



## RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

September 13, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 PM and roll call was taken by the Chair.

Present: Lauren Watkins, Chair, Casey Van Rysdam, Bill Bowen, Harold Dockins, Marty McEachean, Ryan Kane, Assistant County Administrator Sarah Taylor, Director, Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director, Tim Connor, Project Manager, Teddy Meyer, Recreation Facilities Manager, Carrie Miska, Business Manager, Diane Gorski, Project Specialist.

Absent: Deb Chapin, Brad Long, Vice Chair

Chair called for approval of the minutes. McEachean motioned to approve the August minutes and was seconded by Dockins. Chair asked if anyone had any questions. Van Rysdam asked for an update on recommendations for athletic associations' management of the intense heat players are consistently being exposed to. Kane replied that the department would be meeting with the sports partners November 1, 2023 to review the partner agreement, explain responsibilities and expectations relating to use of the athletic facilities, and heat exposure. Van Rysdam suggested touching base with High School Football coaches for ideas. He asked about the post auditing reporting of TDT events and Watkins stated that she emailed Tera Meeks and hadn't yet heard anything back, but that she would follow up. Van Rysdam stated that having the post event data would allow the RAB to see the value of the event and help with future funding allocations. Kane shared that the Sports Tourism Development Specialist position that was recently filled by Bobby McFarland was requested so that the economic impacts of special events could be monitored. He said that McFarland will also reach out to other municipalities to see how they handle athletic tourism. Motion to approve the August minutes passed 5/0.

Chair opened the floor for Public Comments and there were none. She asked Michael Payne, Director of the St. Johns County Park Foundation to address the RAB about the lease the Foundation is seeking with the Parks and Recreation Department. Payne responded by introducing Evelyn Wilkinson who is the newly hired Administrative Coordinator and providing her employment history and experience. Payne asked the RAB for support in seeking office space through a lease with the Parks and Recreation Department. Kane explained that the department has offered special leases to non-profits and shared that office space was available at THE PLAYERS Community Senior center or the Field House at Veterans Park. Discussion followed. Van Rysdam asked if the Foundation had set revenue objectives or does it have an expense budget in place. Payne replied that they had an operational budget that was voted on two months ago for August through December. He announced that the Foundation's fiscal year was from January 1 through December 31. Van Rysdam asked what the expectation was that Payne would be putting together a budget for their fiscal year with payroll, fixed expenses, fundraising expenses and these types of things. Payne replied that the Foundation was scheduled to work on this at the end of September. Discussion regarding the cost of the lease and ability for the county to offer a very low rental fee. Dockins asked about in-kind contribution. Baccari clarified that the lease agreement would be for a dollar amount and that historically the county has offered annual leases for as little as a dollar. McEachean asked for clarification. Baccari stated that the Real Estate division would determine a fair rental amount. There was a consensus of the RAB to provide a low cost office space to the Foundation since its main focus was to fundraise and purchase land and property for the benefit of the department and the residents of St. Johns County. Watkins said that she will work with staff to provide a letter of support on behalf of the RAB.

Watkins reminded the RAB members about the final budget hearing at 5:01 p.m. on September 19<sup>th</sup> and encouraged all to attend. She mentioned that the Phase II TDC Grant Application meeting in January will be held in the County Auditorium.

David Simpkins, St. Johns County School District liaison gave a brief overview of his career and family. He stated that there are over 50,000 students, 2.8% growth from last year. He said all the High Schools are full. Murray and Sebastian Middle Schools and some of the elementary schools had some open seats. He said fall sports programs have started. Bowen asked if all school tracks and recreation facilities were closed to the public. Simpkins explained that due to the ongoing sporting activities and the inability to staff after hours as well as maintenance and liability, the district could not accommodate additional users. Dockins asked about private rentals. Simpkins replied that there are private entities that rent facilities for specific uses and time. These private rentals are limited and do not overlap the sporting activities. Dockins asked for a time change for access during the summer months. Simpkins replied that he would look into it. Van Rysdam asked about student capacity and requested confirmation that the northern part of the county was

being most affected. Simpkins confirmed and explained that schools were built for 2,000 students regardless of need making most school at or over capacity when opened.

Kane shared that the Level of Service/Land Development Code was being pushed back because impact fees were being studied and reevaluated. He stated the Dashboard would be presented at the October 11 meeting.

Tim Connor, Project Manager for the Parks and Recreation Department provided a report on Capital Improvement Projects (CIP). He shared that the projects were available online on the Public Works Geo Hub (<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/899b4250a51b481f99f01a5e32f52588>). There are currently 29 active projects with a current approved budget of \$43M. This amount does not fully fund the completion of these projects; it is the funding approved in FY23. This list is fluent. Market conditions, funding, and other circumstances may alter the project list.

- Alpine Shoreline Restoration - Currently being advertised for construction. Grant money received. Estimate 120 days to completion once contract is assigned.
- Butler West Boat Ramp Park Renovation - Design & Permitting phase.
- Disc Golf - Design & Permitting phase.
- Doug Crane Boat Ramp Expansion - 99% closed and completed.
- Durbin Park Expansion - Design & Permitting phase for small soccer field.
- Field of Dreams - Design & Permitting phase (concession stand, restrooms, ADA improvements).
- Mill Creek Park - Under construction, site is being cleared. Ground breaking ceremony soon. Estimate completion in October 2024.
- Mussallem Beach Front Park Phase 3 - Grant funded project. Bid is being advertised for construction. Includes public bathroom, boardwalks and educational signage.
- Off Beach Parking: 7740 Coastal Highway - Currently on hold awaiting BOCC direction as to whether to keep the property and not development it, sell the property, or complete the project.
- Off Beach Parking: North Beach - Design & Permitting phase for beach walkover, playground & expansion of parking lot & pavilion.
- Other Amenity Expansion: Vilano FCT Grant Obligation – Under construction with early to mid-October groundbreaking.
- Palm Valley West Boat Ramp – Currently under construction to be completed by the end of September. Ribbon cutting ceremony potentially in early October. Includes the renovation of the boat ramp, kayak launch, parking lot & signage.
- Palmo Boat Ramp Expansion – Design & Permitting Phase. Includes the addition of a boardwalk, kayak launch & parking lot improvements
- Plantation Park – Design & Permitting phase. Installation of artificial turf field, bleachers and press box.
- Regional Park: Central Community Park – Includes a Community Center, green space, pickleball & basketball courts, & restrooms.
- Regional Park: Central St. Johns Sportsplex – Includes tournament based stadium style fields, a track & restrooms.
- Regional Park: Northeast Community Park - Design & Permitting Phase. Includes a softball wagon wheel, pickleball & basketball courts, two rectangle fields & restrooms.
- Regional Park: Northwest Regional Park – Includes 2 baseball & softball fields, pickleball & sand volleyball courts, restroom with consideration for a mountain bike trail.
- Regional Park: Villages Outdoor Court Facilities – Includes pickleball & basketball courts & a restroom.
- Riverdale Maintenance Dredge – Under construction finishing up this week.
- Riverdale Parking – Design & Permitting. Parking lot expansion planned.
- Rivertown 2 Improvements – Design & Permitting phase. Includes addition of sidewalks, shade structures, restrooms, concession stand, & parking lot expansion.
- Solomon Calhoun Park improvements – Design & Permitting phase. Installation of artificial turf followed by the addition of bleachers & restroom/concession building.
- South Beach Grill – Demolition contract awarded. Building coming down in the next 90 days. Currently in the Design & Permitting phase to renovate the space to increase parking and add an ADA beach access ramp.
- Trail Projects: Shore Drive Trail – Currently being advertised for construction. Construction of a nature trail along Shore Drive that will run from Doug Crane Boat Ramp to the north all the way to Moultrie Boat Ramp to the south. Partially grant funded project.
- Treaty Park Courts Expansion & Renovation – Currently being advertised for construction bid. Renovation of tennis courts to pickleball courts, moving tennis courts closer to the dog park, parking lot improvements & a new dog park.

- Trout Creek Expansion – Design & Permitting phase. Improvements to the access road & parking lot. Addition of parking & a restroom near the playground area, & pickleball courts. Phase 2 will be renovating the Community Center.
- Twin Creeks Park Infrastructure – On hold awaiting direction & confirmation. Intended to be 4 rectangle fields, restrooms & parking lot.
- Vaill Point Parking Expansion – Final walk through September 15.

Van Rysdam asked that if future reporting could be more forward looking to include the proposed total project cost. Kane stated that the 5-year plan can be provided at a future meeting. Bowen asked the improvements at the Doug Crane Boat Ramp had satisfied the boaters. Kane explained that the drainage issue was being addressed. Connor expounded on the drainage issue and capacity issue solutions. Dockins asked about improvements to Willie Galimore Center and Kane explained that the City of St. Augustine manages and maintains that facility. Kane also mentioned that there were other park improvements included in the maintenance and repair budgets that are not included in the CIP.

There was a discussion relating to the Capital Improvement Projects. Kane explained that this list did not include maintenance projects, projects managed in-house and projects managed by Facilities Maintenance. He reviewed how funding affects projects in the 5 year plan, their approval and completion that includes impact fees. He also shared that we did not manage capital improvements for City owned recreational facilities, only the parts of the facilities that we entered into a MOU with the City of St. Augustine to use.

Assistant Administrator Sarah Taylor mentioned funding in place for improvements in transportation infrastructure projects throughout the county. She provided additional information to help connect the dots between what's happening between Parks and Recreation and the rest of the county. She stated that there was a presentation at the last BCC by the Infrastructure Delivery Team that the Interim County Administration had created a sub-team of current staff to increase and improve the Infrastructure Delivery Program transportation construction projects throughout the county. She stated that are over \$500 million dollars in projects. This information was presented at the September 5<sup>th</sup> BCC meeting before Regular Agenda Item #1 and is available to view online <https://stjohnscountyfl.new.swagit.com/videos/270631> . Discussion followed.

Baccari introduced a graphic of the plaque designed for Ben LaMendola. Mr. LaMendola played an instrumental role in getting the pavilion built at the St. Johns County Pier. She explained that staff had worked closely with the family and the county will be installing a commemorative plaque that recognizes Mr. LaMendola's tireless efforts. She stated that this was supported by County Administration and the Board of County Commissioners. The RAB discussed the Commemorative Policy at length.

Kane encouraged everyone to attend the Treaty of Moultrie Creek 200<sup>th</sup> Recognition on Monday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. He gave a brief overview of the importance of the event. Connor reviewed the 4 nations of Native Americans and their representatives, and public officials included in the event.

Kane presented the FY23 Summary of Goals and Accomplishments.

- Budget Goal #1 Re-allocated operating budget lines to the correct division for more accurate accounting.
- Budget Goal #2 Limited General Fund requests, utilized Impact Fees (IF) and TDT to complete existing projects and design future projects. The \$10.5 – almost \$11 M worth of Capital Improvement Projects only \$1.5 M came for the General Fund.
- CIP Highlights include
  - Cornerstone Playground, \$500,000 IF Zone B Installation slated to begin at the end of August
  - Plantation Park (Design build of Turf field replacing grass and stadium features), \$1,000,000 TDT \*Project funding was delayed until FY 24 in lieu of Mill Creek. Now will be going out to bid on October 1
  - Rivertown II (Design build of parking lot expansion, additional restrooms), \$1,500,000 IF Zone A in design
  - Trout Creek Park expansion (Pave drive & boat ramp, increase ADA), \$1,000,000 IF Zone A in design
  - Twin Creeks Development Park (Restrooms, parking, and amenities), \$2,700,000 IF Zone B on hold
  - Vail Point (expand parking), \$400,000 IF Zone C In Construction
  - Pacetti Bay Neighborhood (Library) playground, \$500,000 GF on hold
- Budget Goal #3 Reorganized Department to provide improved services for Beach Operations. Increased beach activity increased the needs for Maintenance and Oversight/Management
  - Reorganized and added 2.5 FTE's to better provide management and service at Beach.
  - Invested in resources to manage beach including new equipment

- Budget Goal #4 Meet Standards and Improve Quality of Park Facilities
  - Established standards of care and best cultural practices to athletic field maintenance
  - Provided staff with equipment to manage best practices properly
  - Increased security camera coverage throughout County Parks to deter/reduce vandalism. Installed cameras at Vaill Point, Palencia, Nocatee, and Veterans Parks.
- Budget Goal #5 Staff Department to mirror growth incorporated in the past 10 years
  - Department has maintained a static FTE count since FY13, despite growth and demand for services that have changed dramatically.
  - FY23 FTE requests included
    - General Fund Account (Recreation Maintenance) 0080 – added 2.5 new positions
    - General Fund Account(Recreation Programming) 0079 – added 1 new position
    - Special Revenue Fund Beach Services 1137 – added 2.5 new positions
    - Enterprise Fund Golf Course Maintenance 4431 – added 1 new position
    - TDC Cat III Fund Recreation 1146 – added 1 new position

Kane reviewed the draft Legacy Policy for Parks and Recreation facilities for major impact events and events that have occurred for seven plus years that will ensure the ability of these groups to continue to provide their annual events. This will become part of the department's policies and procedures.

Kane shared that the conversation for bonding the four regional parks was on-going. The estimated cost of building the parks is \$100 million dollars, however, the bond will be for a lesser amount as it will include monies already budgeted. He said that this was a dynamic discussion relating to how to pay back the bond such as using Impact Fees and TDT dollars. Taylor stated that the goal is to bring forth the Bond Presentation Spring 2024. She explained that design and construction plans and documentation are required to apply.

Van Rysdam asked for a copy of the Strategic Dashboard prior to the October RAB meeting.

Bowen asked about enforcement of the required attendance for the RAB. Kane explained that there are BCC policies in place and being addressed through the Commission Office liaison. Bowen thanked the county and the Parks and Recreation Department for completing the improvements at the Disc Golf course at the Fairgrounds. He mentioned some issues with Fairground Event holders blocking access and wondered if this can be addressed. Kane replied that we will define boundaries to the user and asked for continued communications with staff when issues arise.

Dockins made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Bowen and approved 5/0.