



RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

November 8, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 PM

Present: Brad Long, Vice Chair, Casey Van Rysdam, Bill Bowen, Harold Dockins, Marty McEachean, Commission Chair Christian Whitehurst, Ryan Kane Director, Teddy Meyer, Recreation Facilities Manager, Carrie Miska, Business Manager, Diane Gorski, Project Specialist.

Absent: Lauren Watkins, Chair

Long called for approval of the September and October minutes. There was a motion to approve both months minutes by Dockins. The motion was seconded by McEachean and approved 5/0. He then opened the floor for Public Comments and announced that each speaker would have 3 minutes to present.

Kenneth Rainer, 5155 Gerona Rd, resident of St. Augustine South, spoke in opposition of the Shores Trail project in its current design. Director Kane explained that the project bid closed on November 15th. He clarified that the project was budgeted for 1.6 million and that 400k was from grant funding. He said that the Army Corps of Engineers would be reviewing the project before it moves forward. He stated that staff will provide a project presentation and address Renner's concerns at the December 13th RAB meeting.

Andor Gyulai, Volleyball 1on 1 co-founder, PVHS volleyball coach and resident of Ponte Vedra gave an update on the growing numbers of players and need for additional courts. He shared that they are currently using fields at Nocatee and Fruit Cove. He and his son Thor won the Jacksonville Beach AA Tournament, representing the oldest and youngest players in the event making his son Thor the first high school teenager in more than five years to clinch an AA tournament championship in the Jacksonville area. He asked for an update on the beach volleyball courts that were slated to be built at Nocatee Community Park. Kane said that 500k was in the budget and that he would follow up on the status of the project. Gyulai requested that the courts be built north to south to avoid glare from the sun if possible.

Susan Phillips, President & CEO Visitor Convention Center introduced herself and William McBroom, Director of Conference Sales. She stated that one of the VCB's functions is to support St. Johns County through destination marketing and promotion. She gave an overview of the VCB's purpose and explained that they are going to focus more on sports marketing. She stated that the VCB looked forward to continued collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Department. A discussion relating to marketing, advertising and data collection followed.

Commissioner Whitehurst announced that he had attended the Sports Partnership meeting and shared information about the proposed regional parks. He said that he encouraged everyone in attendance to share their support of these projects with the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). He declared that Joy Andrews had been made the permanent County Administrator and that her contract was being drawn up for review and approval of the BCC. Van Rysdam asked for a partner organization update and Kane replied that staff would be able to provide this.

David Simpkins, St. Johns County School District liaison, provided details for the end of the fall sports season. Bowling, swimming and cross country state play offs end this week. Golf State Championships are happening now. He said that SJC has some highly ranked players and gave some ranking highlights to the group. He provided a summary of the volleyball and football programs throughout the county. The group discussed the season's highlights.

Long reminded everyone that the January 10th meeting will begin at 1 PM in the County Auditorium for the purpose of reviewing Phase II of the FY24 TDT CAT III Grant Applications. Long also mentioned that the February 14th meeting will be held in the Muscovy Conference Room at HHS and the RAB will choose an applicant to recommend to the BCC for the open RAB seat. The election of officers will also take place at the February Meeting. A quorum is required for both meetings. He urged everyone to attend.

Long announced that there were originally two applications for the open District 4 seat, however Kate Beck was not able to make the meeting due to a work conflict and did not provide answers to the questions each applicant was sent via email. He asked Marithza Ross to introduce herself and to share her answers to the questions provided. Ross shared her backstory and skillfully answered the questions. The RAB asked questions periodically. When Mrs. Ross was finished the RAB members voted unanimously to recommend her for the, partial District 4 term and then requested that the Board of County Commissioners waive the rule requiring her to reapply again in February and to extend her term through the end of the next full term. Commissioner Whitehurst agreed that the request was indeed a valid one and stated that he supported it and would recommend this waiver at the Board of County Commissioner (BCC) meeting. This recommendation will be considered at the December 5th BCC meeting.

Director Kane provided an overview of the staff's relationship with the partner groups and how their requests are managed. Van Rysdam and McEachan commented on the great relationship staff has with the groups. Kane mentioned the annual partnership meeting. He said that the meeting allowed him to give the groups updates on current and upcoming projects. Kane gave some clarification on program numbers and beach pass sales provided in the end of the year Strategic Dashboard presented at the October meeting. He explained that the department was slowly moving towards using a digital system called CivicRec for reservations, programming, invoicing and sales. He said that the use of CivicRec was being expanded and the department was moving towards doing away beach pass cash sales and replacing cash sales with debit/credit card payments. Kane provided an update of the strategic dashboard presented at last month's meeting that included answers to the questions that required some research. He shared newly acquired information on the Disc Golf Project. A brief discussion followed after which the group asked questions and were given answers to a variety of park related items.

Long reminded every one of the upcoming Parks Foundation public events and encouraged everyone to attend. Kane invited everyone to the Hastings Christmas Parade on Saturday, December 9th at 10 a.m. There was no further discussion and the meeting was adjourned.