



## Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes January 15, 2025

### Call to order

Members Present: Watkins, Chair; Brad Long, Vice Chair, Bill Bowen, and Casey Van Rysdam.

Members Absent: Harold Dockins

Also Present: Commission Chair Krista Joseph

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

### Approval of the Minutes

Watkins called for approval of the December 11, 2024, meeting minutes and received a motion from Bowen who was seconded by Van Rysdam. Motion passed 4/0.

### Public Comments

St. Augustine South area residents Margo Geer, Susan Miller, Carol Gangi, Justin Miller, Rob DePiazza spoke in support of or against the Shore Drive Trail Project:

Kane explained that since the grant application expires in March and the BCC will be asked to authorize the department to file for an extension at the February 4<sup>th</sup> BCC meeting. The outcome of the request will determine the next course of action.

### Board Rules of Civility & Decorum

Jalisa Ferguson, Senior County Attorney, provided an overview of the Board of County Commissioners Board Rules and Policies. She reviewed the role of the chair and the manner in which the meetings should be facilitated. She explained that the Chair was responsible for running the meeting and reminded everyone that all comments and questions should be recognized by the Chair. She touched upon the Sunshine Law and offered to come back later to review the statute. She encouraged RAB members to set up an email specifically for RAB business.

### Reports

Krista Joseph, Commission Chair spoke to the Inspire report (Comprehensive Plan update drafts) and said that they would be placed on the Board of County Commissioners agenda in either February or March. She confirmed that the Shore Drive Trail Project grant application extension request would go before the BCC in February. She said that at a previous BCC she had shared that she did not support this project, and that Commissioners Arnold and Whitehurst had expressed their support of the project.

## Consider RAB applications for recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners for the open seat in District 1 and District 4

Watkins explained the process for interviewing and scoring the applicants. Kane will introduce the applicants, and Watkins will ask each of them to provide responses to the following:

1. Tell us briefly about your experience relating to Parks and Recreation.
2. List at least 3 skills you will bring to the Recreation Advisory Board.
3. List at least 3 goals you would like to accomplish while serving as a Recreation Advisory Board member.

She announced that after the applicant has responded to all (3) requests, she will ask each RAB member if they have any questions using the Round Robin format. She asked the RAB members to wait until they were called upon to comment or ask questions. Kane read an email from Jeff Lacher who was unable to make the meeting due to being diagnosed with the flu. The email included answers to the three questions posed by the RAB. He then explained that staff will tally the results of the scoring sheets and announce the highest scores. He said that Watkins will ask for a vote to confirm the results and lead a discussion if there was not a vote.

Kane called George Vancore to the floor as the sole candidate for the District 1 seat. Vancore introduced himself and provided answers to three questions. Watkins allowed the RAB members to ask questions when Vancore was finished. She thanked him for his volunteer service throughout the years and for applying for the RAB seat.

Kane called Ryan King to the floor as a candidate for the District 4 seat. King introduced himself and provided answers to three questions. Watkins allowed the RAB members to ask questions when King was finished. She thanked him for his military and community service and for applying for the RAB seat.

Kane called Jason Trent to the floor as a candidate for the District 4 seat. Trent introduced himself and provided answers to three questions. Watkins allowed the RAB members to ask questions when Trent was finished. She thanked him for his community service and for applying for the RAB seat.

Kane asked the RAB to score the applicants and to provide the sheet to staff when finished. Gorski tallied the scores and provided the results to Kane. Kane announced that George Vancore and Jason Trent received the highest scores. Watkins called for vote to recommend the highest scoring applicants. Long made the motion to recommend Vancore and Trent and was seconded by Van Rysdam. The motion passed 4/0.

## TDT Category III Grant Application funding recommendations to the Tourist Development Council

Meyers provided an overview of the Grant Application process. He explained that there were some adjustments made to line up both phases. He said that the new scoring process better aligned the RAB policy with that of the Tourist Development Council. He reviewed the scoring criteria. He said that the applicant could ask for up to \$30,000. He reminded everyone that the 10% reduction created in Phase I to ensure that there was enough money for Phase II was also incorporated in awards in Phase II. He reviewed the grant award spreadsheet (attached) and said that the results would be provided to the TDC to review at their next meeting. Watkins asked Van Rysdam if wanted to provide feedback since he was on the review panel and

Van Rysdam responded. She asked the other RAB members if they had any comments. There was a motion by Van Rysdam to accept the recommended grant awards that was seconded by Bowen and approved 4/0.

A discussion ensued that included whether to ask the TDC to reinstate the 10% reduction in grant allocations the RAB had requested in Phase I and carried into Phase II. Watkins asked for a motion to approve the request to approve a 10% increase in Phase I and Phase II grant recipients which would be an increase of \$38,194 and bring the total grant dollars to \$313,295 for the year. Van Rysdam made the motion. The motion failed for lack of a second.

## Staff Reports

Ryan Kane, Director, reported that Plantation Park had completed the artificial turf field transition from sod and is actively being used and that this park now has two artificial turf fields. He announced that the Solomon Calhoun multipurpose field bid for artificial turf had closed and a contract was in the works to complete the project. He said that once the Certificate of Occupancy was granted, Mill Creek Park would have a soft opening of the artificial turf field for flag football and ribbon-cutting ceremony to coincide with baseball season. He provided an update on the Shore Drive Trail project that included the need to request permission from the Board of County Commissioners for an extension of the grant as it expires in March. He reported that the county had partnered with the Palm Valley community Association to hold the Palm Valley Boat Parade, and the event was a great success. He stated that over 300 people attended the launch party under the bridge and 75 people used the shuttle. He mentioned that Wes Tucker, Manager of the St. Johns Golf Course successfully ran the St. Augustine Amateur tournament, and someone shot the course record of 62, and someone from the golf neighborhood placed second. Bowen asked for a disc golf update and Kane answered that the county was working on the bid document to build the course for \$750,000. He said that the real estate division was surveying additional property if the golf course doesn't work out. Bowen mentioned there were challenges in building the disc golf course at the golf course among other challenges and hoped that consideration would be given to a more viable location or alternative. Kane said the sound proofing project at the batting cages at Cornerstone Park as finished and that there is a measurable reduction in the decibels recorded. He shared that the Tree recycling program was successful and explained that the trees collected were ground into mulch and the mulch was used in our county parks. Kane mentioned the option of holding another public meeting with the disc golf players to address their concerns and asked Bowen if this would help alleviate any uncertainty. Discussion ensued. Kane also mentioned the St. Augustine Little League field lighting project is complete. North Beach Park construction has begun. The Mussallem Beachfront Park project is scheduled for completion by the end of February. Butler Boat Ramp and Rivertown II parking lot projects are under construction. The Nocatee Sand Volleyball Courts project is scheduled to start in February.

Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director, provided these updates:

Youth Basketball registration was open now through February 2<sup>nd</sup>. The cost is \$40 per child. League Divisions are Boys: ages 9-10, 11-12, & 13-14; Girls: 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades and 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. She announced that coaches are always needed. Baccari shared that the department partnered with the Matanzas 5k to provide the Matanzas Fun Run: Superhero Dash at 8 a.m. on January 18<sup>th</sup>. She mentioned the MLK Breakfast & Baseball Tournament in Hastings of January 18<sup>th</sup> from 9-11 a.m. 35-year employee, Rodney Somerall will be honored at this event. She announced the River Reflection 2025 hosted by the Matanzas & St. Johns Riverkeepers was calling on artists of all mediums, ages and abilities to submit art that highlights the important connection our waterways have to our community. The submission deadline is January 27<sup>th</sup>. The event is scheduled for March 14 at Alpine Groves Park. She mentioned the Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida, in

collaboration with the Northeast Florida Regional Council and your local destination marketing organization, is hosting trail itinerary development workshop on February 18<sup>th</sup> from 1-4 p.m. in the Wind Mitigation Building. More information is available on the St. Johns County River2Sea Loop Alliance web page. She mentioned Veteran Archery, Art, Fishing, & Kayak programs being offered in partnership with the VA. These programs to provide military veterans of all abilities the opportunity to participate in sporting activities in a supportive and inclusive environment while developing new skills and connecting with fellow participants.

## **RAB Member Reports**

Long provided an update on the St. Johns County Park Foundation.

Van Rysdam asked for clarification on the Board approval of providing \$2.2 million American Rescue Fund dollars to the Diamond of Dreams Police Athletic League project. Kane explained that the Board agreed to allow PAL to develop land for an athletic facility. PAL received a grant from the state for approximately 6 million dollars to develop the facility. Kane explained that this will be an ADA site like the Field of Dreams with an inclusive playground and that the ARPA funding needed to be spent on a project that was already underway. The Board agreed that providing these funds to this project would benefit the County. Van Rysdam asked for a golf course P & L to review it against a proforma that was run prior to the golf course renovations. Miska replied that she would send that to him. He asked the RAB to consider holding some of the meetings offsite.

A motion by Long was seconded by Bowen and passed 5/0.