



## Recreation Advisory Board (RAB) Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2025

### Call to order

Members Present: Watkins, Chair; Brad Long, Vice Chair, Bill Bowen, Harold Dockins, Jason Trent, George Vancore and Casey Van Rysdam.

Also Present: Commission Chair Krista Joseph

Recreation Staff Present: Ryan Kane, Director, Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director, Carrie Miska, Business Manager, and Diane Gorski, Project Specialist

### Approval of the Minutes

Watkins called for approval of February 12, 2025, meeting minutes and received a motion from Long who was seconded by Dockins. Motion passed 7/0.

### Public Comments

The Chair called for Public Comments for non-agenda items and there were none.

### Reports

Watkins announced that there the agenda has been arranged so the RAB Member reports follow the Commissioner, School District Liaison and RAB Chair reports to allow the RAB to ask questions to the public commenters. The change gives the public an opportunity to leave before the end of the meeting if they choose. She called on Commissioner Joseph to share her report.

Krista Joseph, Commission Chair, shared her delight in having participated in the Mills Field grand opening alongside the other Commissioners. She mentioned how great it was to see all the young athletes lined up along the fields in their team colors celebrating the opening of the new facility. She also announced that the Comprehensive Plan had been updated to reflect the real time deficit in the parks and recreation facility inventory and that the edited plan will be presented and the upcoming Board of County Commissioners meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 18, 2025. She said that the agenda is posted online.

Watkins welcomed George Vancore and Jason Trent to their first RAB meeting.

### RAB Member Reports

Watkins opened RAB Member Reporting. Vancore asked for clarification on the field allocation and utilization as he has been approached by several residents in the community who are involved in recreational sports and have asked for his help. Kane

recommended sending residents to Jamie or him. He stated that the partnership agreement and field allocations and other related policies will be presented to the RAB at the May meeting. He gave a brief overview of the current policy and field allocation process. Watkins explained that the partnership item was pushed back to allow for the RAB to be fully situated and to give staff sufficient time to gather data and prepare a presentation.

VanRysdam asked for the status of a partner request and Watkins said that the group was told of the date change. He said that he felt that the RAB should be involved in the field use policy changes and allocations of space. He requested documentation be provided to the RAB prior to the meeting for due diligence. He asked about the relationship between the School District and the Rec Department and if this can be improved and access given. Kane said that staff is working with Commissioner Taylor to determine school space availability and logistics. He said that he would share the findings with the RAB.

Long thanked Parks & Rec staff for their support and participation in the Foundation meetings. He said that the Foundation partnered with Rec in the Kite Day event and looked forward to the future.

Trent said that the Mill Creek Park opening was amazing and congratulated staff. He asked about the relationship between Parks & Rec and the School District regarding recreation facilities and how they are updated. Kane said that there is an annual meeting to discuss facility maintenance and availability, and that the relationship was limited to the Memorandum of Understanding the department has with the City of St. Augustine that identifies specific school facilities that are scheduled and maintained by the department. He mentioned that the department was currently in discussions with the School District to get permission to build a restroom facility at Osceola Elementary School fields that are utilized by St. Augustine Little League and the school. He said a copy of the Interlocal Agreement will be shared with the RAB.

Watkins reminded the RAB members that they can reach out to staff with suggestions, questions or concerns independently and that communication between them related to RAB topics was prohibited. (Sunshine Law)

Bowen announced that some members of the St. Augustine Disc Golf Club will be meeting with Meyer and other Rec staff to walk Rivertown II again. He said that a club member has come up with a tentative design for at least 18 holes and that they have some preliminary cost estimates.

## RAB Annual Report discussion

Watkins provided everyone with a copy of the 2023 annual report. She stated that the 2024 Annual Report was due April 1 and explained that she drafted some bullet points to be shared with the RAB and asked them to review and share ideas and return to staff. VanRysdam questioned the timeline. Watkins reviewed the rule relating to the requirement. VanRysdam recommended that where there are numbers on the Strategic Dashboard page the ratios and trend differences be referenced from the year before. Joseph stated that the Board wasn't expecting a very super detailed report. She said that the Board would like to know what is going on, how well you've done and what your goals are. Watkins announced that the deadline for the RAB to send recommendations to staff is Thursday, March 27.

## Consider RAB applications for recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners for open seats in Districts 3 & At-Large

Long reviewed the interview and voting process for the RAB. He announced that Watkins, Bowen and Kenneth Rainer were present. He said that the district 3 seat would be chosen first since the applicants are also eligible for the At-Large seat. Rainer, Bowen and Watkins introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds, experience relating to Parks & Rec, skills and goals

they each hoped to accomplish while serving. Each candidate answered questions from the RAB. The votes were collected and counted for each open seat. Long announced the voting results:

5/2 in favor of reappointing Bill Bowen as the District 3 representative

6/1 in favor of reappointing Lauren Watkins as the At-Large representative

## TDT Category III Grant applications Workshop Summary & Discussion

Baccari stated that Parks & Recreation staff had sponsored the workshop that included the RAB Chair, Van Rysdam, TDC members and TDC staff to discuss the current grant application and review the current new process that is place. She said that one of the main goals was to align and understand everyone's expectation of the grant process. She stated that the RAB members liked the simplicity of the new application process. The RAB wishes to continue to find a way to consider the day visitors, marketing, value of social media and the clicks that occur from the advertising that the individual groups do. They discussed the challenges with fixed expenses and plan on working with the TDC to find a better way to present the budgets within the process, economic impact, heads in beds, marketing, local value, strengthening post event evaluation, defining sports marketing and making sure that it's being brought back to the RAB for review prior to the next round of grants coming out.

Baccari said that the TDC board asked if there was a better way to calculate the value of daily participation to quantify the financial impact of the daily visitors, hotel nights and the timing of events and scheduling in off months. She said that staff would continue working with groups to fine tune the process. She said Parks would continue to compare the policy to the grading matrix to separate the policy from the application based on specific criteria to be eligible for grant dollars. Parks is also considering event evaluation post event only.

The Visitors Convention Bureau was most interested in marketing outside of the county, logos and clear communication on the front end of what the use of the logos and the video represent within the application process.

Baccari provided summaries for several options including the post event recap and honing the application questions to obtain the appropriate information. She said that this would be brought back to the board for additional review and discussion soon. Van Rysdam mentioned the importance of standardizing a marketing plan template. He said McFarland was doing a good job networking with other municipalities. He suggested setting up an annual meeting with the TDC to keep communication open. Commissioner Joseph was encouraged by the relationships being built between these entities and encouraged continued communications. Watkins reiterated that the grant money was generated through tourism and the Category 3 Recreation and Sports Grant has the specific purpose of supporting sports tourism within the county. She emphasized the importance of understanding the primary purpose to help create a policy and application that reflects this intent. She mentioned the importance of the grant to sports tourism and said that McFarland was doing an amazing job preparing for the upcoming new sportsplex. Dockins stated that it was important to keep the human element on the radar as smaller organizations that provide support to the community are also important. Watkins said that staff were looking into what options are available to those groups that can't compete in the scoring system and would report their findings to the RAB. A lengthy discussion followed.

Watkins announced that once the BOCC confirmed today's recommendations to the RAB the Chair and Vice Chair will be elected as well as appointing a new RAB representative to the TDT CAT 3 grant review team.

## Staff Reports

Baccari announced that the Summer Camp lottery received 1351 entries (participants) for 325 available spots at Davis, Ketterlinus, Plantation, Trout Creek. This resulted in a 75% denial rate. She provided the breakdown for each camp. The RAB discussed

the need for additional summer camp facilities with the continued growth of the county and questioned whether Parks and Recreation could get access to any of the St. Johns County Schools. The RAB agreed that the addition of approximately 260 spaces in the three new community centers, would not meet the needs of the community. The group discussed the summer camp program at length and included finding ways to highlight the need for additional facilities.

Baccari provide updates on the Mill Creek Park Grand Opening, the groundbreaking for the construction of an Astro Turf field at Solomon Calhoun Community Center, and St. Johns County Kite Day that celebrated the Department's designation as a Certified Autism Center. She shared that the Butler West Boat Ramp was closed through May for repairs on the floating dock; Crescent Beach will see minor parking impacts and site restrictions through August due to the construction of an ADA walkover; Nocatee Community Park open field space near the pavilion will be closed and might cause minor parking impacts due to the construction of new sand volleyball courts; North Beach Park is being renovated and will be closed through July; Treaty Park playground will be closed from March 24 – April 7 for renovations; Windswept Acres is closed March 3 – 17 for fence replacement; St. Johns County Fishing Pier Gift Shop is closed for renovations through March – April.

Baccari shared some upcoming programming that includes the River Reflection," on Friday, March 14, 2025, from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at Alpine Groves Park; Movie in the Park March 29<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 – 9 PM. at Veteran's Park; Kids Got Talent! Show on March 30<sup>th</sup> at 3 PM at the Solomon Calhoun Community Center.

She said that the Mussallem Beachfront Park ribbon cutting will be sometime in April. This was a Florida Communities Trust Grant Project that has been a work in progress for many years and is now completed. She mentioned that the News for Your Neighborhood program offered by News4Jax will be broadcasting their morning and evening news from Veteran's Park and highlighting local stories. Watkins asked if anyone had any questions. Trent commented on what a great job the department is doing. Watkins asked the which movie was playing and Baccari answered Kung Fu Panda 4. Van Rysdam asked about clarification on the Nocatee Volleyball project and Baccari answered that the project should be completed by the end of May and that the construction might cause minimal parking impacts. Vancore gave kudos to the department. Dockins asked about the APP. Baccari explained that the purpose of the APP was to learn the history of each of the areas virtually. Vancore asked about the sports partnerships and requirements and Watkins explained that this would be placed on the May agenda and the RAB could fully review and discuss the policy at that time.

Long made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Bowen. The motion carried 7/0.