



Recreation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes June 11, 2025

Call to Order

Members Present: Lauren Watkins, Chair, Bill Bowen, George Vancore, Harold Dockins, Jason Trent and Casey Van Rysdam.

Also Present: Commission Chair Krista Joseph and David Simpkins, St. Johns County School District Liaison

Recreation Staff Present: Jamie Baccari, Assistant Director and Diane Gorski, Project Specialist/Liaison

Approval of the Minutes

Watkins called for approval of May 14, 2025, meeting minutes. Vancore asked that the Northwest Communications Tower Advisory Board agreed upon date of September 30, 2025, for the sunseting of the Northwest Communications Tower Advisory Board to be included. Dockins motioned to approve the minutes as amended with a second by Bowen. Motion passed 6/0.

Public Comments

The Chair called for Public Comments for non-agenda items. Suzanne Clulow, St. Johns County resident, introduced herself. Clulow offered her support of all citizens based advisory boards in the county and then provided her thoughts about the Land Acquisition Management Program (LAMP), the LAMP Board and the property list that was recommended to and approved by the Board of County Commissioners. A brief discussion followed.

Reports

Simpkins provided a Spring Athletics Achievements & Facilities Update. He reported that all St. Johns County School District (SJCS D) high schools had a successful spring sports season, with several notable state-level accomplishments: Creekside High School Girls Track 4x800 Relay Team – State Champions; CyberPatriots Team – 1st Place in State (Division); Nease High School Girls Tennis Team – State Champions, Kylie Kochis – Individual Girls Tennis State Champion, first SJCS D athlete to win both team and individual state titles, first SJCS D tennis team to win a state title in 30 years, Boys Weightlifting: Logan Martin – Individual State Champion; Bartram Trail High School Ethan Fox – Boys Discus State Champion, Katherine Kelly – Girls Pole Vault State Champion, Varsity Girls Flag Football – District Champions.

He announced that the high school outdoor sports facilities will be open to the public most Wednesdays in July, from 5:00–7:30 PM except for Ponte Vedra High School (PVHS) due to ongoing construction. He explained that PVHS was installing an artificial turf field, the first of its kind at a district high school. The total project cost is \$1.8 million and was funded entirely through donations and independent sources; no district funds used. Discussion included RAB members acknowledging and commending the athletic accomplishments, and the benefits of public access to school sports facilities, public school athletic facility improvements and partnerships. The RAB shared their appreciation for community and donor involvement in facility enhancements.

Commission Chair Joseph reported that she had just attended a Library Board meeting, where she learned about the strong partnership between the Library and Parks & Recreation departments. She conveyed the Library Board's appreciation for the positive working relationship with Parks & Recreation and highlighted how well the two departments collaborate. Joseph expressed enthusiasm for the co-location of libraries within new regional park designs and emphasized the value of this integrated approach. She recommended that Kane continue to include libraries in all future park projects where feasible, to support community access and interdepartmental synergy.

Watkins reviewed the letter she prepared for the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) on behalf of the Recreation Advisory Board (RAB). The letter expresses the RAB's concerns regarding the urgent need for additional summer camp locations to better serve the growing community. The group discussed the ongoing community demand and lack of sufficient camp availability and the importance of equitable access to youth programming. There was unanimous consensus among the members to submit the letter to the BCC. Van Rysdam asked for an update on metrics related to the Strategic Plan like Key Performance Indicators. Watkins replied that she provided updated ratios for the metrics on the strategic dashboard spreadsheet to Miska for review and consideration. She asked staff to share with interested RAB members.

RAB Member Reports

Van Rysdam asked for clarification on the \$800,000 funding to purchase property near the fairgrounds. Baccari explained that the property could be developed into recreational amenities in the future.

Trent mentioned that the people in his community appreciated the efforts of the commission on e-bikes. He mentioned that the Parks & Rec social media was outstanding.

Dockins said he connected with Simpson about providing a power walking program at Solomon Calhoun and other recreation facilities and that it was a work in progress. He mentioned Fort Mose reenactments and urged everyone to attend.

Vancore mentioned the transition of the Northwest Tower Committee to the RAB at the end of the Fiscal Year. He said that the Tower Committee approved \$165,000 of funding to update playground equipment at Alpine Groves Park. He reviewed the purpose and specific geographic area the funding can be allocated to. Vancore discussed recreational and travel sports field use and allocation and needed modifications to the Partnership Agreement. Discussion relating to the area sports organization partners and field allocation. Van Rysdam asked if there were ratios set for St. Johns County residents and out-of-county residents. Baccari replied that the department does not oversee the operations of the partner organizations. She explained that the department is developing a spreadsheet that will include tracking the number of players, where they live, field use and allocations. Watkins announced that the partnership agreement will be discussed at a future meeting.

Beaches Major Impact Event Application MindTravel Live-to-Headphones "Silent" Piano Concert

Baccari provided details about the event. She said that it's basically an electronic piano concert on the beach with participants wearing headphones. The RAB unanimously voted to recommend approval of the application to the BOCC.

SJC Strategic Plan 2024-2029 Parks & Rec Objectives, Action Items, Implementation

A PowerPoint explaining the strategic planning process and the components assigned to the Parks & Recreation Department was presented by Baccari and discussed by the RAB.

Current Fee Schedule

Baccari asked to table this topic. She said that staff were gathering data, creating scenarios, and examining the impacts and that she would be able to provide data from FY23-24 at the August meeting that will include the number of participants (local vs. out-of-county) and revenues collected from participants and trends. She mentioned revamping the partnership agreement and reporting procedures. Trent asked the department to consider that travel may be how organizations cover recreational program expenses. Discussion relating to policy for fee adjustments followed. There was a consensus to table this item until the August meeting.

Beaches Update

Baccari provided an update on beach pass sales (55% cash/45% credit cards) and informed the RAB about the recently implemented credit card payment system being used by Toll Takers this season. The new system provides real-time data for beach vehicle access. The group discussed beach access, beach conditions, beach goers and alternate ways of capturing data.

Staff Reports

Baccari shared information on the following:

- Butler West and Vilano Landing Boat Ramps reopened May 23rd
- Central Sportsplex & Central Community Park Groundbreaking rescheduled to 10 AM on June 20th
- Shore Drive project: PW working w/Purchasing for a Change Order to redesign the trail to meet the criteria provided by the citizens advisory committee
- BCC Meeting June 17th Proclamation - July is Parks & Rec Month & Hall of Fame Inductee Beverly Fleming
- Popsicles in the Park 10-11 AM Wednesday 7/16 Trout Creek Park Playground, Saturday 7/26 Ron Parker Park Playground, Wednesday 7/30 Mills Fields Park Playground
- REEL in the FUN Kids 4-12 yrs fishing tournament at Vilano Fishing Pier Sunday 7/13 8-11:30 AM
- Archery Camp for the whole family July 7-11 Fairgrounds 9AM-4PM
- EXPLORATION CAMPS: Middle School Exploration (6th-9th grades) 6/23-27, 9AM-4:30PM at San Sebastian River Park; K-2nd Grade 7/28-8/1, 7:30AM-5:30PM Ketterlinus Gym; 3rd-5th Grades, 8/4-8, 7:30AM-5:30PM Ketterlinus Gym
- Sunset Paddleboarding 7/18, 6-9PM Riverfront Park
- All Abilities Paddle 7/19, 6:30-9PM Trout Creek
- PGA Junior Golf League 7/21, St. Johns County Golf Course
- Family Bingo Night 7/26, 6-9PM Solomon Calhoun Center

There was a motion by Vancore and a second by Bowen to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 7/0.