



RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD August 14, 2024 - Meeting Minutes

Call to Order/Roll Call

Lauren Watkins, Chair, called the meeting to order and took the roll.

Members Present: Watkins, Brad Long, Vice Chair, Marithza Ross, Bill Bowen, Marty McEachean, and Casey Van Rysdam.

Members Absent: Harold Dockins

Also Present: David Simpkins, St. Johns County School District Liaison

Recreation Staff Present: Ryan Kane, Director, Carrie Miska, Business Manager, Teddy Meyer, Rec Facilities Manager, Bobby McFarland, Sports Tourism Development Specialist, Diane Gorski, Project Specialist

Approval of the Minutes

Chair called for approval of the June 12, 2024 meeting minutes and received a motion from Van Rysdam that was seconded by Long. Motion passed 6/0.

Public Comments

Chair called for Public Comments for non-agenda items only and explained that each speaker would be given 3 minutes.

Andor Gyulai and Vanessa Summers, Ponte Vedra residents and owners of, and coaches for, St. Johns Volleyball Club and Volleyball 1 on 1, provided an overview of their beach volleyball sand and grass volleyball programs. They spoke to their need for additional space, specifically access to the grass fields at Nocatee during the regularly scheduled maintenance closures in December through mid-January for at least the next two years while Summers works on altering her business model. Discussion followed. The RAB asked the department to review the request but to act in the best interest of maintaining the fields to ensure that they are in the best condition for all programs using the facility.

Margo Geer, St. Augustine South resident expressed her frustration in the delay of the construction of the Shore Drive Trail. She stated that she felt that the county should speed up the project and pay the \$400,000 grant money up front. Staff explained that the grant had specific requirements and the county would be ineligible for the grant if they paid up front. Kane explained that the county has a Grants & Legislative Affairs Department which is actively involved in the Shore Drive Trail grant review process by the state. He said that due to the very public input and calls to various state agencies the review process has been extended and the grant application is being scrutinized to ensure that all criteria are being met. Discussion followed relating to the

project, funding and grant review and permitting process. There was a consensus of the RAB to have the Chair send a letter of support for the project to the BOCC.

Suzanne Clulow, St. Augustine resident, shared her understanding of the terms of the grant. She stated that she continues to support the work that the Parks & Recreation Department accomplishes. She shared her thoughts and preferences about the LAMP (Land Acquisition Management Projects) Board and the acquisition list. Van Rysdam asked for clarification on the LAMP program and Kane explained that it is a Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) appointed Advisory Board that aims to prioritize the acquisition of conservation land within the county by making recommendations. He stated that the LAMP funds were included in the county's annual budget. He said that the LAMP Board provides a list of prioritized properties recommended for purchase by the County. Watkins provided additional details about the program in St. Johns County and other municipalities.

Reports

David Simpkins, St. Johns County School District Liaison announced that St. Johns County School District achieved the following 2024 Statewide Achievements:

- 1st in the state in English Language Arts (ELA) Achievement – Grades 3 – 10
- 1st in the state in Math Achievement – Grades 3, 4, 8, Algebra I (EOC – Grades 7 - 12)
- 1st in the state in Science Achievement – Grade 5, Biology (EOC – Grades 7 - 12)
- 1st in the state in Civics (EOC – Grades 7 - 12)
- 1st in the state of US History (EOC – Grades 7 - 12)

He said that there are 52,000 students registered and 51 schools including two new K-8 Academies (Terrapins - Trout Creek Academy and Sasquatches - Lakeside Academy).

He stated that fall sports have started and include bowling, cross country, swimming/diving, volleyball and football. The Football Kickoff classics are at 7 pm on 8/16/2024:

Nease @ Oak Leaf	Atlantic Coast @ Beachside	SAHS @ Ponte Vedra
Riverside @ Bartram	Fletcher @ Toco Creek	Menendez@ Clay

Lauren Watkins, Chair announced that she was unable to attend the September RAB meeting and asked Long to preside in her absence. She said that she had submitted a letter of recommendation to the BOCC on behalf of the RAB requesting that they authorize the Parks & Recreation Department to apply for a National Historic Landmark designation for the Stetson Kennedy House that is located within Beluthahatchee Park and that the BOCC approved the request.

Bi-Annual Sports Funding Category III Rec & Leisure Sport Marketing Grant Consent Agenda & Post Event Grant Portal Demonstration

McFarland explained the process for scoring the grant applications and method used for determining the grant award amount. The process has been changed to align with the online application process that the Cultural Council uses. The TDC's Category III Sports Funding Program accepts grant applications using an online portal bi-annually. He said that the 4-person panel reviewed and scored the applications. The scores were added up and then averaged. The average score determined the eligible amount of funding with the final results being reflected on

the Consent Agenda. Dialogue relating to the amount of the awards followed. There was a consensus of the RAB to approve the Consent Agenda as presented with the exception of the amount granted to the Jacksonville Classic. The RAB agreed to recommend \$20,000 in lieu of the eligible \$30,000 due to the name of the event not benefitting St. Johns County or St. Augustine as promised last year. The RAB will consider recommending full funding next year if the event name has been updated to recognize St. Johns County and the grant application meets the other criteria. The group discussed how the grant is budgeted and the amount available for each phase. The RAB agreed to reduce the amount awarded by 10% across the board.

The final funding amounts are as follows:

Date	PHASE 1	Final Grant Amount	PY Grant Amount	Type of Event
10/11-13/24	Prime Soccer Cup	\$16,875	\$10,000	Soccer
10/13/24	St. Augustine Triathlon	\$6,750	\$6,500	Triathlon
10/18-20/24	PG Sunshine State Fall Championship	\$13,500	\$8,500	Baseball
10/31-11/3/24	Florida/ Georgia Pickleball Classic	\$5,693	\$10,000	Pickleball
11/1-3/24	PG Bold City Fall Showdown	\$13,500	\$8,500	Baseball
11/18-26/24	International Open* new event	\$27,000	N/A	Billiards
11/23-25/24	Jacksonville Classic	\$18,000	\$20,000	Basketball
12/6-8/24	St. Augustine Amateur	\$20,250	\$15,000	Golf
12/14/24	SAYS Santa Suites on the Loose 5k	\$2,578	\$6,500	Running
03/7-9/25	PG North Florida Kickoff Classic	\$4,500	\$10,000	Baseball
11/30-12/1/24; 12/7-9/24; 3/1-2/25; 3/8-9/25	Gracie Regional Jiu-Jitsu Grappling Series* new event	\$4,307	N/A	Martial Arts
Totals		\$132,953	\$95,000	

There was a motion by Long to approve the Consent Agenda as amended with a second by Bowen. Motion passed 6/0.

SJC Oceanfront Park

Kane shared that the Board of County Commissioners agreed to extend the fishing pier permits for each month the pier is not under water due to the ongoing beach renourishment project. He stated that there is a master plan for the Pier site in the FY25 budget. Van Rysdam asked about the timing and Kane replied that the City was no longer interested in managing and operating the splash park & playground and that the masterplan would include these, the pier, store and the court/parking lot portion of the site.

Staff Reports

Watkins asked the members to wait until the item update was complete before asking questions to ensure that the information that is being shared is cohesive and allows for each member to focus on the topic. She assured everyone that she would ask each member if they had questions, comments or concerns.

Ryan Kane, Director provided the following updates:

The \$12 million Millcreek Park project is nearing completion. The artificial turf will be available in the fall. Grass fields available in the spring. The park includes 2 baseball and 2 softball fields. Ribbon cutting date TBD.

FY25 Budget September 3rd first reading and 17th final reading. Parks & Recreation is requesting >\$24 million. Discussion relating to what the budgeted amount included continued. Van Rysdam clarified that the budget includes items that were previously handled by other division. Kane agreed with the assessment and gave the Deferred Maintenance Program as an example. Facilities Maintenance would not consider field improvements as necessary in relation to building improvements. Van Rysdam said that during the budget meetings it was suggested to look at the Golf Course P&L vs the proforma during the time of the reconstruction and he asked if that had been done and Kane replied that it had not. Watkins asked if questions could be held to the end of the top so that everything can be heard and the group can focus on the item. He again stated the dates for the first and last budget readings. Watkins asked who presented the budget and Kane explained that the Office of Management & Budget present the entire county budget to the BOCC. Additional budget information was provided to the group by Kane.

Staff is working with the Construction Manager At Risk to finalize the costs through value engineering and other logical cuts to the 4-Regional Park plans to meet the approved budget and funding plan. Watkins called for questions and comments and a brief discussion followed. Kane assured the group that the quality of the parks would be top notch, however there would be some down-sizing due to the addition of libraries and Supervisor of Election offices on sites.

Cornerstone Park Noise remediation is in process and involves \$10,000 worth of vegetation and sound proofing fence for the batting cages. Watkins asked about the vegetation options and Ross stated that she researched native landscaping for noise buffering and provided the information to staff. She said that it would be most effective if the homeowner also planted a combination of

trees and shrubs on their property. Ross offered to share this information. There was a brief conversation about the noise buffering project using sound proof fencing and native plants.

St. Johns County commemorated the Juneteenth Holiday with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Collier-Blocker-Puryear Park for the relocated Canright House, a Civil Rights Landmark.

St. Johns County joined the St. Johns County Cultural Council and Vilano Beach Main Street for a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the reopening of new renovated Vilano Beach Oceanfront Park.

During the June 18th BOCC meeting, Commissioner Whitehurst issued a proclamation recognizing July 2024 as Parks and Recreation Month. The department kicked off the celebration by inducting Bert Watson into its Hall of Fame with his family in attendance. Kane explained that department presented a successful Passport to the Parks program that offered a variety of programming throughout the month.

Kane gave an update on the Enjoy Don't Destroy program and that the program has already saved over \$26,000 in repairs and replacements.

The Nease Beachfront House will be closed with limited parking, for fumigation from August 12th – 26th due to termites. Watkins inquired as to the location of the department's gopher turtle and Kane answered that Auggie was at the San Sebastian River property. Bowen asked for the location.

The BOCC accepted the Northwest Communications Tower Committee's recommendation to fund the irrigation and ADA access improvements to the Ruth Harris Bennett Butterfly Garden at Alpine Groves Park. Kane gave an overview of the Tower Committees responsibilities. McEachean spoke to the good work the garden club was doing for the community.

The Parks & Rec Mobile App has launched and there have been 1,653+ downloads. The App is being heavily promoted on social media.

Kane provided a summary of summer camp. He shared that there were 7 camps, welcoming 535 kids who enjoyed a wide range of activities that included Intro to golf lessons, 63 STEM classes, field trips to BravoZ, Daytona Lagoon, a movie outing and a Camp Challenge Field Day.

Kane said that the department was proud to announce that it has achieved the status of Certified Autism Center through the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Studies. The certification requires that 80% or more of front-facing staff complete continuing education classes to better serve the community. It also includes sensory guides for several parks to allow families the opportunity to prepare for possible triggers that may affect their visit.

He mentioned that staff is still working on the Comprehensive Plan and that Baccari was working with Growth Management to identify the Level of Service the department deems essential.

Board Reports

Long spoke to the Canright House project managed by the Park Foundation. He credited TJ Jackson in providing him with information for the presentation at the Juneteenth ceremony. He

said that the Foundation is hoping to have a Director soon. He said that the Foundation added two new members.

Bowen said that the disc golf club participated in Parks & Rec Month. He said that he appreciated the Drum Runners working with them at the Fairgrounds and that the two groups have been able to happily coexist.

McEachean mentioned community partnerships and social service improvements that are underway in West Augustine. He announced the ribbon cutting ceremony for the West Augustine Health Clinic would be September 13th at 10 a.m.

Van Rysdam asked when the next dashboard would be presented. Miska said that the information would be available in November.

Motion to adjourn by McEachean and seconded by Long. Motion passed 6/0.