ryan.

Brad Long introduced Michael Payne, Executive Director of the St. Johns County Park Foundation. Payne stated that he is excited for the opportunity to grow the foundation and create many opportunities within the county. He said that he looks forward to working with the county and the public. Van Rysdam asked him for his background. Payne replied that he has been working with non-profits as an executive and as a development specialist for several years.

Commissioner Whitehurst said that the Bert Watson memorial event was successful and well attended. Whitehurst welcomed Payne to the St. Johns County Park Foundation and said that he looked forward to positive outcomes. He mentioned that the bonding program for the regional parks seemed to be a priority and will be moving forward. He said that it may take time to get the parks built but they will be built.

Sarah Taylor, Assistant County Administrator reminded everyone that the Fiscal Year 2024 recommended budget will be presented at the July 18<sup>th</sup> Board of County Commissioners meeting. The admin hearings resulted in some changes that will be presented in summary form by Jesse Dunn, OMB Director. Taylor stated that the goal is to go forward with OSports to

obtain concrete designs and so forth before the county can go after bonding the building of the parks. Long said that he was happy about the progress being made to get the regional parks constructed. Van Rysdam stated that he appreciated the county taking the appropriate amount of time to get everything that is needed to bond construction of the parks.

OLD BUSINESS

Watkins asked Jamie to review any questions received from the RAB members in relation to the Naming and Sponsorship policy. Baccari answered the questioned and reviewed each section of the proposed policy. There was a lengthy discussion that occurred before, during and after the review. Watkins asked if there was a motion to approve the draft with the recommended policy changes agreed upon today to be moved forward in the process and eventually be sent on to the BOCC for their approval. Long made the motion and was seconded by Van Rysdam. Motion approved 7/0.

STAFF REPORTS

Sydney Lindblad, Beach Operations Manager provided a summary of the current beach tolls along with the statistics from 2020 for comparison. She mentioned the beach renourishment program and the work that is being done and referred everyone to the webpage, Reach the Beach application, and social media sites. Beach access was discussed. Lindblad announced that she had taken a new job and that Friday was her last day. The RAB thanked her for her service, congratulated her on her new job and wished her well.

Ryan Kane, Director of Parks and Recreation recognized Sydney and stated that she has been a huge asset to the team. He said that a Project Manager was being brought on board July 24 and he brings invaluable experience with project management and government to the table. The Project Management will provide consistency, focus and oversight to all of the Parks and Recreation Department projects. He reviewed additional staff vacancies and hires. He mentioned that Representative Stevenson was hoping to gain support for Orangedale Trail expansion from Shands Pier to Mickler’s Beach as this section had been left out of the FY24 state budget. The group shared their thoughts on the trail expansion and its merits. Bowen made a motion to approve providing a letter supporting for the Orangedale Trail that will allow for the continued expansion of connectivity throughout the trail system. The motion was seconded by Long and approved 7/0.

Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation reported that the Golf Course revenue to date was \$1.8 million and on schedule to exceed last year’s revenue. She provided the numbers for the Summer Camp Lottery:

Fiscal Year	Lottery Entrants	Entrants Denied	Entrants Enrolled
2022	687	167	520
2023	1048	557	591

BOARD REPORTS

Van Rysdam mentioned the need for additional community centers so that so many children would not be turned away. He asked if staffing the centers was a challenge and Baccari replied that hiring staff did have its challenges. He asked if any of the regional parks would have a community center. Kane stated that there may be an opportunity to add a community center at one or more of the regional parks. Baccari reminded everyone that the August RAB meeting would be dedicated to the first half of FY24 TDC Grant Applications which could include 8 or more applications. She said that staff would be sure to email the applications in advance of the meeting so that the RAB has time to vet the applications. Watkins reminded everyone to be present for the August meeting and if unable to attend to let Recreation Staff know as a quorum is required to approve/deny grant applications.

Van Rysdam asked when the Strategic Dashboard would be presented. Baccari replied that the Strategic Dashboard update and Level of Service for the Land Development Code would be added to the September agenda. She apologized for the delay in presenting the quarterly Strategic Dashboard but explained that staff schedules had made it necessary to push back the date.

McEachean praised Sarah Arnold and her commitment to Hastings and her work with area leadership groups. He spoke to the positive movement for change in Hastings.

Bowens mentioned the Recreation Department's archery class tried out disc golf at the fairgrounds and enjoyed it. He said that staff members Joe and Teddy have been working on improvements to the course on the non-fairground side so that disc golf can be played when the fairground has an event. He suggested that the new disc golf course should have an inaugural national level tournament once it is open. He spoke about the many opportunities for tournament play at the new course once it is built.

Chapin mentioned that a woman in her hospitality group hosted 600 people at WGV for the Great Race at the Renaissance Hotel. She said the event definitely had a positive economic impact on the area.

Dockins offered his support of the four proposed parks and his hope that tournaments like the senior games will have a place in St. Johns County.

Long stated that he was excited about the new Park Foundation Director and moving forward.

Dockins made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Long and approved 7/0.